

Selling at the Safest Speed

Take time to examine your business practices, verify client identity, set firm boundaries, and articulate these boundaries clearly.

By Carl L Carter, Jr.



It's no secret that we live in the age of instant gratification. Buyers, sellers, and real estate agents all share a common desire: give us what we want *now*. Don't make us wait, don't let it be incomplete, and don't waste our time. And why not? Many industries, including parts of our own, have shifted business models to fulfill these desires based on consumer demands and technological advances.

But there are times when we must accept that *now* isn't feasible, such as arriving at Clinton International Airport in Little Rock at 4:45 P.M. for a 5:00 P.M. departure, which is not going to work out for anyone. Tragedy on a large scale quickly reshaped security regulations at airports. The new regulations are intended to keep airline passengers safe regardless of any inconvenience these regulations may cause.

Buying or selling real estate doesn't have any regulations to keep real estate agents safe. Many argue that it is the responsibility of each individual agent to decide which steps to take to ensure personal safety. I take issue with this mindset. Are most real estate agents aware of the dangers? Do they take any precautions or are they simply conducting their business as rapidly as possible to keep up with consumer demand and the desire for instant gratification?

My mom, Beverly Carter, was a hardworking broker. She loved her clients and worked tirelessly to be the best possible agent. It took only one appointment to end her life. She was working with a husband and wife who were relocating because of work. What was there to fear? She didn't do anything wrong; she simply didn't know to do anything more.

Although many agents in our industry have been victimized in some way, these incidents haven't resulted in substantive change.

I am a REALTOR®, and I am often faced with the dilemma of converting a lead now versus taking a few extra steps to ensure that the person with whom I am working is a legitimate client and not a criminal. I have felt the sting of losing potential clients because I refused to meet them at a property before verifying their identity.

My experiences both as a real estate agent and as a speaker sharing my mom's story with thousands across the country have inspired me to develop the following tips for selling real estate at the safest speed:

Examine your business practices. Look closely at when and where you meet new clients, what you do to verify their identity, and how you listen and learn when another agent shares details about an unpleasant experience.

Verify the identity of those you are representing. If the client's email address is **John.Doe@...**, don't assume that you are working with **John Doe**. Obtaining valid photo identification, preapprovals, and proof of funds will give you a better understanding of your client's identity and needs.

Set firm boundaries. Decide where and under what circumstances you will meet new clients. Hold the first in-person client meeting in your office or in some public place. Obtain the information you need to vet clients before traveling alone with them to see a property.

Articulate these boundaries clearly. You've likely seen a real estate agent apologetically stumble through safety discussions with clients. Don't be that agent. Instead, turn what could be an awkward conversation into an opportunity to show your professionalism and let your clients know how much you care.

In short, adjust your sales approach to ensure that you are always selling at the safest speed. Slowing down may lead to increased client satisfaction. Spending a little extra time in the beginning may save time later because you'll show property only to serious buyers. And it could even save your life.

Carl Carter, Jr., is a REALTOR® and the founder of the Beverly Carter Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving safety for all real estate agents. Carl's mom, Beverly Carter, was a REALTOR® who lost her life while doing the work she loved. Carl's email address is Carl@BeverlyCarterFoundation.org.

