

Your House Is For Sale, You Just Don't Know it Yet

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BY MARILEN CAWAD

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NEW YORK (**TheStreet**) -- Chris Lichon found her "dream" starter home as she was driving around Rutherford County, Tenn. one fine spring day. The house was on about an acre of ground, on a dead-end street, with a big pasture beside it that she could rent for her horse. It was perfect, she thought, except for one small detail. The house was not for sale.

Lichon had already been house hunting for four months when she came across the 1970s ranch-style home. So when she found what she was looking for, her trusted real estate agent didn't think twice about knocking on the door and asking the question, "Would you consider selling your home?"

To Lichon's surprise, the homeowners said yes. "They just asked us to give them a half hour to tidy up and then they showed us around the house," she said. Save for a few places that needed additional insulation, she found the three-bedroom, one-bath home to be well maintained.

As luck would have it, the owners were a growing family of seven who had long thought about moving to a larger place. They named their price, Lichon found it fair, and just like that, the house was sold.

The lesson in this story: When buying a home, don't just rely on a real estate listing or a "For Sale" sign. Trust your instincts and let your realtor do the dirty work for you.

Joshua Baris, a real estate agent for **Coldwell Banker** in Northern New Jersey, recently had to knock on an unsuspecting homeowner's door for his client who wanted a specific three-bedroom luxury condo in West New York, N.J. His bold step resulted in a successful sale.

"If you want to succeed in this market, you really have to be aggressive and creative," said Baris. Not only is he going house-to-house, he's also sending out letters to owners of unlisted homes on behalf of his clients.

His letter would typically say: "My client is looking to buy a house and came across yours. Please call me to discuss in greater detail."

Some recipients of his letter might find his actions intrusive and some might even think it's a scam, but Baris said, more often than not, people are willing to talk and negotiate.

"It's not that everyone has a price, but you'll be surprised how many homeowners have thought about selling, but just never got around to doing it," said Baris. "The best deals are sometimes made when the buyer's agent is one step ahead."

The practice is not uncommon. All over the U.S., realtors have been resorting to cold calls to get prospective buyers into unlisted homes.

"This is happening more often than you might think, especially in the current market, in places where inventories are extremely low," said Keith Sorem, a real estate consultant and associate at **Keller Williams Real Estate Services** in Los Angeles, Calif.

A house, for example, may have failed to sell one or two years ago, so the owner took it off the market. However, home values in the area may have already increased today -- enough to where the owner would be willing to sell. In this case, Sorem said, a cold call would be welcomed by both buyer and seller.

When buying a home, it's always best to keep in mind that you have more options than you are presented with. You might consider selling your own home if prospective buyers asked and the offer was right. Similarly, your ideal home may not be on sale, but that doesn't mean you cannot buy it.