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3 Things to Do Before Engaging Your Property Agent



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When Jian Liang and his wife were looking for their dream home, they had no experience with the property market in Singapore. They thus decided to engage a property agent to help them in their search and sought agent recommendations from a friend.

That's how they met Grace.

“Grace helped us through the entire process, handling all the paperwork and advising us on potential problems,” said Jian Liang. [^]

As a buyer, Jian Liang paid Grace a commission of 1% of the purchase price.

According to Jian Liang, “Grace definitely deserves the commission. She was very helpful and often went out of her way to help us.”

Jian Liang's reliance on Grace is very typical of what Singaporean homebuyers go through. Most of us would probably only buy or sell property occasionally and would be unfamiliar with the processes and paperwork involved. This is where a professional property agent can come in to help.

In Jian Liang's case, his experience with his agent worked out well. Nevertheless, there are three things you should be aware of when engaging and working with a property agent.

1. Is your property agent on CEA's Public Register?

Even if a property agent was recommended to you by your friends or relatives, you should still ensure that they are registered with the [Council for Estate Agencies \(CEA\)](http://bit.ly/ms-cea-main) (<http://bit.ly/ms-cea-main>). You can do so by checking CEA's [Public Register](https://www.cea.gov.sg/public-register?utm_source=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_medium=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_campaign=MoneysmartFebMar18_public-register) (https://www.cea.gov.sg/public-register?utm_source=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_medium=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_campaign=MoneysmartFebMar18_public-register).

If the property agent doesn't appear on the Public Register, don't panic! Make sure you have entered their names, registration or mobile numbers correctly. Be sure to verify the agent against the photograph in the Public Register too.

If you aren't able to find the agent on the Public Register, there are two possibilities:

1. The individual is carrying out estate agency work illegally without a valid registration with CEA
2. The property agency or agent is currently suspended due to disciplinary issues. You can verify this from [CEA's website](https://www.cea.gov.sg/consumers/revoked-estate-agent-suspended-salesperson?) (<https://www.cea.gov.sg/consumers/revoked-estate-agent-suspended-salesperson?>)

utm_source=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_medium=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_campaign=MoneysmartFebMar18_suspendedrevoked).

If you encounter any red flags, you'll probably want to report them to CEA and start looking for a CEA-registered property agent to assist you.

2. Is your property agent representing both buyer and seller? Or tenant and landlord?

It may seem convenient to have one property agent managing both sides of the deal. This actually constitutes [dual representation](https://www.cea.gov.sg/docs/default-source/module/newsletter/3-2017/no-dual-rep.html) (https://www.cea.gov.sg/docs/default-source/module/newsletter/3-2017/no-dual-rep.html?)

utm_source=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_medium=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_campaign=MoneysmartFebMar18_dualrep) and is a huge no-no. There is no way of ensuring that the property agent stays neutral during the deal. After all, a buyer would want to negotiate for the lowest price, while a seller would want the highest price for his property.

In addition, a property agent representing one party cannot receive a fee or any kind of payment from the other party. This is the case even if the property agent has gotten his client's agreement to help the other party in the transaction, say with the paperwork. And yes, 'ang baos' are not allowed too!

As an illustration, Ms Noraini is a potential buyer who does not feel the need to engage a property agent. With his client's consent, the seller's property agent is willing to assist with some aspects of Ms Noraini's paperwork. Ms Noraini is grateful and wants to thank the property agent with a small token. To avoid dual representation, the property agent must refuse her gift.

3. Can I negotiate commission rates payable to agents?

The commission rates of property agents are negotiable. Start your relationship right with your property agent by negotiating and agreeing on the commission rate before he starts work. You can use [CEA's prescribed estate agency agreements](https://www.cea.gov.sg/docs/default-source/module/newsletter/may-jun-) (https://www.cea.gov.sg/docs/default-source/module/newsletter/may-jun-

2016/201605/prescribed-estate-agency-agreements.html?

utm_source=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_medium=MoneysmartFebMar18&utm_campaign=MoneysmartFebMar18_prescribedagreements) to formalise the agreement.

One savvy consumer is Mr Manimaran. When he was looking for his next home, Mr Manimaran was very clear that he wanted to take charge of his ideal home search. He did in-depth property research and contacted various sellers to view their properties. As a confident consumer, he even negotiated the price of the property himself!

However, after finding the resale flat of his dreams, it dawned on him that he was unfamiliar with the paperwork involved in the transaction. He realised that he needed a property agent to help him with the paperwork.

Fortunately, he was able to find a property agent who was willing to help him out. After some negotiation, the property agent was agreeable to help him with the paperwork at a lower commission rate than what one would ordinarily pay for an agent's full services. With the agent's help, Mr Manimaran was able to successfully purchase his new flat without any glitches.

In Singapore, property agents are professionals who provide valuable service and advice for their clients. As a client, help your agent by specifying your requests clearly, and honouring your end of the deal when your agent has fulfilled their duties.

Have you had a good experience with your property agent? Share your stories with us.

This article is brought to you in collaboration with the [Council for Estate Agencies](#).

(<https://www.cea.gov.sg/?>

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