

# Opinion

GUEST OPINION: GARY BEST

## Internet enhancing, not hurting, profession, Realtors' leader says

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Arizona Daily Star

An article published in the March 5 issue of The New York Times appears to want to lead the public to conclude that real estate agents are an "endangered species" and soon to become obsolete because of the Internet. A similar story in the March 6 edition of the Arizona Daily Star's Business section hints at the same notion.

The Tucson Association of Realtors, represented by more than 6,300 members, disagrees strongly with both articles.

In fact, the Internet has enhanced the profession in many ways. It's a powerful tool for communication and research. Our agents use the Internet to provide comprehensive service to their clients daily. Moreover, a Realtor has access to other information that can enhance online research.

We agree with the Star article that the Internet does provide an easier means to locate and view properties. But buyers and sellers still turn to an agent to complete the transaction.

A study released by the National Association of Realtors in January shows that of the 7,800 respondents queried nationally, 81 percent of those who use the Internet to search for a home will purchase through a real estate agent. Eighteen percent of buyers and sellers found their agent on the Internet, and only 13 percent of sellers in that same survey conducted transactions without the assistance of a real estate agent. But the Internet falls short when it comes to pricing, selling and closing transactions.

On these responsibilities, the Times article also challenges the role of the Realtors by stating "an agent really only performs four main functions: setting the price of your home, finding potential buyers, preparing and showing your home, and handling negotiations and contracts." The article devalues the Realtors' work and drives the point that consumers can engage in these functions themselves using the Internet.

To minimize the work of real estate agents suggests that the authors have never been involved in a real estate transaction.

Agents — and particularly those bearing the Realtor designation — must be licensed because transactions can be so complex,

Many who have attempted to sell a home without an agent have discovered the value of a Realtor. In fact, the 2004 National Association of Realtors of Home Buyers and Sellers reported that for-sale-by-owners remained at 14 percent of the market in both 2003 and 2004. The reason: Most transactions fail because the parties are unable to perform the four key functions noted in the Times article.

With the unprecedented growth in real estate in Tucson over the last several years, consumers could not have navigated the sea of negotiations and contracts without a professional. As supply and demand begin to achieve a healthier balance, Realtors can better serve their clients with more options to secure their ideal home.

And while we are certain the Internet will continue to play an active role in that service, we are also confident that people will continue to use Realtors to realize and protect the full value of their homes.

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