

How many transactions have you completed per year over the last three years?

You want a Realtor® who is consistently selling twenty or more properties per year. You do not want someone who is selling over fifty each year. If an agent has too few sales, they are either not focused on their business or simply not very proficient. If an agent is doing too much business, they may not be able to give you the attention you need or may pass you to an assistant or junior agent.

What percentage of your closed sales last year were for buyers?

As a buyer, you want to work with someone who has at least ten listings each year or at least 50% of their sales from the listing side. To be a good buyer's agent in this competitive market, a buyer's representative needs to be able to predict what a seller's agent may do.

When working with a buyer, how many offers do you usually write before the client "wins" a property?

This number should be four or less, regardless of market conditions. If an agent or a buyer boasts about writing five, eight, or even ten offers before "winning", the strategies they were using did not work and valuable time was lost.

Do you have an area of expertise?

When purchasing or selling in San Francisco, you want a Realtor® who works all neighborhoods of the city. Out-of-town agents are bad representatives - no exceptions. Agents who specialize in certain San Francisco neighborhoods may also be risky because they may not have full knowledge of the city and the uniqueness of each individual neighborhood. They may find it difficult to switch to an area that is outside their specialty.

What is your business model?

Any agent who has been in business more than two years should have a model. If they don't, they might not be doing the best they can with their skills. As with any job, a person should know how they are running their business.

Why are you with (Company)? (e.g. Prudential, Pacific Union, Paragon, etc.)

Brokerage firms offer many benefits. It is important to know whether the agent representing you understands and uses those resources. For example, good management and an agent that uses it can keep you out of a lawsuit. Real estate lawsuits are abundant. In addition, the network of an agency can often help you find off-market properties and position you better when submitting an offer.

Please tell me about your last real estate transaction.

This is an important open-ended question that will help you determine the agent's strategy and skill level. Hearing how the agent "won" the deal or "sold" the property using their skills is a key factor. Did they negotiate in the client's best interests? Did they make the deal happen or were they just an order taker or a "buddy" of the client?

Is this your only career? What did you do before real estate?

Many real estate agents are also mortgage brokers or into some kind of network marketing. This is a bad sign. Unfortunately, a lot of people get into real estate to make a quick buck. I suggest you choose your agent the way you choose your financial managers and attorneys. What would you think if your attorney also sold candles at home parties?

How often do you go out of town? Do you have a trip planned any time soon?

You want to make sure your agent has a balanced life, but also that you are not going to get stuck with a junior agent or assistant while your agent is in Tahoe skiing all winter. Is your agent leaving the country for a month during your home search? It is important that agents have designated time off and set your expectations for when they will be unavailable, but you also want to know that they are not going to be consistently unavailable. If the agent will be out of town, be sure their business partner is an experienced agent.

References, References, References!

You wouldn't hire an employee without checking them. Don't trust your life savings, future investments or retirement to someone without first checking their references. **Buying real estate is one of the biggest investments you will ever make in your life!**