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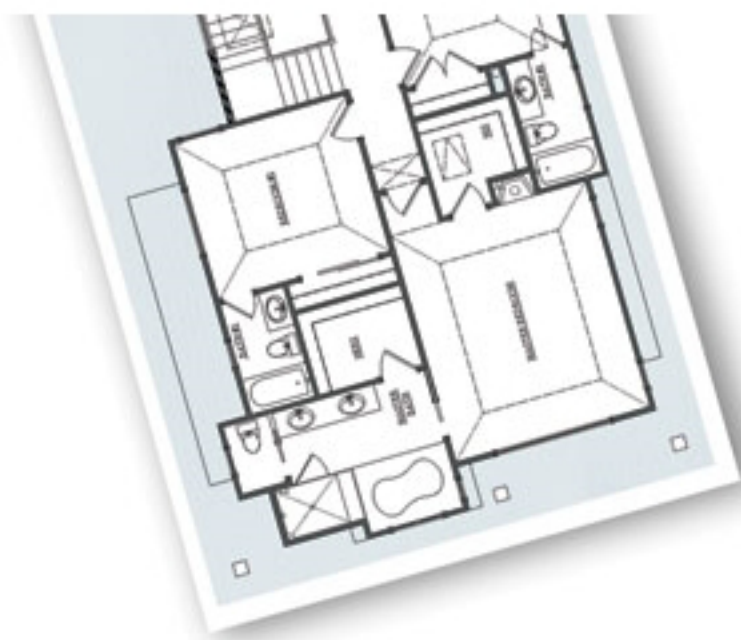
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From this week's Business of Life

## Seen & Noted: A home's identity in black and white

By: Lisa Bertagnoli April 21, 2008

Could the old-fashioned floor plan be edging out its high-tech competitor in home sales, the online virtual tour?

Showing written floor plans is "a trend that's growing," says Chris Pagano, an agent in Coldwell Banker's Lincoln Park office, as some

buyers think virtual tours that pan 360 degrees "distort a room."

Floor plans, which cost up to \$500 to have drawn up, clearly show the exact dimensions of rooms and how they connect.

Virtual tours "really aren't that helpful," agrees Lori Rinaldi, 29, a banker hunting for her first home. She prefers still photos accompanied by a room's dimensions. "I don't even look (at a listing) if there aren't pictures."

Honore Frumentino, a Koenig & Strey GMAC broker in Deerfield, is moving away from virtual tours. "Customers want to direct their online experience," she says, and that's easier to do by clicking on still photographs.

Virtual-tour makers agree and are developing documentary-type videos that stitch still photos together to give the appearance of video. Those videos are easier to look at and give customers the "great-looking, big photographs" they want, says Brian Balduf, CEO of YHT Inc., a Des Plaines producer of video home tours.

Agents say it pays to give customers what they want.

Deborah Hess-Flocco, principal at New Chicago Real Estate Inc. in Chicago, lost a sale when a would-be buyer refused to view a property without seeing a floor plan first. Ms. Hess-Flocco declined to have one drawn, but in retrospect, she says, "maybe we should have done it."

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