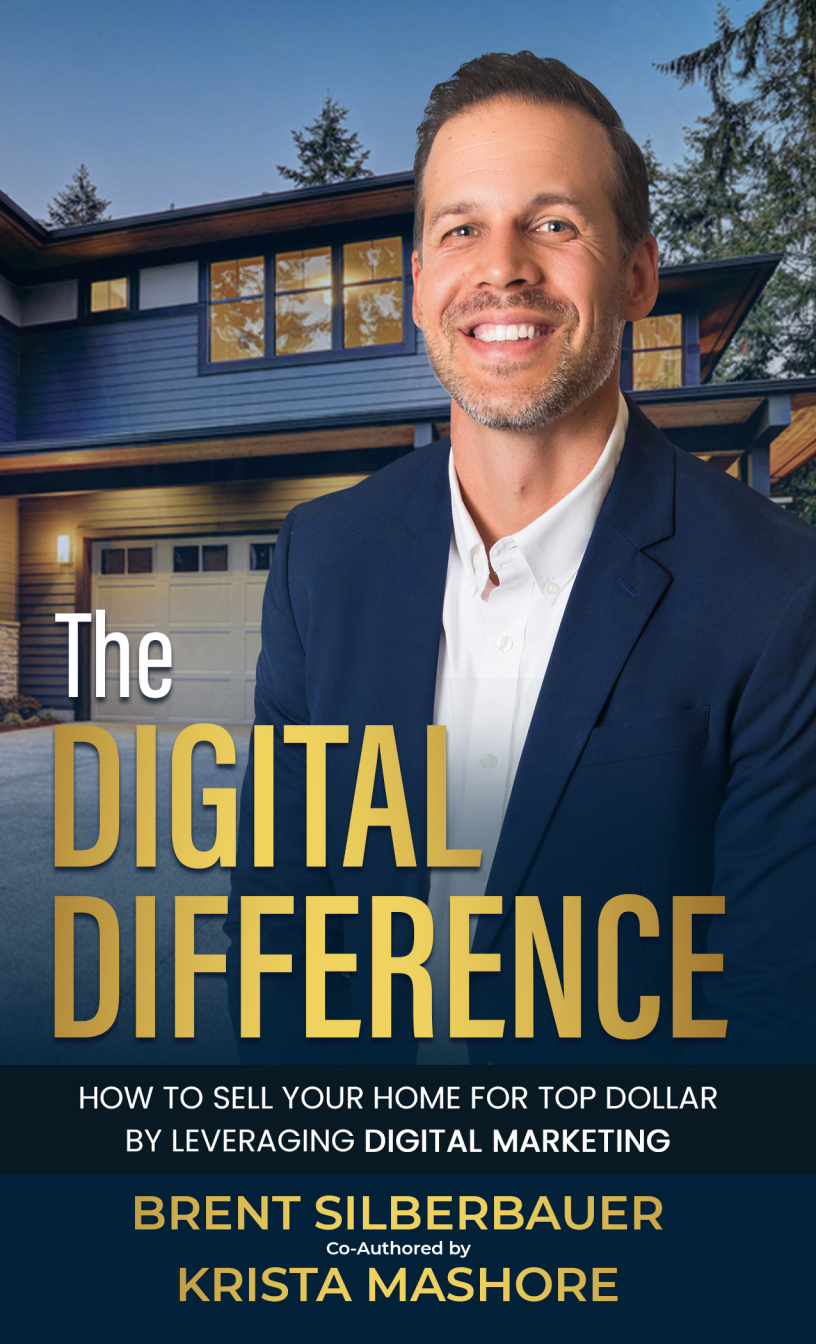




The **DIGITAL DIFFERENCE**

HOW TO SELL YOUR HOME FOR TOP DOLLAR
BY LEVERAGING DIGITAL MARKETING

BRENT SILBERBAUER

Co-Authored by

KRISTA MASHORE

THE DIGITAL DIFFERENCE

*How to Sell Your Home for
Top Dollar by Leveraging
Digital Marketing*

By
Brent Silberbauer

Co-authored by
Krista Mashore

*The Digital Difference: How to Sell Your Home for Top
Dollar by Leveraging Digital Marketing*

© 2022 Brent Silberbauer

Published by Brent Silberbauer, Chico, CA

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without prior written consent of the authors, except as provided by the United States of America copyright law.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information with regard to the subject matter covered. It is distributed with the understanding that the author is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional advice. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

For more information, please write:

Brent Silberbauer

1166 East Lassen Ave.

Chico, California, USA 95973

Visit us online at: www.BrentSellsChico.com

PRAISE FOR BRENT & HIS TEAM

Brent was fabulous! We saw the work he did for friends in the same area and knew we also had to use him to sell our home. We loved his fresh approach, using multiple digital platforms to really market our house. He was able to highlight its value, allowing us to sell for over asking, in less than a week! We could not recommend Brent more! —Rosie

The level of marketing he developed in just a matter of days was phenomenal: Video and aerial footage, designated website, etc. Because of his keen sense of the market, guidance, and quality, marketing our house went pending at above asking before the weekend was through! We are thankful for how personal he made the home for both us and the buyer and handled the transaction with the utmost integrity. If you want an excellent home buying or selling experience, look no further than Brent! —Brian and Jaime

Brent did an awesome job with us selling our two-story home! He was very responsive, honest, and realistic. Excellent negotiator, we were able to reset the market price in Chico for two-story homes and got way over asking price! —Joe

Brent is worth his weight in gold. He went above and beyond to illustrate and communicate the unique value

of our home through his phenomenal video footage that brought in traffic from hundreds of miles away and a full price offer the next morning which happened to be way over our original asking price. His consistent communication and attention to detail made the whole process so smooth. I HIGHLY recommend his service to everyone I know. Understanding the value he brings, I recently shared his video he made for me with a neighbor friend who was also planning on moving, and they can't tell me enough how grateful they were for me introducing Brent to them who also recently sold their house way over original asking price. I strongly encourage anyone to check out his videos on Youtube. In their quality and viewership, I have not seen anything like them. —Peter and Brooke

MEET BRENT SILBERBAUER

Brent Silberbauer is one of the most innovative real estate agents in Northern California. Utilizing his 20 year experience in media production along with social media distribution, Brent is able to show the value of Northern California property in a way that is unmatched. This equates to more internet exposure, more tours, and ultimately higher and better offers.

Brent and his wife Jennifer produced a local television show that aired on NBC and CBS called Restoring Chico. (Go to www.RestoringChico.com if you'd like to see it.)

Brent Silberbauer comes from a multigenerational real estate family, and got his start in the industry working for a large institutional real estate investment corporation in Northern California.

His biggest passion is leaving both buyers and sellers at each transaction with a smile on their face. Brent Silberbauer has constantly beat the market average sales price utilizing HGTV style video walkthroughs, high tech media distribution, and custom websites for each home that he sells.

MEET KRISTA

Krista Mashore is the CEO of two multimillion-dollar companies. As one of the Top 1% of REALTORS nationwide, Krista has sold over 2,300 homes since entering the field in 2001. She is known as the Digital Marketing Queen and Yahoo Finance's #1 Digital Marketer to watch out for in 2021. As the Broker/Owner of Homes by Krista and CEO of Krista Mashore Coaching, she has put together an unbeatable team whose primary focus and goal is happy clients with highly successful outcomes.

Author of four best selling books, Krista now coaches and trains agents and professionals to become experts in the digital marketing space. She has currently made 25 million+ utilizing her proven strategies in one business alone. Krista's ultimate goal is to help her community and clients in any way she can.

She lives with her family in Contra Costa County in Northern California. One of her favorite pastimes is coaching teens in her community through her movement, Teens Lifting Lives.

To learn more about how Krista's Organization Krista Mashore Coaching may be able to help you with your digital marketing strategies to dominate your profession, please visit www.KristaMashore.com.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHOOSING A STRATEGIC LISTING AGENT: WHAT MATTERS MOST?.....	4
The Difference	5
Credentials	6
Experience	8
Reputation	10
Overall Team.....	12
Outside Resources.....	13
Rapport.....	14
Questions to Ask.....	15
Credentials:	16
Experience:	16
Reputation:	17
Overall Team:.....	17
MARKETING IN TODAY’S WORLD: THE DIGITAL DIFFERENCE	18
The Power of Digital Marketing	20
Traditional Marketing on Steroids.....	24
Seller Questions to Ask on Marketing.....	30

NEGOTIATING FOR THE WIN	32
The Competitive Negotiator	33
The Compliant Negotiator	34
The Collaborative Negotiator	36
Your Job During Negotiations.....	38
Seller Questions to Ask on Negotiation	40
COMMUNICATION IS KEY.....	42
Starting Off on the Right Foot.....	44
Communication During the Marketing Stage	49
During Negotiation.....	50
During Escrow	51
Seller Questions to Ask on Communication	53
CREATING CLEAR GOALS AND PRIORITIES	54
Get Clarity	57
Clarity for Couples.....	58
Get Your Priorities Straight	59
Seller Questions to Ask on Goals and Priorities.	63
SELLER’S PREP FOR A GREAT SALE	64
Set Up Your Home to Inspire Offers.....	64
Breeze Through Inspections.....	69
Major Repairs.....	71

ON THE MARKET: STRATEGIC SELLER DO'S AND DON'TS.....	74
Showing Your Home.....	74
A LAST WORD.....	78
SOURCES.....	79

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever read the book, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*? It was written for couples expecting a baby, especially their first. It runs through all the physical ins and outs of pregnancy as well as the emotional roller coaster pregnancy puts you on. It talks about the people who will team up with you during the pregnancy, specifically what their role is, and what to expect from them. It also recommends things you, as a couple, can do to make the birth healthier and easier. Basically, it instructs you and warns you about a bunch of things so that you don't freak out!

Think of this book as, *What to Expect When You're Selling*. Yes, selling your home can be as emotional, joy-filled, scary, exciting and irritating as pregnancy! Unfortunately, too many sellers find themselves freaking out and not getting the happy and healthy end result they'd hoped for! In my experience, it does **not** have to be traumatic or a struggle. In fact, with the right team and the right information, the process can actually be fun and definitely successful.

I wrote this book to give you the information you need as a seller to enjoy the ride and end up with the best result at "birth." As one of my neighbors in

Northern California, I want you to be *hugely* successful in the sale of your home!

In the first part of this book, I'll explain what you should look for in a listing agent and how to hire the one who will do the best job for you. You'll find out what you should expect every step of the way from a really good agent. It doesn't matter what price range your home falls into, I really want you to expect *superior* service from the listing agent you hire!

Later in the book, I'll talk about what *you* can do to be a strong partner with your agent, making the process easier and more successful. Decades ago, dads used to hang out in the waiting room, biting their nails, smoking, and worrying while their spouse did all the heavy lifting. Real estate used to be that way (and with some agents, it still is!). But your positive contribution to the entire process can make a huge difference to the final result. So, I'll give you some tips of things you can do *before* your house goes on the market, *while* it's being shown, and *during* the final negotiations and closing process.

My motto has always been “**Buy and Sell Strategically**” And I LOVE helping my clients use the best strategies to get their homes SOLD!

If you have any questions after reading this book, feel free to contact me at (530) 864-2404. Be sure to also check out www.BrentSellsChico.com for informative videos that are easy to watch and full of valuable information. We can also get you a Free Marketing Analysis and a Home Evaluation through the website.

This book is my gift to you, along with my very best wishes for the successful sale of your home!

Brent Silberbauer

CHOOSING A STRATEGIC LISTING AGENT: WHAT MATTERS MOST?

When selling your home, the first and most important decision you have to make is choosing the real estate team that will list your house. Unfortunately, many people just go with someone they know who happens to have a real estate license. While Uncle Harvey might be a super nice guy, he may *not* be the best agent to list and sell your property. Hiring someone who lacks experience can cost you thousands and thousands of dollars, even if he promises to give you the “family discount” and reduce his commission. First of all, he won’t give you the high-octane marketing a real pro can give you. Second, mistakes and not knowing how to keep a transaction on track, especially when everything hits the fan, can be *extremely* costly in real estate. After selling millions in real estate each year, I’ve witnessed every kind of misstep and screw up possible! And I’ve seen how horribly expensive they can be. Trying to save money on commissions by using someone inexperienced will cost you far more than the few percentages in commission you think you’ll be saving. And I can’t tell you how many times a seller has chosen a “discount broker” over me, only

to come back to me months later when that agent couldn't get the job done!

It's like choosing a surgeon for a critical operation: You wouldn't just use your next-door neighbor to be your surgeon because he lends you his lawnmower and offers you a "family discount," right? Of course not! You would check his credentials, whether he specializes in the kind of surgery you need, his reputation, and a ton of other things before you'd let him slice into you!

The Difference

Your home is a huge investment. So, even though it might hurt your uncle's or your neighbor's feelings, you need to choose the agent who will do the best job for you. So rather than just sitting through the dog and pony show of your first appointment with a prospective listing agent, use it as an in-depth interview, and don't be afraid to *grill them*.

Without a doubt, the most critical parts of your listing agent's job are **marketing** and **negotiation**. If your Realtor® is not strong in understanding and implementing current best practices in *both* of those areas, they're doing you a disservice by even taking your listing! I'm not kidding! Agents who are weak or "old school" will not be able to get you the best

price and most favorable terms for your house even if they've been in the business for decades. They also won't be able to get the job done well, quickly, or without a lot of hassle.

Because these two areas—marketing and negotiation—are so very important, most of the content in this book will be surrounding those two topics. It's important to note, you don't have to become an expert in either marketing or negotiation yourself. You just need to know the skills and services an agent *should* be offering you before you even think of signing on the dotted line with them. When you interview potential agents to list your house, you'll want to ask a ton of questions specific to marketing and negotiation.

We'll start discussing marketing in the next chapter, but before we go over that, we're going to cover the other basic qualifications that a prime agent needs to have: Credentials, Experience, Reputation, Overall Team, Outside Resources, and Rapport.

Credentials

Anyone can get a real estate license. A license doesn't necessarily mean they know what the heck they're doing. Agents who are really serious about the business join the National Association of Realtors®

(NAR), which is real estate's national professional organization. (They'll have that designation on their business card.) Realtors® are required to follow the NAR's Code of Ethics and pass additional exams every two years that other agents don't have to take.

All agents have basic continuing education requirements, but none of these courses do anything to help an agent learn best practices in selling homes. And to be quite honest, all of the education and credentials in the world will not take the place of experience. Experience is the only way to be the best of the best, to learn how to foresee and tackle problems before they arise, and to truly know the ins and outs of how to capitalize on an investment for the Seller. Those of us who strive for excellence in real estate have taken additional coursework to sharpen our skills or to learn more about our areas of specialty. We might have studied advanced negotiation, digital marketing, or trends in home financing.

Personally, my background is in Media Arts where I earned an undergraduate degree from CSU, Chico. I've also studied negotiation from some of the best teachers in the industry. I've participated in hundreds of hours of sales training, seminars, digital marketing coaching, video production and photography courses, and been a practitioner of all of these disciplines. My

real estate marketing videos have received hundreds of thousands of views on social media and YouTube. My wife and I went so far as to produce a TV show on the local CBS and NBC stations that went to thousands of people in our local market (www.RestoringChico.com). It absolutely matters which agent you use and how much they've gone after personal development.

Don't hesitate to ask someone who wants to list your house about their credentials and additional education. And don't be impressed by fancy designations. Ask what they've learned from their courses and how they'll benefit you with the sale of your home.

Experience

Back to the surgeon analogy: Do you want a doctor who has successfully performed dozens of surgeries *exactly* like yours? Or do you want someone who typically works in a totally different specialty? Should you hire someone who will be performing their very first surgery or who really knows their way around the operating room?

Like many professions, good real estate agents typically specialize (or *should* specialize) in certain properties within a particular geographic area. We call it their "niche." Someone who tells you they can "sell anything anywhere" is just kidding themselves.

They may be able to get the job done eventually, but they certainly won't know the best way to market your type of home—which means they **cannot** get you the best result possible.

On the other hand, a listing agent who has sold dozens of homes like yours in your specific city or neighborhood will have the inside scoop and know what it will take to get you the best outcome. A really good and ethical agent, who does *not* deal with your type of property or isn't in your area, will refer you to someone else or, *at the very least*, partner with an agent who does specialize in that area and type of property.

What about years of experience? This can be a double-edged sword. If you've got someone with many years of experience who is keeping up with current trends, social media and internet marketing, and who is a real go-getter, that's perfect! They'll bring the wisdom of many transactions along with a cutting-edge process and twenty-first century marketing.

But if you're considering someone with loads of experience who still does real estate the exact same way they did it when Reagan was in office, run for the hills! It'd be like hiring a surgeon who still sterilizes his scalpel over a hot flame! Real estate is so different than

it was decades ago, even *five years ago*. The market has changed dramatically, and the way buyers search for and find homes is totally different (Hint: It's online). If your “experienced” agent doesn't know this, and doesn't know how to create an attractive landing page for your home, or get into the back end of Zillow to upgrade your home's profile and keep it in prime position, or how to create a strategic ad campaign on social media, well, you'd be shooting yourself in the foot to choose them.

You would be much better off with a newbie who is gung-ho, tech-savvy, bright, knowledgeable about the market, marketing and digital marketing, and who is eager to do all they can to build themselves a great reputation. They'll treat you like gold because, to them, you are! Just make sure that newbie is working for a good broker who will pay attention and guide them along the way.

Reputation

This is so important! You want someone who is respected in the community; who is known for their *ethics* and *integrity* as a person and listing agent. Why would you ever want to deal with someone who is unethical in *any* circumstance? Unless you're looking for a partner to help you rob a bank. But even then,

you want the guy to be honest enough to give you your share of the loot, right?

No other agent or loan officer or escrow officer (or pizza delivery guy!) will want to work with an agent who is known to be shady or just difficult to work with. Why would another agent bring a deal from their really qualified buyers to an agent who is unresponsive, untrustworthy, and a pain in the you-know-what? Even if your home is the Taj Mahal and you're offering it at a screamin' great price, other agents will steer their clients as far away as possible. And if you *do* happen to enter into a Contract of Sale while Mr. or Ms. Shady-Pants Agent has your listing, trust me, it will not go well. And in this litigious world we live in, you're totally putting yourself at risk.

Just don't hire that weasel! Plenty of professionals out there are ethical and respected. Don't invite unnecessary grief (and lawsuits!) by choosing the rotten apple in the barrel.

Okay, so how do you scope out an agent's reputation? Asking them for references would be nice but they'll only give you their most satisfied clients or the people they've bribed to say nice things. Your better bet is to go online and check out Google, Zillow, Facebook, Realtor.com, or Yelp for client reviews.

You can also check with the Better Business Bureau and the Department of Real Estate. If you know any Realtors® in the area, ask them their thoughts on the agent you're considering.

Overall Team

It takes a village, right? Unless an agent is listing just one or maybe two houses at a time, they **cannot** keep on top of everything that needs to be done to get you the best result in the shortest amount of time! They need support. They need resources. They need other really committed, skilled, and talented people on their team to keep the momentum going during the sale of your home.

Not every great agent has an office of twenty staffers to run the show. Some professionals have built part-time teams or virtual teams that are highly efficient and effective. But if your prospective listing agent uses their pool maintenance guy to keep up their website and their thirteen-year old niece to design and mail out flyers, you need to look elsewhere.

A listing agent who strives for excellence will spend money to make sure their team is dedicated, motivated and proficient. So much of what is done during the sale of your house will not be done by the agent who

signs the listing agreement. It's important that you know who else will be working on your sale, what specifically they contribute, their experience, and how often you'll be interacting with them.

Outside Resources

Every transaction requires a number of outside resources, people who are not directly associated with your listing agent's team. These include home inspectors, escrow officers, loan officers, insurance agents, even building and maintenance contractors. They're the professional experts your agent calls for advice and/or service. Realtors® who really know what they're doing have consciously cultivated a good team of these folks. They've vetted them, checked their work and their references, and probably work with them on a regular basis. They *know* them.

Why should you care? Because this outside team can make or break a transaction! When your agent has a strong outside team to support you through the process, you'll avoid so many headaches! Even if that outside resource is needed by the "buyer's side," your listing agent can ensure the deal goes through smoothly by recommending good resources and people to the buyer and the buyer's agent.

I've always believed that my team of resources is one of my strongest assets because I've seen what can happen *without* such a team. An inept escrow officer can completely screw up an escrow by miscalculating amounts due. An insurance agent can delay a close by not getting the right policy together in time. Another example: What if your buyer wants something fixed within a really short contingency period? Your listing agent can save the day by having just the right person to handle it on speed dial. You won't have to scramble around looking for a contractor who may or may not be any good and may not get the job done in time. Having a list of resources to go to in a pinch can save the sale of your home!

Rapport

Having rapport with your agent can help immensely. Having rapport basically means that you feel “aligned” with someone. You not only get along with them, you feel that you're “kindred spirits.” They “get” you. Maybe you have different backgrounds, even come from different cultures, but they “speak your language.”

I know, this is probably starting to sound like dating advice! But the point is that you'll be entrusting a precious possession, your home, to a total stranger. Not

only is it the largest financial asset most of us have, but our homes often have a lot of emotional attachment as well. You want an agent you really trust and who understands how important this sale is to you.

You probably have specific, important reasons and goals for selling your home (we'll talk about this in a later chapter) so you don't want some bulldozer of a listing agent to put *their* agenda before yours. You want someone who will not only guide you but who will *listen* to you. You'll be spending time and making important decisions with your listing agent. They don't have to become your very best friend, but you certainly don't want to get stuck with someone who irritates the heck out of you!

Questions to Ask

I'll give you specific questions to ask about marketing and negotiation later. Here are some additional questions you can use to vet potential listing agents. I'd suggest you keep this list along with other questions you have right next to you during your first appointment, so that you can get the information you need to feel confident about your decision.

Credentials:

1. Are you a Realtor®? What resources from the NAR do you use?
2. What further courses have you taken in real estate? What did you learn from them?
3. (If they show you a certain credential) What does this credential mean? How will it help you sell my home?

Experience:

1. How much experience do you have selling homes like mine in this area? Can you give me some recent examples?
2. How many homes have you sold over your career? Is that you and your own team personally, or does it include other agents under your broker?
3. Do you specialize in my type of home? This geographic area? What makes this type of home and this area unique?
4. (If they have many years of experience) How would you say that real estate has changed over the last several years? Have you kept up with the latest trends in marketing to buyers online? What specifically do you do in that arena?

5. (If they have little experience) Do you have a more senior person who will be intimately involved in this listing? Who is that person?

Reputation:

Though you can't really ask them directly what their reputation in the community is, you *can* ask:

1. Are you involved in the community and any professional organizations?
2. What do you like your clients and counterparts to say or think about you? What do you think you are known for as an agent?

Overall Team:

1. Who else is on your team? What are their skills and background?
2. What specifically do you handle versus what members of your team handle?
3. How often will I be interacting with them? With you?

MARKETING IN TODAY'S WORLD: THE DIGITAL DIFFERENCE

The world has changed drastically over the last couple of decades, hasn't it? The way we communicate, buy, and get our news, information and entertainment has completely changed. Even in the last five years, things like online shopping and social media have exploded. With technology, we can pay bills and order our lattes with our smartphones. We can take a video of Junior taking his first steps and send it to Grandma thousands of miles away in seconds. We can find out where the nearest gas station is or how high Mt. Everest is (29,029 feet!) with a two second Google search.

Yet despite our fantastic advances in technology, the real estate industry has lagged way behind. The vast majority of agents still do their jobs the same old way they did in the '80's, *especially* when it comes to marketing. Why do you care? Because basic traditional marketing will *not* get you the best result. It may be able to get your house sold but it will not happen as quickly as it could, and you won't get the price you want or the most favorable terms you could get. Why? Because ***basic traditional marketing does not reach as many potential, qualified buyers.*** Period.

So, though you don't need to be especially tech-savvy, your listing agent absolutely needs to be. And

though you don't need to know how to take traditional marketing and put it on steroids, your listing agent needs to know how to do this. As a homeowner, you just need to know enough about these things so you can tell if the agents you're interviewing know what the heck they're talking about before you sign on the dotted line! For example, many agents will tell you, "Yeah, sure, I market on social media." But what they're really saying is that they'll post something about your house on their business and personal Facebook pages. Who sees it? The people who already see those posts. That, my friends, is not how you market on social media!

Effective digital marketing targets all those folks who are not already connected. It captures potential buyers who don't visit that agent's website or Facebook pages. It's the difference between 12 people knowing that your home is on the market and 12,000 people knowing. In fact, my first video home tour that I did got 27,000 views on Facebook alone and 2,600 views on Youtube. According to the National Association of Realtors, 97% of buyers will walk through a home they see online.¹ So, imagine, on a listing video for your home, the difference between 30 minutes of viewing time and 300 hours of viewing time or 12 views and 12,000 views! It's like the difference between singing in the shower and singing at half-time during the Super Bowl. It's all singing but the real pros go for the Super Bowl gig!

The Power of Digital Marketing

I cannot stress enough how much the internet and social media can do to ensure the successful and satisfying sale of your home. This type of marketing can get very technical, but you don't need to know all the technical ins and outs. All you need to know is how exactly your listing agent plans to tap into this power for you.



Brent Silberbauer Investment Realtor
4d · 🌐

Beautifully remodeled home in a great location and at an affordable price! It doesn't get much better than that! This home features three bedrooms and two bathrooms and is currently for sale at \$359,900. For more information please visit www.928Karen.com



928KAREN.COM
928 Karen Drive

Learn More

10.8K Views

 Like

 Comment

 Share


Brent Silberbauer Investment Realtor
6d · 🌐

—> 2621 Sedona Ave, Chico CA 📍
 4 beds | 3 bath | 2,242 sqft | 2018 built | Incredible garden & kitchen + MORE!
 -
 More details here 🖱️ <http://www.2621Sedona.com>
 -
 This home is listed by: Brent Silberbauer // 02019819
 Sheraton Investment Services
www.BrentSellsChico.com



2621SEDONA.COM
You have got to see this backyard!
Learn More

10.6K Views

 Like
  Comment
  Share


Brent Silberbauer Investment Realtor
April 29 at 1:00 PM · 🌐

Imagine living in this peaceful cul-de-sac community right near Bidwell Park.

This dream home goes LIVE soon...

Get all the info and be the first to know the all details here:
<https://www.28rubicon.com/>

Brent Silberbauer, DRE # 2091914



28RUBICON.COM
The One You've Been Waiting For...
 Modern, Quiet, & Close to Everything

Learn More

27.5K Views

 Love
  Comment
  Share

Good marketing *without* tapping into the power of social media and the internet might attract *dozens* of prospective buyers. Good marketing on social media *can reach literally thousands!* And having more potential buyers exposed to your home *definitely* gives your home a competitive advantage.

An exceptional agent will do **paid advertising** on social media which can literally get thousands of views. Your agent should also be creating “cookies” on the backend of their advertising to capture information on the target audience. A good agent knows how to use paid *weekly* Facebook ad campaigns that are *targeted* to people “interested in moving” per Facebook analytics. They will do paid ads on social media sites with your property tour (this generates over 10,000+ views, hours of video watch time, and tons of comments, likes and shares!). They’ll post on Craigslist to capture out-of-area leads and they’ll post frequently on Instagram to reach the millennial market.

If your agent is really sharp, they won’t just list your home on MLS. They’ll do weekly posts and updates of your home on various real estate sites to keep your home in top spots. They’ll also do a “reverse prospecting search” to identify prospective buyers.

In everything they do, they will make sure that they have identified the potential buyers who are most likely to pay the highest price for your home. This becomes the *target market* they focus their efforts on. They don’t just create boring ads and posts. They get creative with contests and giveaways that promote your home’s virtual tour video. Also, in everything they

post online, they'll research and use *search engine optimization (SEO)* to make sure the ads and posts about your home get the most views. This means using titles, captions and content that feature key words potential home buyers are using to find a home.

When it comes to *online marketing* and *social media* (which is my personal expertise and strength!), we often think of Facebook. But YouTube and Instagram are also important. In fact, YouTube is the world's third largest search engine (only behind Google and Google Images)² and is growing in use by the newer generations. In today's age, having videos of your home on YouTube with great titles and captions is a MUST.

We also use software that can track buyers' behaviors online and send them information about our properties that match up to homes they are searching for. From there, we can generate a list of those buyers and continue to market to them. It's pretty amazing what today's technology can do!

Once they've placed ads and posts online, great agents don't just "set it and forget it." They have a *constant tracking system* that determines which ads are doing well and which need tweaking. They stay on top of the campaign and immediately contact any leads that come in from it personally *via phone or text*.

Tracking also allows an agent to be proactive and more effective. For example, if one of my homes has had a certain number of showings within a certain time period but no offers, I know it's time to reduce the price. This isn't my crystal ball talking. It's data. It's beyond just doing a comparative market analysis. My team analyzes the data of home sales and days on market for any given period, how much inventory is on the market, absorption rate, and whether it's a buyers' or a sellers' market. In some markets, fifteen showings in twenty-one days with no offer spells trouble. In a slower market or a hotter market, the criteria would be different. The point is, we always take the time to analyze the data and track our marketing results so we can continue to be proactive.

During the initial interview, you should ask to see examples of the agent's proposed listing and their social media analytics from past properties. I've given you an example of what my team uses in the back of this book on page 78.

Traditional Marketing on Steroids

You're probably familiar with the basics of traditional marketing in real estate: The agent lists your property on MLS, makes up a flyer, sends out a mass email to other real estate agents, throws up a couple

signs, puts some photos on their company website, and holds an open house or two. Done, right?

That is *not* how great agents today do it. Great agents make sure that everything they do stands out and is unique and exceptional. And when they do that, your home stands out and it looks unique and exceptional. These agents put their “traditional marketing” on steroids and the “traditional” part is only one step in the whole marketing strategy. Here’s what those first traditional marketing pieces look like for the kind of exceptional listing agent you really want on your team:

MLS Listing: A great agent will not only list your home on MLS but on *all* of the real estate sites available like Zillow, Redfin, Realtor.com and Trulia. (There are actually hundreds of real estate sites and I market my listings on *all* of them.) A good agent will use the “back end” of these sites (when allowed or when they pay to do so) so they can make your listing more attractive and guarantee the property will stay in a primary position. They’ll post a virtual video tour of your home rather than just a few photos. (For an example of a video tour, look up “Brent Silberbauer” on YouTube for my entire catalog of past tours) In the listing, a great agent won’t just post the basics with

the same canned copy and paste description you see on every listing. They'll feature things that make your home unique and particularly attractive to potential qualified buyers—and they'll have done their research beforehand to identify the most likely buyers and what they're looking for.

Professional Videos and Photos: Realtors® who really care about doing a superior job for you won't just shoot a few photos and a quick video with their smartphone on the fly! They will *pay* to have a professional photographer and videographer come in to do the job. These pros will make sure to capture your home's best features, to ensure that unique aspects of your home stand out, that lighting is great, and that the angles shown are inviting and give your home a sense of spaciousness. Then they'll take those photos along with the video and edit the heck out of them to give the biggest impact. They'll even do things like taking pictures of your house at night if it looks great when it is all lit up. Whatever it takes, they'll spare no expense to make your property better than it's ever looked before.

It can't be understated how critically important *video* is in marketing your home! Statistically, on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, videos

get *12 times more shares* than texts or photos!³ So, when your home is posted using video, you'll get, on average, 12 times more people viewing it organically! And just imagine what happens when you invest in *paid* ads for your home (that's how we get thousands of views and hundreds of hours watched!). When a website has video on it, people spend 88% more time on that website.³ That's why I take videos *very seriously* in marketing all of my listings.

In many cases, I'll use drones for parts of the video. So much of real estate can be shown off from the sky. Not only will I take photos from the drone, I will make sure the drone flies from the home over to schools, restaurants, parks, and whatever other neighborhood assets are nearby. This way the viewer can see exactly how close the property is to great walkable destinations.

Truthfully, an incredibly awesome video that **doesn't get proper distribution** is like your grandmother's crystal wine glasses that are tucked away in some closet—*beautiful but useless*. 99% of agents will say they market using video, but they never take the time or exert the energy to distribute it as it should be done. My videos can have over 100 hours of viewing time. Based on how ineffectively most agents use

social media and video today, it's highly unlikely that they even get 5 hours of watch time!

Printed Materials: Rather than a cheap flyer, a great listing agent will spend the time and money to create a high-quality, full color brochure with links to the virtual video tour and website. They'll make sure a digital copy of this brochure (basically, your home's website) gets sent to *everyone* who makes online or phone inquiries about your house or any similar homes in a digital copy. I make sure that all printed materials are cell phone compatible because **91% of buyers use cell phones** in their property search.

Engaging the Real Estate Community: A Realtor® who has a good reputation definitely has a head start here! One with a rotten reputation, not so much. First, a great listing agent will create an attractive email with a link to the brochure, the website listing, and the virtual tour. Rather than just blasting this email out and hoping someone will open it, they'll target their emails to the best buyers' agents in the area, then they'll follow up with them personally. They'll make sure that buyers' agents in their own company keep the property top of mind.

I also send it to agents outside the area who have brought buyers into the community. Our team con-

tacts preferred lenders for any prospective buyers in their pipeline. And when my clients' homes are being shown, my team will contact buyers' agents *within 24 hours after each showing* to get specific feedback to help guide our marketing campaign.

Listing Signs: Most listing signs are designed to promote the agent, not sell the home! A great agent will spend the money to create a distinctive sign that directs the prospective buyers to a custom website with the home tour video and additional information on the home. This way the prospective buyers get to experience the home in the best light possible! These videos are carefully scripted to highlight the features that will truly benefit buyers in the market. Having a custom domain (i.e. www.123BananaStreet.com) hanging on the sign allows prospects to share the home video tour and pictures digitally with a quick text message to friends and family who may also be interested.

Your Home's Website: Yes, your home should have its very own website, not just a crummy page with a few photos on the real estate company's website! Your home's website should be attractive to the eye with all the information a potential buyer needs: the virtual video tour, a photo gallery, a description of the home,

and, most importantly, an easy way to submit their contact information so we can follow up with them. We love this feature and so do Buyers.

Does this sound like a lot of work? Honestly, it's just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what an *exceptional* listing agent can do for you. Yes, it requires a *commitment of time and money* to market your home. It requires a commitment on your agent's part to *continually educate themselves on technology and innovation*. This is what you *deserve* and what you should *expect* from your listing agent! And if it's not being done, then it is costing you money and time when it comes to selling your home.

Seller Questions to Ask on Marketing

1. Specifically, what will you do to market this property?
2. What potential buyers would you target for my property and why? How specifically will you market to them?
3. What do you think makes my home most attractive to buyers and how will you feature it?
4. Can you show me examples of your brochures and other marketing materials?

5. Can you show me photos of your custom website signs? How will it stand out?
6. Do you use the back end of Zillow and other real estate sites? Will you add video tours in addition to the photos on Zillow?
7. What kinds of efforts will you make to engage the real estate community about my property?
8. How will you engage my neighborhood?
9. What will my home's website look like? Who will take photos and videos?
10. What kind of social media ad campaigns will you run? How do you track them? How often will you post on various sites? How will you use their analytics?
11. Can you show me examples of reach, engagement, video views and time watched of your past home ads on social media? (If they gloss over this or can't answer, it tells you they aren't marketing correctly online which will cost you thousands of dollars.)
12. What kind of campaign do you run before the property officially goes on the market?
13. How do you specifically target buyers who are looking at properties similar to mine?

NEGOTIATING FOR THE WIN

Negotiation has gotten a bad rap and is generally misunderstood. That's because many people think of negotiation's like a big family-style dinner where there's not enough food to go around. Everyone has to beat out the other guy and get theirs before it's all gone! Others think of negotiating as just plain rude. If someone asks for something, you either give it to them or not. It's impolite to wheel and deal about it.

Both of these are totally outdated descriptions of what good negotiation should be. Good negotiation is based on the "win-win" concept. Everyone in the transaction gets what they *really* want and need, not necessarily absolutely everything they'd like. It's based on conscious compromise, give and take. And it's the most effective way to end up with the best price and most favorable terms for your home in the shortest amount of time!

Like marketing, you don't have to become an expert in negotiation yourself. But it's very important that you can identify what kind of negotiator the agents you're interviewing are and how much specific training they've had. To do that, we're going to take a quick look at a few different negotiation styles.

The Competitive Negotiator

This is a “winner takes all” kind of negotiator. It’s a very old school style of negotiation and, like the old “hard sell” from decades ago, it’s not the most effective approach in today’s world. An agent who is a competitive negotiator typically has a big ego and is proud to be known as cutthroat and unyielding. They might sell a lot of homes but it’s usually at a high cost to their Seller (the deal takes much longer than it should, they end up with a high price but horrible terms, etc., etc.). You can recognize a competitive negotiator by the way they need to be right about *everything*! They are stubborn and inflexible, often not distinguishing between big issues and the unimportant ones. The competitive negotiator often relies on bullying techniques, like threatening to pull the deal or setting impossible timeframes for contingency periods or funding. This kind of approach does *not* speed up the process but usually ends up costing you money in the end!

This kind of agent might be charming to you as a client but tends to treat everyone else rudely and with disrespect. They can be short-tempered and unprofessional, even using profanity toward potential buyers and their agents. Their need to be superior

and “right” ends up costing everyone unnecessary stress and money.

Why is an agent using this approach ineffective? Other agents don’t like them, don’t trust them, and know that they will be abusive during the transaction. So, they avoid bringing buyers to them. Or if they do, the buyer’s agent approaches the transaction in full armor with rifles cocked! The stubbornness and inflexibility of a competitive negotiator will kill deals that could be viable or, when transactions do go through, leaves a bad taste in the mouths of everyone involved. It’s simply not good business, and it won’t get you the result you deserve.

The Compliant Negotiator

This kind of negotiator is the complete opposite of the competitive negotiator. Compliant people fear confrontation and disagreement. They need to be liked so they’ll let others walk all over them. This type of agent will always give in to the demands of the other side—and will convince you to do the same. They might be a very nice person but not the person you need on your team.

Think of it like a surgical nurse who is afraid of blood. You wouldn’t want that person assisting the

surgeon who's operating on you! In the operating room, blood is just part of it. No one expects the patient to be wheeled in and get completely healed without shedding a drop. A good nurse knows there's going to be blood. It's a necessary part of the process and it's not bad (unless it gets out of control!). While a fearful nurse closes their eyes at the sight of blood and avoids it altogether, a competent nurse takes it all in stride and manages the situation in the calmest way possible, knowing that it will lead to a healthy patient.

Like blood in the operating room, negotiation is just part of every real estate deal. It's something to be expected, not feared. It's extremely rare when a buyer steps up and accepts every single term that you as the Seller have proposed. It's not like customers in a department store who just look at the price tag and plunk down their credit cards. Real estate transactions are full of big issues and tiny issues, all of which require negotiation. If your agent simply caves every time the Buyer asks for something, they are *not* representing your best interests.

This type of agent is always warning you to cave in because "we may lose the deal." Don't fall for it. If a buyer wants your property badly enough, they'll negotiate. When my clients are nervous about losing

a deal because we counter or negotiate, I always remind them that, if the buyer walks because our terms are not acceptable without countering back, they didn't want the house badly enough. They would have walked away anyway at some other time during the transaction and wasted our precious time.

Okay, so if it's not the bully and it's not the scaredy cat, *what kind of negotiator do you want?*

The Collaborative Negotiator

Like that calm surgical nurse, a collaborative negotiator expects and is prepared for negotiation. At its core, negotiation is communication. So, they'll listen and ask questions, seeking to really understand all parties to the transaction.

First of all, in collaboration with you, they'll set goals for the sale of your home. They'll help you prioritize your needs and desires for the transaction. They may even discuss areas of compromise with you prior to putting your home on the market. They won't promise you the moon but will help you be realistic from the get-go.

When offers come in, a collaborative negotiator will take the time to understand each Buyer's motivations and priorities by discussing them with the Buyer's

agent. They'll do their research. When a conflict arises between what you want and what the Buyer wants, they'll work with the Buyer's agent to come up with creative options and solutions that work for everyone. They won't give away the farm and they'll always make sure that your most important priorities are honored. But they'll be willing to compromise on small issues that allow an otherwise great deal to go through. And if a dispute arises, they'll have the skills to keep the situation as calm as possible. They won't overreact to unreasonable demands or high emotions from the other side but will keep their cool and seek to understand the real issues beneath. They won't let their ego or need for being right get in the way of getting the deal to go through as long as it is in the best interest of their Seller's goals and objectives.

To someone who is not trained specifically in negotiation, the collaborative approach might seem weak. But it's actually the strongest and most effective approach you can take. Just ask Harvard. The school offers extensive training in this. It's the approach taught in virtually every advanced negotiation course these days. So, if your agent has taken some of these courses, that's a very good sign! Skills for collaborative negotiation include: effective verbal communication, great listening skills, rapport building,

creative problem solving, assertiveness, and “ethical persuasion” skills. With these skills in their toolbelt, a collaborative agent will get you a much better end result than either of the other styles.

Your Job During Negotiations

You do have an important part to play in the negotiation. Your job isn't to deal directly with the Buyer or the Buyer's agent. In fact, no matter how great you are yourself as a negotiator, direct interaction on your part will only cause confusion and possibly derail the transaction. Let your agent do their job and support them. Here are some of your duties as the Seller:

Remember Your Priorities: In the next chapter, we'll talk about how to unearth your priorities for selling your home, which are the things that are most important to you. During negotiations and within the contracts, you'll be making decisions on *hundreds* of issues. Some of them matter and some really don't. But it's easy to get caught up in all of it and lose sight of what you're really trying to accomplish by selling your home. Be sure and keep your priorities front and center so that when the inevitable kerfuffle happens, you won't lose your way.

Stay Calm and Think It Through: I know, I know, it's your *home* we're talking about! But the best decisions are *not* made when we're feeling emotional. Yes, you may be really ticked that the Buyer wants to charge you outrageous rent so you can stay a month after close. Yes, you may get freaked out when you hear they plan to fill in your swimming pool and remove the lemon trees you planted. Take a deep breath. *Respond, don't react.* Avoid a knee-jerk reaction and think it through. And if you need time to get into a better place emotionally, sleep on it before making a decision.

I remember in my earlier years in the business, I'd react and make decisions based upon emotions rather than facts. It's something that takes time and a lot of transactions to learn. Thank goodness, I've had many transactions to get my emotions intact and to help my clients do the same.

Listen and Ask Questions: Your agent is there to advise so please listen. If you don't agree or understand why they want you to compromise on something, ask questions. Ask what their reasoning is. Ask about other options and, if you've thought of a different option, let them know. Ask them what will likely happen if you *don't* agree to the compromise. At the end of the day,

you do have the final say in any decision. Just be sure to get all the information you need to make a good one.

Be Clear: Your listing agent wants to negotiate on your behalf so be as clear as you can. Keep communication open. If you don't like how the negotiation is going, tell them and explain why. When you make a decision or compromise, make sure it's one you feel good enough about that you will honor it. And if you're a couple selling your home, try to avoid mixed signals. Come to decisions together. Giving your agent clear marching orders allows them to represent you to the best of their ability. Then be willing to listen if your agent disagrees with the direction you want to take. They should be able to explain their alternative and why it is more beneficial to you.

Seller Questions to Ask on Negotiation

Unfortunately, most people don't find out what their agent's negotiating style is until they're in the middle of negotiations! Asking a few questions and really paying attention to how they interact with you will help.

1. What negotiations training and courses have you taken? What did you learn from them?

2. How would you characterize yourself as a negotiator? What is your best skill in negotiating?
3. What do you think are the most important aspects of any negotiation?
4. What part will I play in negotiations and how will we communicate during this stage?

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Another major area you want to screen for in a potential listing agent is *communication*. Too many traditional listing agents get you to sign on the dotted line then disappear for a month or so until they have an offer in hand—or to tell you why they *don't* have an offer! In this age of instant communication, that is simply not acceptable! You deserve more and should expect more, and you don't want to end up having to chase your agent down to get your important questions answered.

You want to know what's going on with the marketing. You want to hear about any comments made by potential buyers looking at your home. You want to give your input into the process and make sure your interests are really being served. Make sure you receive the kind of communication you need from the beginning.

For example, even during the initial listing appointment, a really great agent will take the time to explain what's happening in your market and how that will affect the sale of your home and its pricing. They'll tell you who your most likely buyers will be and how they intend to market to them. They'll give you honest

feedback on your expectations for the sale and maybe offer alternatives to expectations that aren't realistic. They won't just schmooze you and talk over your head.

In fact, if three out of the four agents you interview say your home is overpriced, don't believe that fourth guy who says, "Hey, no problem!" He'll only waste your time when three months down the road he suggests reducing it! I can't tell you how many times I've seen a listing go to an agent who overstates the listing price when I was frank and honest about it. Then I'll see the home sit on the market for months and watch price drop after price drop until it finally sells for *less* than I could have gotten for it! The agent you want will treat you with respect as a valued partner in the process and not lead you on like this.

An example: A couple in our community wanted to upgrade their home to something bigger. They had a new baby and they simply ran out of rooms! The perfect home came up in a gated community called Canyon Oaks. A listing agent said they could get \$675,000 for their current home which was a two story, three bedroom home with an ADU. Well, they didn't get that price. It sat on the market and they got a few offers here and there but they ended up taking too many days to sell and lost the ability to purchase the

beautiful home in Canyon Oaks. After months on the market and going through both Spring and Summer they sadly took the home off the market. After feeling the cram of their larger family in their now too small home, they contacted me. We sold the home at an over asking price in a short amount of time. However, our entry list point was \$599,000—exactly the listing price they *should* have had from the beginning!

So, make sure your agent is frank, honest, and open with you. And this good communication should continue after you sign a listing agreement with them.

Starting Off on the Right Foot

From the very beginning, your listing agent and their team should almost be in constant contact. Not in a way that harasses you or makes them inefficient, but in a way that keeps you informed about *what is happening* and *when it's happening*.

The first thing they should ask you is how to best connect with you. Do you prefer Phone? Text? Email? What times of day are good? Your agent should also be clear about when they are available and who to contact for pressing questions if they aren't. I give all my clients contact numbers for all of the players on my team they'll be interacting with.

Here are just some of the things your agent and their team should be asking and communicating to you at the start:

Your goals and needs from this sale. I cover this more thoroughly in the next section. But your listing agent should take the time to sit down with you and really understand what you want and need from this sale. They should be sincerely interested and pay careful attention to what you have to say. A good agent will listen and ask questions so they can tailor their marketing and negotiation strategies accordingly. If they gloss over this part and don't go in-depth with you on this, that's definitely a red flag! It might mean that they'll be using "off the shelf" strategies they've always used—and you'll get an "off the shelf" result in the end.

Your home's best features. Who knows this better than you? Your agent should ask for your input about what you most like about the home and what makes it great to live in. A great listing agent (or their marketing specialist) should ask you about the features of your home and any upgrades you've done. They should ask about the specific location including great neighbors, terrific neighborhood hot spots, and public amenities nearby. Of course, they'll have a lot of area statistics

and knowledge at their fingertips. But your personal insight into these things, whether it's neighborhood schools or local hair salons, will add a lot to the marketing of your home.

Your home's information. Okay, this is the boring part but it's necessary. I call it my "Seller's Homework" and I've created a special packet for my clients that takes them through all we need. It asks for things like alarm codes and desired showing instructions (i.e. "please give owner at least 30 minutes notice" or "do not allow pets outside"). It also includes forms to help my clients provide all the information they need to provide legally to prospective buyers.

In California and many other states, the amount of information you have to disclose is incredible! For the required disclosures, I provide them with an easy online form. I tell my clients to pour themselves a glass of wine, open up their laptop or tablet, then walk from room to room and make notes of any repairs or changes they've made over the years. When it comes to filling out State-required disclosures, we go into detail with our clients explaining what each line item means. (Sadly, many listing agents simply hand their clients these complicated forms and ask them to fill them out. This is not only a hassle for you but

can cause legal problems down the line if you don't do it correctly and completely.)

My state, California, is very strict about disclosures and you have to disclose *anything* that has ever been modified, repaired, replaced, added, fixed or changed. You have to disclose *anything* you know about that “may” happen in the future or that did happen in the past to the home, city, neighborhood, etc. It's not up to you to decide if it's good or bad, significant or not, even if something is obvious or not. You still need to disclose it. So, if you live on a golf course, disclose it no matter how obvious that seems. If you don't and a golf ball hits the house and damages someone or something, you may be open to a lawsuit. I am *not* kidding!

Those “boilerplate” disclosures in your forms cover a lot, but over-disclosure is always better if you want to avoid future lawsuits. If you have a lot of traffic or live on a busy street, disclose it. If you changed out the toilet seat in 2005, disclose it. If you know about any future change to the community, disclose it. If you have an HOA and you know dues are going up, disclose it. Yes, it's a pain to note all these things, but it's much less stressful than a lawsuit!

Setting up initial appointments. Your agent's team should not only let you know when things are happening but should schedule times that are convenient for you, not just for them. You'll have an appointment for photos and videos to be taken and they should also send you a checklist of how to prepare for this appointment. I usually encourage clients to have a stager come to their home to make suggestions about how to best show off their home's features and do some basic staging with them.

Your agent's team will schedule installation of a lawn sign and should ask for your input before placing it. They'll also have a lock box installed and someone should sit down and explain to you exactly how this will work, who will have access to your home and when they'll have access. I also always give my clients tips on how to keep valuables safe during the period when a home is being shown.

Home Preparation: Before your home goes on the market, a good listing agent should provide you with a checklist of repairs and any improvements they recommend. And your agent should take the time to discuss this list with you, explaining why certain things are important, then help you come up with alternatives, if necessary. I also give my clients a list

of our preferred vendors (who have been screened and vetted) for any work that needs doing or to get estimates. (I'll talk more about how to get your home market-ready in the next chapter.)

Communication During the Marketing Stage

Sadly, this is the stage when too many listing agents go silent! They might be working on your behalf, but they don't bother to keep you in the loop. But a really good listing agent will involve you. First of all, they'll lay out exactly what they intend to do to market your property *before* they even get started. They'll tell you where and when certain pieces will be coming out. They'll make sure you get marketing pieces so you can share them. They'll tell you the best way to share on your social media and create emails you can forward to friends and family.

When the marketing phase begins, you should get updates on progress at least once a week! Your listing agent should also be receiving and sharing feedback from buyers' agents after they've shown the property. Waiting three months to find out that buyers all think your carpet needs replacing is a waste of time! We install synched lock boxes that tell us in real time when a home is shown. Then someone on our team contacts

the agent within twenty-four hours of each showing and asks for feedback. We share that feedback with our clients and discuss whether any changes need to be made.

Most importantly, your listing agent should be tracking and analyzing the results from different marketing efforts. And they should respond quickly to whatever trends they see! For example, if an ad on social media isn't generating any leads, it needs to be tweaked. If the home is being shown frequently but is getting no offers, maybe the price or something in the home itself needs to be tweaked. If the brochure doesn't generate any phone calls from potential buyers, it needs to be tweaked. A great agent will stay on top of this and make sure you're kept informed.

During Negotiation

This is the period when you and your agent should have the most one-on-one time. People on your agent's team may handle many different parts of a transaction, but when it comes to negotiation, your listing agent should be totally hands-on and never leave negotiation to a junior person who has no experience or training!

First of all, your agent should share any information they have about the buyer regarding their hot buttons, needs, and motivations. They should also be able to share with you what they know about the Buyer's agent: what type of negotiator they are, how communicative and reliable they are, other transactions they've closed, etc.

As offers come in, your agent should be able to give you good, clear feedback on how viable the offers are and show you data to back up their conclusions. They will also point out where each offer might be countered to get closer to what you want. This should not be a "my way or the highway" kind of discussion but a collaborative give and take with your agent. I'm very aware that I know more about real estate and this market than any of my clients and that it's my job to come up with creative counters and solutions to differences between their goals and the offers that come in. That said, I respect my clients as intelligent people and always ask for their input during this entire phase.

During Escrow

Honestly, for most Sellers, this is the most frustrating stage! It's a waiting game to see if all the contingencies clear. It's a waiting game while the title company does its report. It's a waiting game to see when the

lender will finally release funding and the title can be recorded. And let me just tell you that during this stage, lots of “stuff” happens.

Personally, I don’t believe that my clients need to know about every tiny hiccup in this phase. But I do think they should be informed immediately of anything that might derail the transaction. Some agents believe they should “wait and see” if the worst eventually will happen. Honestly, I think they’re just afraid to face giving their clients bad news! Your listing agent should respect you enough to let you know if problems arise that may squelch the deal or cause it to change dramatically.

My first broker taught me that it’s our job as agents to be problem solvers and that problems will *always* come up somewhere during a transaction. So many different people have parts to play in getting to a successful conclusion. I believe that it’s *my* job to know *their* jobs and to stay on top of what’s happening, rather than sitting back and assuming everything is just peachy keen. A good agent will constantly check in with the various participants and verify that the process is on track.

For example, if your agent finds out that the roof inspection came back with issues you didn’t know about,

you want to know sooner rather than later so you can decide what to do. If it looks like the buyer might not be able to qualify, your agent should tell you and get some back-up offers going. Hopefully, they asked the right questions prior to going into escrow to keep this from happening in the first place. But sometimes, things just come up. Someone missed something or forgot to ask the proper questions or didn't verify the proper information. You don't want to get to the very end of the loan contingency period to discover that the lender never intended to fund the loan!

What about working with the title company? Too many agents simply turn you over to the escrow officer and call it good. The great agents I know don't. Like me, they'll stay on top of the escrow and make sure all the players are getting documentation in on time, that it's correct, and it goes as smoothly as possible.

Seller Questions to Ask on Communication

You don't want to find out that you've hired a poor communicator six months down the line when you're trying to chase your agent down to find out what the heck is going on! Here are a few questions you might ask to see if the agents you're interviewing will really keep you informed and involved:

1. How often will your team communicate with me? Who on your team is my main contact person during each phase?
2. How can I reach you if I have an urgent question? Who do I call if I can't reach you?
3. What types of checklists or consultation do you give to help me get my home ready for market?
4. How often will I hear about your marketing efforts and the results we're getting? How much detail will you provide?
5. How often will you give me feedback about what potential buyers and their agents are saying about the property?
6. How will we stay in touch during negotiations?
7. How hands-on is your team during the contingency period? How do they coordinate with the escrow and the title company? How often will you give me updates?

Creating Clear Goals and Priorities

When people decide to sell their home, they don't just wake up one morning and say, "Let's put the house on the market!" They've usually thought about it for a while and often have more than one motivation behind the sale. (BTW, this is true of buyers too. They'll start a

home search—often online—3-6 months prior to being ready to pull the trigger. This is why it's important that your agent knows how to capture potential buyers who were searching previously.) And for couples selling, they often have different, even conflicting motivations.

To get the best result, the result that makes you happiest at the end of the day, it's *critically* important that you sit down and get very clear on *why* you're selling your home and *your particular goals* in selling your home. Without this information, even the best Realtor® will have trouble delivering for you.

Why? **Because your agent's strategy should be based on your individual goals and needs.** This includes their strategy for both marketing and negotiation. Yes, they may do the same basics for all of their listings. But they should also be tailoring these strategies to your needs and priorities.

Let's take someone who needs to move quickly to take care of a sick parent across the country. They don't want to leave too much money on the table, but they're more concerned about getting out of town ASAP with enough to pay off their mortgage. Contrast that scenario with a couple who isn't in a hurry, who wants to sell so they can upgrade, and who wants to get the most money they can out of the house.

Even if these homes were exactly the same in the exact same neighborhood, a good listing agent would approach them differently. They might recommend the second seller does some minor renovation or landscaping while they might recommend that the first seller clears out immediately so the house can be immediately occupied. With the second seller, they might push the price a bit (without going crazy) to see how the market responds. For the first seller, they might suggest a price that is just slightly below market.

In my experience, in any transaction, there are a million aspects that can be tweaked depending on my client's goal and needs. Things like length of escrow, cash versus obtaining a loan, renovations or none, contingencies or as-is, rent back or none, high or low deposit, back up offer or not, etc., etc. However, if you aren't very clear on what you need and want from the sale of your house, your agent simply can't develop the best strategy.

And during the sale process, you'll have dozens of decisions to make! If you take the time to be clear up front, making those decisions will be much easier and less stressful while your house is on the market and during negotiations.

Get Clarity

Sit down and write down all the things that are important to you in the sale of your house. Be sure and write down *everything* that comes to you. And as you write these things down, ask yourself, “Why?” For example, maybe you write, “Sell the house for \$650,000.” Why do you want to sell it for \$650,000? Is it because your neighbor sold his house for that much? Is it because that’s how much you need to pay off your mortgage and have enough for the down payment on your next home? Is it because you’re trying to fund your retirement? Get very specific about the reasons *why* what you want or need is important to you. (And by the way, how much you *net* out of the sale is more important to you than the selling price, right?) Just because you want or need a certain amount out of your house doesn’t mean it is worth that much. Bottom line, your home is only worth what a buyer is willing to pay in any given market.

Think about what you *don’t* want as well. Maybe you don’t want your house to be shown at certain times. Maybe you don’t want to repair certain things that you know should be repaired. Maybe you don’t want to clear out your overstuffed garage before your house goes on the market. List all of those things you

don't want and think about *why* you don't want them. Keep in mind that any restrictions you place on the sale will lessen the number of buyers and offers you attract. Talk to your Realtor® and ask about the impact of your restrictions then make a decision from there.

Clarity for Couples

When I have my Sellers do this process and they are selling as a couple, I often recommend that each person comes up with their own separate list. Why? Sometimes, one partner is hesitant to contradict the other or to be totally frank about what they want. Doing it separately gives each one a little more freedom.

After you each have made up your own individual lists, sit down together and compare them. Talk each item through. Notice which goals and desires you share. You might surprise each other with new ideas or possibilities. You may find areas where the two of you are rowing in different directions! If you have conflicts, it's important that you find this out now. It will save you many headaches down the road if you can resolve your differences now. After you've brought your agent on board, you want to present a united front so they can be clear about what you want and don't want from the sale and during the sales process.

Get Your Priorities Straight

In life, we rarely get *absolutely everything* we want! Selling your home is no different. You may luck out and have everything fall into place perfectly. But just in case you don't, you want to be clear on where you're willing to compromise and where you aren't.

For example, on your goals list you may have written down that you don't want to do any renovations whatsoever to your home. Two weeks in, your agent is getting feedback from buyers' agents that the shiny black walls in your entry, living and dining rooms are very off-putting. If you're determined to get your price in a reasonable amount of time, you may need to suck it up and repaint.

I give my clients an analysis as to what they should fix up or not and how that will or will not affect their bottom line. For example, if it only costs \$4,000 to paint the entire house but you can get \$20,000 more if you do, it's worth considering. If you and your agent think some work would be worth it and can get you this kind of return but you don't have the cash, ask if it can be taken out of escrow or if the agent has options where they can pay to have it fixed up, then get reimbursed from escrow. I partner with a renovation

center that offers this type of service and it can be a total game changer.

Back to your goals: Next, take your list and *start prioritizing*. If you could only have one of your goals, what would it be? If you could have three, which would they be? Keep going until you've got the whole list in order from "most important" to "least important".

Once you've completed and prioritized your list, share it with your listing agent. (I even ask people for their list at our first appointment.) They'll be able to give you feedback, make suggestions, and strategize to get you as much of that list as possible. The agent you really want to work with will be honest enough to tell you if some of what you want is unrealistic. They'll explain why and help you come up with a more reasonable expectation.

This is also the time to check "emotion versus fact." For sentimental reasons, you may really want to keep your daughter's room (the one who's away at college and about to get married) intact just as she left it. But if her Goth décor is scaring buyers off, you might need to reconsider and pack her stuff up.

Or maybe you're determined to get as much for your home as your snooty neighbor did last year. Is that

based on fact or pride? “Fact” would mean that the market is the same or better as it was when the other house sold, that your home is located as favorably on the exact same or larger lot size, and that your house is exactly the same as his with all the same upgrades. “Pride” would be, “Because my house is just as good!”

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve met with Sellers who want to receive the *highest* amount of money for their home. They think their home is worth more than everyone else’s. However, when they go to buy, they want the biggest house with the most upgrades for the *least* amount of money. And, hey, I get where they’re coming from. I’m the exact same way when I go to sell my own home and buy a new one! That’s emotional attachment, not reality.

Listing price is often subject to “emotion over fact.” If you’ve taken great care of your home and spent lots of money on awesome upgrades, you might be able to command a higher price—and you might not. Things like a swimming pool are very expensive but often don’t get good return for the money you spent on it. The next owner may actually want to tear out that custom mantel you loved and spent a small fortune on. Listing price isn’t justified solely by the amount of time and money you’ve put into your house. *It’s determined*

by the market. This is where you need to trust your agent. And if you've taken the time to choose a really good agent, you *can* trust their advice. (Just keep in mind that getting a real estate license and printing a business card doesn't necessarily make someone an advisor who should be trusted.) Listen when they tell you that your optimal listing price should be based on your goals and the market. Ask them to explain and show you the research that supports their suggested price and marketing strategy.

Once your home hits the market, and especially during negotiations, keep your prioritized list handy to help you make those big and small decisions. Use it as a guide to remind you of what's important and what isn't. This guide will make the process a heck of a lot easier for both you and your agent. It will take the pressure off any decisions because you won't be "re-thinking" yourself at every turn. And at the end of the day, you are way more likely to achieve those important goals you've set!

Here are some questions to help you get started with your wants and needs list but don't stop with these. Try to be as broad and as clear as you can.

Seller Questions to Ask on Goals and Priorities

1. Why are we selling our home?
2. Why at this particular time? Is this a “want to sell” or a “need to sell” time?
3. How quickly do we want to sell? How quickly do we really need to sell?
4. When do we want to move? Are we willing to vacate the home before it goes on the market? Do we want to rent back from the new owner if it closes before a certain date?
5. How much money do we want to *net* out of the sale? Why?
6. How soon do we need the funds?
7. How much money and effort are we willing to put into the house *before* it hits the market? What about changes or repairs requested by Buyer? Why will we do or not do these things?
8. Are we looking to repurchase? Locally or out of the area? Do we need help with that? (Your listing agent may be able to find you a good Buyers agent to work with.)

Seller's Prep for a Great Sale

I've mentioned a few ways you can help in terms of marketing and clarity about your goals and decisions. But making sure your home is market-ready is another huge way you can contribute to the successful sale of your home! Before even considering any renovations, most homeowners have plenty they can do to make their homes more attractive and more likely to breeze through inspections.

Set Up Your Home to Inspire Offers

Basically, you want your home to not only look clean and attractive, you also want *prospective buyers to be able to see themselves and their families living there*. You want them to walk around and visualize where their piano could go and where their winter clothes could be stored. You want them to imagine themselves sitting in your tub or cooking dinner for friends in your kitchen. So, though the way you have your home set up right now might be perfect for you, it's important to look at it from the perspective of others who might want to live there. Make this a project for your whole family and get everyone on board and doing their part.

Some things to consider:

Your Closets: Many of us jam as much as we can into our closets! We might have shoes piled on the closet floor or our collection of golf hats crowding the shelves above. Though your closet may be spacious, if it's crowded, it will look as if it isn't. And if it's *not* spacious, that fact will become painfully obvious. It's worth the time to do some Spring cleaning. This might be a good time to get rid of clothes you no longer wear. If not, then box up as much as you can and hide it under the bed if need be. This goes for the closets in all bedrooms, your coat closet, your kitchen pantry and cupboards—every place you store things. Yes, potential buyers will not only be checking out closets but also kitchen cupboards, linen closets, and even bathroom medicine cabinets! It's not just that people are nosey (though some definitely are!) but they are trying to imagine fitting their stuff into where your stuff is. I always tell my clients, “Hey, you have to pack up anyway, so why not start now?”

Your Clutter: Few of us live in totally uncluttered homes, especially if we're active and have an active family. Personally, I have a stack of books on the nightstand next to my bed that might kill someone in a bad earthquake! When my kids were younger, they picked

up their toys, but they had scads of them in every room in the house. I have a home office that has all kinds of paperwork, resource materials, and electronics in it. A friend of mine is a total tech guy and has what can be described as an Apple Computer museum. He has an original Apple 2e computer, the original iPod, iPad, iPhone, you name it. He collects older tech and has it on display in his office. While it's pretty cool to hear him talk about how revolutionary each device is, it makes the room feel cluttered.

Your mission here is to minimize the clutter! Box up stuff you don't access frequently. Keep stuff that you use often in an accessible place but hidden away. If your house is messy, Buyers get the impression that your home may not have been well-maintained. They'll get wary and look at everything about the home with a suspicious eye. So, though it might seem like a hassle, keep the goal in mind—and remember that it's not forever.

Your Housekeeping: Most of my clients hate this part. Most of us keep our homes relatively clean but the standard here is sparkling, market-ready clean. I usually suggest that my clients start with a great Spring cleaning that includes things like windows, fireplaces, overhead fans, baseboards, and vents. Get any tile

grout spiffed up. Shampoo carpets and rugs. Polish floors. Wipe down doggy doors. Touch up paint and patch holes in the walls.

Once the major clean is done and your home starts to be shown, keep that standard up as much as possible. You never know when that perfect Buyer will ask to see your home! Kitchens and bathrooms should be especially clean with sparkling floors. You may need to sweep, mop, and vacuum more often because of all the people trooping through your house.

Your Furniture: Don't panic! I'm not going to suggest that you buy all new furniture! Just take a look and consider if your furniture really shows off your home's assets. Your agent or someone on their team should be able to help with this. Oftentimes, it's a question of simply rearranging furniture to make a room look more spacious and welcoming. Other times, you may want to consider removing pieces of furniture (like extra dining room chairs or that super-huge sofa) and storing them to open a room up. Moving a lamp can give a room better light. Adding pillows to a sofa can hide its worn spots. In some situations, a house actually shows better if the owner moves out and it's totally empty! If this is an option for you, discuss it with your agent.

Your Personal Stuff: By “personal stuff,” I mean things like family photos, posters of rock bands or political slogans, the deer heads from your hunting adventures, those funny magnets and your kids’ art that you have on your refrigerator. Again, the objective is for potential buyers to see *themselves* in this home, not you. Think about it: When you walk into someone’s personal home for the first time, it can be a little awkward. You feel like an outsider and that you “don’t belong,” right? When you walk into a model home, you feel freer, not like an intruder. By hiding away a lot of what says “you” about the house, buyers are able to see more of “me” in it. I always advise my clients to make their homes as model-like as possible by removing most of their personal stuff.

Your Home’s Nose: In California, wine is big business and every wine drinker will tell you that wine has “a nose.” You experience a wine’s smell before you even take a sip. And consciously or unconsciously, potential buyers “smell” your home before they even look around! You may not even notice the smell of your home because you’re used to it. But others will notice, and the scent can set the tone of the showing. (Who knew, right?!?) If your home smells musty or like your pets or has unpleasant cooking odors, it will turn people off. If it smells like cigarette smoke, some people

will refuse to enter the house! If the odors are major, you may need to bring in professionals to clean and deodorize (or replace) carpets and furniture or even paint walls. If it's minor, you can often resolve it by using a scented plug-in and opening some windows, if it's nice weather.

Curb Appeal: Curb appeal is like that first impression you have of people. Once you have that impression, especially if it's not a good one, it's hard to change it! You don't have to spend a ton of money on this, but simple things like a freshly painted mailbox or new hardware on the front door can make a big difference. Make sure the lawn is mowed and any hedges or shrubs are trimmed. I usually suggest planting some colorful seasonal flowers in flower beds in the front yard and placing a few flower pots on the front step. Wash down the front driveway and porch then roll up your hose and hide it. New welcome mats not only add eye appeal but will help remind potential buyers to wipe their feet!

Breeze Through Inspections

There are certain maintenance items regarding your home that you should take care of prior to putting your home on the market. Why? When a home inspection person can tick off certain items as being good and

orderly, it tells the buyer that your home has been well maintained. Also, in some jurisdictions, the lender will not let a sale go through until certain items are in good repair and working properly.

Basic Maintenance: Here is the checklist I give my clients with questions about the home repair items they should handle before we put the home on the market:

Is your water heater double strapped?

Do all of your smoke detectors work?

Do you have a CO 2 detector on each floor?

Have your furnace filters been changed recently?

Has your HVAC unit been professionally maintained recently?

Does your garage door open smoothly and does your garage door opener operate properly?

Do any of your doors or sliders need some WD40?

Do you have any leaky faucets or slow-flowing drains?

Do you have any missing or torn screens?

Do you have any light bulbs that need replacing?

Do all of your blinds and shades work properly?

Do all door locks and locking mechanisms work properly?

Are your gates and their latches working properly? Is your fence in good repair?

Major Repairs

What about things like mold and dry rot issues, leaks, broken roof tiles, health and safety issues or termite problems? If you know that these problems exist, I almost always recommend that you take care of them *before* your home goes on the market. Sometimes, lenders will *not* fund a home until these problems are fixed. Even if they did, few home buyers want to take on that kind of project. Delaying getting this work done will only delay the sale and may actually turn some buyers away. If you absolutely cannot afford to have this work done, *at the very least* get a guaranteed estimate from a reputable vendor so your potential buyers have a sense of what they would be getting into.

What about other major issues like a roof that is leaking? First of all, it's illegal to withhold that information if you know or even suspect your home has a problem. Even if you could withhold it, any intelligent buyer will have a thorough home inspection done

during the contingency period. In the worst case, your buyer may cancel the contract as soon as they find out about the roof. In the best case, they will probably ask to have the sales price discounted substantially. Why? Because when you have problems with major systems, such as roofs, structural, plumbing, electrical or mechanical systems, you really don't know what you're getting into until you get into it! A vendor may say they can repair something rather than replace it but unless the problem is very straightforward, they can't be sure.

In a perfect world, I'd have you do what it takes to make that roof sound (with a guarantee). If that's not a possibility, just be aware that it causes an obstacle to the sale that will have to be overcome.

What about major renovations, like updating bathrooms or kitchens? This is such a case by case decision that I won't even get into it here. It's a discussion you need to have with your agent. When I discuss this possibility with my clients, I make sure to give them all the data they need to make a good decision. We'll talk about trends in the market and the likely return on their investment for these renovations. We'll get estimates from my preferred vendors. We'll talk about the time involved and how far back that will push

putting the house on the market. We'll talk about any disruption the family might go through while the renovations are happening. It's important to weigh all of these factors before making this decision.

ON THE MARKET: STRATEGIC SELLER DO'S AND DON'TS

Woo hoo! Your house is ready, your listing agent has started their dynamic marketing campaign, and your home is officially on the market! Good for you! Now I'd like to help you succeed during these next stages. Over my years of experience and after many home sales, I've come up with a list of simple do's and don'ts for my clients. Unfortunately, I've arrived at some of these do's and don'ts based on clients' innocent missteps—that led to horrendous results! So, I don't take them lightly!

Showing Your Home

When you get that call that an agent wants to show your home, here's how you help your house shine (and if you're away at work during the day, do these things before you leave in the morning):

Keep all lights on. Visitors shouldn't have to fumble for light switches, and it makes your home appear brighter, more inviting, and easier to see.

Place Glade Hawaiian Breeze scented plug-ins throughout the home. This gives a nice but not overwhelming scent.

Keep all blinds and window treatments open. This will make your home seem larger and brighter. If you can, remove window screens to let as much light as possible in and give an open feel. (Save them in the garage because the buyer will want them later.) It will also show off your exterior features.

Put away any clutter and personal stuff. In your preparation, you already did this so all you should have to do is put away anything that was brought out the day before.

Spiff up your kitchen and bathroom. The whole house should be clean but make sure to do a last polish of these two areas. Flush toilets. Fold towels and washcloths. Wipe down counters and sinks. Empty trash cans.

Sweep your front step and front hall. It's about first impressions. It's also about not having debris for agents and buyers to track into the home that you're working so hard to keep clean!

Make arrangements for pets (if any) during showings. Personally, I love animals but not everyone does. A really terrific buyer might just be terrified of good old Fido. Figure out what you can do with your furry loved ones. You could take them to a neighbors', keep

them in a space in the yard or garage, take them with you, or even drop them off at a kitty or doggy day care.

Be absent during the showing. You want potential buyers to feel free to really explore your home and “occupy” it. You want them to speak frankly to their agent about what they like and don’t like about the house. You want them to turn on the disposal, poke into the garage, pace off your dining room. Even if you sit quietly at your desk minding your own business, your very presence will make the situation awkward.

Now for a very important **Don’t**:

Don’t say a thing. I’ve trained my clients and they’re really good about being somewhere else during a showing. But sometimes, they get home and the buyer and their agent are still there. If that happens, be pleasant, make yourself scarce, and do NOT engage in conversation! Why? By answering even seemingly harmless questions, you can sabotage your position in the whole negotiation process! Does this sound paranoid? In negotiations the more you know about the other side the better prepared you are to negotiate. Sometimes sharing that you are very motivated to sell or you need to sell by such and such a time frame can put you in a weak position. In addition to this I’ve had clients simply not like prospects or vice versa.

Not everyone is going to like us and when you have such a large and at times emotional purchase those feelings can all be more sensitive. Oftentimes it's a much safer bet to have the agents work out the deal and negotiate the best terms for the clients.

There's an old slogan from World War II: "Loose lips sink ships." Don't sink your ship.

A LAST WORD

Honestly, there's so much more I could tell you about selling your home! But armed with the information from this book, you now know more than 99% of all homeowners. I hope you've learned a lot and gotten some ideas and inspiration. I also hope that you are hugely successful in selling your home!

If I can answer any questions or offer assistance, please feel free to contact me at (530) 864-2404. And be sure to go to www.BrentSellsChico.com for informational videos that are easy to watch and full of valuable information. We can also get you a Free Marketing Analysis and a Home Evaluation of your home.

Wishing you the best!

Brent Silberbauer

Engagement Totals from Q2 2020-Q2 2022



SOURCES

From Marketing in Today's World: The Digital Difference

1. National Association of Realtors. "Real Estate in a Digital Age." *National Association of REALTORS®*, 2021, <https://www.nar.realtor/research-and-statistics/research-reports/real-estate-in-a-digital-age>.

From The Power of Digital Marketing

2. Funk, Matthias. "YouTube 2nd Biggest Search Engine - The Myth That Just Won't Die." *Tubics*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.tubics.com/blog/youtube-2nd-biggest-search-engine>.

From Traditional Marketing on Steroids

3. Sarika from InVideo. "135 Video Marketing Statistics You Can't Ignore in 2022." *InVideo*, 2 May 2022, <https://invideo.io/blog/video-marketing-statistics/>.