

# What Makes A Good Agent?

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My neighbour asked me the other day to recommend a very good agent.

Very quickly, I shouted the name of Samanthajane Ltd, based in Charlton Village, SE7.

"I accept you're biased because you work there. I also accept that you do provide very good after service care because I've been told about it" She said, "but there must be many others, one at least?"

Hmm! Sure! I thought.

Sales or Letting?

"Both." She responded.

"Franchise or independent?"

"Doesn't matter really." She replied.

Ok. Would you prefer accredited membership of NAEA, ARLA, NALS, NFOPP, UKALA OR GUILD OF PROFESSIONAL ESTATE AGENTS or not?

She stares at me suspiciously and then asked;

"Is membership of any of these bodies the proof of a good agency?"

"Hmm, not exactly." I responded.

True. Being an operational member of any of the above mentioned associations does not on its own provide a cast iron guarantee of good agency services.

However, a client would be reassured that certain primary administrative procedures would be in place as standard to deal with any maladministration of services and fairly too.

For this to happen, a good agent would have an internal workable procedure to sort complaints out. And where the client is still not happy with the outcome, they will be offered the choice of getting redress from an external or independent organisation for arbitration purposes, ie; this may be the ombudsman service or the court.

Mrs Wanebee, that's my neighbour then asked; "what makes a good agent?"

Simply put, the mutual understanding and respect between the client and the agent goes a long way in establishing trust.

Let's face it. The job of an agent is based on trust.

Trust by the client to hand over access keys of a property to someone else who does not occupy the property.

Trust on having a stranger (the agent) to come into your property and tell you what they think your property's worth (appraisal).

The conviction that you as the client, to believe the information you're given is trust enough.

In an ideal world, nothing is supposed to go wrong. Agents and their clients are not supposed to renege on their agreed terms of business.

But we don't operate in a utopian world. So things would go wrong sometimes and people will be offended and some will register a complaint.

So it's when things go wrong and a client loses out due to any factors of maladministration from the agent that's when the default procedures mentioned above kicks in to provide qualified remedy and therefore cushion the effect of the loss.

- A good agent will always listen to and respect the instructions of his client.
- Does your agent give you written terms of business each time before marketing your property?
- A good agent would not illegally fly board any available communal fences for cheap publicity.
- Would actively ask your permission to erect an ad board in front of your property whether it's for sale or let and abide by it. Just because an agent has been instructed to sell or let a property does not automatically override the clients desire if they choose not to have an advertising board erected at the property.

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- Does your agent hurriedly let your property without a consideration to your instructions and explains away his reasons to you later.
- Does your agent hoard access keys to a multi agency property and claim deposit have been taken without a prior notice to yourself and you find out it's a ploy to buy time and cheat out the competition?
- Does your agent let your property without proof of proper tenant eligibility and affordability checks?
- Does your agent provide any after service care once agreed commission has exchanged hands or how many times have you heard the phrase "it's nothing to do with us anymore."

The above list could go for ever. The bottom line is whether your agent has approved instruction to let, manage or sell your property, the onus is on them to provide the client with required duty of care, effective due diligence for without which, the agent cannot be said to be acting properly with the best interest of the client at heart. That is the focus of the whole shenanigans of code of conduct. Doing things with common sense, in order words, just doing things right. That can't be hard, can it?

For free advice on achieving optimum rent, good lettings info and procedures, sales, queries on property management issues, please contact: Chidi Duru, who is the Sales & Lettings Consultant at Samanthajane Ltd.  
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