

[Click Here](#)



Powered by Clickability

Click to Print

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Dear seller, I knew it was love...

Buyers in competitive housing markets try to win over sellers with love letters and family photos.

March 3, 2005: 12:04 PM EST

By Sarah Max, CNN/Money senior writer

SALEM, Ore. (CNN/Money) - Joe and Becky Avotins weren't surprised when several buyers made an offer on their Studio City, Calif. house the day after they put it on the market.

But they were taken aback when they read a heartfelt letter attached to one of the offers.

"Our family has just been to the open house of your home and has fallen absolutely in love with it," said Joe, reading the letter. It praises everything from the color of the dining room to the family-friendly backyard and introduces the couple and their young daughter.

"It definitely put a smile on our face," said Joe, explaining that the buyers had a solid offer and strong financials, but the letter didn't hurt. "For some reason we felt better selling to this nice family."

That's the point.

To that end, some real estate agents are recommending that their clients send personal -- yet tactical -- notes with their offer letters. Some buyers include photographs, wedding videos, even sonograms of their unborn children, say agents.

"It brings to life the person who might be buying the property," said Robby Browne, a real estate agent with the Corcoran Group in New York and, coincidentally, a former admissions officer at Harvard University. He recently spent several hours helping a client craft a two-page letter for a property in Greenwich Village.

Some sellers are moved by the gesture. "If they're emotionally attached to a house they do like to hear all that stuff," said Todd Marks, a real estate agent with Prudential John Aaroe in Beverly Hills, who represented the Avotins in their sale.

These days, as many as 8 out of 10 offers he sees have a love letter of sorts attached, he said.

"I've never met a seller who wasn't emotionally attached to their house," said Sally Thompson, a real estate agent with John L. Scott in Seattle who worked in public relations before going into real estate. "It's where they lived, where their children grew up."

Most of the sellers she works with want a buyer who's going to treat the house well and get along with the neighbors. For that reason, she tells the buyers she represents to write a handwritten note (it's more personal than a typed letter) explaining who they are and why they like the house.

She then reads the letter and, if needed, edits it before sending it off. "It goes on top so the person reads the letter first and then goes into the details of the offer," she said.

Even the most moving letter won't do a lot of good if the offer is low or the finances are questionable. Still, she said, she's seen sellers give buyers a second chance to improve their offer because of the letter.

Let's not get too personal

At some point, however, the novelty is lost.

"A lot of sellers really just care about the bottom line," Marks said. "They don't even want to read the letters."

And while some agents ask clients to put pen to paper, others go out of their way to avoid personal contact between buyer and seller.

"My feeling is that you need to treat the transaction as a business proposition and you should not be emotionally involved," said Karen True, a real estate agent with the Corcoran Group in Palm Beach, Fla. "Ideally everyone just wants to get the best price."

Even after a price is negotiated, she said, there could be problems if the buyers and sellers get cozy with each other. Buyers might feel guilty about, say, insisting that something get fixed after the home inspection. Sellers might open themselves up to trouble down the road.

"Do you want the buyers calling you directly because they can't get a window open or a faucet leaks?" asked True.

Houses, like relationships, are never perfect.

For more on surviving a competitive market, click [here](#).

For the latest home prices in more than 100 markets, click [here](#). ■

Find this article at:

http://www.money.com/2005/03/02/real_estate/thursday_letters/index.htm

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

[Click Here](#)