

OPEN HOUSE SAFETY

USING CLOUD-BASED CAMERAS



Don't do Open Houses alone! You've heard the warnings, right? In every agent safety seminar I teach, the "buddy-system" is always nestled in the curriculum; particularly for times we find ourselves most vulnerable like Open Houses. Other agents and affiliates, as well as friends and family members, can make great buddies as you conduct your Open Houses, but sometimes finding another person that's free for a few hours on a Sunday afternoon is a challenge.

There has to be more that we can do. Having lost my sweet mom, Beverly Carter, to a violent crime against an agent, I'm constantly examining my real estate practices for ways to ensure my personal safety and security. I'm particularly jealous of urban areas that have necessitated a pre-Open House online registration, but few of us have that luxury. I was first introduced to the concept of videoing an open house in the fall of 2015 through a safety app called Real Agent Guard. They proposed that you could have your laptop open with its camera enabled, projecting the video stream of those that enter the property. Clients would see themselves on the screen and clearly know that the property was under surveillance. *Accountability through loss of anonymity*, I thought. I loved it.

Before making the leap to purchase and implement a cloud-based camera into my open house strategy, I researched their effectiveness at deterring criminals. The UNC Charlotte of Criminal Justice found that 60% convicted burglars would look for security cameras before moving forward, and 40% of burglars said that the presence of security cameras would motivate them to seek another easier target. The Electronic Security Association reports through a study about 83% of burglars would first determine whether a home has security cameras before they broke into the house, and 60% of thieves would typically avoid homes with security cameras.

I'll admit, I initially had the worry I would make potential clients uncomfortable with a camera placed next to the sign-in sheet; however, my worry was misplaced. My camera is discreet, and I'm not sure many people even notice it. On the off-chance that someone mentions it, I tout the cool features of the camera and ask if they use cloud-based cameras at their current residence. It's a great way of redirecting the conversation without awkwardly stumbling down the path of "I think you might harm me or steal stuff."

I use the Amazon Cloud Cam. Although it's a small investment to purchase one (I got mine for \$119), it serves all my security needs without subscribing to any monthly fees for additional services. Other popular models include offerings by KAMTRON and Blink XT.

The reasons why I chose this product:

- Lightweight and portable
- Simple to use and set-up
- Ease to use smart phone app for set-up and monitoring activity
- Two-way communication with microphone and speaker, so my designee could keep an eye out for my personal safety and verbally check-in at any time

Another opportunity for adding this technology to your processes is the chance to replay your "performance" during the Open House. Think you're nailing your property descriptions and best representing your brand during Open Houses? Watch the replay and see for yourself.