



OPINION

Why the best real estate agents are the ones no one hears about

Be an advocate who wants this industry to be recognized for the profession it is

BY [HANK MILLER](#)

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Key Takeaways

- Real estate doesn't have an accurate or favorable perception with the public, which is why it's time to stop talking about raising the bar and actually do it.

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Are real estate agents selling or counseling? Are they expected to be cheerleaders or shepherds, to paint the “happily ever after” or “be careful” picture?

Having almost three decades of appraisal and sales experience allows me to offer the opinion that the number of agents filing the role of “counselor” are

Most agents who I have and continue to interact with are focused on getting the transaction closed and getting paid.

“Always be closing” is doctrine from the top down; if you’re not closing, you’re not eating. Good for the agents and industry, bad for the image and the clients.

Doubt that? Consider how [low on the public respect scale real estate agents are](#).

The public’s perception is largely shaped by TV and media. The public sees the buyer’s agent provide critical info like “this is the kitchen, this is a closet, look at that view.”

Does a homebuyer need an agent to tell them what they like or what they need? Is a homebuyer so inept that they need an agent to “imagine what this basement would look like finished?”

How many buyer’s agents are simply “yes people” — simply agreeing with their buyer because they either just want to close them or simply lack the required skill, knowledge and candor to be effective counselors?

How about a dose of professionalism?

How about looking at present or potential issues, functional or external obsolescence, deferred maintenance, known problems like synthetic stucco or defective siding?

They're buying a home, which will likely eat up a significant portion of their monthly income, and that's under the best of circumstances. What happens when something breaks or their economic situation changes?

Agents must make buyers think and make them understand the ramifications both present and into the future.

Arguably the biggest problem the industry has is the agent that will do anything or say anything to secure a listing. That seller is looking to sell the home for as much as possible, as fast as possible and with as little headache as possible.

Along comes a "yes agent" who agrees with everything the seller says, throws out the compliments like chicken feed and simply ignores anything that might cause the seller angst — like data that conflicts with the seller's opinion of price.

Of course a month later, the "market changes" and the **price cutting** begins. Professional agents have been bypassed, and the seller now has a listing that develops a history.

This manipulation is the text book example of "sales," and it's not unique to real estate. But isn't the role of the agent to honestly evaluate the home, be candid and present the applicable data as it applies?

List to live, get the listing, no such thing as a bad listing

do the best you can and hope it works out, but hope is not a strategy.

Our industry leaders push sales first; they are selling the dream, the sizzle. Everything is predicated upon agent fees, that anyone can be a successful agent and about how to “sell, sell, sell” everyone you know and meet.

At every level, businesses exist to “serve” agents, including national-regional-local membership organizations, MLSs, marketing, training — all there to “help” agents, at a price.

But the comedic irony is obvious; the very ones told to “sell” are being sold themselves. The “get rich in real estate” pitch is being swallowed hook, line and sinker by agents themselves.

Why are there **over a million Realtors?**

The 90/10 rule applies; the majority of agents cannot earn a living, and most new agents are gone within two years. Why? Because agents want to believe it.

They want to believe that they’ll just convince friends and family for business, it’ll take off, and they’ll be cashing checks.

The work, dedication and time required to be an effective and **successful agent** isn’t considered or discussed.

While there has been plenty of chatter about “**raising the bar**” — it’s just that, chatter. Nothing has changed and nothing will change.

one supervising broker. How can the IRS consider agents “independent” with that requirement?

If agents were employees, perhaps performance and qualifications would suddenly matter to the local offices.

Why are there no apprenticeship requirements? Why does a hairdresser or appraiser have to complete thousands of hours of supervised work before becoming eligible to work independently?

And no, working under a broker is not the same as an apprenticeship, nor is sitting in class. A broker, despite the job description, cannot and does not mentor and shape an agent.

There are not enough hours in the day to recruit (the main purpose in life) and act as a mentor to rookies.

The best agents are the ones no one hears about

They make problems go away before their client gets wind of them. They're working or thinking about work, anticipating problems and have solutions waiting. They are candid, attentive and completely focused on their clients.

They make transactions smooth and look easy. They smile hearing “man, I should go into real estate; you hardly worked and made all of that.”

Their objective for every transaction is to make it look boring.

is. Someone who is annoyed by the public perception that we are simply a walking, talking, commission-chasing clown show.

I'm annoyed by the so-called leadership that yaps about raising standards like an ankle biting dog on the porch. Either bite or go lay down; it's well past the time that the entry and retention bar be raised to cull the massive amount of bloat in the agent ranks.

Mandatory apprenticeships and tiered licensing levels are overdue; it's time to legitimately address the issues. We're not splitting atoms — let's get to it.

Hank Miller has been an active certified appraiser and associate broker since 1989.

Email Hank Miller

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Ariela Heilman

90/10 like the screen actors guild ! Having been a broker through multiple downturns since 1992, I agree that making our industry more professional is long overdue. Surviving the downturns takes grit and adaptability. As we head into a downturn that will necessitate corrections, the ranks will thin in ways Charles Darwin codified.

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Pam Krichev

By the time I'd been "working" for a year the flaws in the system were obvious...the emphasis on production, laughable education, little guidance. I've been an agent for 16 years now and the ongoing success I've had is because I don't start calculating my commission the minute I leave a listing appointment or set out with new buyers. I give the best care and service I can whether the property is a 30 year old trailer or a half million dollar estate.

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Pierce Smith

HANK: good and blatant look at the obvious. But, Professionalism comes from knowledge, character, intention, process. HANK Wrong: people quit because they are (1) not trained "fake it until you make it" not professional. (2) Process leans toward deception! (3) few people except top producers can consistently lie. For 13 years, we redact personal info, post offers, allow changes throughout the offer/acceptance period, Seller sign all offers return to buyers to give buyer agent credibility.

Value proposition is based on braggadocio, quantity, no or phony quality. Recent clients want authenticity, transparency, reality!

Recruiting: license insufficient

Training: devoid, unrealistic, hype, junk.

Professionalism brings respect, respect brings trust, trust brings business. Defragmentation brings smooth transactions-a much better client experience!

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Boyd Campbell

Very interesting perspective and for the most part accurate. 41+ years in the business has taught me a number of things. The one thing I am not is a salesman! I am one of the 10%. I am an educator and problem solver for buyers and sellers. Decades and 100's of closed transactions ago, I came to the realization my value proposition to the buyer and/or seller of real property was my knowledge. Hence, the value of placing ads, installing signs and lock boxes, coordinating inspections, pointing out kitchens etc. etc. etc. was the least of my value to the transaction albeit necessary. My point, I get paid for what I know and to the 90% who know not, they get to take advantage of a consumer who doesn't know what they don't know. New business models, a more sophisticated consumer and industry leaders demanding the bar be raised will bring more balance and acceptance of our practitioners and what they do. Maybe or maybe not?

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When will we look in the mirror? When will the public's opinion of us as buffoons finally spur action from within? When will we stop calling ourselves professionals and actually take steps to be professionals? If you are not fully invested, this is not your profession — this is a hobby. And your hobby has been and continues to smother those of us who are true professional agents.

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