

A Practical Guide to Hiring a Desert Mountain Listing Agent

1. **Hire an agent team, not an individual agent.** A team or group will have more collective resources, imagination, listing appointment coverage capability, a wider marketing perspective, and greater collective critical thinking skills than an individual agent.
2. **Hire an agent team that has a mix of males and females on it.** Females see things males do not see, and vice versa. A variety of perspectives is immensely helpful.
3. **Hire an agent team that has time to do an excellent job for you.** If they have more than about five or six homes per agent, they likely will not have time to do an excellent job for you. Having many listings is good for agents and their brokerage, but not that good for their clients. Listings, and listing clients, suffer when agents have more work than they can handle well.
4. **Hire an agent team based on their professional qualifications, not because they are friends who are also real estate agents.** With prices as high as they are in Desert Mountain, you will pay a considerable amount of money in commissions. Trusting a friend whose listing track record suggests it will be difficult to meet **your** goals and maximize **your** net effective income is an effective way to put **your** money, and **your** friendship, at risk. Avoid that risk and get the best return possible out of your commission expense investment.
5. **Hire an agent team who can (and does) sell the entire Desert Mountain experience.** Agents who are members of the Club, live (or have lived) in the community, are familiar with Carefree, Cave Creek, and north Scottsdale, and who have been selling in Desert Mountain for many years, will be much more effective in selling your home than agents without such credentials.
6. **Hire an agent team with seasoning and experience, especially for a larger or more complicated selling assignment.** Consider that the longer they have been performing the art of real estate, the better the chances they will say or do the right thing at the right time, and not say or do the wrong thing at the wrong time, keeping a deal on track to your advantage.
7. **Hire an agent team whose members present themselves professionally.** Good grooming and appropriate attire befitting the responsibility are a must.
8. **Focus on the specific work product and listing client outcomes (beyond the obvious, of selling the home) of the candidate agent team, not the image or marketing messages of their brokerage or brokerage company,** irrelevant because corporate entities do not:
 - a. Meet with the prospective listing client prior to a listing being signed,
 - b. Establish what the client is looking to accomplish or avoid,
 - c. Profile the property in depth to understand its strengths and weaknesses,
 - d. Do a detailed comparison of the property against comparable properties to produce a well-grounded, defensible list price (see 9., below),

e. Create a marketing strategy, ***completely finished and ready on Day One of the listing***, designed to compete effectively against carefully identified key competitors of the listing, and to take into account that most serious, near-term prospective purchasers of homes in Desert Mountain will do their own research online to find candidate homes, and will refine their list into a “Let’s see these!” list after reading descriptions and seeing photos or videos of candidate homes. Since making a great first impression is so important, the following points become paramount:

- Writing a mistake-free Multiple Listing Service “blurb” that has a wide variety of marketing points in it. The narrower the message, the fewer readers it will entice. Your agent or agent team needs to have the time, imagination, experience, product awareness, and writing skills to write the description in a way that will reach out to as many target audiences as possible, not just those Desert Mountain “insiders” who already know, for example, what is meant by “Membership not included.”
- Telling the property’s story with great visuals.
 - Photography:
 - Obtaining professional still photography, preferably images taken both in the morning and the evening, and aerial photography where the situation demands it.
 - Annotating each photo placed in the Multiple Listing Service to explain to a viewer why the picture is on display in the first place.
 - Taking the time to put the photos in a logical “story sequence.”
 - Videography:
 - Taking the time and spending the money to produce an “on camera,” narrated, video introducing the home, inside and out, to viewers, not just an animated slide show set to music or an un-narrated “drone video.”

The better the initial online presentation, the better the chances of landing quickly on multiple buyers’ short lists, generating showings, and receiving multiple offers.

- f. Create a variety of marketing pieces that can be physically handed to someone as well as emailed.
- g. Identify key target marketing groups to whom information on the property will be sent and set a schedule for doing so repeatedly.

- h. Create staging and showing strategies designed to maximize the home's competitive strengths and minimize any competitive disadvantages.
- i. Do the showings, secure the premises, report the results to the sellers promptly, if not while locking up the premises, and follow up with buyers or their agents.
- j. Manage the myriad number of details that surface between signing a listing contract and the closing of escrow.
- k. Create and execute a communication plan to share marketing activity and market details with the listing client, including the creation of a private website where the listing clients can go at their convenience to find out what the listing agents have done on the seller's behalf, and obtain market information.

All this work is done by *people*, namely, listing agents. Ask your candidate listing agents to send you links to past (or current) listings to get a sense of the thought and effort put into them. Dig a little. Do not assume an agent team will take the time and care on your listing as you would. ***Check their work.*** If no one pushes them to do an excellent job at the start of a listing, their poor approach will turn off prospective purchasers in the market at the time the listing goes "live." This damages the seller in several ways but, insidiously, acts to increase the chances of ***that*** listing agent being able to sell the home to one of ***their own*** clients, thus "double-dipping" the sale. ***Sellers should beware of listing agents who: a) take a long time to get their listings under contract, b) have to significantly discount them, perhaps after serial price reductions, to get them under contract, and c) seem to sell a large number of their listings to their own clients. d***

Furthermore:

- a. Most agents or agent teams on your potential interview list work for national or international organizations, all of which will send information on their listings to the local Multiple Listing Service and dozens of other web-based real estate search sites. This is "basic" real estate practice, and there is no practical difference between brokerage companies in this regard.
- b. With respect to attracting attention from buyers at the start of the listing, having exposure on these "outside" search sites is far more effective than having exposure on the brokerage's own branded search website, regardless of how "highbrow" the brokerage house image is. Serious buyers who do not know Desert Mountain exists will start their search on general search sites such as Realtor.com, Zillow, Google, or Redfin. Once they become aware of a given community/development that looks attractive, they will gravitate towards sites that specialize in that community's real estate (for Desert Mountain, that would include PropertiesofDesertMountain.com, The Davis Driver Group's main website, and DesertMountain.com), instead of brokerage company websites. Of these two, PropertiesofDesertMountain.com has the greater level of detail on all properties in Desert Mountain; DesertMountain.com has only the generic details offered by the city-wide Multiple Listing Service.

9. **Regarding the importance of the Initial List Price.** If it is obviously too high, the listing will not sell promptly after coming on the market and will become “stale.” If the owners really are interested in selling, this strategy will eventually force one or more price reductions, costing precious time in the process. Prospective purchasers recognize and shun unrealistically priced homes, causing the owners to eventually “chase the market” through price reductions. The prospective purchasers go from thinking “The sellers are not realistic,” to “There must be something wrong with that house. Let’s skip seeing it.” Eventually, a “bargain hunter” will appear on the scene, make a low-ball offer, and acquire the property (hopefully NOT represented by the listing agent who has mishandled the listing to their client’s detriment). The seller will have overpaid for inadequate services, wasted much time and ongoing ownership expenses, not received a price they should have for the property, and endured significant hassle and headache in the meantime due to numerous showings and, possibly, open houses. The tragedy in this is that they will have no way to look back on the process and discern that they have been hustled. So, there are expensive consequences to a serious seller if the original list price is too high. If the owners are not really interested in selling, and just want to test the market with a high price, that is a sure-fire way to probably not sell the home and get a lackluster effort on the part of the agent. Alternatively, properly priced properties sometimes result in immediate multiple offers and an ultimate sales price higher than the original list price.

Producing a truly well-grounded list price is not easy, at least if the seller’s goal is to sell for a fair price more or less as soon as possible. It takes iterative, detailed comparative analysis of the subject property with individual members of groups of homes (Listed, Pending, Sold and Expired listings) sharing different sets of relevant comparable features. The more points of comparison used, and the more *combinations* of points of comparison used, the more perceptive and accurate the analysis will be. Be sure and ask your candidate listing agents or agent teams to give you a sample List Price Analysis and Preliminary Marketing Plan so you can understand their approach to this task.

10. **Marketing claims made by candidate agents or agent teams, or their brokerage, about things other than selling your home quickly for the most amount of money should be ignored.**

Specifically:

- a. **Claims of client benefit due to having sold more real estate than their competitors.** If an agent team has managed to get an abundance of listings over the years due to a wide and heavy Desert Mountain social footprint, or possibly due to unrealistically high initial list prices (set either by the agent or the owner), and then managed to sell them, they have enjoyed wonderful income. However, merely selling a property is a low bar to clear, given enough time and frequent or significant price adjustments. So, merely generating high personal income on the part of an agent or agent team, or an office bragging about how many listings they have sold, should not be construed as a measure of the *quality of service and outcomes* rendered to their listing clients.
- b. **Claims of client benefit from the location of an agent’s office.** Where an agent physically works might make it easier for them to cover a listing appointment made on short notice but has nothing to do with the quality of work they will do for a client. An office location is irrelevant to proper pricing, promotion,

presentation, follow-up, deal management, good grooming, and having the best data with which to work.

c. **Claims of client benefit due to the agent or agent’s brokerage “having the buyers.”**

i. This claim has nothing to do with doing quality work for a listing client. It is a “shiny object” disingenuous claim made to divert attention away from the consequences of not having enough time to do an excellent job on the fundamentals in the first place, and/or not having the data to do so, and/or not having the skills and/or inclination to do so. If the property is priced and marketed correctly, serious buyers will show up, period. And, unless a slight commission discount is negotiated in the event the listing agents represent both the seller and the buyer, it ought not to matter to a listing client what brokerage or agent represents the buyer. It would be foolish for a seller to value such a slight discount higher than the benefits accruing to the seller of a listing team doing an exceptional job of proper pricing, promotion, presentation, follow-up, etc.

ii. Desert Mountain buyers are represented by many firms, and even more agents. No one firm or agent team has a monopoly on them. According to data gathered by The Davis Driver Group between January 1, 2019, and May 31, 2023, from the local Multiple Listing Service, 1,011 Desert Mountain buyers were represented by 185 different brokerages, only three of which represented seventy-eight or more.

iii. If buyers will show up to see a well-priced and promoted home, a claim of “having the buyers” betrays a brokerage’s true desire, that of “double-dipping” as many transactions as possible, thus making more commission income, rather than promoting their desire and ability to do the challenging work necessary to price and promote a property properly in order to save a listing client time and money.

(ii) Such claims also strain the claiming firm’s relations with the rest of the brokerage community.

The market is very efficient. Eventually, buyers will see the homes they should see, one way or the other, especially in times of thin inventory as is currently the case in Desert Mountain.

d. **Claims of client benefit due to a candidate agent’s or agent team’s brokerage office “having the most ‘walk-in traffic’” (using different words to claim benefits from “having the buyers”).**

i. If a property is not well-priced, properly marketed, and properly shown it will not matter if a listing agent’s office has *hundreds* of daily walk-ins. None of them will want to buy the home.

- ii. Second, as noted above, it should not matter to a seller what brokerage winds up representing the buyer.
- iii. Much as they would like to, it is unlikely for an onsite sales office salesperson/candidate for a listing assignment to convert a given “Walk-In” visitor to a near-term purchase of his or her own listing for three reasons:
 - a. A given candidate listing agent who works at an onsite sales office would have to be “up” when a prospect comes in the door **with an interest in a listing belonging to that agent**. That can happen, but it is not something a candidate listing agent or team can imply will happen with any certainty when interviewing for a listing.
 - b. First-time visitors to an onsite sales office might ultimately buy property, but twenty-two years of experience working in Desert Mountain’s onsite sales office, and thirty-three years of overall selling experience in Desert Mountain, suggests that if they are **just starting** their “We might want to own some real estate around here; we just don’t know when, where, why, or what!” research, they will usually not conclude this threshold level of research while a listing signed in the near term is still active, much less “Okay, we have settled on Desert Mountain; now, do we want to buy or build?”, and “We want to buy, so which house fits our needs the best?”
 - c. Serious near-term buyers certainly could walk into a given brokerage office, but they are likely only doing so to find an agent who can take them to see a brief list of homes that their own online research has suggested might fit their needs. It would be unwise for the agent on floor duty at that brokerage office to try to talk a prospect out of going to see one or more homes on that list in favor of other homes listed by that agent, or to immediately “push” one or more of his or her own listings onto someone he or she just met. Perhaps, after the prospect’s list is exhausted and the prospect realizes he or she may need local help, then that on-site agent might be able to propose alternatives, but not before. Even then it would be a long shot that one of his or her own listings would be a fit for such a client.

Summary

There are many ways to choose a listing agent in Desert Mountain. Most of them lead to poor choices.

Your chances of making a desirable choice are higher if you choose an agent team with a favorable record in the following four metrics:

- Getting their listings under contract quickly,
- Without having to discount them sharply (ten percent or more) to get them under contract,
- Achieving a high Original List Price to Sales Price ratio, and
- Having a good track record of selling their listings for prices equal to or greater than the Original List Price.

If they are not the leader in these four categories, they are not producing the best quality outcomes for their clients.

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