Real Safe Agent system gaining traction with Realtor associations

Close to three years after the murder of Arkansas agent Beverly Carter and amid reports of other attacks on vulnerable real estate professionals, more Realtor associations are stepping up to tackle the issue of agent safety.

The country's third-largest Realtor association, The Long Island Board of Realtors (LIBOR), along with the Buffalo Niagara Association of Realtors (BNAR), have joined other multiple listing services and Realtor associations in using the Real Safe Agent (RSA) system.

The patent-pending system has agents working together in their local real estate communities to prevent predatory behaviors from escalating.

The system and accompanying mobile app allow users to rank their level of comfort with prospects, make more informed decisions about whether it'd be a good idea to bring another person along to an appointment, connect with agents in the area who could accompany them, and issue drop-in alerts to nearby agents if they become uncomfortable. All aspects of the system are setup to be discreet so as to not alarm prospects should they be legitimate.

RSA will be used by 75,000 agents around the country by the end of August, according to Susan Young, RSA's VP of industry relations. Participants also include the Northern Ohio Regional Multiple Listing Service and the Fort Smith Board of Realtors.

BNAR CEO John Leonardi, a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel and 25-year industry veteran said: "Real Safe Agent is one of the most innovative products I've seen. It's rare that something comes along that changes a paradigm in our industry, and Real Safe Agent completely changes how Realtor safety is approached."

Carl Carter Jr., founder of the Beverly Carter Foundation and Beverly Carter's son, said that he was not affiliated with the RSA ystem, but liked certain innovative parts of it.

He said it seeks to streamline the client ID verification process and provide better information-sharing for an agent's client activities.

One innovative function that comes with RSA is agents' ability to alert any available agents in their area which they call the "Listening Mode."

For example, if Carl is showing a property and gets uneasy, he can access the RSA app to flag himself as such.

Other agents in Listening Mode and in that area will get a notification of Carl's uneasiness, so they can "drop by" to be a buddy.

As part of this feature, Carl's buddies can "listen" along as Carl conducts the showing.

How feasible this is in a hectic job market remains to be seen, Carter cautioned.

Carter added that he had noticed a shying away from broker connectivity in these safety backup arrangements.

"Understandably, many brokers fear that they might miss a distress signal and be liable in some way," he said.

The system is not for sale to individuals or brokerages. It is only sold to associations or MLSs to be used as a member benefit.

Email Gill South.

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