



Not All Brokers Are Created Equal

How you can make an Intelligent Choice

There's a tendency for the uninformed and uninitiated to adopt a mindset that all real estate brokers are "cut of the same mold." In fact, there are substantial differences among individuals and firms. This article will attempt to help you chose when it comes time to solicit help from professionals, whether buying, selling or leasing commercial real estate.

It is quite normal for most brokers to think they have the best platform to service your particular requirements. In the recesses of our own minds, brokers rationalize that the customer or potential client would be making a big mistake to choose a competitor. That's the ego in us brokers. Not all people with big egos are real estate brokers, but most real estate brokers have bigger than average egos. They need to because of all the rejection faced in the sales game. Whenever someone chooses a competitor (ok, I'll admit it. . . I have a few competitors!) over me and my firm, my ego goes thru this rationalization process that hardens my psyche and allows me to keep looking for the next property owner to whom I can be of service. This mental process is why most people reject the life of a commission salesperson. It's lonely, unpredictable, sometimes painful, but I wouldn't be in it for 45 years if the positive didn't outweigh the negatives. But I digress . . .

Here's my top nine knock-out list of qualities and qualifications that you can use to select a commercial real estate broker next time you are in the market for one of us: Note: when I use the pronoun "he" I also mean "she":

1. Focus on commercial brokerage only.

Does he spend any portion of the day showings/marketing homes? I did when I first started but I quickly learned that commercial real estate is a specialized segment of the business and eventually made a decision to focus exclusively on helping commercial clients solve their problems.

2. Distance from Your Property.

Does he focus on a geographic territory within 30-45 minutes from your property? No broker wants to drive an hour or more to show a property for 15 minutes and then turn around and drive back to the office. When a broker takes an assignment (listing) too far away, he will have a tendency to make it difficult to make appointments convenient for the prospect. That hurts exposure and could cost you a sale or lease. Being accessible on short term notice is a bonus, but not always realistic because good brokers have busy schedules. Unlike "house" brokers, who use lock boxes, we want to be present on all showings.

3. Is he or she likeable?

People do business with people they know, like and trust. It's a fact. Or at least a general rule. Different personalities will seek out different qualities in a broker so "one size fits all" does not apply here. If the chemistry doesn't feel right, that's usually a red flag and you should ask yourself why. You will have to figure out the difference between brokers who tell you "what you want to hear" and brokers who tell you the "way it is." What you want to hear is often not the truth. Don't decide you like a broker because he tells you whatever it takes to get you to sign the listing agreement.

4. Is there a written Marketing Plan?

Does the broker bother to show you in detail specifically what he is going to do to market your property? A written plan that a broker hands you usually means he is willing to be held accountable for doing what he says he will do. You need to buy into the marketing plan and the exposure vehicles the broker will use. Is the plan professional, well thought out, comprehensive?

5. Track Record

What specific transactions did the broker successfully complete in the last year or two? Make the broker tell you specifically what they sold or leased in your market in recent months and years. You want a broker who is making deals happen.

6. How will he communicate with you?

Will you get regular reports detailing activity on your property? Are these reports available via your preferred mode of communication? (i.e. regular mail, email, etc.). One of the most frequent complaints we hear from clients is their previous broker listed their property and didn't call or write until the listing expiration. That's sad. Insist on regular communication.

7. Does he have a website and/or blog?

In this day and age, a broker is a "nobody" if he doesn't have an on-line presence of some sort. You should go to that web site and check it out for content and professionalism.

8. Does he have support staff?

Does someone answer the phone when you call his office or do you always get a voice mail? Does he work with a partner and/or have an assistant who can respond to a question if he is on vacation? Or are you just stuck waiting for the vacation to be over?

9. Is he involved in the community?

Good brokers are "givers" of their time and expertise. Many are involved in professional organizations like the National Association of Realtors which has 1.1 Million members, 83,000 of which are commercial brokers. All of whom subscribe to a Code of Ethics. Some serve on City councils or committees, school boards, not for profit groups, other trade associations or business networking groups.

There you have it. Nine key criteria to help you select a broker right for you. You may have your own check-list but using these will greatly assist your decision process. NO broker can "guarantee" to sell or lease your property but you want to select a broker that can put the probabilities in your favor.