In whose interests?

Andy Acton warns about an offer that’s too good to be true

One fine, sunny afternoon, there I was relaxing on the sofa at home when a complete stranger knocked on my door and told me he had someone who would love to buy my house — and if you work with a reputable firm you should also end up with more in your pocket. If we go back to my house which I was offered £35,000 for, if I had checked the true value I would have found out it was worth £65,000. A good agent would also have found me a buyer at that price, but charged me a fee — say 2.5 per cent. End result is I get £65,575.

The only real loser from selling as a result of a direct approach is the seller. The buyer pays you £55,000 — if there is an agent of any sort involved they may get between £5,000 and £25,000 so the true cost to buyer is £60,000 to £65,000 (which is still below the market value). The buyer and agent are delighted and you are left feeling hard done by and slightly embarrassed; but only if you know about it.

Whilst this may read like a piece of fiction, in my experience so many dentists do sell for tens of thousands of pounds less than they could have.

A direct approach can sound very convincing and to seek a second opinion may well cost you nothing — so why wouldn't you? You have worked hard all your life to build value into your business - you owe it to yourself to sell it for what it is worth.

The true market for the sale of practices is far from the stories being spread by the 'direct approachers'. Last year FTA Finance, the leading arranger of finance for dentists in the UK, arranged £109 million worth of finance for dentists – this blows away the myth that there is no one out there with any money. Last year a practice in Essex had 12 offers of which some were above the asking price — and no one is buying dental practices? This particular practice was initially marketed to 975 dentists who were actively looking for a practice that matched the profile of this one.

I would also strongly advise that you pay for selling your practice too. In this way there is no doubt you are the client, you are receiving the service and if you work with a reputable firm you should also end up with more in your pocket. If we go back to my house which I was offered £35,000 for, if I had checked the true value I would have found out it was worth £65,000. A good agent would also have found me a buyer at that price, but charged me a fee — say 2.5 per cent. End result is I get £65,575.

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### About the author

Andy Acton is a director and co-owner of Frank Taylor and Associates – the leading independent valuers and sales agent to the dental profession. Its sister company, Loan Hunter, provides financial solutions to the dental industry. Andy is a regular contributor to the dental media and has also delivered many lectures across the UK.

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