

Real Estate

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER
SUNDAY, DEC. 2, 2007
Marketplace 3

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Technology's no substitute for a Realtor

By **THOMAS MUSIL**
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Q. What is academia saying about the future of the real estate agent, commissions, marketing methods, etc.? It seems as though technology, i.e., virtual transactions, could happen.

Many real estate services are already online. I can imagine going to a Web site to buy or sell directly using a virtual site with "live voice" seller and buyers negotiating.

It seems buyers/sellers are

skeptical of the commission amounts and the veracity of agents. The average home is over \$1 million here and \$60,000 seems too much to pay for real estate sales services. Could the consumer set the stage for a revolution in real estate transactions?

A. Real estate, like all other aspects of the modern world, is changing. There is no question that technology is leading the way.

With technology the real estate consumer is more in-

formed, and market activities are more transparent. This is not enough to limit the services of a real estate agent. I see references in the media that the real estate agent is going the way of the dinosaur, travel agent and the stockbroker.

While our housing market is slowing down and technology is improving, I disagree with your idea that real estate careers will substantially decrease. Agents bring value to transactions.

As technology has developed, so have the complexity, regulation, requirements and procedures facing real estate buyers and sellers. Many consumers may be comfortable working without an agent representing their interests.

However, many consumers are not and will seek full-time, experienced real estate salespersons to help with the transaction. Buyers especially need representation, which – in most cases – is paid for by the seller through a commis-

sion split with the listing agent.

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