



## The Open House



Edition: 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Open houses have become the mechanism for showing potential purchasers or tenants through a property. An agent attends a property, opens that property to the public and then shows it to all and sundry. What you will get is 4 types of visitors:

- A prospective purchaser or tenant;
- An interested neighbour who wants to see how their property will stack up to the marketplace;
- "Tyre Kickers"; and
- Burglars.

Don't underestimate the organisational strategies of criminals and how inviting an open house is for those who wish to "case a joint". The open house provides a perfect mechanism to enter, look through the premises and identify the security conscious and not so security conscious owners. I was advised many years ago that if a burglar wants to break in, no amount of security will stop them.

If you are a professional burglar, an open house will provide you with the following information:

- The layout of the property;
- What security measures have been instituted by the owner; and
- What is worth stealing.

Unfortunately, differentiating between the 4 types of visitors is almost impossible. Agents don't want to scare away prospective purchasers or tenants. It's important that you make friends with the neighbour who may be interested in selling their property, and you never know the advantage of building a relationship with a "tyre kicker". The burglar; he or she will portray themselves as a potential purchaser or tenant and s/he will not sign the ledger "potential robber".

The agent has little control! The best an agent can do is protect themselves and provide some information for the police.

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This is why we now suggest that every person attending an open house should be required to show photo ID. All prudent agents should have already implemented an open house sign-on list that could be used as the basis for building a database in relation to that property type. Many agents are not requesting photo identification and are relying on the honesty of a person to provide their correct name and mobile phone number. If you are a burglar, you will lie about your name and your phone number.

Photo identification will weed out those who are genuinely interested in the property and those who are not. If a person is seriously interested in a property, they will provide a copy of their photo identification. This is your first step in protection. A person who intends to rob the place will not provide you with photo ID and will move onto the next premises.

Moreover, if a robbery occurs, and it's a person in the open house list, the police will have something to investigate. Many years ago, we consulted on a case where 1 hour after the open house the property was burgled. The agent had 2 protections:

- A list of every person who had attended the open house, with an indication that they had seen all photographic ID; and
- A procedure for locking up the house, which had been followed.

It was clear that the agent had complied with a duty of care. They had identified each person who had entered the premises and could demonstrate that they had locked the premises up properly. Most of all, it provided the police with the tool to investigate every person who came to the open house. Yes, none of these were the burglars; however the agent was able to demonstrate their worth to the owner and value of the process to those who had attended the premises.

I know many will fear that this is an intrusion on visitors who inspect a property; however it is for your agency's protection. In addition, remember a properly qualified open house list is the best means of building your database.

**Cheers,  
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and The team at ACP/Leverage!**



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