

Should You Care Whether Your Real Estate Agent Is a Realtor?

Last week, I gave you 18 questions you might ask when interviewing an agent to list your home, but I forgot the one question which could prove to be the most important: **Is he (or she) a Realtor?**

This question may puzzle you. "Aren't those terms synonymous? Isn't every licensed real estate agent a realtor?" (Notice the lower case on "Realtor.")

For decades the National Association of Realtors (NAR), which owns the trademark term "Realtor," has been fighting a losing battle to educate the general public and even its own members that only members of NAR can call themselves "Realtors" and that "Realtor" is a trademark (like "Kleenex") that should always be capitalized.

NAR also owns the website www.realtor.com, but contracts with a for-profit company, Move, Inc., to operate it. This website used to be the number 1 real estate website, but I've read that recently it has lost market share and is now behind Trulia and Zillow.

I have frequently reminded sellers of homes that a big reason to make sure your listing agent is a member of NAR — that is, a Realtor — was because only Realtors' listings are uploaded to that all-important website by Metrolist, the Denver MLS. That argument, however, is about to go away, since the NAR Board of Directors has made changes to its

operating agreement with Move, Inc. to make it more competitive with

Trulia and Zillow, which carry non-Realtor listings and even "by owner" listings. Metrolist has confirmed to me that they will start uploading non-Realtor listings to realtor.com "soon."

Since the recent market downturn, and even before that, NAR and its local Realtor associations have been bleeding membership, as agents by the thousands (hundreds locally) have given up membership in NAR to save the \$500 cost of annual dues.

So why would it still be important for you to ask your agent if he or she is a Realtor — i.e., a member of his local Realtor association and therefore of NAR?

You can find my best answer to that in my August 15th column, in which I described the qualities of successful agents — one of them is to be a Realtor. I didn't say that specifically. What I said was that a successful agent "gives back" by supporting his trade association as well as joining service clubs and chambers of commerce. They do this not because of what's in it for them — a specific monetary payback — but because it's the right thing to do.

Our Realtor associations actually benefit the consumer as well as their Realtor members. It is NAR which has a major lobbying presence, for

example, in Washington, DC, to make sure that Congress does not tamper with the home mortgage interest deduction, which is so important to all homeowners. NAR also led the fight to keep banks out of the real estate brokerage business — important to its members but which would also have had serious ramifications for the general public.

Since it's safe to say that the most likely reason an agent would NOT be a Realtor is to save \$500 per year,

you should ask yourself, "Do I want to entrust the marketing of my house to an agent who needs to scrimp on expenses such as his NAR membership?" If he (or she) scrimps on his membership in and support of the trade association which is fighting to preserve the American dream of home ownership, what expense will he scrimp on in marketing your home? Photographs? Video tours? Postcards and emails to buyers and agents? Advertising? Think about it!

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By **JIM SMITH,**
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This Week's Featured Listing

Golden Home Backs to Open Space

Located at the top of Golden's premiere subdivision, the Village at Mountain Ridge, this 4-bedroom, 5-bath home at 390 Mesa View Way boasts 4,400 sq. ft. of living space, a 5-car, 1,044-sq.-ft. garage, and a professionally landscaped 0.29-acre lot backing to Mt. Galbraith Open Space Park.



Take a Narrated Video Tour at www.MountainRidgeHome.com

You won't find a more beautiful location for your next home. The interior finishes are superb -- granite countertops, stainless appliances, designer paint scheme, main-floor study opening to the wrap-around deck, walk-around gas fireplace, gorgeous climate-controlled wine cellar, and so much more. The Brazilian cumaru (teak) hardwood floors even extend out to the covered wrap-around deck, which itself measures 1,130 sq. ft. Upstairs, the master suite features his & her walk-in closets and opens to a wood deck which provides shade to the flagstone patio below and overlooks the terraced backyard and the mountainside beyond. In the past three years only two other Mountain Ridge homes backing to open space have come on the market, so act quickly if that's what you're looking for. **Open this Saturday, 1-4 p.m.**

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