LISTING AGENT BEST PRACTICES

A guide to delivering exceptional results for your sellers — from the first CMA to closing day.

Epique Realty — Washington State

1. Running a Thorough Market Analysis

Most agents pull a quick handful of comps and call it a day. Great agents go deeper. When preparing a CMA, cast a wide net — don't pre-filter too aggressively. You want more data, not less, so you can truly educate the seller and let the market tell the story.

Look at All Four Categories Over the Last 6 Months

- **Solds —** The backbone of the analysis. What actually closed, at what price, and how long did it take?
- **Pendings —** The current market pulse. They haven't closed yet but buyers voted with offers. Note the list price and days on market before going under contract.
- **Actives —** Your competition. What is the seller competing against right now? Price and condition relative to those homes matters.
- **Failed / Expired / Withdrawn —** What most agents skip entirely — and they shouldn't. These tell you where the market said no. What price points sat? What conditions didn't sell? This is some of your most powerful data for the pricing conversation.

Things Most Agents Miss

- Agents often ignore expired listings, but they're gold. They show the seller exactly where overpricing leads. If a home sat at $X and failed, that's a real data point.
- **Price reduction history on actives —** Don't just look at where a home is priced today — look at where it started. A home that's been reduced twice is signaling something.
- **Days on market trends —** Is DOM shrinking or growing over the 6-month window? That tells you if the market is heating up or cooling and affects how you counsel urgency.
- **List-to-sale price ratio —** Are homes selling at, above, or below list? And is that ratio changing over the period? This sets expectations before you even talk about offers.
- **Condition and update tiers —** Don't just compare square footage and beds/baths. Separate the comps into updated vs. original condition. Sellers need to understand what their tier of the market is doing, not just the neighborhood average.
- **Location micro-factors —** Backs to a busy road, backs to open space, corner lot, proximity to schools — these affect value and most agents just average them away.
- **Seasonal context —** Where are we in the year? A comp from January in a market that peaks in spring needs context.

2. Presenting the CMA to Your Seller

Having the data is only half the job. Translating it into something the seller can actually feel and understand is where great agents separate themselves.

Bring the Links — Show Your Work

Don't just hand them a spreadsheet. Pull up the actual listings. Let them see the photos of the homes you're comparing theirs to. When a seller can see the comp — the kitchen, the yard, the condition — they stop arguing with the number. They come to their own conclusion. That's far more powerful than you simply telling them.

Break It Down to Price Per Square Foot — But Explain Its Limits

Price per square foot is a great equalizer across similar homes. It makes the data digestible. But great agents also explain when it breaks down — a 1,200 sq ft home and a 2,400 sq ft home in the same neighborhood will have very different per-square-foot values. Smaller homes often sell at a higher price per square foot. Make sure the seller understands why so they aren't comparing apples to oranges.

Account for Every Feature Difference

This is where most agents get lazy. Make the adjustments visible:

- A half bath can add meaningful value depending on the price point and buyer pool — explain what the data shows, not just what you think.
- An extra garage bay, a shop, a finished basement — break these out individually so the seller understands what the market is actually paying for each feature.
- If you can find a comp that sold with a shop and one without, show both. Let the market speak.

Land Value — Make It Tangible

This is one of the most commonly mishandled parts of rural and semi-rural listings. Sellers assume more acres = proportionally more value. It rarely works that way.

- There's often a sweet spot acreage for the area. Going from 7 to 10 acres may add less value than the seller expects because the buyer pool shrinks.
- Usable vs. unusable land matters enormously — flat, fenced, irrigated acres are not the same as steep, wooded, or wetland acres.
- Find comps at different acreage tiers and show the actual price difference. "The market paid roughly $X more for the jump from 5 to 10 acres — not $X per acre multiplied out."
- Help them understand who buys 10 acres vs. 7 acres. Is it a different buyer? A smaller pool? That affects days on market too, not just price.

> *The goal of the presentation is seller understanding, not just seller agreement. A seller who truly understands the market will make better decisions throughout the entire transaction.*

3. Helping the Seller Prep the Home

The best agents find the language that makes the seller feel like they're winning, not being criticized. Say too little and you leave money on the table. Come in too strong and you damage the relationship.

Set the Mindset Shift Early

Before you start pointing at things, reframe the entire conversation:

> *"What we're going to do today is start thinking about this home the way a buyer sees it — not the way you live in it. These are two completely different things, and that's actually good news because most of what we're going to talk about costs nothing."*

This depersonalizes the feedback before you give it and sets the seller up as a partner rather than someone being judged.

The Counter Conversation

Counters are where sellers feel the most resistance. Help them see it differently:

> *"Buyers are subconsciously measuring counter space the moment they walk in. Every item on the counter makes the kitchen feel smaller — even in a big kitchen."*

A practical line that works well: "If it's not decorative or absolutely necessary, box it. You're moving anyway — this is just packing early."

That last line is key. Packing early reframes decluttering as progress, not sacrifice.

Talking Through Personal Items Without Making It Personal

> *"Buyers need to be able to picture themselves here. When they see your family everywhere, they're a guest in your home. Less of you actually helps them fall in love with it faster."*

Walking the Home — The Doorway Test

Stand in the doorway of every room and look at it like a photo. That's exactly how buyers will see it online first. If the first thing your eye goes to is clutter, a dark corner, or furniture that blocks the room — that's what needs to move.

- When suggesting moving furniture, anchor to what you're trying to show: "I want buyers to see that fireplace — let's clear a path to it visually."
- Too much furniture makes rooms feel small. Be willing to have that conversation.

The Buyer's Eye Walkthrough

Walk through the home the way a buyer would — starting from the curb, through the front door, room by room. Narrate what you're seeing out loud. Sellers hear it differently when you're describing the experience rather than handing them a list.

Give Them a Tiered Priority List

- Must do before photos — high-impact, no-cost. Declutter, clean, clear surfaces, move excess furniture.
- Should do if possible — small repairs, fresh paint in key rooms, curb appeal basics.
- Nice to have — bigger items that may or may not pencil out depending on price point.

> *"Every distraction, every repair buyers notice, every room that feels smaller than it is — they're doing math in their head on what they'll offer. Our job is to stop that math before it starts."*

4. Professional Photography Day

Photography is the first showing. Every buyer will see your listing photos before they ever step foot in the home. Treat photo day like the most important appointment of the listing.

Get There Early — Minimum 30 Minutes Before the Photographer

Not five minutes early. Not right when they arrive. Thirty minutes at minimum. If you have any sense that the seller might need extra help getting things together, get there earlier. Trust that instinct. Showing up early is one of the simplest ways to protect the quality of the listing and show the seller you're fully invested.

Bring a Laundry Basket

This is one of those small things that separates prepared agents from everyone else. No matter how well the seller prepped, there will be last-minute clutter — a remote on the coffee table, mail on the counter, shoes by the door, a dog bowl in the kitchen. Toss it all in the laundry basket, get it out of the shot, and put it back once the photographer is done. Simple, fast, and it saves the shoot.

Do a Room-by-Room Sweep Before the Photographer Starts

- Blinds up in every room — natural light is everything in real estate photos. Go through the entire home before the photographer touches their camera.
- Every light on — all of them. Lamps, overhead lights, under-cabinet lights, closet lights if they're being shot.
- TVs off — a black TV screen in a photo looks like a dark void and draws the eye in the worst way.
- Hide cords — TV cords, phone chargers, power strips. They show up clearly in photos and cheapen the look of an otherwise nice room.
- Ceiling fans off — a spinning fan blurs in photos and even a still fan can look awkward depending on the angle.

Learn From the Photographer — Don't Just Hire Them

A great real estate photographer has been in hundreds — sometimes thousands — of homes. They've seen every mistake and every missed opportunity. That's an education most agents never tap into.

Call them before the shoot and ask if they're willing to teach you. Most great photographers are happy to walk a newer agent through the process if you simply ask. You will learn more from one shoot with a great photographer than from any class, any book, or any advice from another agent.

Pay attention to: how they assess natural light, why they stand where they stand, what they ask you to move and why, and how they handle difficult spaces. Build that relationship. A photographer who trusts you will go the extra mile every time.

The First 5 Photos Are Everything

When your listing syndicates to the major portals — Zillow, Realtor.com, Redfin — and when it gets shared on social media, buyers see the first 5 photos before they see anything else.

- Lead with your strongest interior shot if the interior is the story — a stunning kitchen, a dramatic great room, a view from inside looking out.
- Don't burn all five on exterior shots. One great exterior is important, but five outside angles give a buyer scrolling on their phone no reason to stop and click.
- Ask yourself: if a buyer only saw these five photos, would they want to see more? If the answer isn't a clear yes, reorder them.

> *The goal of the photos isn't to document the home — it's to make someone pick up the phone.*

5. The Day the Home Goes Live

Double Check Everything in the MLS — Then Get a Second Set of Eyes

You've been staring at this listing for days. You will miss things. Have someone else read through the entire listing before it goes live. Check every field: square footage, lot size, bedroom and bathroom count, year built, garage spaces, school districts. One wrong number can create problems with buyers, appraisers, and even legally.

Make the Listing Agent Remarks Clear and Complete

Everything another agent needs to know should be clearly spelled out in the remarks. No guessing, no calling required. Agents who make other agents work for basic information lose showings.

Load All Associated Documents Before Going Live

Disclosures, HOA documents, well and septic records, surveys, permits — anything a buyer or their agent might need should already be attached. Agents who have everything ready signal to the other side that this is a well-run listing.

The Lockbox — Don't Overlook This

- Make sure it's easy to find. Note the location clearly in the MLS remarks if it's not obvious.
- Test the key before the listing goes live. Try it on every door it's supposed to open. A key that sticks or doesn't work will frustrate showing agents — and in some cases cause them to skip the home entirely.
- If the home has a gate, outbuilding, or shop buyers will want to access, make sure access is figured out and clearly communicated.

Set and Confirm All Showing Terms With the Seller

Before the listing goes live, lock in the showing instructions — confirmed vs. go-and-show, notice required, time windows, pets that need to be secured. Then double check that nothing has changed since you last talked. A quick call the morning of launch can save a lot of awkward last-minute conflicts.

Booties — Have Them at the Home if the Seller Wants Them

If the seller doesn't want shoes worn in the home, make that easy for showing agents. Have booties available at the entry and note it in the MLS remarks. Don't just say "no shoes" without a solution.

6. Showings and Feedback

Set Clear Expectations Before the First Showing

This is a conversation to have at the listing appointment or before the home goes live — not after a seller has been waiting by the phone for three hours. Help them understand how the process actually works: buyer's agents don't always respond right away. If your seller expects a call the moment a showing ends, they're going to be anxious and frustrated.

Set a clear and consistent communication rhythm up front. Two approaches that work well:

- Call them the day after each showing once you've had a chance to reach the buyer's agent and gather real feedback.
- Set a standing call twice a week — same day, same time — where you go over all feedback received along with a full marketing update.

What matters is that the seller knows exactly when to expect to hear from you.

Call Agents for Feedback — Don't Just Send a Text

Your first move should be a phone call, not a text or an automated feedback request.

- You will learn more from a two-minute phone call than from anything a buyer's agent types into a feedback form. Tone, hesitation, what they volunteer without being asked — that's the real information.
- Agents are more candid on the phone. They'll tell you the buyer thought the price was too high or that they're writing on something else — things they'd never put in writing.
- Every call is a relationship. The agent you call today for feedback is the agent writing an offer on one of your listings next year. Real estate is a relationship business at every level, and agents who treat their peers well build a reputation that pays them back for years.

Bring the Feedback Full Circle With Your Seller

When you connect with your seller, don't just relay the feedback — help them interpret it. One comment about price is noise. Three comments about price is the market talking. Use the standing calls to also review marketing results: online views, showing volume trends, how activity compares to the first week.

7. Once an Offer Is Received

Step One — Read the Room: Are More Offers Coming?

Before you do anything else, assess the situation. How long has the home been on the market? How many showings have happened? Are agents calling with questions that signal strong buyer interest? If you just went live and activity has been heavy, one offer often means more are coming. A short acceptance deadline written into an offer is a buyer tactic — acknowledge it, but don't be controlled by it.

Before Accepting Any Offer — The Conversation Most Agents Skip

Call the buyer's agent and ask them plainly:

> *"Is there anything your buyers noticed during the showing that they're planning to bring up during the inspection period?"*

This simple question that most agents never ask can change everything. Buyers sometimes make a conscious decision to wait until the home is under contract before raising issues — because they know their leverage changes the moment the seller accepts.

Before an offer is accepted, the seller holds the leverage. The moment an offer is accepted, that shifts. A home that falls out of escrow carries a stigma that is hard to shake. Knowing this, why would you ever accept an offer without first finding out if there's a known issue waiting to surface?

Multiple Offer Strategies — Walk Your Seller Through Each One

- Highest and best — notify all buyers that multiple offers exist and ask everyone to submit their strongest offer by a set deadline. Clean and competitive, but some buyers will walk rather than engage.
- Escalation clauses — buyers agree to outbid competing offers up to a cap. Can drive price up effectively but adds complexity. Decide in advance whether you'll accept them.
- Sharing the current highest offer — can motivate other buyers to come in stronger but raises ethical and strategic questions. Be consistent with all parties.
- Negotiating with one buyer — sometimes the right move is to work with the strongest offer rather than opening it up.

> *If you're not sure which strategy fits — call your area leader, team leader, mentor, or broker. Multiple offer situations can have legal and ethical dimensions. The best agents know when to ask for guidance.*

Always Notify Agents Before Rejecting Their Offer

This is non-negotiable and it matters for two reasons. First, it's respectful — a buyer and their agent spent real time and energy on that offer. Second, it gives them one last chance to improve it:

> *"I want to let you know before we move forward that your offer is not in the position to be accepted at this time."*

That one moment of communication has turned a losing offer into a winning one more than once. Don't skip it.

8. Breaking Down the Offer

Understand What Your Seller Will and Won't Hear on That First Call

When you call your seller with an offer, the only two things that will register in that first moment are the price and the closing date. Everything else will blur. Don't try to walk them through every detail over the phone. Acknowledge the price, let them feel the moment — then tell them you're sending a full written breakdown and will go through it together before any decisions are made.

Write Out Every Term of the Offer Clearly

Translate the purchase agreement into plain language. Make sure nothing gets lost:

- Purchase price and closing date
- Earnest money amount and what happens to it if the deal falls apart
- Financing terms — loan type, down payment, financing contingency deadlines
- Inspection contingency — what the buyer is asking for and the timeline
- Personal property included — washer, dryer, refrigerator, riding mower, anything called out
- Seller concessions — is the buyer asking you to pay any of their closing costs?
- Any other requests — septic cleanout, repairs, home warranty, survey

A seller who doesn't realize they agreed to leave the washer and dryer or pay for a septic cleanout is a seller who feels blindsided at closing. That's on the agent, not the contract.

Get the Seller a Netsheet Before They Sign Anything

The price on top of the offer is not what the seller walks away with. They need to see the real number before they respond. The netsheet should account for: agent commissions, seller paid closing costs, estimated title and escrow fees, prorated property taxes, any liens or payoffs, and credits or concessions being offered.

Call the Lender — Don't Skip This Step

If the buyer is getting a loan, call the lender directly before your seller makes any decisions. A pre-approval letter can mean very different things depending on how much work the lender has actually done. Ask directly:

- Have you verified employment — pay stubs, employer confirmation?
- Have you pulled and reviewed tax records?
- Have you reviewed bank statements and confirmed the source of down payment funds?
- Or have you only run their social security number and pulled credit?

A pre-approval based only on a credit pull and the buyer's word is not a pre-approval in any meaningful sense. That one phone call can tell you everything — and may change how your seller responds to the offer.

9. When the Buyer Has a Home to Sell

Not all home sale contingencies are created equal. If you're looking at an offer where the buyer hasn't even listed their home yet, that's an unknown variable sitting between your seller and their closing. This is your moment to do the work most agents won't.

Find Out Everything You Can About the Buyer's Home

If the buyer's home is in your area:

- Ask if you can walk through it. You need to see the condition, updates, and layout — everything that affects how quickly it will sell and at what price.
- Find out how ready they are to list. Have photos been taken? Is there an agent engaged?
- Run your own comps on their home independently. Don't rely on what the buyer's agent tells you. You need to know whether the timeline is realistic.

Negotiate Smarter Terms in the Acceptance

- Negotiate a maximum list price. Include language that caps what the buyer can list their home at. This prevents them from listing at an unrealistic price and burning through your seller's timeline with no real chance of selling.
- Set a clear timeline. In most markets, 30 days is a reasonable and sufficient window for a properly priced home. Longer for a highly unique or luxury property — use your market knowledge to counsel your seller.
- Include a kick-out clause. This allows your seller to continue showing the home. If another offer comes in, the contingent buyer has a set window — typically 24 to 72 hours — to either remove their contingency or step aside.

If the Buyer's Home Is Out of Your Area

You may not be able to walk through the home, but you don't go in blind:

- Pull everything you can from public portals — Zillow, Redfin, Realtor.com. Look at the home's history, estimated value ranges, and how the surrounding market has been performing.
- Use RPR (Realtors Property Resource) to get a richer picture than public portals alone.
- Call the agent who will be listing the buyer's home. Ask directly: how ready is this home to list? What are you expecting to price it at? How does inventory look in that price range? What you learn in that conversation will tell you a lot about how seriously to take this contingency.

10. Using a Pre-Inspection to Protect Your Seller

If You've Had the Home Pre-Inspected, Use It Strategically

Having the report is not enough. Build language directly into your counter that:

- Confirms the buyer has received a copy of the pre-inspection report.
- States that no repair requests will be made during the inspection period for any items already documented in that report.

The buyer has full transparency — they know exactly what the home's condition is going in. In exchange, the seller is protected from being renegotiated on items that were already disclosed. No surprises, no ambush repairs.

> *Without that language in the counter, a pre-inspection report is just a document. With it, it becomes a shield.*

11. Once an Offer Is Accepted — The First 24 Hours

Get Everyone on the Same Page Immediately

The moment an offer is accepted, send a coordinating email to all parties:

- WADOCS@EpiqueRealty.com
- Your Epique TC
- The buyer's agent and the buyer's broker
- The lender
- The closer

If there were multiple counters and the final terms evolved through negotiation, spell out the key details clearly — final purchase price, down payment, seller concessions, closing date, and any other financially material terms. Keep it to what matters for each party's role. Your TC will handle uploading the contract.

Write Out the Next Steps for Your Seller — Right Away

Once the offer is accepted, your seller enters one of the most anxious stretches of the process. There was a rush of activity — showings, offers, negotiations — and then suddenly everything goes quiet while inspections and appraisals are being ordered. Send them a clear written summary of:

- The inspection timeline and when to expect it to be scheduled
- The appraisal timeline if applicable
- Any deadlines the buyer has for contingency removal
- When you will be checking in and what they should expect to hear from you

> *A seller who knows what's coming and when — the quiet feels manageable. A seller who doesn't — every day of silence becomes a reason to worry.*

Prepare Your Seller for Inspection Day

- They need to be fully out of the home for several hours — not just out of the way.
- You will not be attending the inspection. The inspection is the buyer's time with the inspector. Your presence can make buyers feel watched and inhibit the process.
- Find out in advance whether the buyer's agent plans to attend so your seller isn't surprised.
- Make sure all areas are accessible — attic, crawlspace, electrical panel, outbuildings, shop.

Navigating Inspection Requests

If the buyer has submitted a reasonable short list of legitimate items, help your seller understand what's being asked. If they need licensed professionals for any items, offer to help them find someone to interview — but do it the right way:

> *Do not put yourself in a position where the seller feels they had to use your person. A significant number of agent-related small claims cases stem from an agent recommending a contractor who then failed to perform. Offer options, not a single recommendation. Keep that decision clearly in the seller's hands.*

If the buyer has submitted a laundry list, meet with your seller in person. Go through it item by item and help them separate legitimate safety or material issues from minor nice-to-haves and unreasonable requests.

Before You Respond — Call the Buyer's Agent

Get on the phone and find out what's actually driving the list:

> *"Are there any items on this list that are deal breakers for your buyer, or are these things they'd like addressed if possible?"*

Buyers sometimes ask for everything hoping to get some of it. Other times there are one or two items they feel strongly about and the rest is negotiable. Knowing the difference completely changes how you counsel your seller.

Be Careful With Open-Ended Repair Requests

Some inspection requests sound simple on the surface but open the door to a much bigger and more expensive conversation. The HVAC service example is the most common trap:

When an HVAC technician comes out to service the system, they will often identify additional items — a capacitor that's aging, a refrigerant level that's slightly low. Some are legitimate. Many are not urgent. But once a technician's report exists, the buyer's agent will frequently come back asking that all of it be addressed. What started as a simple service call has become an unplanned repair negotiation.

The fix is in the language of your response. Instead of "seller agrees to service HVAC," write:

> *"Seller agrees to have the HVAC system serviced by a licensed HVAC technician prior to closing. Service shall consist of a standard maintenance service only. Seller is not obligated to make any additional repairs or replacements beyond the service itself, including any items noted as recommended but not required in the technician's report."*

Apply this same thinking to any open-ended request — roofs, plumbing, pest treatment. Any time a request has room for interpretation, add language that removes that room.

12. After Inspection — The Lender and Appraisal

Call the Lender the Moment Inspection Is Resolved

This is a step most agents skip because they assume the transaction is just moving forward on its own. Lenders intentionally wait until inspection is resolved before ordering the appraisal — this protects the buyer from paying for an appraisal on a transaction that could still fall apart. If no one tells the lender the inspection has been resolved, the appraisal doesn't get ordered and your closing timeline quietly starts to slip.

Ask the lender directly:

- Has the appraisal been ordered, or does the lender need confirmation that inspection is resolved to move forward?
- Has the buyer turned in all required documents?
- Is the file through processing, or are there conditions that haven't been satisfied?
- Are there any known hiccups that could affect the timeline?
- Based on where things stand right now, should the seller expect an on-time closing?

Managing the Appraisal Timeline

Appraisals typically take a week or more to come back. When the appraiser calls to schedule their visit, ask them directly about their estimated turnaround time. This matters because:

> *Federal law requires that buyers have a minimum of 3 business days to review their Closing Disclosure before they are permitted to sign closing documents. This is one of the most common — and most avoidable — closing delays in real estate transactions.*

The sequence: appraisal comes in → lender finalizes the loan → Closing Disclosure is issued → mandatory 3-day review period begins. If the appraisal comes back later than expected, there may not be enough time before the scheduled closing date. Knowing the appraiser's turnaround lets you do the math and flag a potential delay before it becomes a surprise.

Preparing for the Appraisal

The seller should not be home during the appraisal. Let them know whether you will be there to let the appraiser in or whether the appraiser will use the lockbox. If you plan to be there, have a brief package ready: recent comps supporting the value, a list of updates with approximate costs and dates, and any features that might not be immediately obvious.

Common Appraisal Issues to Address Proactively

Walk the home before the appraiser arrives and address any of the following:

- Water heater straps — required in seismic zones including most of Washington State. Simple and inexpensive to fix before the appraisal.
- Smoke detectors — required on every level and inside or immediately outside every sleeping area. Test each one.
- Carbon monoxide detectors — required in any home with gas appliances, an attached garage, or a fireplace.
- GFCI outlets — required in kitchens, bathrooms, garages, and exterior outlets. Common in older homes that haven't been updated.
- Handrails and guardrails — any staircase with more than a few steps needs a secure handrail. Elevated decks need guardrails.
- Broken or cracked windows — even a small crack or broken seal in a double pane window will be noted.
- Peeling or chipping paint — particularly important on FHA and VA loans where appraisers are required to flag deteriorated paint as a health concern.
- Roof condition and moss — have it treated and cleaned before the appraisal. Moss signals moisture retention and potential deterioration. Make sure gutters are clear and downspouts are intact.
- Standing water or drainage issues — any evidence of pooling water around the foundation, in the crawlspace, or in the yard raises red flags.
- Exposed wiring or open electrical panels — visible exposed wiring, open junction boxes, or double-tapped breakers will be flagged.
- Crawlspace and attic access — must be accessible and reasonably dry with no visible mold or standing water.
- Unpermitted additions or conversions — these can significantly complicate an appraisal, particularly on FHA and VA loans.

> *Every item an appraiser flags as a condition has to be resolved, re-inspected, and signed off before the loan can close. Most of these items cost very little to address proactively. None of them are worth leaving for the appraiser to find.*

13. If the Appraisal Comes In Low — Don't Panic

A low appraisal feels like a crisis in the moment. It isn't always. Take a breath, get the information, and get to work. This is exactly the moment all the preparation you did on the front end pays off.

Get a Copy of the Appraisal and Review It Carefully

You cannot challenge what you cannot see. Request the full report and look at:

- Which comparable sales the appraiser used and whether they missed relevant sales or used comps from outside the natural market area
- How they made adjustments between comps and your seller's home
- Whether there are factual errors — wrong square footage, incorrect bedroom or bathroom count, features listed as absent that are actually present

Send the Appraiser Your Analysis — Make Your Case

This is called a Reconsideration of Value and it is absolutely worth attempting. Compile your strongest comparable sales — particularly any the appraiser did not use — along with a clear explanation of why they are relevant. Include documentation of updates and improvements. Present it professionally and without emotion. A well-supported reconsideration with data the appraiser may have missed can absolutely move the number.

If the Value Holds Low — Explore Every Option First

- Look at financing costs first — if the seller is currently paying the buyer's closing costs, explore whether the lender can raise the interest rate slightly to cover those instead, or whether the buyer can receive a gift from family to cover the gap.
- Ask whether the buyer can increase their down payment to cover the difference. The lender can only loan against the appraised value — but a buyer can always bring more cash.
- Get everyone involved — the lender, the buyer's agent, and your seller. Sometimes the solution is a combination of adjustments across multiple areas.

If a Price Reduction Is the Only Answer

> *"We challenged this appraisal with our own data. We explored every option to close the gap. The market has spoken and what we arrived at today is the true market value of your home."*

A seller who has watched you fight for their value — who saw you pull the comps, send the reconsideration, explore every alternative — will accept a price reduction with far more peace than a seller who feels like it just happened to them.

14. Closing Day — Getting Your Seller to the Finish Line

Prepare Your Seller Well in Advance

Don't wait until the day before closing to have this conversation. Your seller should know exactly what to expect — when they need to be out, when keys transfer, and what the sequence of events looks like — with enough time to plan their move, coordinate movers, and avoid any last-minute chaos.

Be Very Careful With the Words "On Recording"

"On recording" means possession transfers the moment the deed records at the county — and that time is completely outside of anyone's control. Recording can happen at 10:00 in the morning or at 3:00 in the afternoon depending on the county's processing volume that day.

Using "on recording" as the possession time creates uncertainty for everyone — the seller doesn't know exactly when they need to be out, the buyer doesn't know when they can move in, and movers are sitting in a driveway waiting for a phone call.

When "on recording" is appropriate:

- The home is already vacant at the time the offer is written.
- The seller will be fully moved out several days before closing with no need to coordinate a same-day handoff.

In any other situation, put a specific time in the contract. Washington State contracts default to 9:00 PM if nothing specific is written in. Most agents and sellers have no interest in handing over keys at that hour. A time like 5:00 PM works well in most transactions — it gives the seller the full day to finish moving and the buyer a reasonable hour to receive keys.

What Your Seller Should Have Handled Before Closing Day

- All personal property removed unless specifically included in the contract.
- All keys, garage door openers, gate codes, mailbox keys, and access items gathered and ready to hand over.
- Utilities scheduled to transfer — not cancelled, transferred — on the closing date so the buyer has power, water, and heat from day one.
- The home left in the condition agreed to in the contract — broom clean at minimum and all agreed-upon repairs completed with documentation ready.
- Nothing left behind that was not included in the sale. Even something that seems harmless — old paint cans in the garage, furniture in the backyard — can become a dispute at the final walkthrough.

The Final Walkthrough

Let your seller know this is coming and what it's for. It is not a second inspection. It is the buyer confirming the home is in the same condition as when they wrote the offer, that agreed-upon repairs have been completed, and that included personal property is still there.

Closing Itself — Make Sure Your Seller Knows

- Where they are signing — title company, mobile notary, or remote signing if the transaction allows.
- Approximately how long signing takes — typically 30 to 60 minutes for the seller side.
- What to bring — a valid photo ID at minimum, and anything else the title company has requested.
- When to expect their proceeds — wire transfers typically land the same day as recording. Make sure your seller knows which they are receiving and when to expect it.

> *You have shepherded this seller through one of the most significant financial transactions of their life. Closing day is the payoff for all of that work. Show up for it. And remember — a seller who felt cared for, informed, and represented at every step is the most powerful referral source you will ever have.*

— End of Listing Agent Best Practices —