

After-sales service - an all-important estate agent duty

By [Tony Clarke](#)

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What sets a truly professional estate agent apart from the casuals, the amateurs and the inexperienced? One factor always stands out: the effort and the care that good agents put in after the sale has been achieved.

A caring, supportive agent will always accept that he has to work harder after the sale than prior to it. This is because, if he has the right attitude, he will see himself as part of the seller's and buyer's teams and will do all he can to make the transition for both of them hassle-free.

It has to be recognised that leaving a home that a seller may have cared for and grown to love, in which he has probably raised children and pets, and entertained friends - can be one of the four or five most unsettling, emotional experiences that the average middle-class citizen undergoes. Sometimes the stress can be almost equal to that of a divorce or severe financial crisis.

What, therefore, should a caring, conscientious estate agent be doing in the post-sale period?

1. Ensuring that the legal documentation, especially the deed of sale, is drawn up and signed by both parties. This is obvious, but it is surprising how, time and again, this absolutely essential step is delayed and further delayed because one or other party is having doubts, difficulties or is simply not available.
2. Ensuring that the financial aspects of the deed of sale are complied with. This includes seeing that the deposit and all costs, such as transfer and conveyancing fees are paid on time. Here again, any delay will result in the entire process being held up.
3. Ensuring that all outstanding rates and transfer duties are paid on time. If these are not paid up, the transfer will automatically be blocked by the municipality.
4. Ensuring that the obligatory certificates, which the seller must pass on to the authorities, are obtained. Included in this list are the electrical compliance, water, plumbing and gas (if applicable) certificates. Again, if any of these are missing, transfer will be delayed.
5. Ensuring that all suspensive conditions, particularly those applying to the buyer, such as the award of a bond or the sale of another home (a very common precondition), are achieved or, if not achieved, appropriate steps are taken to either help the buyer or to move on to a new deal. Again, unnecessary delays here often result through the agent simply not being sufficiently on the ball.
6. Setting the dates of occupation and possibly helping with the organisation of cartage contractors and the move.
7. Ensuring that only agreed fittings and fixtures, specified in the deed of sale, are removed and that all others remain in place.
8. Ensuring that the property is in good condition when the new owner moves in. In the one or two weeks prior to a move, very often the garden and tidying up functions are neglected.
9. If early occupation, with occupational rental, is being allowed, ensuring that the necessary sums are paid up front and that the temporary "tenant" complies with the conditions of the lease.
10. Assisting the new owner to find schools for his children. Often, this very important step is left to the last minute.

During the boom property years, untrained agents working in organisations that taught no real standards or which had no agreed codes of ethics, often got away with minimal after-sales service, their argument usually being that these matters should be sorted out by the conveyancers. Almost every agent will tell you, however, that, even though conveyancers are usually efficient, they, too, need to be kept up to speed, and they will often, justifiably, claim that the agents are often responsible for poor documentation. Either way, the nett result is that days, sometimes even weeks, can be wasted and this, in most cases, results in the seller losing money through late payment.

Treated as human beings

The nub of the matter is that buyers and sellers always want to be recognised - and treated - as human beings, not just as parties in a deal.

If you look at the Rawson Property Group's most successful franchises, it is always those that have a genuinely caring attitude that have thrived - the types who arrive with a pizza for the family on moving day.

Good, caring agents like long relationships with their clients, often going on to serve their relatives, children and associates as well - and they get a great deal of satisfaction out of their work - a bonus factor that casual, uncaring agents simply do not understand.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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