

Technology sounds death knell for recalcitrant realtors

The South African real estate industry has entered a new age due to technological advancement, proved by the fact that 80% of sellers now start their property searches on the internet.

That's according to Richard Gray, CEO of Harcourts Real Estate (SA), who says today's cutting-edge technology in the hands of NQF-qualified agents is sounding the death knell for recalcitrant operators.

"There's no doubt that technology, along with the new compulsory NQF training, is changing the industry. A few years ago, an agent could get by with a car. Nowadays, the basic industry requirements are an NQF qualification, a laptop or iPad, and a smartphone."

Commenting on Harcourts' latest page viewing statistics from Google Analytics, Gray says today's buyers invariably start their searches not by visiting show houses, but by typing in key search words as well as their preferred suburbs. Only once they find a property that suits their requirements do they contact the listing agent to set up an appointment to view.

Web enquiries are increasing

According to Anton Jansen van Vuuren, head of technology for Harcourts, the group receives an average of 400 web enquiries per day. Depending on demand for an area, this figure can rocket up to 1 000 or more. Current record holder is Harcourts Maritz in Centurion, which received 230 000 website page views over a four month period earlier this year.

This is evidence that today's property seekers are increasingly technology-savvy, hence the importance of providing them with the widest possible range of listings on comprehensive, easy-to-navigate websites.

Consumers are also less tolerant of the poor communication that has long dogged the industry. "Buyers know about and expect value-adds such as virtual tours and quick response codes, which enable them to access listings and websites instantly via their smartphones.

Sellers today also have heightened expectations. They want their properties exposed to the widest possible buying pool, not only on the listing agency's website but on all the other important property portals in South Africa and overseas," van Vuuren concludes.