

## 5 P's for Picking Right Retail Real Estate Attorney

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In today's world, the one thing we are not short on is choices – and the legal field is no different. While this means you have a lot of options, it can also mean information overload. The process of selecting the right retail real estate attorney can be overwhelming to say the least. However, getting a handle on the following five P's will help simplify the selection process and put you on the right path to finding an advocate and trusted advisor.

1. *Professional Experience.* It is often said that there are very few substitutes for experience, making this one of the most important factors in deciding on an attorney. Understanding an attorney's retail real estate experience can help you understand where they are coming from and what they have to offer you as a client. More experienced attorneys can often offer in-depth industry knowledge and the benefit of the perspective gained from years of well-earned battle scars. But, newer attorneys can offer fresh perspectives and usually lower hourly rates. Whichever it is you are looking for, it is important to find an attorney with the knowledge and experience that is right for your situation. Ask the attorney to summarize his or her experience handling similar matters or working with clients like you.

2. *Personality.* Like it or not, the personality of your attorney is often times seen as a reflection of your own style. It is important to understand how your attorney interacts with both colleagues and adversaries. This will provide you with good

insight into how you will be represented and how effective that attorney will be at presenting your position in a way you are comfortable with. In addition, finding someone with whom you can build a quick and comfortable rapport will allow you to work together more efficiently and create a level of trust right from the start. Interviewing an attorney by phone or in person is the best way to get a feel for this. It can also be helpful to ask others to share their impressions. If you don't have any common acquaintances, bringing a business partner or associate with you to the meeting and asking for their impression is one way to understand how the attorney may be perceived by others.

3. *Promptness.* In today's fast-paced business climate, deals can be won or lost in a matter of days (sometimes even hours), making prompt response time critical to effective representation. Ask your attorney his or her policy on response time and clearly communicate your expectations from the start. If you are finding that the promises made don't match the reality, it may be time for a change.

4. *Process.* Make sure your attorney's working style matches your expectations so that you can both focus on the task at hand. One important thing to understand from the start is how involved the attorney will be with the project. Will you be working directly with the attorney or with one of their colleagues? Knowing the process at the outset helps to alleviate unnecessary frustration after the relationship begins. It is also important to understand how you like to be communicated with. Do you prefer phone, email, or another method? Lastly, you should also understand your attorney's billing process so there aren't any surprises or unexpected bills or charges. Mismatched expectations in any of these areas can quickly ruin a relationship.

5. *Profile.* Above all else, it's important to do your homework. At the very least, you should check out the attorney's professional biography or Web site profile as a part of your initial due diligence. From this, you can begin to understand their experience, style and hopefully even garner a bit about their personality. Having this frame of reference will give you a head start for working through the rest of the selection process.

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