

13 strategic questions to identify whether an agent is the best fit

rew.ca/news/13-strategic-questions-to-identify-whether-an-agent-is-the-best-fit



Consumers need to develop an effective selection process in the lead up to hiring a buying agent. In a recent post, REW suggested you get serious, do your due diligence and assess specific facts, such as results and relevant experience.

REW talked to experienced agents to identify the most important questions consumers should ask to ensure the agent they select will have a positive impact on their buying experience and ultimately their final purchasing decision.

“Listen carefully and ask follow-up questions to find out what they’ll do, how they’ll do it and if they delivered on their promises to other customers,” says Bryan Velve, RE/MAX Crest Realty, an agent with 30+ years in the Vancouver area. “Agents are the kings and queens of the job interview and they know how to morph to appeal to a prospect.”

1) How many years have you worked as an agent?

REW’s expert agents concur, experience is crucial but note a less experienced, hungry agent with a deep commitment to acquiring knowledge and staying current will work just as hard.

2) What did you do before you became an agent?

Previous careers can also provide relevant insights and approaches to financing, negotiating, construction and more, so find out what they did before launching their real estate careers. This is especially important for new agents.

3) How will I benefit if I hire you as my agent?

"Ask open-ended questions that can't be answered yes or no," says [Julie Hughes](#), who runs Hughes Workman, Keller Williams, [Toronto](#), with partner Doug Workman.

4) How do you find listings?

Agents that rely exclusively on automated alerts could do far more. "I leverage my long-term connections to find out if a colleague is about to list a property that fits my client," says Velve.

5) How can you help me get pre-qualified?

Agents know that up to 95% of buyers aren't pre-qualified and that in certain neighborhoods, they'll lose out on every single offer as a result. "Can they introduce you to mortgage brokers they've vetted and individuals they've done business with over the years?" says Sandra Pate, Johnston & Daniel, Royal LePage, Toronto.

6) What type of experience do you have in neighborhoods X, Y and Z?

What can you tell me about Toronto's Leslieville or Vancouver's [Kitsilano](#) that's not common knowledge? Ideally, your buying agent knows that neighbourhood because they've bought, sold and walked through homes in the area.

7) How many homes in the \$XX price range have you bought for clients?

"If you're buying a multimillion-dollar home, you need an agent that is comfortable in that niche," says Velve. Conversely, they need to know what's considered the norm and acceptable in a lower-end home.

8) Do you specialize in a particular type of dwelling?

In major centres, such as Toronto and Vancouver, agents may focus exclusively on condos, where buyers need to consider everything from maintenance fees to short-term rental and smoking regulations.

9) How do you evaluate comparables?

Agents look at recently sold properties that are similar to the home you want to buy. “To develop truly accurate comparables, agents really need to know the neighbourhood and its homes, particularly in downtown neighbourhoods where cookie-cutter homes are the exception,” says Pate. Homes with three-bedrooms, two-bathrooms, a finished basement and parking can be surprisingly unique beyond those basics.

10) How do you pre-screen and inspect listings on my behalf?

Agents that continue to attend agent open houses and engage in one-on-one conversations with the listing agents can save buyers time and help manage their purchasing experience. “You simply can’t see it all on a computer screen because no one photographs or posts the ugly parts or the horrible views,” says Pate. “Virtually every property will look better in pictures and online than in real life.”

11) How many listings will we see together?

Velve always sees several homes with buyers to identify the unexpected attractions and turnoffs. “Buyers typically need to see several homes to figure out what actually matters to them in real life,” says Velve. “I need to be there to point out and discuss both the positive and the negative.”

12) How do you approach an offer?

In downtown Toronto and Vancouver, where demand tends to be high and supply short, agents must structure offers to their specific markets.

13) How will you negotiate on my behalf?

Beyond price, closing dates can be negotiated to accommodate sellers if buyers can stay with friends, family or find a short-term rental. What other factors will they consider during negotiations? “Be flexible and get creative to get the home you want,” says Pate.

Review the questions, create a list and be prepared to take detailed notes before you start the 13-question interview process that will help lead you to the agent that will help you find and win the home that meets your most vital criteria.

Looking for an agent? Search for the best fit agent for yourself [here](#).



See what's under the surface

Find out if a buyer agent is the right agent for you

How many years have you worked as an agent?

What did you do before you became an agent?

How will I benefit if I hire you as my agent?

How do you find listings?

How can you help me get pre-qualified?

What type of experience do you have in neighborhoods X, Y and Z?

How many homes in the \$XX price range have you bought for clients?

Do you specialize in a particular type of dwelling?

How do you evaluate comparables?

How do you pre-screen and inspect listings on my behalf?

How many listings will we see together?

How do you handle offers?

How do you approach an offer?

How will you negotiate on my behalf?

Real estate. Real simple.



Kara Kurylłowicz

Kara Kurylłowicz is a Toronto-based writer with 30 years of experience writing and editing for a wide range of magazines, websites and corporate clients. She has a long-term interest in real estate, as a journalist, homeowner and landlord with investment properties. She is fascinated by the Greater Toronto Area real estate market and is equally interested in how the Toronto market affects seasonal and second homes.