**Don't Go It Alone: Use a Pro to Sell Your Home**

When the time comes to sell your home, you must decide whether to seek assistance from a real estate professional or attempt to sell it yourself. Take a tip from the Texas Association of REALTORS® : You can save yourself a lot of time and trouble by listing your home with a broker.

People who try to sell their own homes are denying themselves the benefit of a real estate professional who is trained to sell real estate on the terms most advantageous to the party he or she represents. In fact, studies show that very few homeowners who attempt to sell their homes by themselves end up doing so without the help of a real estate professionals and, of those who do, 50% say they would never attempt it again because of all the hassles they went through.

These guidelines can help you find a broker to meet your home-selling needs:

* Choose your agent with care, as you would a lawyer or doctor. Talk with friends, neighbors and co-workers who have recently bought or sold a home in the area. What kind of service did they receive? Would they select the same broker or company again?
* Attend an open house to observe sales associates in action and judge their expertise. Were you shown the home in a professional manner? How familiar were the sales associates with the property?
* Focus on real estate companies that specialize in residential sales. Look for posted "sold" signs. A company with a successful track record warrants consideration.
* Target companies located in your community. They are more likely to be familiar with the area schools, businesses and places of worship precisely the type of information that prospective buyers will want.
* Once you have narrowed your selection of potential listing companies to five or less, contact each for an interview. Look for the sales professional who takes copious notes on decorating, construction, landscaping and any personal property to convey with your home.

The following questions may be helpful in selecting a broker:

* Do you work full time as a real estate professional?
* How will you work to actively seek buyers for my home?
* Will you participate in a multiple listing service (MLS)?
* Are you a member of the Texas Association of REALTORS® ?
* What professional course or training session have you recently attended?

"Any good real estate broker keeps the clients' interests in mind at all times, provides frequent status reports, and has a clear understanding of the housing market and financing terms," said Louise Hull, 2000 chairman of the Texas Association of REALTORS® . "To maximize exposure and minimize problems, enlist the services of a broker. Your peace of mind and a great deal of money are at stake. With professional assistance, the home-selling process can be made much easier."