

Do Home Buyer Letters Make a Difference?

By Danni Duggan

I was recently asked at an open house what I think about home buyer letters. Do they make a difference?

My answer: sometimes. It depends on the market, the seller, and how badly you want the house. In this current market, get to writing.

If the seller is a bank, your letter is not likely to sway any decision makers. If your seller is a homeowner, however, you stand a chance. Some sellers claim they are interested only in key deal terms (price, pre-qualification of the buyer, costly repairs). Other sellers have spent decades in a home, have tended to it lovingly, and want to know the buyer. After touring a seller's home, you may know more about what would appeal to a seller than you realize. Pay attention.

A client once told me, "I need to know that I tried everything. Absolutely everything." Indeed, local brokers are seeing letters accompany more offers in our current market. As your Realtor®, my job is to advise you as to market conditions and to provide strategic advice regarding your offer. If that offer involves a home buyer letter, then let's talk about what that letter might look like.

The most important aspect of a buyer's letter is its tone. Let's start first by discussing what not to do with your letter.

1. It should not beg or plead, "This is our 20th home offer. Please pick us. For the love of the universe, please pick us."
2. It should not brag, "We are coming from a larger home in a much more expensive community. We can pay cash, and we look forward to making the home our own."

3. It should not discuss future plans for the property, "We noticed you never got around to remodeling that second bathroom. We plan to install something industrial chic that contrasts ironically with the home's original bungalow charm."

4. It should not be generic. A seller will know immediately if you could easily reuse the letter by swapping out the house color and the name of the neighborhood.

We have established what the letter should not be. So what should it be? Above all, the letter must be sincere. It must come from the heart. It should paint a clear picture of who you are and why you love this particular home. Find something the seller did well and compliment them on that choice. What qualities of this home sing to you? It is quite likely that those same qualities appealed to the seller at one point. Creating common ground creates connection. It is harder to reject someone you feel connected to than to reject a stranger. Your letter is essentially a one-sided conversation where you are sharing your hopes and dreams in an attempt to create a connection with the seller. Why pick you?

While neighborhood amenities and schools are important to buyers, do not veer too far off message in your letter. You do not want the seller to think that you would basically take any home that is located in that neighborhood or that would put your children in that school district. Keep focus on the house. Maybe you love the large oven in the kitchen because, like the seller, you also enjoy baking (insert photo of recent baking



masterpiece). Maybe you compliment the backyard deck and let them know you would love to entertain guests there. Maybe you are thrilled to find a home with a wood shop because, hey, you are a wood worker too (insert photo of recent wood working project). If you noticed that the seller has piles of dog toys, by all means mention that your dog Fluffy is going to love running around the secure, fenced backyard (insert charming picture of Fluffy here). Connect. Connect. Connect.

Whether or not you choose to include a letter in your offer, the key is to stand out and be memorable. In a stack of 30 offers, many of which may include letters, all things being equal, sharing your most sincere and authentic self could make all the difference. We all like to believe that in real estate we make key decisions based exclusively on the numbers, but when presented an opportunity to deal with someone we feel connected to, a seller may just be persuaded by a home buyer letter. At the very least, you can rest assured that you tried absolutely everything.



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