

Just One More Look: Buyers have taken to calling for a second opinion. And a third, a fourth, a fifth

By Johanna Robledo - First, the buyer brought her sister to see an uptown apartment, represented by Century 21's Mary Lou Currier. Then she came back with her decorator, followed by a baby-toting friend, and then an architect. Then there was the meet-and-greet with the super. So far, though, no contract. "I had one person come back three additional times. First he came with his mother, then a girlfriend and co-worker, and then an interior designer and a painter," recalls Jeffrey Schleider of Miron Properties. "This is all before putting together a number"—and, he adds, an offer never materialized. Condo marketer Adriano Hultmann of Prudential Douglas Elliman has met similarly entourage buyers. One sixtysomething couple returned to his Queens showings countless times over four months, each time with aunts, cousins, uncles, and their daughter and son-in-law. They finally signed a contract last week.

Start asking brokers about this, and you'll quickly learn that it's a colossal irritant—and that lately, it's happening *all the time*. **"I don't know whether to smile or to cry, but the trend is definitely there,"** says **Barak Dunayer of Barak Realty, who attributes the phenomenon to the "level of urgency" in the market—or lack thereof.**

"Three years ago, people were in such a rush. [Now] buyers think they can bring in their feng shui expert, their mother, their grandmother if she's around." Schleider adds that, of late, "what's unique is the sheer number and the types of people [buyers are] bringing by."

Worried about making a bad investment, they seek reassurance from everyone and—literally—their mother. "After a period of economic downturn, everyone's buying more cautiously," explains LoHo Realty's Jacob Goldman, who says he's seen a whole lot of feng shui experts dragged along to showings in recent days. "They want to make sure that if they're going to do it, they're going to do it right." They may

also be seeking reasons to be dissuaded. One shopper, a bank auditor, passed on a sunny co-op priced below market because it wasn't auspiciously laid out. But he also admits, "In the back of my mind, I was looking for reasons it might not be a good idea." His father's comments provided just enough justification to say no.

Are brokers, desperate to figure out whether their potential customers are serious, reduced to looking for tells, like poker players? Hultmann says he's encouraged when they start measuring rooms for furniture, and **Dunayer says when buyers hire a real-estate lawyer, that's a good sign.** But Goldman, who's waiting on a client with an accepted offer who has returned three times, testing every electrical outlet and requesting changes in the contract, says that "sadly, the only tell is that they actually sign the contracts. Even making an offer and saying they will take the place means nothing." He's still showing that apartment.



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