

INSIDERS OUTLOOK

Saving landlords from grueling court eviction process

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This year has marked the end of condominiums reigning supreme. Long gone are the days of sell outs in under two months, where people were compelled to buy real estate as quickly as they could.

These days, people are looking to wait out the market and rent instead. With a vacancy rate of close to zero, landlord is now king. People all over the city are signing one, two and even three year leases, thereby securing their rent for a while. With so many leases being signed there are some things that residential brokers especially should know.

Since tenants bear the cost of the broker's fee, many landlords list their buildings with brokerage companies to make the rental process more pleasant. This way, finding tenants is at no cost to the landlord. Landlords will hold brokers responsible for the tenants they bring to their buildings. Brokers should take every step they can to ensure the landlord is satisfied, which is when their tenants pay the rent in a timely manner and inhabit the space peacefully. There is obviously no way to guarantee such

things absolutely before a tenant moves in, but there are ways to show the landlord you tried your best to achieve that guarantee for him or her. One such way is prequalification.

When a client contacts the brokerage company looking for a place to rent, the company should have a questionnaire ready to be filled out by the client or asked over the phone. A time saver would be to have the client pre-qualified before showing them any space.

The Steps to Prequalification

1. Credit Report. The first thing to do is to run a credit report. This can be done online or over the phone in virtually minutes.

2. Prior Residences. The questionnaire should ask the client to list his or her places of residence for the past five years. The broker should then call the prior landlords. No matter how high the credit score, brokers need to establish that the client has been a timely payer and will not be a nuisance to other tenants in the building. Other residents can withhold rent from the landlord if their quiet use and enjoyment is disturbed in the building.

3. Landlord-Tenant Registry. Brokers can check the landlord-tenant registry in

their town to see whether the client has ever had a case against them. This can be done in court or over the phone.

4. Current Pay Checks. In order to verify that the client can afford certain monthly payments, ask for a copy of two current paychecks. This way there is evidence in the client file that they held a paying job.

5. Guarantors. If the client does not financially qualify they can use a guarantor to ensure their monthly rent. Watch out for is out-of-state guarantors. These can cause complications in enforcing payment judgments.

6. Inspect Apartment. Have the client thoroughly inspect the apartment prior to signing the lease. The client should inspect all of the utilities, such as faucets and heating and cooling systems, as well as all appliances. They should then sign off on the fact that the apartment is in proper condition.

These five steps can help brokers save face should they accidentally introduce a bad tenant to a good building. They can also help avoid the turbulent and costly eviction process that can bring a landlord to court. It is in everyone's interest to stay away from court. ■