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**Jack Kestell**  
 2015 President  
 Spokane Association of REALTORS®



## The Search is Tech; the Buy is TOUCH

**Opinion**

I finished reading a new report from the National Association of REALTORS® this week with a smile on my face. The report, "Real Estate in a Digital Age," concludes the search for real estate today is high tech, but the buy remains high touch.

It is no surprise that more people than ever before are looking for properties online as the first step in their house hunt. Heartening for my colleagues and me is the fact that more people than ever before are purchasing their home with the assistance of a REALTOR®.

The report is online here: <http://www.realtor.org/reports/real-estate-in-a-digital-age>.

In 2010, 36-percent of all buyers surveyed said they started their home search online. Today, that number is 40-percent. If we look at the demographics behind that number, we see the number climbs to 94-percent of young adults in the millennial generation.

The world we live in today is a digital one, and searching for a home is no different. Buyers now have apps that let them search by location and neighborhoods. Online listings have virtual tours so viewers can look at a bunch of potential homes while narrowing down their search to a select few in the effort to save time. Online searching maximizes the ability to compare and contrast homes on the market by selected features. Most of this is done before a potential home buyer connects with a real estate agent.

Even though most of those surveyed started their searches online, fewer than half of all buyers reported they actually bought a house they found there. 57-percent ended up buying a house they found through a REALTOR®.

When it comes time to actually buy a house, something interesting happens. According to the study, in 2010, 83-percent of all buyers surveyed said they hired a REALTOR® to help them buy a house. Today, that number is 88-percent. Buyers are turning to REALTORS® more today than ever before.

National Association of REALTORS® President Chris Polychron said this about the study: "Consumers have the ability to do more home buying research online and be more connected during the home search process than ever before, but research proves they still are seeing the value a REALTOR® brings to the transaction from the initial search to well after the closing."

The value of a REALTOR®. There it is. This is why I smiled when I read this report. Technology has added great value in the home buying process, to be sure, but there's something about buying a home that urges us – and I submit will always urge us – to turn to someone along the way, for assistance, for advice, for encouragement.

As we embrace the season of fall once again, and spend more time inside our homes, I encourage you – when you finish this article – to look up and look around where you are. If you are in your own home, congratulations! If you wish you were in your own home, start searching online and see what's out there. Then, when you're ready, do what almost everyone else does: talk with a REALTOR®!

*This article represents the personal opinion of Jack Kestell, 2015 President of the Spokane Association of REALTORS®.*

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