



Tech tools of the trade

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TREB PRESIDENT'S COLUMN AS IT APPEARS IN THE TORONTO SUN

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There are more than 28,000 REALTORS® in the Greater Toronto Area serving the needs of consumers. Many of the technological advances in recent years have allowed REALTORS® to serve their clients more efficiently.

Many REALTORS®, for example, are available through a pager or wireless handheld device. Long before smart phones became commonplace, REALTORS® were using them to be more accessible to their clients.

REALTORS® were also early adopters of digital cameras. When you put your home up for sale, photos can be displayed with your listing. These photos can also be stitched together to create virtual tours for your listing. Since REALTORS® can access the Multiple Listing Service from anywhere in the world, even using a handheld device, laptop computers have become another staple in the REALTOR® toolkit. Laptops are convenient for reviewing prospective listings if you're thinking of buying. If you're planning to sell, your REALTOR® may also use one to take you through a comparative market analysis, a look at similar homes listed and sold in the area.

One of the most important elements in helping you achieve a purchase or sale is cooperation among REALTORS® in the profession. That's why you may find many REALTOR® profiles on networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn.

Many REALTORS® may also maintain a list of other REALTORS® in the community to whom your new property listing can be emailed. With your consent, your REALTOR® can automatically upload your property information to the Multiple Listing Service, a sophisticated database of sold, expired and active listings used only by REALTORS®. You may also choose to display it on public websites like REALTOR.ca (formerly MLS.ca), and those of your REALTOR®, their brokerage and other cooperating REALTORS®.

Many REALTORS® maintain websites not only to display listings but also to keep clients up-to-date on market statistics and issues that affect real estate. On

these sites you may notice blogs, regularly updated journal entries, or podcasts or audio reports that can be downloaded. Some REALTOR® have also begun to share their expertise using Twitter. A networking site, it allows those who have established a profile to send brief text updates instantly to others who have signed up to follow them.

If you're planning to buy a home, your REALTOR® may sign you up for prospect match, a service in which listings that match your criteria are automatically emailed to you each night. Be sure to also ask your REALTOR® about the Toronto Real Estate Board's Buyer Registry Service (BRS). A password-protected database that contains information on the current housing preferences of REALTORS' clients, the BRS can help your REALTOR® get early notification from other REALTORS® when properties matching your preferences become available.

When it comes time to make an offer, your REALTOR® can use the Multiple listing Service to generate market statistics that are specific to your area.

To begin the transaction process, your REALTOR® can access forms that automatically populate all of the data pertinent to the purchase or sale. To keep things on track throughout every stage, your REALTOR® may use transaction management software and once the deal is done, you can count on your trusted advisor to stay in touch, through vehicles like email newsletters, using contact management software.

By using these and other tools REALTORS® can provide you with the most current information and the best advice, helping you to ensure that you don't leave money on the table. To learn more about the many benefits of using a REALTOR® visit www.TorontoRealEstateBoard.com.

Maureen O'Neill is President of the Toronto Real Estate Board, a professional association that represents 28,000 REALTORS® in the Greater Toronto Area.