

The Real Estate Sales Process Walkthrough: From Listings to Closing



In 2019, [89% of Americans buying their home used a real estate agent](#), while 89% of sellers did the same. That's a promising stat if you're a realtor, right?

According to the same study, 90% of buyers would use their agent again or recommend their agent to others. If you have a great [sales process](#) you can create an enjoyable process for clients and turn one sale multiple opportunities.

If disorganized, the real estate process can be time-consuming, frustrating and full of back-and-forth

discussions between a seller. But, if you're able to optimize the sales process, not only will you save time, you can close deals quicker. Not only that, handling the real estate sales process properly can ensure a seller will turn to you next time they want to sell another property.

Let's dive into how you can dominate the real estate sales process from listing to closing the deal, and keep buyers (and sellers) on your side.

Step 1: Preparing a sales listing

Preparing a sales listing is easier if you break it down into three core parts: what to prepare, how to stage and how to promote.

Before you dive into the preparation process, make sure you have a constructive way to organize it. After all, you're about to juggle several clients/properties with lots of varying information that you can't afford to mix up.

A great way to stay on top of your property and client research is by using a [CRM](#) tool. These tools allow you to easily track your relationships by mapping out the stages of your process. A CRM tool gives you the ability to track emails and calls, cuts down on data admin time, gives you a streamlined view of your process, and so much more. Best of all, they are completely customizable to your needs.

As a realtor, you can set up separate pipelines per property and track the progress of buyers that show interest. Here is a real estate closing checklist:

Part 1: Prepare

It might come as a surprise, but as a realtor, you need to conduct research on your seller. Just like any sales relationship, the stronger it is, the more chance you have of achieving the desired outcome.

Ask the seller about their property, their motivations for selling it and what they hope to get out of the experience.

Not only will this strengthen your relationship, but you'll also gain a sense of their urgency and expected timeline around the sale.

Other questions you must ask the seller during your first meeting are what their financial expectations are for the property, as well as asking them to bring along records like tax, title, and insurance for the property (make sure you make copies of these documents).

If there are any skeletons in the closet about the property (such as unpaid taxes) now is the time to find out so you don't get a surprise from the seller down the line.

For example, if the seller's property has a claim on it, you

must make them aware that this needs settling before someone buys the property. Similarly, if there's a title dispute that the seller hasn't disclosed, now is the time to be upfront.

The last thing you need for your real estate agency is a jilted relative or a tax-collecting agency that's owed money, causing issues when the keys have been handed over to a buyer.

Once all of the seller's title, tax and insurance paperwork checks out, you can move on to getting the property on the market.

Pro-tip: If a seller is speaking with other agents regarding the sale of their property, ask to be the last agent they speak to. It's easier to get them on board this way, as you'll be able to unpick other agent's processes.

Part 2: Stage

Now that you've cemented a relationship with the seller, you need to get their property looking as attractive to potential buyers as possible. The best way to do this is to encourage them to stage their property correctly.

Not only does staging a property make it easier for a buyer to [visualize the property as their future home](#), but it also sells the property faster.

Impact of Buyers Viewing A Staged Home

In fact, staged homes spend an average of 90% less time on the market than those that aren't.

Of course, this is something that as a realtor, you'll have to persuade your seller to do. If they're reluctant to stage their house, inform them about how much it could cost them financially if they don't.

On average, an unstaged home sits on the market for 161 days longer than a staged house. But if you break it down into a dollar figure, it could cost your seller thousands of dollars by not following your advice.

Just show them [this example](#).

Pro-tip: To sweeten the deal of staging, send your seller [this virtual checklist](#) to help them out. It's an easy way to let your seller know what you expect from them in the lead up to staging their property, without being pushy. (If you're using a CRM, just save the checklist as a trigger in your sales funnel so it'll be sent to your seller automatically).

Part 3: Promote

Once the property is looking top-notch and photographs have been taken, it's time to release it to the public.

According to the National Association of Realtors [Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers](#), buyers search for their new home across many channels, but online sources are the most popular.

As a realtor, online channels are where you should be promoting your seller's property. Your first stop should be listing the property on the [Multiple Listing Service \(MLS\)](#).

You should also use the MLS listing as the foundation of your promotion plan. Plugging the property on your agency's website will be your next move, before moving on to using social media to spread the word.

Here's a basic checklist of promotion activity you should be considering:

- **Local Multiple Listing Service (MLS)**
- **Landing page on your real estate agency's website:** Complete with staging photos, your contact information and a call-to-action (i.e. book a viewing)
- **Social media sites:** Including but not limited to your agency's Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and LinkedIn accounts
- **A custom post on your agency's blog promoting the property:** Complete with a rundown of the property's top features and fittings, staging photos, your contact information and a call-to-action (i.e. book a viewing)
- **Traditional mail outs:** These can simply be a hard copy of your landing page you've built for the property. Traditional mailers can be used to entice buyers who aren't using the internet

Pro-tip: Make sure your agency's branding across all marketing channels is consistent. You aren't just selling your client's property, you're promoting your agency as well. This needs to be communicated through your marketing campaign. If you use poor quality marketing materials to represent your agency, it can damage your brand. Make sure you invest in campaigns wisely.

The complete guide to real estate sales

When it comes to Real Estate Sales, process is king.

Optimize your process with our free ebook guide.

Step 2: Name your price

Pricing your seller's home is, without a doubt, the most important part of the sales process for you as a real estate agent.

Any real estate agent worth their salt knows they need to avoid pleasing your seller at this stage. Instead of pricing a home at what the seller wants (which violates the [code of ethics](#)), you need to price each property using your training, overall understanding of the market and comparable sales.

When a home is priced too low, not only will your seller lose out on money, but the public might take this as a sign that there are issues with the property. This can massively impact the level of interest around purchasing a property.

On the flip side, a property that is priced too high will alienate buyers who simply can't afford it (even if it is what they're looking for).

The only way to decide on the right price for a property is to do a comparative market analysis.

How to conduct a foolproof comparative market analysis

There are many aspects of a property you must consider

when conducting a comparative market analysis.

First, start off with the obvious aspects of the property:

- The price of other properties in the same neighborhood that have recently sold and are similar in size and features
- Any improvements or upgrades your seller has made to the property
- Features that fetch more at an auction like a swimming pool or a lot of yard space
- How much are other homes on the market being priced at per square foot?
- What is the market that you're selling the property in like? Is it a balanced market, based on sellers and buyers?

To make sure you get the most accurate price possible for your seller, you need to dig deeper than the basics.

Looking at listings in the area should be your first step. Break these down into four areas: active listings, pending listings, sold listings and listings that have been withdrawn.

- **Listings that are active:** Any property that's currently up for sale will fall under this banner. Make sure you only include listings that are aimed at buyers that may also be interested in your seller's property. Be warned: active

listings should only be used as a rough guideline. Any price offered for an active listing doesn't reflect its market value until it sells, so keep that in mind.

- **Listings that are pending:** These are the listings that are under contract, but haven't closed. Unless you've got a real estate connection involved in the sale, a listing agent is unlikely to let you in on any information about the price of the pending sale. That means until the property closes, you'll only be making a calculated guess. However, listings that are pending can give you a solid idea of what direction the market is moving.
- **Listings that have sold:** This is where the figures start to become important. Any property that has closed within the past three months is considered a [comparable sale](#). These sales are what will give you a true market value, and you should look at between three to six months of comparable sales data to come to a solid figure for your seller's property.
- **Listings that have been withdrawn:** The least important factor of the four; withdrawn listings are properties that have been taken off the market. The most common reason for this is a property was priced too high, and the agent had to remove the listing and review. That means the average price of a property that's been withdrawn will almost always be higher than

the average prices you find from comparable sales.

Pro-tip: A [real estate CRM](#) tool can help you track these listings by consolidating all of this data into one easy-to-use platform.

Once you have a solid foundation for your comparative market analysis, examine any comparable sales you've come across in more detail. Keep it simple. Look for properties that are closest in condition, shape and size. Here are some ways to make it easier:

- **Properties of a similar size:** Measure this per square foot. Keep in mind that larger homes are normally worth less than smaller homes per square foot. Less is more in this case. Only give yourself a 10 to 15 percent leeway in terms of variance between comparable sales and your seller's property, otherwise, the figures may be inaccurate.
- **Properties of the same age:** This one requires some digging. But try and find out if the property is of a similar age to your seller's property. Ideally, you want any comparable sales to have been built within a few years of your seller's property.
- **Properties that have the same features:** Has your seller's property got a pool? Or have they invested in a

new kitchen? A good point of reference when considering features is to ascertain whether it's been remodeled or not. A remodeled home is worth more than a fixer-upper, just as homes that have one bath are worth less than a home with two. Remind your seller that dealing with any maintenance issues before they put their property on the market will often earn them more during the sale.

- **Location, location, location:** Take a realistic look at the location of your seller's property. What kind of view will be seen by a potential buyer from each window of the property? For example, a city center apartment with any kind of view will be worth a lot more than one that faces a brick wall. If your seller's property is located near a motorway or a busy road, this will also count against the price of their property.

Only once you've conducted all the necessary research into a property will you be able to build a report for your seller.

There isn't a set size your report should be (sometimes it's a couple of pages, sometimes it's a 50-page document). But the more in-depth it is, the more you'll be able to persuade your client that your price is the right choice.

Step 3. Organize property viewings

Once you've decided on a price and started promoting your seller's property, it's time to start hunting for a buyer.

You may even have a buyer in your contacts already. They could be new or old leads or new or old clients looking to level up. A great way to organize your contact list is through a real estate CRM tool.

For example, you can consult your CRM list and assign tags to your contacts. Use these tags to separate your contacts into warm and cold lead categories. You can then set up a reminder to send them an invite to the open house.

The ideal approach to property viewings is to offer two options: an open house and, for buyers you're trying to get across the line, a private viewing.

Let's start by exploring the open house approach within the real estate sales process.

Setting up an open house

You should have a solid list of interested buyers from your promotional campaign. These lists would've been taken automatically from your website call-to-action, social media posts and your blog.

Pro-tip: If your agency uses a real estate CRM, sending out invites to the open house will be painless. Just filter out [real](#)

[estate prospects](#) who filled in their details to come to the open house, and send out an email using a premade template.

Once your open house is scheduled, make sure you keep in touch with the seller to ensure the property is in peak condition for the big day.

During the open house, it is your mission to seek out any potential buyers who express a keen interest in the property. Have a notepad on hand and write down anything they mention; their partner, their interest in a sport, their ideal property location, what they like about the seller's property. Write it all down and include it in your CRM system.

This will help you to not only gauge how likely they are to become a serious buyer, but also give you the ammunition to follow up with them with personalized messaging.

Follow up with potential buyers to set up private viewings

That notepad you took full of notes from the open house?

Now is the time to use it. Use your CRM system to [track your emails](#) and phone calls with your potential buyers so your entire conversation lives in one easy-to-find place. You can also use smart templates, or customize your own, to make

following up and replying by email quick and easy.

Contact any potential buyer who you made contact with during the open house and, using the information collected, send them a customized invite to a private viewing.

Don't know what to write? Use this:

Example of a killer open house follow up email:

Hi there (name of interested buyer)

I'm just reaching out to let you know it was fantastic to chat with you yesterday and to ask for your thoughts on (open house address). You (and partner's name, if they have a partner) expressed a desire to make (open house address) your new home, so I'd love to get a chance to talk to you about this further.

Here are a few more aspects of the property that would make it a good fit for you (or both of you).

(List some of the reasons why the property would be a great fit for them based on what you picked up in the conversation. For example:

Local schools if they have kids

Transport links (especially if they commute

Nearby parks if they have a dog

Our real estate firm works in this neighborhood regularly, and I can tell you that (address of property) is unique to the area because of (include unique selling points). I'd love to show you around the property for a private viewing so you can get a more personal feel for the place before bidding ends.

As a realtor who has been in the industry for (add the number) years, properties like (open house address) have become a specialty of mine.

I'll actually be in the neighborhood on (day and time) if you have time to meet me and discuss the property further. Please let me know and I can arrange to put a viewing together.

Warm regards,

(Your name)

Arranging private viewings will help you close sales in two ways.

Firstly, it gives potential buyers the opportunity to imagine themselves living in the home without the crowd that comes

with an open house.

Secondly, a private viewing makes them feel important and, as an agent, you've gone the extra mile to show them the property.

Step 4. Negotiate the sale

Once you've hooked a buyer, the commercially-driven discussions can begin.

As a real estate agent, negotiating a sale can be a stressful and tense time. It's up to you to handle any offers and counteroffers with the client. Your goal here is to get a property's price and terms agreed upon as quickly as possible without rushing either party.

You must also manage the sale so it doesn't become too time consuming for you. You can manage your time more efficiently through a CRM system.

For example, you can save time and [stay organized](#) by:

- Moving your potential buyer's deal from 'proposal made' to 'negotiations started'.
- Setting up reminders and notifications about following up with the potential buyers.
- Tracking when a potential buyer opens an email and if they've clicked on any links within it, helping you gauge

when to follow up.

In an ideal world, a potential buyer will simply agree to pay the asking price. However, if there are several buyers interested in your seller's property, you'll need to compare the offers for your seller.

Buyer offers will vary, but look out for the following:

- Whether they've agreed to pay the requested price
- If the potential buyer has passed financing pre-approvals
- What date they've requested as an occupancy date/closing date
- If the potential buyer has provided a list of items they wish to be handled before they agree to the deal (repairs, pest inspection, etc.)

Pro-tip: You can add these details to your potential buyer's profile in your CRM so they are easy to find and sort through.

Before you can consider a potential buyer as the right person to take over your seller's property, you need to make sure they're qualified.

Negotiation part 1: Qualify the potential buyer

There's a difference between being interested in buying a property and being qualified to do so.

Before moving along with a potential buyer, you must make sure they've got their pre-approval for a mortgage (don't confuse this with a [mortgage pre-qualification](#)). It's only during the pre-approval phase that a buyer's credit report, employment and income will be verified.

If a potential buyer has only come to the table with pre-approval paperwork, you should be wary of considering their offer with your seller. It'll be a much quicker sales process for you and your seller if you only consider buyers who've passed through the paperwork and they've been given the green light for their mortgage.

As realtors know, a pre-approval shows important information like the maximum loan amount a potential buyer is eligible to receive, term for financing and down payment amounts. You can keep on top of all of this paperwork by adding each piece to your CRM system. View your client's profile on your [mobile CRM](#) to easily refer back to these stats when negotiating with the seller on the road.

If they pass all the tests, move their offer on to your seller for consideration and change the label in your CRM system to remain organized.

Pro-tip: At this stage, you should update any promotion you're doing for the property (on your website, blog, etc.) to show people that it is "under offer".

Negotiation part 2: Accompany your seller to the appraisal

Next up will be the [home appraisal](#) of your seller's property, which you should always attend.

An appraiser won't know the property like you or your seller does, so it's crucial you are there to answer any questions they have.

Appraisals are one of the last hurdles for your seller to clear. It will have a big impact on the price of their property, so you need to be on hand to let the appraiser know about any updates or improvements that have been made by the seller that could influence the end price of the property.

Step 5. Close the sale

The final steps to closing your seller's property involve a final inspection, providing the buyer with the necessary paperwork and finally—taking the property off the market.

Now's the time to move the deal to the final stage in your [CRM](#). You can set up activities and goals to make sure nothing is missed. It's the final countdown and a CRM system helps you get across the finish line smoothly.

Part 1: Schedule a final inspection

A final inspection is the buyer's last chance to point out anything in the property they aren't happy with.

Real estate laws require that you (as the agent) and your client (the seller) provide the buyer with full-disclosure about anything that's faulty at the property. If your seller doesn't comply, they'll be liable for any defect, so make sure you keep the buyer in the loop.

Obviously, the time of a final inspection needs to be agreed by the seller and buyer. But the sooner the better to keep the sales process moving.

Either you or your seller must arrange for a qualified inspector to prepare a final inspection report. Make sure whoever organizes the inspector informs them that you'll be present. Let your seller and the buyer know that a typical final inspection can take up to four hours depending on the size of the property, so they'll need to clear their schedules.

Make sure you're there for this inspection as well, so you can navigate your seller and buyer through the process.

Don't think this is necessary?

It is.

There are instances where an inspector will say something about an element of the property (like the fireplace will need

to be replaced in the next 5 years) and your buyer may panic.

In their head, they might perceive this as “the fireplace needs to be replaced immediately, otherwise the property isn’t suitable.” By being present, you can deal with these concerns, keeping your buyer calm and on track to close the sale.

The property needs to be evaluated from top to bottom: from the rooms and features to the foundation and rooftop. Have the buyer check that the air conditioning and heating are working throughout the property, as well as all of the plumbing and electrical outlets (and any appliances that have been included in the sale).

Finally, the inspector will look at the property’s foundation, room, walls, windows and any other structural element of your buyer’s property.

The main aim of a final inspection is to give the buyer peace of mind that the property is in good condition. If all goes well, it should help to move them along their buying journey and make them more comfortable when you move on to the final negotiation after the inspection.

Part 2: Handle the final negotiation for your seller

It’s up to you as a realtor to handle the final negotiation for

your seller after the property inspection. Usually, the buyer will have their own agent that you'll be negotiating with, but you could be negotiating with the buyer directly.

Keep in mind that, sometimes, a final negotiation isn't always needed. If the information that's been given to the buyer has been accurate, and there were no surprises during the final inspection, it's likely they'll be happy to pay the original price.

If the buyer found areas of the property they weren't happy with, it'll be up to you to handle these negotiations. If this happens, the best way to get a deal made is to make a compromise.

Sometimes the seller may have to take a little less for the property than they were hoping for, but remind them it's a better solution than having the property sitting on the market for the foreseeable future.

Pro-tip: You and your seller can avoid a final negotiation by being as transparent as possible with buyers throughout the sales process.

Part 3: Sign the papers and hand over any necessary documents

The next part of the process: signing the [purchase agreement](#).

A foolproof purchase agreement will outline any payments and credits that are owed to your seller and any payments that are due from the buyer.

Make sure you include every cost in the purchase agreement. This includes transactions such as title and tax searches, adjustments (if they were necessary) and prepaid taxes.

The buyer's agent will draw up a formal contract, which the buyer will sign before sending it over to you and your seller. Take the time to explain everything to your seller and review it with them before they sign it on their end.

Once the purchase agreement has been signed by both parties, it's time to hand over the property documents to the new buyer. And there are a lot of them.

The best way to make this as painless as possible is to collect everything from your seller during the sales process and keep it on file.

You'll need:

- **The property deed**
- **Seller's insurance policy:** Typically, your seller will need to make sure the property is insured prior to the final closing of the property so the buyer is protected.
- **Any water, sewerage and property tax bills:** If your

seller's property is hooked up to municipal sewerage and water, you'll need to have proof that everything is paid up for the closing. This goes for property taxes, too. State or local transfer taxes are usually paid when the property title is handed over from the seller to the buyer.

- **Certificate of Title / Title Insurance Policy:** As a real estate agent, you should've checked titles and policies earlier in the process to ensure there are no surprises (refer back to the very first step in this guide). You must make sure any unpaid taxes, assessments or other issues are resolved by your seller before you hand these over to the buyer. The property's title insurance policy is for the buyer and covers them for potential losses that could result from property ownership disputes. Both the new buyer and their lender should get a copy of these.
- **Final utility readings:** Your seller needs to take final readings of any gas and electric meters in the property and give them to their service provider and the new buyer. This will make the move-in a lot easier for the new buyer as service providers will already know your seller is no longer responsible for utilities at the property.
- **Any service records or warranties:** Your seller should hand over any service records or warranties for any appliances or maintenance that's ever been done on the property. Any recommendations for a reliable plumber

or electrician is also a nice touch for the new buyer, especially if they're new to the area.

- **Plot and survey plans:** Finally, the buyer will need to get a copy of an up-to-date survey for the closing. If your seller has misplaced them, you should be able to get a copy from the town or city hall for a small fee.

Once all of the documents are handed over and all the paperwork is signed, the very last step for you as a realtor is to remove the property from the market. Take it down from the MLS, your website and any social media advertising you've been running for it.

The speed of the Real Estate Sales Process depends on you

The real estate sales process can be a long one. But the longer it lasts, the more time your seller will be out of pocket, and the more time your agency will have to spend on finding a buyer.

Ideally, you want to close a property sale as quickly as possible (without the seller feeling rushed).

Organizing the seller from the earliest stages of the sales process (staging their property and getting their documents in check) can make a massive difference in how quickly and swiftly the sale will go. [CRM systems](#) can also go a long way

in simplifying, organizing and automating your sales process.

Once you've hooked a potential buyer, the key to a smoother sale is to help both parties with any questions they have so you can stamp out any objections that could stall the sales process.

After all, 89% of people selling their home use a real estate agent, so getting a sale right can open up doors for your agency. Not only with current clients, but with homeowners who are looking for a competent agency to handle their next property sale.



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