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## Why Realtors Get Fired

By Richard Stanley

To hire a realtor is to enter a relationship—one that could be long term, such as a marriage, or more like a limited affair. Either way, your realtor will probably learn more about you in a shorter amount of time than any other service professional. Who else will know details of your financial background, your lifestyle and tastes, what drives your aspirations—and will even have a key to your house, complete with your alarm code? As in any relationship, realtor relationships can get off-track, and even end prematurely. Here are some reasons why:

- **Communication** – Above all, a good realtor must convey information accurately and in a timely manner. Teachers often become skilled realtors because they are trained to listen, to explain and to guide clients to a successful course of action. If you don't understand a part of the sales process, ask questions. Be sure to receive satisfactory answers. Your relationship will be stronger for the effort.

Remember that communication works both ways. Even the best realtor will fail if the client does not respond to information sent to her or him. If you want action from your realtor, stay in touch. Let your realtor know what you think of marketing efforts or of prospective purchase ideas. Little, or no, feedback dooms any relationship.

- **Attention** – Some realtors start relationships with clients and don't follow through. Promises get broken. Agents become ill or disappear on vacation. Clients languish; listings become abandoned. Such lack of diligence is cause for cancellation of a listing agreement. If you feel your realtor is not working diligently on your behalf, talk to the realtor's manager immediately.
- **Ethics** – The National Association of Realtors, an association to which most, but not all, real estate licensees belong, has a body of standards for realtors' ethical behavior. This "Code of Ethics" may be found at <http://www.realtor.org/mempolweb.nsf/pages/printable2008Code>.

Generally, if realtor behavior doesn't pass the "smell test", it's probably unethical. For example, it is unethical for one realtor to solicit a listing from another realtor's seller until the expiration of the existing listing period. If a realtor approaches you with an idea that makes you feel uneasy, say, "No thank you"—and use another realtor with higher standards. When realtors and clients operate in "gray" areas, trouble usually follows.

- **Expectations vs. Results** – Nothing spoils a client/realtor relationship more than a realtor's over-promising and under-delivering. For example, some realtors are gamblers who take over-priced listings. For these realtors, luck is in the numbers—some properties will sell, some won't. They rely on their gift of schmooze to mollify any future client disappointment. If you're a seller and you

hire this kind of realtor in today's market, get ready to be hammered for price reductions later.

To handle damage control of lost time and motion, when your first agent's listing expires (sooner rather than later) find a more realistic, to-the-point, talented agent the second time around. The market today punishes slow learners severely. Don't be a desperate seller who validates the realtor's blessing: "May you be the first born, the second wife and the third realtor."

- **Trust** – Any relationship without trust fails. If you feel you can't trust your realtor, get another—fast. Your business interests are at stake.
- **Chemistry** – Sometimes, personal chemistry interferes with a client/realtor relationship. Usually not much positive can be done, except to say, "Next!"

**How to get a realtor divorce:** If your realtor relationship is strained, call the realtor's manager and explain the problem. One of the talents of a good manager is to mediate problems between realtors and clients. If you're a buyer who has not signed a buyer's loyalty agreement, you can move on to another realtor easily. Be courteous to the first realtor and notify her or him of your plans without getting personal. Why burn a bridge, when the house you settle upon later might be represented by the realtor you spurned?

If you're a seller, your listing agreement defines in writing when the term of representation expires. Remember, the listing agreement is with the **brokerage**, not the sales agent. You could ask that your listing be assigned to another agent. Alternatively, you could wait out the listing to the end and then re-list your property with another brokerage. In very rare exceptions, a brokerage might agree to a seller's request to cancel the listing altogether. A good argument for cancellation might be if the realtor failed to market the property diligently.

Any good realtor takes great pride in his or her reputation—personally and professionally. No realtor wants unhappy clients in the neighborhood. As loyalty is a deep bond, personally and professionally, the highest compliment a client can pay a realtor is to offer repeat business.

Finally, some clients can be impossible to please. They acquire reputations, too—among realtors!

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