

Psst. Whisper Listings Are More Common Than Ever

And they're not only for the ultra-rich and famous!

***A special article from
The Institute for Luxury Home Marketing***

A private sale — also called an off-market listing or “whisper listing” — is a for-sale property that, at the seller’s request, is not listed in the MLS or marketed in the traditional sense. Historically, this method of home sale has been favored primarily by ultra-wealthy and famous individuals who wish to protect their own privacy, although it is becoming increasingly popular in low-inventory, high-demand markets. While whisper listings can be exciting and lucrative, these ultra-secretive sales demand unconventional marketing and information distribution strategies.

Classified: Home Sales of the Rich and Famous

Ultra-rich and/or well-known homeowners often require their listing agents to do things a little differently: refrain from listing their property in the MLS, reveal as little information as possible to the general public, and only show the residence to pre-qualified prospective buyers. But, within these guidelines, how can you attract good buyers and provide those buyers with adequate property information? One strategy used by luxury real estate professionals is “need-to-know” marketing.

Using the need-to-know marketing model, the agent provides buyers with varying levels of information and access depending on the individual’s interest and financial fitness or qualification to purchase. In other words, a prospective buyer only gets property information if they *need to know* it. There are three levels of access.

1. **The first level is reserved for the casual inquiry**, which receives a simple flyer with limited photographs and information plus the URL to a sparse property website.
2. **The second level is for real estate professionals**. When a real estate professional wants more information but doesn’t have a buyer prospect, the listing agent gives them the URL and slightly more information. In a second home market, this may include information about the resort or community where the property is located (because first you have to sell the location).
3. **The third level of need-to-know is for a fully qualified prospect**. Once the marketing agent confirms that the prospect is fully qualified, He or she gives the prospect the password to a password-protected portion of the property website. This password-protected website, reserved for the most serious and financially capable prospects, offers everything one requires to make the decision to visit the property or to write an offer on it. Lots of photographs, complete descriptions, heating and air conditioning schematics, floor plan, site plan, videos, mini-movies etc.

A three-tiered information scheme and a password-protected property website allow you to keep your seller happy, while providing all necessary information to qualified buyers.

High Demand Breeds Whisper Listings

Today, up-scale homes are being sold off-market with more and more frequency, particularly in low-inventory markets such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Miami. Sellers in these markets may prefer to sell privately, confident that high demand will help spark a sale.

It is controversial when a real estate professional decides to sell a property privately, without the request of the seller; however, when a seller requests a private sale, the real estate professional must have a marketing plan to maintain confidentiality and get the home sold. "Need to know marketing" is a useful strategy.