

Don't ask me, I WON'T tell you!

Marc Schneiderman, director of Arlington Residential talks about the importance of confidentiality and discretion when dealing with high-profile clients

I have learned over the years that maintaining the privacy of buyers and sellers is paramount. Fairly regularly we are asked to sell properties on a confidential basis where no marketing material is released and there is no internet presence. These homes, usually at the top end of the market, are available to a select number of well-qualified buyers only.

The importance of maintaining privacy is often just as important to the seller as it is to the buyer. In addition to this there is an element of exclusivity created when a house is made available to a select number of buyers only and not to the whole of the marketplace. It is often at this point that the skill of an agent comes into its own. We have a list of well-qualified buyers we are ready to contact who are waiting for certain types of property to become available and who, most importantly, are actually in a position to press ahead and buy the property as soon as they have identified it.

Furthermore, some of these buyers are contacts we have nurtured over many years and are very property astute; they appreciate the rarity value of certain types of properties. In these instances it is not uncommon to actually achieve a higher price from a buyer for an 'off market' property than might be achieved if the property was conventionally marketed in order to secure the purchase and to avoid the wider market hearing of the property and the potential

competition that may bring. Handling high-end properties means that on a very frequent basis, I am in contact with buyers and sellers who are well known in the world of business and often well known in the entertainment industry. Respecting their privacy and ensuring our discussions remain confidential has to be a certainty. To this end, it is not unusual to be asked to sign confidentiality agreements prohibiting any discussion or mere mention of the names of some of our buyers and sellers. The well-drafted confidentiality agreements actually prohibit confirming that the agreement itself even exists.

There have been instances where due to the profile of buyers I have been asked to ensure that the owners of the property being viewed are not present at the viewings, and our clients are quite understanding of this. Ultimately, it is the sale of their home that interests them, not necessarily meeting the actual buyer. On rare occasions buyers have visited houses concealed from prying eyes under the cover of an umbrella. This can raise an eyebrow or two in the summer!

Such is our level of confidentiality and discretion that I do sometimes smile to myself when I am at home with my family, watching a movie in which one of our clients may be starring. My wife and kids have no idea that I may have met the lead actor that very morning. ■

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