

# **EIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK ANY REAL ESTATE AGENT BEFORE SIGNING ANYTHING**

Everywhere you look; there are advertisements for Real Estate, and for Real Estate Agents. The reason is pretty simple: It's not extremely difficult to get your real estate license, a college degree is not required, and the income potential is pretty high. Unfortunately, this means that there are a lot of BAD Real Estate Agents out there.

The BEST way to find a good professional - in any industry - is to ask for a referral from a trusted friend or colleague. This does not, however, mean that any person referred to you is a quality professional - everyone has a brother, sister, aunt, uncle, or cousin who is in the business, after all - but it will increase your odds. There are a few questions that you should ask ANY Real Agent before signing a buyer's agency or listing agreement.

## **1. How long have you been in the business?**

Pretty much any average person could decide they want to get their license today, and have that license in their mailbox a month later. Because of this, your Real Estate Agent's experience is VERY important. A new Agent will learn a LOT their first year, and will continue to learn more with every transaction. Don't automatically choose against a newer Agent - they typically bring a lot of energy to the transaction, and they will have LOTS of time for you. However, if you do decide to use a newer Agent, make sure they have a great support system behind them.

## **2. Are you a Realtor?**

Not all Real Estate Agents are Realtors. Members of the National Association of Realtors have to adhere to a strict code of ethics, or otherwise face having their membership revoked. Also, you must be a member of the National Association of Realtors to have access to the MLS (Multiple Listing Service) which is what gives Realtors access to almost every home for sale in their market area.

## **3. What certifications do you hold?**

There is an "alphabet soup" of advanced certifications that Real Estate Agents can earn. While it doesn't automatically mean that they are a good Agent, it does mean they are serious about their job. Keep an eye out for GRI - this is the most time consuming certification to obtain.

#### **4. What is your specialty?**

Real Estate Agents typically categorize themselves as either "commercial" or "residential" which are vastly different. Even among Residential Real Estate Agents, though, agents will specialize in Buyers, Sellers, or Renters. Some Residential Agents successfully handle Buyers & Sellers, but make sure they come with plenty of satisfied customers. Agents typically cut their teeth working with renters.

#### **5. Can I have a list of past customers?**

Take the time to call a few of an Agent's past customers. Ask for their strengths and weaknesses (and make sure they don't share the Agent's last name.)

#### **6. Who is your Broker? Can I call him/her?**

Real Estate Agencies are moving towards the "mega-brokerage" mentality which means that many Agents today have never met their Broker. If an agent doesn't have their Broker's cell phone number, find out who they will call if they run into questions.

#### **7. How many sales did you complete last year?**

A good agent will complete at least 25 sales per calendar year. You want to make sure that the agent helping you through the largest purchase or sale of your life is a GOOD agent.

#### **8. Is this your full-time job?**

It always surprises me how many people are willing to let their office mate down the hall handle the purchase or sale of their home. You need someone who handles real estate transactions full-time, day in and day out, to make sure that your best interests are taken care of. There are plenty of fantastic Real Estate Agents working today. Unfortunately, the incompetent Agents really stand out. (Did you hear about the Agent who contracted the wrong house?) Make sure that you find your Agent through a trusted source, and ask any Agent these important questions.

by Eric Bramlett