What Your Listing Agent Should Be Doing

THE HOME SELLER'S LISTING AGENT PLAYBOOK

How to evaluate the agent, marketing plan, pricing strategy, communication, and negotiation behind your home sale. Before you hire an agent–or if your home is already on the market–use this guide to determine whether your agent is actively working to sell your home or simply waiting for another agent to bring a buyer.

Presented by Tom Olsewski – R

REALTOR® | eXp Realty | Serving Northeast Pennsylvania

Inside This Guide

This playbook is designed for home sellers in Northeast Pennsylvania who want to make informed decisions before signing a listing agreement—or who want to evaluate whether their current agent is truly performing. Real estate is one of the largest financial transactions most people will ever make, and the agent you choose to represent you matters far more than most sellers realize.

📸 Marketing

The marketing your home should receive—photography, video, digital, and agent outreach.

📊 Pricing

How your asking price should be determined—with data, not guesswork.

📞 Communication

What your agent should communicate every week after the sign goes up.

🤝 Negotiation

How your agent should handle offers, inspections, and appraisals to protect your net proceeds.

Also Inside

Listing-agent red flags to watch for · 40+ questions to ask before you sign · A full accountability scorecard · A checklist for relocation sellers · Interview question checklists by category

Selling a Home Requires More Than an MLS Listing

Too many sellers assume that hiring an agent automatically means their home will be aggressively marketed. In reality, a passive listing strategy–sign in the yard, entry in the MLS, and waiting–is far more common than sellers expect. The result is longer days on market, price reductions, and frustration.

Your listing agent should have a deliberate strategy for three critical stages of your sale. Each stage requires different skills, tools, and proactive effort from the agent you hire.

1	2	3
1. Exposure Getting the property in front of qualified buyers through marketing, promotion, and agent outreach.	**2. Positioning** Pricing and presenting the property so buyers immediately recognize its value relative to the competition.	**3. Advocacy** Communicating, responding to market feedback, and negotiating offers to protect your financial interests.

> You are not hiring someone to list your home. You are hiring someone to actively market, manage, and negotiate the sale of one of your largest financial assets.

The Three-Pillar Listing Agent Test

Before hiring any listing agent, evaluate them in three core areas. Vague answers before you sign are a warning sign–agents who cannot clearly articulate their strategy during the interview are unlikely to become more detailed or accountable once the listing agreement is signed. Use these three pillars as your baseline evaluation framework.

1

Marketing

Can the agent clearly explain *how buyers will discover your property*? Ask for specifics: platforms, databases, agent outreach, and a launch timeline.

2

Pricing

Can the agent show you the *market evidence* supporting the recommended price? Look for a written Comparative Market Analysis with comparable sales and active competition.

3

Communication & Negotiation

Can the agent explain exactly how you will receive feedback, market updates, and representation when offers arrive? You need a process–not a personality.

> If the answers are vague before you hire the agent, they are unlikely to become more detailed after the listing agreement is signed.

Section One

Your Agent Should Be Marketing Your Home

Marketing is the engine that drives buyer awareness. Without a deliberate, multi-channel strategy, your home competes only against properties with agents who are willing to do more. This section explains what real marketing looks like–and how to recognize when it's missing.

The "Three P's" Problem

Many sellers unknowingly accept what could be called the passive listing strategy. It is surprisingly common, and it is not in your financial interest. When an agent relies solely on the MLS and a yard sign, your home's exposure is limited to buyers who happen to be searching in your specific area–and agents who happen to stumble across the listing.

Put

Put a sign in the yard.

Place

Place the property in the MLS.

Pray

Pray another agent brings a buyer.

The MLS and yard sign are valuable tools. They are not a complete marketing strategy. Your agent should be able to explain how your home will reach buyers who will never drive down your street–and who may not yet know your neighborhood exists. In Northeast Pennsylvania's lakes-and-recreation market, many buyers are relocating from out of area. Passive marketing misses them entirely.

⚠ If an agent cannot describe a marketing strategy beyond the MLS, that is a significant red flag before you sign anything.

Ask This Before You Sign

"What exactly are you going to do to market my home?"

This is one of the most important questions you can ask a listing agent–and the quality of the answer tells you a great deal about what your listing experience will look like. Do not accept vague or generic responses. A strong agent should be able to walk you through a specific written plan before you ever sign a listing agreement.

Do Not Accept These Answers

- "We'll put it on the MLS."
- "It will automatically go to Zillow."
- "I'll put a sign out front."
- "We'll hold an open house."
- "I have buyers."

A Strong Agent Should Explain

- How the property will be presented
- Where it will be promoted
- Who the target buyer is
- How buyers will be targeted
- How local agents will be notified
- What happens during the first week
- What happens if buyer response is weaker than expected

Professional Property Presentation

Before marketing begins, your agent should help position the property to compete visually. In today's market, the vast majority of buyers begin their home search online. Your digital presentation is effectively your first showing–and first impressions formed online directly influence which homes buyers choose to tour in person.

Ask whether the marketing plan includes each of the following elements. A thorough plan will address most of them; the specific tools used should match your property type and price point.

Photography

Professional real estate photography with correct sequencing–exterior, interior, and lifestyle imagery where appropriate.

Video

Video walkthrough or property tour, plus vertical video optimized for social media. Drone video when appropriate and permitted.

Floor Plans & Community

Floor plans when appropriate, community and amenity imagery, and compelling property descriptions with a strong headline.

> A buyer often decides whether to investigate your home further before ever stepping inside. Your digital presentation is your first showing.

Your Listing Should Tell a Story

Good marketing does not merely document rooms. It communicates why someone would want to live there. A list of specifications–three bedrooms, two bathrooms, 2,100 square feet–tells a buyer what the home is. It does not tell them why it matters to their life. The strongest listing presentations connect features to lifestyle.

Your agent should identify the property's strongest buyer benefits and build the marketing message around those benefits. In Northeast Pennsylvania, where many buyers are seeking recreation, lifestyle, and retreat from urban density, this storytelling approach is especially powerful.

Lifestyle Benefits to Highlight

- Privacy and outdoor living
- Lake access or water frontage
- Views and natural surroundings
- Proximity to hiking, skiing, or recreation
- Vacation-home or retreat lifestyle

Functional Benefits to Highlight

- Commute convenience
- Updated kitchen or baths
- Home office possibilities
- Multigenerational space
- Finished basement or bonus space

Community Benefits to Highlight

- Community amenities
- Low-maintenance living
- School proximity
- HOA features
- Neighborhood character

Seller Question: "Who is the likely buyer for my property, and how will your marketing speak to that buyer?"

The Digital Marketing Plan

Your agent should be prepared to explain where the property will appear beyond the MLS. The right digital marketing plan reaches buyers wherever they are actively searching–whether that's a major real estate portal, a social media feed, a targeted email campaign, or a local community group. The number of platforms matters less than having a deliberate strategy for reaching the buyers most likely to purchase your home.

Portals & Websites

Major real estate portals, brokerage websites, agent website, and a property-specific landing page when appropriate.

Social Media

Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and short-form vertical video targeting likely buyer demographics and geographic markets.

Database Marketing

Email marketing to buyer database, agent database notifications, and local community exposure through targeted outreach.

Paid & Retargeting

Paid advertising and retargeting campaigns where appropriate to extend reach to active buyers who have shown interest.

Agent-to-Agent Marketing

Buyer's agents represent an important distribution network for your property. Many qualified buyers work exclusively with a buyer's agent who is actively searching the market on their behalf. If your listing agent does not have a plan to proactively reach those agents, a meaningful segment of your potential buyer pool may never know your home is available.

Ask whether your agent's marketing plan includes proactive agent-to-agent outreach. This is distinct from simply placing your home in the MLS and waiting for agents to find it.

- [ ] **Agent email announcements**
  Direct notification to agents who work with active buyers in your price range and property type.

- [ ] **Coming-soon promotion where permitted**
  Building awareness and interest before the listing officially goes live to maximize day-one momentum.

- [ ] **Follow-up with showing agents**
  Proactive outreach to agents who have shown the property to gather feedback and gauge buyer interest level.

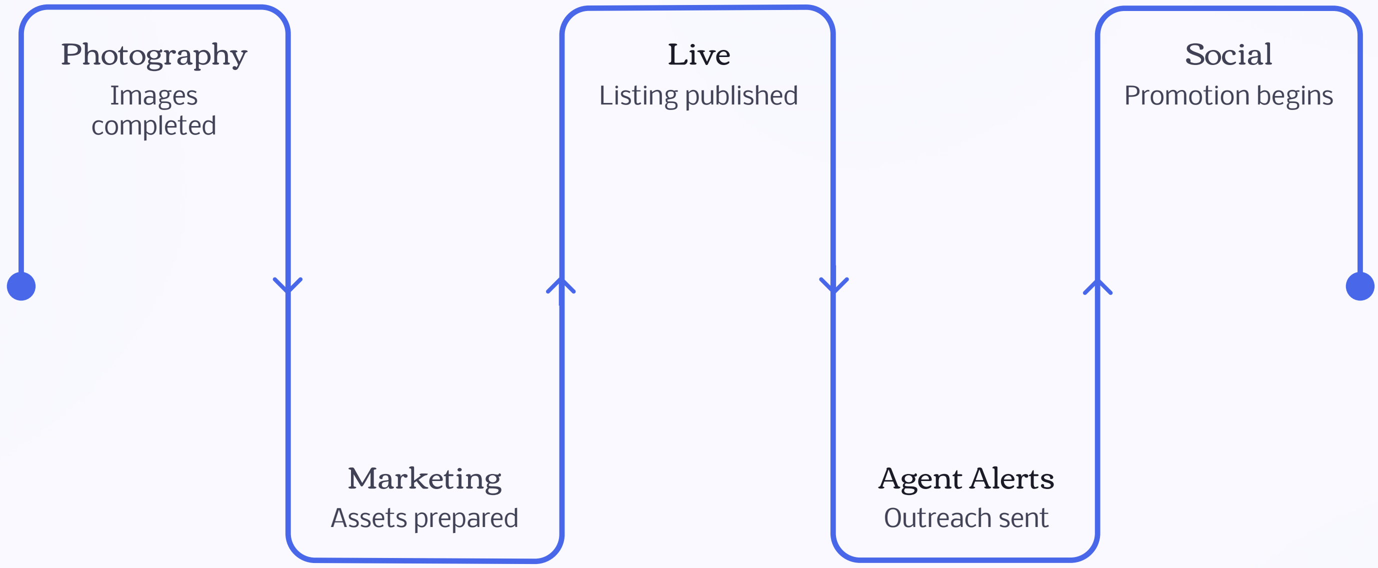
- [ ] **Reverse prospecting where available**
  Using MLS tools to identify agents with buyers who match your home's criteria and reaching out directly.

Seller Question: "How will you proactively get my home in front of agents who already have buyers?"

The First 7 Days Matter

The early days of a listing are often the most valuable. Buyer alert systems notify active buyers the moment a new property matches their criteria. Agents monitoring the market for their clients take immediate notice. The window of "new listing" attention is real–and it should be planned for, not left to chance.

Your agent should have a coordinated launch plan ready before your home becomes active. A disorganized launch–photos not ready, marketing delayed, agents unnotified–wastes the most valuable days of your listing.



The objective of a strong launch is to create maximum awareness while the property is newest to the market–when buyer interest and agent attention are naturally highest.

Ask your agent: "If I hire you today, what happens between now and the day my listing goes live?" A strong agent should walk you through every step.

Marketing Red Flags

Not every agent approaches marketing with the same level of strategy and preparation. Some rely almost entirely on passive exposure through the MLS and hope that other agents will do the work of finding a buyer. Before you sign a listing agreement, watch for these warning signs that the agent may not have an active marketing strategy for your home.

🚩 Red Flags to Watch For

- Cannot provide a written marketing plan
- Relies almost entirely on the MLS
- Uses low-quality phone photography
- Cannot explain who the target buyer is
- Has no video strategy
- Has no plan for agent-to-agent outreach
- Has no database marketing strategy
- Cannot explain what happens during launch week
- Cannot show examples of previous listing marketing
- Treats all properties exactly the same regardless of type, price, or location

> A great presentation before the listing is valuable. Consistent execution after the listing is what sells the home.

Section Two

Your Agent Should Be Pricing With Proof

Pricing is the single most consequential decision in your entire home sale. A well-priced home attracts buyers, generates competition, and protects your net proceeds. An overpriced home sits on the market, accumulates days, and ultimately sells for less than it would have at the right price from day one.

Pricing Should Not Be a Guess

A homeowner should never hear "let's price it high and see what happens" without supporting market evidence to back up the recommendation. This approach–pricing above what the market will support in hopes of negotiating down–sounds logical but routinely backfires. It costs sellers momentum, showings, and ultimately money.

Your agent should be able to show you *why* a pricing recommendation makes sense. That means a written Comparative Market Analysis–commonly referred to as a CMA–that reviews actual market evidence and translates it into a defensible pricing strategy for your specific property.

Opinion-Based Pricing	Evidence-Based Pricing
"I think we should try $525,000 and see what happens." No data. No comparables. No strategy. Just a number designed to win the listing.	"Based on these three recent sales and current competition, the supported range is $475,000 - $495,000. Here's why I recommend $485,000." Data-driven. Defensible. Strategic.

If an agent cannot show you the numbers behind the recommended price, the recommendation may be little more than an opinion.

What Your CMA Should Include

A useful pricing analysis reviews relevant market evidence across multiple categories. A CMA that only includes recent sold properties–while ignoring active competition, pending sales, and expired listings–gives you an incomplete picture of where your home sits in the current market. Ask to see all of the following categories reviewed and explained.

Recently Sold Properties

Preferably recent closed sales when sufficient comparable data exists. These establish what buyers have actually paid for similar homes.

Pending Properties

Properties under contract that reveal where today's buyers are actively writing offers right now.

Active Competition

Current listings show what buyers will compare against your home when making their decision.

Expired & Withdrawn

Listings that failed to sell–these may reveal prices or positioning that buyers consistently rejected.

Not Every "Comp" Is Comparable

One of the most important–and most often overlooked–elements of a pricing analysis is whether the comparable properties are actually comparable to your home. An agent who cherry-picks the highest sales or uses properties from different neighborhoods, conditions, or property types may be building a case for a price that the market will not support.

Your agent should explain *why* each comparable property was selected and how it relates to your home specifically.

- Neighborhood
- Property Type
- Square Footage
- Bedroom & Bath Count
- Lot Size
- Condition & Renovation
- Garage Capacity
- Basement & Amenities
- Views & Water Frontage
- Location Characteristics

Seller Question: "Show me the three to five properties that most closely compete with my home, and explain why you selected each one."

Do Not Hire the Highest Price

One of the easiest ways for an agent to win a listing is to tell the homeowner what they want to hear. Suggesting an inflated list price costs the agent nothing–they are not the one who will experience the consequences of an overpriced home sitting on the market. You are.

Agent A Recommends

$475,000

Supported by three recent comparable sales with detailed adjustments.

Agent B Recommends

$489,000

Supported by two recent sales, active competition, and a clear pricing rationale.

Agent C Recommends

$525,000

No comparable sales provided. "Let's start high and see what happens."

It may be tempting to choose Agent C. But the right question is not "Who gave me the highest price?"–it is "Who gave me the strongest evidence?" The agent does not determine market value. Buyers ultimately determine what they are willing to pay, and an overpriced home simply waits longer, accumulates more days on market, and often sells for less in the end.

Ask the Agent to Show the Math

Before accepting a recommended list price, ask the agent to walk you through the evidence. A confident, competent agent will welcome this conversation. An agent who deflects, generalizes, or cannot answer these questions directly is showing you something important about how they will manage your listing once it's active.

1. Which properties support this number, and how recently did they sell?

2. How does my home compare to each comparable on condition, features, and location?

3. What are buyers currently choosing in this price range and property type?

4. What is the recommended pricing range, and why is this specific position within that range recommended?

Key Principle: Pricing should be evidence-based, not personality-based. The right price wins you more buyers, more showings, and more negotiating power.

The First Two Weeks

The early period of a listing can be especially valuable because the property is new. Buyer alert systems trigger. Active buyers compare the new listing against existing inventory. Agents working with motivated buyers take immediate notice. This window of heightened attention is real–and squandering it with an overpriced listing has real financial consequences.

If a home enters the market substantially above where buyers perceive value, you risk losing the initial momentum that the new-listing window provides. Buyers who dismiss your home in week one rarely return–even after a price reduction.

Seller Question: "What will we measure during the first two weeks to determine whether our pricing strategy is working?"

Price Should Be Reviewed With Data

Once the home is active, pricing should not become a set-it-and-forget-it decision. Market conditions change. New inventory appears. Competing properties adjust their prices. Buyer behavior shifts. Your agent should monitor a range of signals to determine whether your pricing strategy is working–and recommend data-driven adjustments when the evidence warrants them.

Online Buyer Activity

Views, saves, and engagement with your listing across platforms indicate whether buyers are finding and reacting to the property.

Showing Activity

The volume of showings relative to comparable listings is one of the clearest signals of how buyers are responding to the price.

Showing Feedback & Patterns

Recurring objections from multiple buyers about price, condition, or features indicate a systemic issue, not isolated opinion.

Competitive Changes

New listings, price reductions by competing properties, and new pending sales all affect how buyers perceive your home's value.

Section Three

Your Agent Should Communicate After the Sign Goes Up

The listing agreement is not the finish line—it is the starting line. What your agent does in the days and weeks after your home goes live is what ultimately determines your outcome. Silence is not a strategy.

Signing the Listing Agreement Is the Beginning

One of the most common seller frustrations in real estate is the experience of hearing frequently from an agent before signing–and then very little afterward. The pre-listing conversation is where agents compete for your business. The post-listing period is where they actually earn it. A professional listing relationship should include an established communication plan from day one.

Before you sign, ask for specific answers to these questions. If an agent cannot answer them clearly, that is a preview of how communication will work once your home is on the market.

Questions to Ask About Communication

- How often will you contact me with updates?
- What information will each update include?
- Who specifically will be my point of contact?
- How quickly are calls and messages returned?
- How will urgent issues–like an offer arriving–be handled?
- When will we formally review our strategy together?

The Weekly Seller Update

Your agent should establish a regular, structured seller update–not a vague "I'll call you when something happens" approach. Weekly updates are a professional standard that keeps you informed, engaged, and able to make timely decisions. They also give the agent a structured opportunity to interpret market signals and recommend adjustments before problems compound.

📅 Showing Activity

Number of showings this week, comparison to prior weeks, and trends in showing volume relative to competing properties.

💬 Buyer Feedback

Recurring objections, condition comments, price reactions, feature responses, and patterns emerging across multiple showings.

🏘️ Market Changes

New listings, new pending sales, recent closings, price reductions by competitors, and shifts in buyer activity levels.

📋 Strategy Review

What appears to be working? What should change? What specific actions happen next? Clear recommendations with supporting rationale.

Showing Feedback Is Market Intelligence

Showing feedback should not merely be "they liked it" or "it wasn't for them." These responses tell you nothing actionable. Your agent should be actively soliciting specific feedback from every showing and looking for patterns across multiple buyers. Single comments may reflect individual taste. Recurring themes are market signals that require a response.

Feedback Patterns That Demand a Response

- Multiple buyers mention price concerns independently
- Buyers consistently like the location but raise condition concerns
- Buyers expect updates that are not present
- Buyers are comparing your home unfavorably with a specific competing listing
- Buyers have recurring concerns about layout or functional use of space
- Buyers are touring the property but not submitting offers despite apparent interest

> One buyer's opinion may not matter. The same objection from several qualified buyers is market information–and it requires a strategic response.

Your Agent Should Interpret the Feedback

Collecting information is not enough. The raw data of showing feedback has limited value until it is analyzed, interpreted, and translated into a recommendation. This is where a strong listing agent earns their commission—not in the passive act of listing your home, but in the active work of converting market activity into useful decisions.

Collect

Gather systematic feedback from every showing agent and buyer.

Identify

Distinguish between isolated comments and recurring patterns across multiple buyers.

Diagnose

Is the issue presentation, condition, marketing, or price? Each has a different solution.

Act

Recommend and implement specific adjustments based on what the data actually says.

Section Four

Your Agent Should Be Negotiating–Not Just Delivering Offers

When an offer arrives, your agent's role is not simply to forward a document and ask "what do you want to do?" A listing agent should analyze, advise, and advocate–helping you understand every dimension of the offer before you respond.

An Offer Is the Start of the Negotiation

Some agents simply send the seller the offer and ask what they want to do. That approach treats negotiation as the seller's problem rather than the agent's professional responsibility. Your listing agent should help you evaluate every component of an offer–not just the price at the top of the page. A high purchase price surrounded by unfavorable terms can easily result in a worse outcome than a slightly lower price with clean, buyer-committed terms.

Offer Price	Financing Type	Down Payment	Earnest Money
Inspection Terms	Appraisal Terms	Seller Concessions	Closing Date
Contingencies	Buyer Qualifications	Personal Property	Risk of Transaction Failure

The highest offer is not automatically the best offer. Your agent should help you see the full picture before you respond.

Your Agent Should Help You Compare Offers

When multiple offers exist, sellers should be able to evaluate them side by side with their agent's guidance. Without a structured comparison, sellers often default to the highest number–which may or may not represent the best overall outcome. Your agent should help you evaluate what each offer actually means for your net proceeds, your timeline, and the probability of a successful closing.

Offer A

Higher price but extensive contingencies and a buyer with minimal down payment. Higher appraisal and financing risk.

Offer B

Slightly lower price with stronger financing, larger down payment, and cleaner inspection terms. Lower transaction risk.

Offer C

Strong price and flexible closing but requests significant seller concessions. Net proceeds may be similar to Offer B.

Seller Question: "Which offer gives me the strongest combination of price, terms, certainty, and net proceeds–not just the highest number?"

Negotiation Does Not End With Price

Many sellers assume that once a price is agreed upon, the negotiation is over. In reality, the negotiation continues through inspections, appraisals, repair requests, contingency deadlines, and all the way through to closing. A strong listing agent should be actively protecting your interests–and your net proceeds–throughout every phase of the transaction.

Price & Concessions

Purchase price, seller concessions, closing cost assistance, and any personal property included in or excluded from the sale.

Inspection Negotiations

Repair requests, repair credits, inspection contingency terms, and buyer demands following the inspection period.

Appraisal Issues

Low appraisal navigation, renegotiation strategies, appraisal contingency management, and protecting agreed price.

Timeline & Logistics

Closing timeline, contingency deadlines, post-closing occupancy arrangements, and settlement logistics.

Ask About Negotiation Before You Hire

Negotiation skill is difficult to evaluate from a resume or a marketing brochure. The best way to assess it is to ask an agent directly about their negotiation experience–and then listen carefully to the quality of the answer. You are looking for evidence of strategic thinking, advocacy, and problem solving. You are not looking for a story about someone who simply delivered an offer and got lucky.

Ask This Question

"Tell me about a difficult listing negotiation you handled. What was the challenge, what did you do, and what was the outcome?"

Listen for These Qualities

- Did the agent identify the seller's priorities?
- Did the agent anticipate the buyer's position?
- Did the agent create or leverage a strategic advantage?
- Did the agent solve a problem to preserve the transaction?
- Did the agent protect the seller's net proceeds?

> You are looking for a negotiator and problem solver–not merely someone capable of filling out a contract.

Section Five

The Listing Agent Accountability Scorecard

Use this three-part scorecard to evaluate any listing agent before you sign. Score each section independently, then total the results to see how the agent measures up across all three pillars of a professional listing relationship.

Score Your Agent: Marketing

Give one point for every YES answer. Be honest in your evaluation–partial plans and vague commitments should not receive full credit. This scorecard is most useful when you complete it after the listing presentation but before you sign the agreement.

Marketing Checklist – 1 Point Each

- ☐ Professional photography is part of the marketing plan.
- ☐ Video marketing is included where appropriate.
- ☐ The agent has identified the likely target buyer.
- ☐ The property will receive digital marketing beyond the MLS.
- ☐ The agent will promote the property to their database.
- ☐ The agent has a buyer-agent outreach strategy.
- ☐ The agent has a specific launch plan with a timeline.
- ☐ The agent can show examples of prior listing marketing.
- ☐ The agent has explained how inquiries will be handled.
- ☐ The agent has explained what happens if activity is weak.

Marketing Score: _____ / 10

Score Your Agent: Pricing

Give one point for every YES answer. A strong pricing process should be transparent, evidence-based, and clearly communicated. If an agent cannot explain how they arrived at their recommendation in specific terms, that is a gap worth noting.

Pricing Checklist – 1 Point Each

- ☐ The agent provided a written CMA.
- ☐ The CMA includes recent comparable sales.
- ☐ Pending sales were considered and explained.
- ☐ Active competition was reviewed and discussed.
- ☐ Expired or reduced listings were considered where useful.
- ☐ The agent explained why each primary comparable was selected.
- ☐ The agent discussed differences in property condition.
- ☐ The agent provided a pricing range rather than an unsupported number.
- ☐ The recommended list price has a clear strategy behind it.
- ☐ The agent explained how pricing performance will be monitored.

Pricing Score: _____ / 10

Score Your Agent: Communication & Negotiation

Give one point for every YES answer. Communication and negotiation are the two areas most frequently cited by dissatisfied sellers–and the two areas where agents most often overpromise and underdeliver. Hold the bar high here.

Communication & Negotiation – 1 Point Each

- ☐ I know specifically how often the agent will contact me.
- ☐ Weekly updates are a defined part of the plan.
- ☐ I will receive showing feedback in a timely manner.
- ☐ The agent will identify recurring feedback patterns.
- ☐ Market changes will be proactively communicated to me.
- ☐ I understand how the agent will respond to offers.
- ☐ The agent can explain how multiple offers will be compared.
- ☐ The agent has demonstrated real negotiation experience.
- ☐ The agent has a strategy for inspection negotiations.
- ☐ The agent has a strategy for appraisal problems.

Communication & Negotiation Score: _____ / 10

Total Listing Agent Score

Add your three section scores together for a total out of 30. Use this combined score to guide your hiring decision. No single score should be dramatically lower than the others—consistent performance across all three pillars is what produces a successful listing experience.

30

Maximum Score

Marketing (10) + Pricing (10) + Communication & Negotiation (10)

26-30 – Strong Listing Plan

The agent appears to have a detailed and accountable approach. Proceed with confidence.

20-25 – Ask More Questions

Several important components may need clarification. Identify the gaps and push for specific answers.

14-19 – Significant Gaps

The listing plan may lack sufficient detail in important areas. Consider interviewing at least one additional agent.

Under 14 – Proceed Carefully

Consider interviewing additional agents before making a decision. The risk of a poorly managed listing is real.

Section Six

Listing Agent Red Flags

Not all agents are equally equipped to represent your interests. These red flags–when present–suggest a listing relationship that may leave you exposed, uninformed, or underserved at the moments that matter most.

12 Listing Agent Red Flags

Be cautious when an agent exhibits any of the following behaviors–either during the listing presentation or after the agreement is signed. The more of these you observe, the more carefully you should consider your options before committing to a listing relationship.

🚩 Marketing Red Flags

1. Promises the highest price without supporting market evidence.
2. Cannot provide a written marketing plan.
3. Relies almost entirely on the MLS as the marketing strategy.
4. Uses poor-quality photography or phone photos.
5. Cannot explain who the likely buyer is for your specific home.

🚩 Communication Red Flags

1. Has no clear communication schedule or update process.
2. Does not actively seek or share showing feedback.
3. Cannot explain how market activity will be measured or reported.

🚩 Strategy Red Flags

1. Recommends "starting high and seeing what happens" without evidence.
2. Cannot explain their negotiation process in specific terms.
3. Focuses almost entirely on winning the listing rather than explaining how they sell homes.
4. Becomes difficult to reach once the listing agreement is signed.

> A great presentation before the listing is valuable. Consistent execution after the listing is what sells the home.

Section Seven

Listing Agent Interview Questions Checklist

Use these questions in every agent interview. The quality and specificity of the answers you receive will tell you more about how your listing will be managed than any marketing brochure or sales presentation ever could.

Marketing Questions to Ask Every Agent

These questions are designed to move past vague promises and into specific, accountable commitments. A strong agent will answer each one with confidence and specificity. Hesitation, generalization, or deflection on any of these questions is meaningful information.

Marketing Interview Checklist

- [ ] Who do you believe is the most likely buyer for my home?
- [ ] What is your specific marketing strategy for reaching that buyer?
- [ ] Will you provide a written marketing plan before I sign?
- [ ] Will my home receive professional photography?
- [ ] Will you create a video tour?
- [ ] How will you use social media to market this property?
- [ ] Will you market the home to your buyer database?
- [ ] How will you reach buyer's agents proactively?
- [ ] What specifically happens during the first seven days?
- [ ] Do you use paid advertising, and when is it appropriate?
- [ ] Can you show me examples of marketing from previous listings?

Pricing Questions to Ask Every Agent

Pricing questions are designed to separate agents who rely on opinion from agents who rely on evidence. You are looking for an agent who can walk you through the market data, explain the comparables, and give you a defensible pricing strategy–not just a number designed to win your listing.

Pricing Interview Checklist

- [ ] How did you determine my recommended list price?
- [ ] Will you provide a written CMA?
- [ ] Which recent sales are most comparable to my home?
- [ ] Why did you select those specific properties?
- [ ] What active properties compete most directly with mine?
- [ ] How does my property's condition affect its value?
- [ ] What pricing range does the market currently support?
- [ ] Where within that range do you recommend positioning my home, and why?
- [ ] What happens if we price too high?
- [ ] How will we know whether the price is working, and when would you recommend reviewing it?

Communication & Negotiation Questions

These two categories–communication and negotiation–are where listing agents most commonly fall short. Ask these questions directly and listen for specific, process-oriented answers. "I'll always be available" is not a communication plan. "I'm a great negotiator" is not a negotiation strategy.

Communication Questions

- [ ] How frequently will I hear from you with updates?
- [ ] Do you provide a weekly seller report?
- [ ] What will be included in that report?
- [ ] How quickly will you provide showing feedback?
- [ ] Who is my primary point of contact?
- [ ] How quickly do you normally respond to calls?
- [ ] How often will we formally review strategy?

Negotiation Questions

- [ ] How do you evaluate and compare multiple offers?
- [ ] How do you handle inspection requests?
- [ ] How do you handle appraisal issues?
- [ ] What do you do when a buyer makes a low offer?
- [ ] Can you give me an example of a difficult negotiation?
- [ ] How do you protect my net proceeds?
- [ ] How will you advise me when the highest offer isn't the strongest?

Experience & Accountability Questions

Beyond marketing, pricing, and communication, you should also evaluate the agent's overall experience, local market knowledge, and accountability standards. These questions help you understand what you can realistically expect–and what the agent expects from you in return for a productive listing relationship.

Experience & Accountability Checklist

- [ ] How many homes have you listed recently, and how many sold?
- [ ] What types of homes and communities do you specialize in?
- [ ] How familiar are you with my specific market area?
- [ ] What happens if my home does not receive showings?
- [ ] What happens if it receives showings but no offers?
- [ ] What metrics will you monitor and report to me?
- [ ] What do you expect from me as the seller?
- [ ] What can I expect from you in specific, measurable terms?
- [ ] Can you provide references or verified reviews?
- [ ] Why should I hire you instead of another listing agent?

The Most Important Question

After all the checklists and scorecards, one question cuts through everything else. It forces the agent to articulate their specific value proposition–and it reveals whether they have a genuine strategy or a generic sales pitch. Ask it at the end of every interview, and listen carefully to what follows.

> "What will you do after my home is listed that another agent may not?"

The strongest agents should be able to speak with specificity about their marketing execution, buyer-agent follow-up, communication process, data analysis, and negotiation approach. They should not need to rely on vague statements about working hard, being passionate, or having many years of experience. Listen for substance–specific plans, specific tools, specific commitments.

Listen for specifics about...

- Marketing execution and follow-through
- Buyer-agent outreach and follow-up
- Communication rhythm and content
- Data analysis and market monitoring
- Problem solving and transaction management
- Negotiation strategy and advocacy

Section Eight

If Your Home Is Already Listed

Already on the market and wondering if things could be going better? These questions help you assess your current listing's performance–and have a productive strategy conversation with your agent.

Is Your Current Listing Underperforming?

If your home has been on the market for several weeks without an offer–or without meaningful showing activity–it is worth asking whether the strategy needs to change. Staying the course without examining the data is rarely the right answer. The questions below can help you assess the health of your listing and identify where the gaps may be.

Ask Yourself These Questions

- [ ] Are we receiving enough showings relative to comparable listings?
- [ ] Are buyers engaging with the listing online?
- [ ] Are we receiving meaningful, specific showing feedback?
- [ ] Has my agent explained what the feedback patterns mean?
- [ ] Are competing properties selling while mine sits?
- [ ] Have new comparable sales changed our pricing position?
- [ ] Is the marketing being refreshed or is it stale?
- [ ] Is my agent proactively communicating–or do I have to chase updates?
- [ ] Do we have a clear next-step strategy, or are we simply waiting?

If several answers are "No," it may be time for a direct strategy conversation with your agent–or a second opinion from a different one.

Questions for Your Current Agent

If your home is already listed and performance is not where you expected it to be, the most productive next step is a structured strategy conversation with your agent. These questions can frame that conversation and move it beyond general reassurance into specific, actionable planning.

Marketing

"What are we doing differently over the next two weeks to increase exposure and reach buyers we haven't reached yet?"

Pricing

"What does the newest market data tell us about our current price position relative to what buyers are choosing?"

Feedback

"What patterns are you seeing from buyers and agents who have toured the property? What does the feedback mean?"

Competition

"Which homes are buyers currently choosing instead of ours, and how do we compare on price and presentation?"

Strategy

"What specific changes do you recommend, and what is the plan between now and the next time we talk?"

A productive listing meeting should end with a clear, written action plan–not general reassurance that things will work out.

Section Nine

The Relocation Seller Difference

For sellers moving to another area, the listing process involves far more than finding a buyer. Every decision your listing agent makes ripples forward into your move, your next purchase, and your family's logistics. Coordination matters as much as price.

Relocation Sellers Need More Than Marketing

When you are moving to another area, the listing process affects much more than just the home itself. A delayed closing, an unexpected contingency, or a failed transaction does not merely mean more days on market–it can disrupt employment start dates, school schedules, temporary housing arrangements, and the purchase of your next home. Your listing agent should understand your entire relocation picture, not just the property transaction.

Timing Coordination

Employment start dates, school schedules, and move dates create a timeline your listing strategy must accommodate.

Two-Transaction Management

Coordinating the sale of your current home with the purchase of your next one across two markets requires experienced oversight.

Vacant Home Management

If you move before your home sells, your agent should have a plan for managing showings, inspections, and repairs remotely.

> For a relocation seller, a successful sale is not simply achieving a price. It is coordinating price, timing, certainty, and the move itself.

Questions Relocation Sellers Should Ask

Relocation sellers face a more complex set of risks than local sellers who are not simultaneously managing a move, a new purchase, and family logistics. These questions are designed to surface the specific issues that matter most when your listing is connected to a larger life transition.

Relocation-Specific Checklist

- [ ] How will we coordinate my sale with my move and next home purchase?
- [ ] What happens if my home sells faster than expected?
- [ ] What happens if it takes longer than expected?
- [ ] Can we negotiate closing-date flexibility into the listing strategy?
- [ ] How will you manage the property if I move before it sells?
- [ ] How will inspections and repairs be handled if I am out of state?
- [ ] Can documents be signed remotely throughout the transaction?
- [ ] How will you coordinate with my agent in the destination market?
- [ ] What contingencies should we consider to reduce two-home risk?
- [ ] How can we structure the sale to minimize carrying costs if timing gaps occur?

Section Ten

Your Listing Agent Expectations Agreement

Before you sign a listing agreement, get the expectations in writing. Verbal commitments made during a listing presentation carry no accountability. This section gives you a simple framework to document what your agent has agreed to deliver.

Get These Expectations Clear Before You Sign

Use this framework to document the commitments your agent has made during the listing presentation. Review it before signing and, if appropriate, reference it throughout the listing relationship to hold both parties accountable. A professional agent should welcome this level of specificity–it is a sign of how they operate, not a challenge to their credibility.

Marketing

My agent will provide professional photography, video, digital marketing on the following platforms, and written agent outreach. The written marketing plan will be delivered before the listing goes live.

Communication Frequency

My agent will contact me with a structured update every _____ days. Weekly seller reports will include showing activity, buyer feedback, and market changes.

Showing Feedback

I will receive feedback within _____ hours of each showing. Recurring patterns will be identified and discussed with a recommendation.

Offer Communication

All offers will be presented and explained within _____ hours of receipt. Multiple offers will be presented with a structured comparison and recommendation.

Pricing Review

We will formally reassess our pricing strategy after _____ days, or immediately if showing activity or buyer feedback indicates a structural pricing issue.

Primary Contact

My primary point of contact is _____________________. Calls and messages will be returned within _____ hours.

The Seller's 3-Step Listing Agent Checklist

Use this consolidated checklist as your final verification before signing a listing agreement. Each step corresponds to one of the three pillars of a professional listing relationship. Completing all three steps before signing is the best protection against a listing relationship that underperforms.

1

Step 1 – Verify the Marketing

- [ ] Ask for the written marketing plan.
- [ ] Review examples of professional photography from past listings.
- [ ] Confirm video and social media strategy.
- [ ] Ask about database and buyer-agent outreach.
- [ ] Identify the target buyer and understand the launch strategy.

2

Step 2 – Verify the Pricing

- [ ] Require a written CMA with recent sales, pending, and active competition.
- [ ] Understand why each major comparable was selected.
- [ ] Ask for the supported pricing range and recommended position within it.
- [ ] Establish how pricing performance will be measured.

3

Step 3 – Verify the Service

- [ ] Establish the communication schedule and update format.
- [ ] Require regular showing feedback and weekly market updates.
- [ ] Understand how offers will be evaluated, compared, and presented.
- [ ] Discuss negotiation strategy for inspections and appraisals.
- [ ] Establish a regular strategy-review schedule.

The Bottom Line

After everything in this guide, the evaluation of any listing agent comes down to three straightforward questions. If an agent can answer all three with clarity, specificity, and evidence, you have found someone worth hiring. If the answers are vague, evasive, or built on personality rather than process, keep looking.

1	2	3

1. How will you get buyers to see my home?

That is **marketing**. The answer should include specific channels, a launch plan, agent outreach, and a target buyer profile.

2. How can you prove this is the right pricing strategy?

That is **positioning**. The answer should include a written CMA, comparable sales, and a clear pricing rationale.

3. What will you do after listing to protect my interests?

That is **communication and negotiation**. The answer should include a communication schedule, feedback process, and negotiation approach.

> You are paying for exposure, expertise, strategy, communication, and advocacy–not simply a sign and an MLS entry.

Ready to Talk Strategy?

Thinking About Selling in Northeast Pennsylvania?

Before you choose an agent or a listing price, get a second opinion on your home's selling strategy. A complimentary Home Selling Strategy Review is a no-obligation conversation designed to give you clarity before you commit to any listing relationship.

We'll Review

- Your property's likely buyer profile
- Current competition in your area
- Recent comparable sales
- Recommended pricing range
- Marketing opportunities specific to your property

We'll Also Cover

- Property preparation recommendations
- Relocation timeline coordination if applicable
- Estimated seller net proceeds
- Potential challenges and how to address them
- Recommended next steps

Tom Olsewski
REALTOR® | Relocation & Retirement Specialist
Serving Northeast Pennsylvania Lic-RS376466
Serving North New Jersey Lic-2561002
(570) 228-8194 - Cell
(570) 526-2800
www.DiscoverPAhomes.com
tom@DiscoverpaHomes.com
Instagram: @DiscoverPAhomes| YouTube: **https://www.youtube.com/@NEPAliving**
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About Tom Olsewski

Tom Olsewski is an experienced REALTOR® with over 22 years experience currently with eXp Realty serving buyers and sellers across Pike, Monroe, Wayne, and Lackawanna Counties in Northeast Pennsylvania. He works with sellers who want an agent who can explain not just what will be done to sell their home–but why it works, what the evidence says, and what happens next at every step of the process.

This playbook was created to give Northeast Pennsylvania homeowners the framework they need to evaluate any listing agent with confidence–whether that agent is Tom or someone else. The best real estate decisions are informed ones, and informed sellers make better choices for themselves and their families.

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Pike County · Monroe County · Wayne County · Lackawanna County

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Contact

Phone: 570-228-8194
Email: tom@discoverpahomes.com
Website: discoverpahomes.com