

# Giving something back



**William Naylor**  
of Naylor's Estate  
Agency explains  
why agents should  
get involved in their  
local community.

**W**alk down any high street in and there will be an estate agency – they are an intrinsic part of any community.

However, the professionals who buy and sell homes are often distrusted by the general public and viewed as something of a necessary evil.

As the owner of an independent agency, I was disturbed to read the results of an Ipsos MORI poll which reported that only 22 per cent of respondents believed that estate agents told the truth. This compared with ratings of 31 per cent for bankers – in fact, the only profession to come lower in the honesty ratings were politicians.

So, it's clear that the profession needs something of an image makeover. It's also a disappointing response for the many agencies that are committed to supporting and improving the community in which they operate. Independent estate agencies in particular are often run by people who have lived in the area for much of their adult life; who have a genuine commitment to that region, and unsurpassed local knowledge. However, estate agencies are often perceived as making money from local residents without giving much back.

## GIVING SOMETHING BACK

We are fortunate at Naylor's to be based in the attractive Leicestershire town of Market Harborough. The town regularly features in property lists and was recently cited by The Times as being one of the top 15 commuter towns as well as one of Britain's happiest places to live. The town is commended for its strong sense of community with many independent shops and a thriving local economy as well as great transport links.

These qualities are just some of the reasons why I chose to set up an agency and to live here – so I believe that I also have a duty to put something back in. There is also a strong commercial argument for supporting your village, town or city, as



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well as the obvious moral one. If somewhere is perceived to be a pleasant place to live with a strong sense of community, people are more likely to want to live there.

In my experience, the smaller independent agents tend to be slightly more community minded as they are often owned or managed by people who have a strong affiliation with the region. However, whether you are part of small agency or a large chain with a hundred branches nationwide, there's no excuse not to get involved in what is going on in your area. There are always ways to help – from working as volunteers in schools to running charity events in aid of local organisations.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN ACTION

We have instigated many community initiatives since opening Naylor's ten years ago and are proud to be part of the town's thriving group of independent traders. This year our focus has been on two specific areas: litter and Britain in Bloom.

Litter is something that I feel very strongly about and so it seemed a good idea to

practise what we preach by actively supporting a litter pick. We joined forces with a litter management company and sponsored a 2.5 mile pick along a rubbish hotspot. The pick yielded a disturbing seven bags of refuse – one bag every third of a mile. As it was the first sponsored pick in the town, we got the local press to highlight the issue and spread the word hoping that other businesses would follow suit.

Market Harborough has a great record in the annual Britain in Bloom competition having won gold several times in the East Midlands in Bloom competition; the town is also the 2014 reigning champion of the largest town category. The entry is volunteer-led and they work extremely hard to make the town look beautiful with some fantastic floral displays. We decided to get involved after spotting people tending to planters on the town square outside our offices. We enjoy looking at all the beautiful displays so it seemed fitting that we should help by sponsoring some of the hanging baskets and paying for the installation of an automatic watering system as part of the town's entry. We have yet to decide our community priorities for 2016, but it has become an important and rewarding part of what we do.

Of course everyone is busy: we have to make a living and working in the property industry has certainly had its challenges over the past decade. However, we make our money from the place that we operate in and the people who live and work there, so it seems only right that we should play a part in making that place better for everyone.

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