

*Paul Hodgson, Senior Property Consultant at Dart & Partners, **team** estate agent in Teignmouth (01626 772507) answers a common question...*



Q. Why are some agents' fees so much higher than others? After all, they all basically do the same job.

A. The first point to make here is that it's a free market, so all agents are entitled to set their own fees – and stand or fall by them. Besides, just imagine the public outcry, and the accusations of price-fixing that would start flying around, if we all charged the same!

Apart from that, the simple fact is that in estate agency - just like anything else - you generally get what you pay for. In other words, all agents do *not* do the same job! Cheap agents will always cut corners. Some, for example, may be "virtual" agents with no high street presence at all, relying instead entirely on the internet. This might all sound terribly 21st-century, but with no staff on hand to give expert local advice, they will probably expect you to do quite a lot of the work yourself!

Also, always remember that the low fee model only works with high volumes. Agents – virtual or otherwise - who charge less than the going rate for your area need fast turnover in order to survive. That means that they will probably want to push through sales at almost any price, rather than taking the time needed to market your home properly.

The fact is, a decent, professional estate agent does a great deal for his or her money: -

- they use their knowledge of the local market and recent comparable sales to value your property
- they advise on presentation
- they use a mix of both internet and print media, together with a range of specialist tools such as floor plans, virtual tours and embedded video, to generate the maximum degree of exposure to the market
- they process all offers, using their professional judgement and experience to help you evaluate them, and ultimately...
- they find you a buyer!
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But it doesn't stop there. A good agent will continue to provide you, their client, with professional advice and support at every stage of the process, right up to completion. Of course, a cheap agent won't do half of that. But frankly, when it comes to selling your most prized asset, why risk a bad bargain?