

DENNIS IN THE NEWS

THE BUSINESS TOOL FOR REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS

REALTOR

a step one

One way single women can address the need for both safety and companionship—and reduce expenses—is through shared housing, says Marta Borsanyi, founding principal with The Concord Group, a real estate consultancy in Las Vegas and San Francisco and Newport Beach, Calif. It's a trend that will grow, she says, to the extent that floor plans can be created or adapted to offer privacy zones for both parties.

Capture a burgeoning market

It's always dicey stereotyping any target group. But if you want to go after the growing niche of female homebuyers, practitioners with experience in the market say this is what you can expect.

How they buy. Women tend to be more specific about what they need in terms of square footage and cost and, therefore, generally look longer than men, Becker says.

What they spend. Many don't want to spend as much as lenders qualify them for, says Prather, who recommends a fixed-rate mortgage if they plan to stay at least 10 years.

How they negotiate. When they find the right home, most act decisively and zero in on details in the contract, says Dana DiPasquale, a salesperson with Baird & Warner's Lincoln Park Chicago office.

Their wish list. Many seek an overall warm, fuzzy feeling that connects them emotionally to the house. Biderman was taken with her home's 1961 charm and hardwood floors. Others are captivated by a well-equipped kitchen, attractive master bedroom and bathroom, or spacious closets, says Chaz Walters, owner of Hot Property Residential Brokerage in Chicago. DiPasquale has found the following can clinch a transaction: an in-unit washer-dryer; a master bath with separate shower and tub and plenty of drawers for makeup and a hairdryer; and a gym in a high-rise building.

How much maintenance they'll do. A lot of women today—inspired by retailers' classes, female-friendly tools, and plentiful how-to materials—are tackling their own remodeling projects. That doesn't mean they seek out fixer-uppers—unless price makes that a necessity. "They still want turn-key properties so all they have to do is paint and carpet," says Leslie Giacobbi, with Seven Gables Real Estate in Anaheim Hills, Calif.

What their home connotes to them. Many single women form a deeper attachment to their purchase than men do, says Becker, which he attributes to the fact that men job-hop more.

Cheri Davis, a broker at Walters' company in Chicago, has another explanation. "I didn't wait for my prince before I bought my condo or two-flat, and I don't think anybody should wait for anyone to make your life better," she says.

Highlight the unusual

"Lagoon-like setting on a flat 1-acre hilltop. More than 8,000 sq. ft. that includes a guest



house for mom and dad, a guest apartment, a set of Wall Street-caliber offices, and a detached wine cellar." Sound enticing? You'd read on, wouldn't you?

Stan Barron, owner of Stan Barron Properties in Austin, Texas, uses such appealing ad headlines to sell his listings. A prior job in advertising convinced Barron that writing ads with catchy headlines, even if a tad long, makes a difference in attracting buyers. About five times as many people read a head as body copy, he says.

"The prior listing company's ad [for the house described above] focused on predictable characteristics, such as the number of bedrooms," Barron says. Thanks to his ad, the house sold for its \$1.29 million asking price in 11 days, after it had lan-

guished for six months with the other company. Madison Avenue would be proud.

House to go?

It may not be the quietest office, but Dennis Baum, with Keller Williams Realty's Preston Road office in Dallas, finds that checking business e-mail from a Starbucks, Borders bookstore, or other Wi-Fi hot spot, which offers wireless Internet access, helps him prospect.

On Saturday mornings, Baum goes to a coffee shop, orders his favorite brew and opens his notebook to display its top, which bears his photo, name, and company logo. "The people in line turn their heads, wondering, 'What's this guy doing?'" Baum says.



Although he's only snared one listing and a few referrals in the three months since he set up his "second" office, he's confident more leads will percolate. "I get noticed but wouldn't if I sat in my office," he says.

Do you have an innovative, business-boosting selling or marketing tip that you'd like to share? Please e-mail us at greatideas@realtors.org.

ZIPPY ADS • COFFEE KLATCH SALES SHORTS

At your service

There's nothing like a butler to make prospects feel special, Jim Brown, *CRM, CRM*, decided. So the broker with Keller Williams Realty Slidell in Slidell, La., trolled the Internet for life-size, three-dimensional sculptures of butlers and found Woodendipity Inc's charming 4.5-foot-tall French butler,



which he placed in his office's reception area. Before prospects arrive for an appointment, the receptionist places a card personalized with their names, a small welcome sign, and a fresh bottle of sparkling water on the butler's tray. "They all smile right away when they see the butler and their name card," Brown says.

Although he can't attribute increased listings and sales directly to his dapper employee, he says, "It's all about customer appreciation and making prospects feel more welcome and wanted."

To order your own butler (\$269, plus shipping), visit www.woodendipity.com.

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"A House *Sold* Name"