

How to Find the Perfect Real Estate Professional

When you're selecting a real estate professional to help you buy or sell a home, it's important to choose the agent who is both most qualified and who you think you'll work well with. The ideal person for you is an experienced professional who knows your market, acts in an ethical manner, answers all your questions, addresses your concerns, and, most important, will listen to you and be your teammate throughout the entire process.

Here are some key items to consider:

Look for Marketing Materials That Stand Out

Signs of a true pro who is hard-working and has marketing savvy – an agent who:

- has great-looking ads and photos for their listings
- seems to be doing an aggressive job of marketing their properties online on Trulia
- creates materials that catch your eye online, in your mail, or in advertisements around town

Look for Someone Who Is Internet Savvy

Almost all buyers start their search for a new home on the Internet even before they contact a real estate professional. Make sure your agent has an Internet presence and has all their listings well-marketed online.

As a seller, you can use the web to find an agent too, if you don't already have one in mind. Trulia's Find a Pro directory has more than 700,000 real estate professionals. Search for:

- an agent in your desired zip code
- who knows your area
- who has shared some stellar advice online.

Likely they'll be an expert who can do the same for you in a one-on-one relationship while they help you buy or sell a home.

A Word for the New Guy

In real estate, just 20 percent of the agents do 80 percent of the business. Most people gravitate to an agent who has a few years of experience under his or her belt. But you might find that someone who's newer in the business can offset their inexperience with drive, hunger, fresh approach, and enthusiasm. So even though I recommend someone with at least five years' experience in selling, don't overlook a hard-working fresh face.

Avoid the Part-Time Agent

Avoid anyone who isn't serious about real estate as a career. You want to work with someone who has helped people like you find and buy homes many times and who makes it a full-time job. Anyone who dabbles in real estate for supplemental income or as a part-time job is a no-no. Your home purchase or sale is too important a business deal.

Work the Neighborhood

Another great way to get a pulse on potential real estate agents is to go to open houses and meet some who are actually in their work environment. You can search for open houses on Trulia.com or using Trulia's mobile apps. Go to the open houses, meet these agents, collect their business cards, and jot down a few notes about them. Are they polite and informative? Do they take an interest in your questions and appear knowledgeable about the neighborhood?

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As you identify possible agents to work with, here are ten questions you should ask to help narrow down the field:

1. What percentage of your clients are buyers (vs. sellers)?

2. In which neighborhoods do you primarily work?

3. Will I be working with you directly for all aspects of my home buying process, or will you delegate some tasks to a sales associate or administrative assistant? (A knowledgeable assistant can be invaluable, but you want to make sure you can connect with your agent regularly.)

4. Do you work full-time or part-time as a real estate agent?

5. How many homes have you closed in my neighborhood?

6. How many other buyers are you representing now? How many sellers? (Hint: the busiest agents are often the most efficient.)

7. Is your license in good standing?

(You should check an agent's certification yourself with your state's Department of Real Estate.)

8. How many years of education and experience do you have? (Experience and continuing education typically make for better agents.)

9. Are you also a broker and/or an agent?

10. Can you provide me with the names and phone numbers of past clients who have agreed to be references? (Insights from past customer can help you learn more about an agent and give you a greater comfort level.)

About the Author



Michael Corbett is Trulia's real estate and lifestyle expert. He hosts NBC's EXTRA's Mansions and Millionaires. In addition to his regular segments on ABC's The View and Fox News, he is a national best selling author with three critically acclaimed real estate books: Find It, Fix It, FLIP IT!; Ready, Set, SOLD! and Before You BUY!