

## Why empathy belongs at the heart of real estate

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Lisa just wanted it over.

Her mother was in convalescent care, and it was anyone's guess how long she would be there. The family home needed to be sold to pay for everything, but Lisa was frozen in a sea of stress and confusion.

She knew a buyer would see a purple bedroom that needed the wallpaper stripped and walls painted, but she just saw her mother's favorite color and the peace she felt even as her body started to decline.

She knew the blue carpet was old and dated, but she kept seeing her and her sister lounging on the floor, girlfriends surrounding them, everyone giggling, sharing and having a great time.

She knew a buyer would hate the quirky island that made the kitchen cramped and dated, but Lisa saw her mother whipping up one of her delicious home-cooked meals. She knew it was crazy, but she could smell the love every time she was there.



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Lisa knew what she had to do to [sell the home for top dollar](#). Her mother needed her to sell it for top dollar.

But Lisa just couldn't move.

## Real estate is more than a transaction

Not everyone is facing such an obviously emotional sales situation, but residential real estate — the purchase or sale of one's personal home — is rarely “just business.”

This is an industry worth billions of dollars in annual revenue with no clear and compelling value proposition for its customers.

The real estate industry is screaming for disruption.

We brought it on ourselves. For decades, our ads have been about how great we are — we are market leaders, no. 1, luxury, lifestyle, most, global, community, *big*.

We almost never talk about [what we actually do to earn our commissions](#).

That is why a company offering to do it for a small flat fee can look enticing.

The consumer might believe that one transaction is pretty much the same as another. Parts are parts, and the transaction ain't rocket science. It seems like it should be a lot easier and that a super smart tech company could deliver the same value for far less.

## Technology can't replace human-ness

Lisa is all of us. Our homes are not a collection of bricks and mortar. Even the most analytical rocket scientists lose objectivity during the sale or purchase of a home — it's the place they live, raise a family, entertain friends and create memories.

There are a dozen or more people who affect the outcome of each transaction. Each one is playing by his or her own internal rules and motivations. And though we all might want the same thing, we often do not agree on how to get there.

A team needs a leader with skill and empathy, not a computer algorithm.

In this story, Lisa needed our guidance on exactly what she fixed and what she left alone. She leaned on us to get quotes and schedule workers. She seemed to steady during our calls that often started on a frantic note. She was often surprised by our advice, and the entire project cost far less than she expected.

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A buyer made an offer before the home even hit the market, and Lisa was tempted to take it. It was, after all, full price, and she wanted this process over!

We did a lot of research on the buyer and her agent. We suggested that Lisa counter \$30,000 higher than the list price, and Lisa thought we were crazy.

The buyer agreed to that high price.

The transaction was difficult as the buyer bucked and protested along the way, doing everything possible to lower that price. Managing the numerous people involved on both sides was often difficult and tense.

## Getting through a nuanced transaction with empathy

It is easy to assume how you might respond, but the stakes are much higher when the people you love are affected. Do you take a hard no and risk the buyer walking away? Do you give in because you are already netting more money than you expected?

A technology-focused real estate company might negotiate via text message or other technology, but that is a rotten way to solve problems.

A negotiation over money might be simple, but how do you create a solution that factors in stress, inconvenience and the risk of the unknown?

A skilled agent uses experience, communication skills, problem-solving skills and empathy to find the best solution. In many situations, buyers and sellers get a solution that might be different than the one they expected — a solution that works as well or better.

Text messages can't do that.

Lisa just closed escrow and kept nearly *all* of that extra \$30,000. Her mother's future is secured, and Lisa feels the satisfaction of a job well done.

We feel the same.

*Kendyl Young is the broker-owner of DIGGS real estate in Glendale, California.*

Source: [click here](#)