*Argument 4*

*"Of the two leading real estate firms in our town---Adams Realty and Fitch Realty---Adams is*

*clearly superior. Adams has 40 real estate agents. In contrast, Fitch has 25, many of whom*

*work only part-time. Moreover, Adams' revenue last year was twice as high as that of Fitch,*

*and included home sales that averaged $168,000, compared to Fitch's $144,000. Homes*

*listed with Adams sell faster as well: ten years ago, I listed my home with Fitch and it took*

*more than four months to sell; last year, when I sold another home, I listed it with Adams, and it*

*took only one month. Thus, if you want to sell your home quickly and at a good price, you*

*should use Adams."*

The author of this argument claims that Adams Realty is superior to Fitch Realty. To support

this claim the author cites certain statistics about the number and working hours of the fa'ms'

agents, and the number and sales prices of homes sold by the two fLrms. The author also

cites anecdotal evidence involving her own experience with Fitch and Adams. Close scrutiny of

this evidence reveals that it lends little credible support for the author's assertion.

The author bases her claim partly on the fact that Adams has more agents than Fitch, and

that many of Fitch's agents work only part-time. However, the author provides no evidence that

the quality of a real-estate firm is directly proportional to the number of its agents or the

number of hours per week that its agents work. Lacking such evidence, it is equally possible

that a smaller firm is more effective than a larger one, and that a part-time agent is more

effective than a full-time agent. Besides, the author does not provide any information about

how many Adams agents work part-time.

To further support her claim the author cites the fact that Adams sold more properties last

year than Fitch. However, the author overlooks the possibility that last year's sales volume

amounted to an aberration, and that in most other years Adams has actually sold fewer

properties than Fitch. Moreover, the disparity in sales volume can readily be explained by

factors other than the comparative quality of the two fkrrns. Perhaps Adams serves a denser

geographic area, or an area where turnover in home-ownership is higher for reasons unrelated

to Adams' effectiveness. Or perhaps sales volume is higher at Adams simply because it

employs more agents, and each Adams agent actually sells fewer homes on average than

each Fitch agent does. Without ruling out such alternative explanations for the disparity in

sales volume, the author cannot defend the conclusion that based on this evidence that

Adams is superior to Fitch.

In further support of her claim the author points out that the average sales price of a home

sold by Adams is greater than the average price of a home sold by Fitch. However, this

evidence shows only that the homes that Adams sells are more valuable on average than the

ones that Fitch sells, not that Adams is more effective in selling homes than Fitch. Moreover, it

is possible that a few relatively high-priced or low-priced properties skewed these averages,

rendering any conclusions about the comparative quality of the two firms based on these

averages unfair.

For additional support the author points out that it took Fitch Realty considerable longer to

sell one of the author's homes than it took Adams Realty to sell another one of her homes ten

years earlier. However, this disparity is explainable by other plausible factors, such as

changing economic conditions during that ten-year period, or a difference in the desirability of

the two properties. Without establishing that all other factors affecting the speed of a sale were

essentially the same for the two homes, the author cannot rely on this limited anecdotal

evidence to support her daim.

In conclusion, the author's evidence lends litde credible support to her claim. To persuade

me that Adams is better than Fitch, the author would need to provide clear evidence that

individual Adams agents are more effective in selling homes than individual Fitch agents, and

that the disparity in home sales and sales price is attributable to that difference. Finally, to

better evaluate the author's claim we would need more information comparing the percentage

of agents working part-time at Fitch versus Adams. We would also need more information

about the comparative attractiveness of the author's two homes, and the extent to which the

residential real-estate market changed during the decade between the sale of these two

homes.