**The Critical Role of the REALTOR® in the Real Estate Transaction**

**Why Was This List Prepared?**

Surveys show that many homeowners and homebuyers are not aware of the true value a REALTOR® provides during the course of a real estate transaction.

At the same time, regrettably, REALTOR® have generally assumed that the expertise, professional knowledge, and just plain hard work that go into bringing about a successful transaction were understood and appreciated.

Many of the most important services and steps are performed behind the scenes by either the Realtor® or the brokerage staff and traditionally have been viewed simply as part of their professional responsibilities to the client. But, without them, the transaction could be placed in jeopardy.

This publication seeks to close that gap.

Listed on the following pages are over 180 typical actions, research steps, processes, and review stages necessary for a successful residential real estate transaction and normally provided by a **full service** real estate brokerage and for which they are entitled to fair compensation.

**Comprehensiveness**

The list is by no means an attempt to set forth a complete list of services as these may vary within each brokerage and each market. Many REALTORS® routinely provide a wide variety of additional services that are as varied as the nature of each transaction.

By the same token, some transactions may not require some of these steps to be equally successful. However, most would agree that given the unexpected complications that can arise, it's far better to know about a step and make an intelligent, informed decision to skip it, than to not know the possibility even existed.

**The REALTOR® Commitment**

Through it all, the personal and professional commitment of the REALTOR® is to ensure that a seller and buyer are brought together in an agreement that provides each with a "win" that is fair and equitable.

The motivation is easy to understand. For most full-service brokerages, they receive no compensation unless and until the sale closes.

By contrast, there are firms that offer "limited services" with no representation in exchange for an up-front fee, or perhaps offer a menu of pay-as-you-go or "a la' carte" options. Some even offer a sliding scale ranging from limited to full service. In these cases, the compensation of the REALTOR® is based on reducing the levels of service they provide with the seller bearing full responsibility for all the other steps and procedures in the selling process. In short, the marketplace truism is that "you get what you pay for."

**A Variety of Choices**

The variety of brokerage business models in today's real estate industry affords the homeowner a greater range of options than ever before.

But no matter which option is chosen, before signing a Listing Agreement or otherwise engaging the services of a REALTOR® and agreeing to compensate them, homeowners should understand exactly what services will, or will not, be provided.

**Why Use A REALTOR®?**

Not every real estate agent or broker is a REALTOR®. That term and the familiar Block "R" logo are trademarked by the National Association of REALTOR® and can only be used by those are REALTOR® members through their local association of REALTORS®.

While all REALTORS® are state-issued licensees as agents or brokers, the major difference between a "real estate licensee" and a REALTOR® is that REALTORS® have taken an oath to subscribe to a stringent, enforceable Code of Ethics with Standards of Practice that promote the fair, ethical and honest treatment of all parties in a transaction. Non-member licensees have taken no such oath and are not morally bound to the ethical practices and principles set for in the REALTOR® Code.

For that extra measure of peace of mind, ensure the individual seeking to represent you is both a real estate licensee and a REALTOR®. Visit the Association of REALTORS® website in your area, for a searchable list of our REALTOR® members.

**The Critical Role of the REALTOR®**

Listed here are over 180 typical actions, research steps, procedures, processes and review stages in a successful residential real estate transaction that are normally provided by **full service** real estate brokerages in return for their sales commission. Depending on the transaction, some may take minutes, hours, or even days to complete, while some may not be needed.

More importantly, they reflect the level of skill, knowledge and attention to detail required in today's real estate transaction, underscoring the importance of having help and guidance from someone who fully understands the process — a REALTOR®.

And never forget that REALTORS® are pledged to uphold the stringent, enforceable tenets of the REALTOR® Code of Ethics in their professional dealings with the public. Not every real estate licensee holds REALTOR® membership. Make sure yours does!

**Pre-Listing Activities**

1 Make appointment with seller for listing presentation

2 Send seller a written or e-mail confirmation of listing appointment and call to confirm

3 Review pre-appointment questions

4 Research all comparable currently listed properties

5 Research sales activity for past 18 months from MLS and public records databases

6 Research "Average Days on Market" for this property of this type, price range and location

7 Download and review property tax roll information

8 Prepare "Comparable Market Analysis" (CMA) to establish fair market value

9 Obtain copy of subdivision plat/complex lay-out

10 Research property's ownership & deed type

11 Research property's public record information for lot size & dimensions

12 Research and verify legal description

13 Research property's land use coding and deed restrictions

14 Research property's current use and zoning

15 Verify legal names of owner(s) in county's public property records

16 Prepare listing presentation package with above materials

17 Perform exterior "Curb Appeal Assessment" of subject property

18 Compile and assemble formal file on property

19 Confirm current public schools and explain impact of schools on market value

20 Review listing appointment checklist to ensure all steps and actions have been completed

**Listing Appointment Presentation**

21 Give seller an overview of current market conditions and projections

22 Review agent's and company's credentials and accomplishments in the market

23 Present company's profile and position or "niche" in the marketplace

24 Present CMA Results To Seller, including Comparables, Solds, Current Listings & Expireds

25 Offer pricing strategy based on professional judgment and interpretation of current market conditions

26 Discuss Goals With Seller To Market Effectively

27 Explain market power and benefits of Multiple Listing Service

28 Explain market power of web marketing, IDX and REALTOR.com

29 Explain the work the brokerage and agent do "behind the scenes" and agent's availability on weekends

30 Explain agent's role in taking calls to screen for qualified buyers and protect seller from curiosity seekers

31 Present and discuss strategic master marketing plan

32 Explain different agency relationships and determine seller's preference

33 Review and explain all clauses in Listing Contract & Addendum and obtain seller's signature

**Once Property is Under Listing Agreement**

34 Review current title information

35 Measure overall and heated square footage

36 Measure interior room sizes

37 Confirm lot size via owner's copy of certified survey, if available

38 Note any and all unrecorded property lines, agreements, easements

39 Obtain house plans, if applicable and available

40 Review house plans and make copy

41 Order plat map for retention in property's listing file

42 Prepare showing instructions for buyers' agents and agree on showing time window with seller

43 Obtain current mortgage loan(s) information: companies and & loan account numbers

44 Verify current loan information with lender(s)

45 Check assumability of loan(s) and any special requirements

46 Discuss possible buyer financing alternatives and options with seller

47 Review current appraisal if available

48 Identify Home Owner Association manager if applicable

49 Verify Home Owner Association Fees with manager - mandatory or optional and current annual fee

50 Order copy of Homeowner Association bylaws, if applicable

51 Research electricity availability and supplier's name and phone number

52 Calculate average utility usage from last 12 months of bills

53 Research and verify city sewer/septic tank system

54 Water System: Calculate average water fees or rates from last 12 months of bills

55 Well Water: Confirm well status, depth and output from Well Report

56 Natural Gas: Research/verify availability and supplier's name and phone number

57 Verify security system, current term of service and whether owned or leased

58 Verify if seller has transferable Termite Bond

59 Ascertain need for lead-based paint disclosure

60 Prepare detailed list of property amenities and assess market impact

61 Prepare detailed list of property's "Inclusions & Conveyances with Sale"

62 Compile list of completed repairs and maintenance items

63 Send "Vacancy Checklist" to seller if property is vacant

64 Explain benefits of Home Owner Warranty to seller

65 Assist sellers with completion and submission of Home Owner Warranty Application

66 When received, place Home Owner Warranty in property file for conveyance at time of sale

67 Have extra key made for lockbox

68 Verify if property has rental units involved. And if so:

69 Make copies of all leases for retention in listing file

70 Verify all rents & deposits

71 Inform tenants of listing and discuss how showings will be handled

72 Arrange for installation of yard sign

73 Assist seller with completion of Seller's Disclosure form

74 "New Listing Checklist" Completed

75 Review results of Curb Appeal Assessment with seller and provide suggestions to improve salability

76 Review results of Interior Décor Assessment and suggest changes to shorten time on market

77 Load listing into transaction management software program

**Entering Property in Multiple Listing Service Database**

78 Prepare MLS Profile Sheet -- Agents is responsible for "quality control" and accuracy of listing data

79 Enter property data from Profile Sheet into MLS Listing Database

80 Proofread MLS database listing for accuracy - including proper placement in mapping function

81 Add property to company's Active Listings list

82 Provide seller with signed copies of Listing Agreement and MLS Profile Sheet Data Forms

83 Take additional photos for upload into MLS and use in flyers. Discuss panoramic photography

**Marketing The Listing**

84 Create print and Internet ads with seller's input

85 Coordinate showings with owners, tenants, and other Realtors®. Return all calls - weekends included

86 Install electronic lockbox if authorized by owner. Program with agreed-upon showing time windows

87 Prepare mailing and contact list

88 Generate mail-merge letters to contact list

89 Order "Just Listed" labels & reports

90 Prepare flyers & feedback faxes

91 Review comparable MLS listings regularly to ensure property remains competitive in price, terms, conditions and availability

92 Prepare property marketing brochure for seller's review

93 Arrange for printing or copying of supply of marketing brochures or fliers

94 Place marketing brochures in all company agent mail boxes

95 Upload listing to company and agent Internet site, if applicable

96 Mail Out "Just Listed" notice to all neighborhood residents

97 Advise Network Referral Program of listing

98 Provide marketing data to buyers coming through international relocation networks

99 Provide marketing data to buyers coming from referral network

100 Provide "Special Feature" cards for marketing, if applicable

101 Submit ads to company's participating Internet real estate sites

102 Price changes conveyed promptly to all Internet groups

103 Reprint/supply brochures promptly as needed

104 Loan information reviewed and updated in MLS as required

105 Feedback e-mails/faxes sent to buyers' agents after showings

106 Review weekly Market Study

107 Discuss feedback from showing agents with seller to determine if changes will accelerate the sale

108 Place regular weekly update calls to seller to discuss marketing & pricing

109 Promptly enter price changes in MLS listing database

**The Offer and Contract**

109 Receive and review all Offer to Purchase contracts submitted by buyers or buyers' agents.

110 Evaluate offer(s) and prepare a "net sheet" on each for the owner for comparison purposes

111 Counsel seller on offers. Explain merits and weakness of each component of each offer

112 Contact buyers' agents to review buyer's qualifications and discuss offer

113 Fax/deliver Seller's Disclosure to buyer's agent or buyer upon request and prior to offer if possible

114 Confirm buyer is pre-qualified by calling Loan Officer

115 Obtain pre-qualification letter on buyer from Loan Officer

116 Negotiate all offers on seller's behalf, setting time limit for loan approval and closing date

117 Prepare and convey any counteroffers, acceptance or amendments to buyer's agent

118 Fax copies of contract and all addendums to closing attorney or title company

119 When Offer to Purchase Contract is accepted and signed by seller, deliver to buyer's agent

120 Record and promptly deposit buyer's earnest money in escrow account.

121 Disseminate "Under-Contract Showing Restrictions" as seller requests

122 Deliver copies of fully signed Offer to Purchase contract to seller

123 Fax/deliver copies of Offer to Purchase contract to Selling Agent

124 Fax copies of Offer to Purchase contract to lender

125 Provide copies of signed Offer to Purchase contract for office file

126 Advise seller in handling additional offers to purchase submitted between contract and closing

127 Change status in MLS to "Sale Pending"

128 Update transaction management program to show "Sale Pending"

129 Review buyer's credit report results -- Advise seller of worst and best case scenarios

130 Provide credit report information to seller if property will be seller-financed

131 Assist buyer with obtaining financing, if applicable and follow-up as necessary

132 Coordinate with lender on Discount Points being locked in with dates

133 Deliver unrecorded property information to buyer

134 Order septic system inspection, if applicable

135 Receive and review septic system report and assess any possible impact on sale

136 Deliver copy of septic system inspection report lender & buyer

137 Deliver Well Flow Test Report copies to lender & buyer and property listing file

138 Verify termite inspection ordered

139 Verify mold inspection ordered, if required

**Tracking the Loan Process**

140 Confirm Verifications Of Deposit & Buyer's Employment Have Been Returned

141 Follow Loan Processing Through To The Underwriter

142 Add lender and other vendors to transaction management program so agents, buyer and seller can track progress of sale

143 Contact lender weekly to ensure processing is on track

144 Relay final approval of buyer's loan application to seller

**Home Inspection**

145 Coordinate buyer's professional home inspection with seller

146 Review home inspector's report

147 Enter completion into transaction management tracking software program

148 Explain seller's responsibilities with respect to loan limits and interpret any clauses in the contract

149 Ensure seller's compliance with Home Inspection Clause requirements

150 Recommend or assist seller with identifying and negotiating with trustworthy contractors to perform any required repairs

151 Negotiate payment and oversee completion of all required repairs on seller's behalf, if needed

**The Appraisal**

152 Schedule Appraisal

153 Provide comparable sales used in market pricing to Appraiser

154 Follow-Up On Appraisal

155 Enter completion into transaction management program

156 Assist seller in questioning appraisal report if it seems too low

**Closing Preparations and Duties**

157 Contract Is Signed By All Parties

158 Coordinate closing process with buyer's agent and lender

159 Update closing forms & files

160 Ensure all parties have all forms and information needed to close the sale

161 Select location where closing will be held

162 Confirm closing date and time and notify all parties

163 Assist in solving any title problems (boundary disputes, easements, etc) or in obtaining Death Certificates

164 Work with buyer's agent in scheduling and conducting buyer's Final Walk-Thru prior to closing

165 Research all tax, HOA, utility and other applicable prorations

166 Request final closing figures from closing agent (attorney or title company)

167 Receive & carefully review closing figures to ensure accuracy of preparation

168 Forward verified closing figures to buyer's agent

169 Request copy of closing documents from closing agent

170 Confirm buyer and buyer's agent have received title insurance commitment

171 Provide "Home Owners Warranty" for availability at closing

172 Review all closing documents carefully for errors

173 Forward closing documents to absentee seller as requested

174 Review documents with closing agent (attorney)

175 Provide earnest money deposit check from escrow account to closing agent

176 Coordinate this closing with seller's next purchase and resolve any timing problems

177 Have a "no surprises" closing so that seller receives a net proceeds check at closing

178 Refer sellers to one of the best agents at their destination, if applicable

179 Change MLS status to Sold. Enter sale data, price, selling broker & agent's ID numbers, etc.

180 Close out listing in transaction management program

**Follow Up After Closing**

181 Answer questions about filing claims with Home Owner Warranty company if requested

182 Attempt to clarify and resolve any conflicts about repairs if buyer is not satisfied

183 Respond to any follow-on calls and provide any additional information required from office files.