

Got your first celebrity client? 6 tips for making an impression

Jason D. Greene | September 21, 2021 | Luxury Lens

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Paul Bradbury by Getty Images

Helping celebrity clients find their dream homes can be tricky. What's the right approach? How can you impress? Who's the VIP in the entourage? Here are a few tips for real estate agents to make an impression and ensure repeat business

As you climb the ladder in the real estate industry, it's likely you will work with a celebrity client. Movie stars, professional athletes, music artists and other notable people who garner national media attention fall in this category.

Working with these elite VIPs is a lot less about the glitz — and a lot more about discretion and professionalism. It's crucial to know just how to appropriately handle and impress celebrities so you can successfully do your job and serve them right. Just encountered a celebrity client? Here are a few tips.

1. Know their creative process

According to a Zillow report, half of listed homes in 2020 went pending in less than a week. Although those are average homes, more expensive homes are being scooped up, too — mostly by celebrities. One of the major contributors for them to find their right home isn't so much the cost but the creative element.

"When your clients work in the arts, their homes are usually an extension of their creativity, and in many cases, their homes are part of their creative process," Realtor Jeremy Van Caulart from Van Caulart & Associates said.

Get to know your client's style, work, creative process and taste.

2. Consider security, safety and more

There are certain aspects you absolutely need to consider when looking for a new home for a celebrity.

According to a survey by Safety.com, 74.3 percent of home security owners feel safe with their home security system. Celebrities need security in their homes more than the average Joe, so this is an important element to consider during your search.

There are specific questions you need to answer. "Do they need a private entrance, staff (service level), security at the main entrance and at the actual apartment itself?" Amy Herman, a real estate salesperson from SERHANT., noted. "It may all be very important to the client."

3. Mesh with 'the team'

According to a report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor, the national mean annual wage of agents and business managers for artists, athletes and performers is \$98,070. Celebrities pay these folks well — and for good reason. They do a lot for them, even buying new homes for them.

“You will most likely have very little direct contact with the talent,” Aimee Stern, broker associate in the Director of Estates Division at The Agency said. “Instead, you will be invited into a tight crew of trusted professionals who work synergistically to keep the machine running smoothly.”

4. Speak CPA

It's no secret celebrities pay CPAs to help out with their finances. According to a statistic by ZipRecruiter, the average annual pay for a celebrity accountant is \$67,372.

“When we deal with celebrities in the entertainment industry, they often have very little understanding of the world of finance,” Tabitha Mazzara, director of operations at Mortgage Bank of California, said. “In those situations, we often deal with their accounting team, their CPA firm.”

When you know how to communicate with the CPAs, you're in for much smoother sailing.

5. Don't get star-struck

When meeting someone famous, especially for the first time, it's understandable to have feelings of anxiety. (In fact, many stars have admitted feeling overwhelmed when meeting their idols, too.)

That said, you should avoid getting star-struck. Remember that at the end of the day, they are human. Don't let their fame affect you and how you do your job.

“Most of these people are very nice, very down-to-earth, and don’t want any special treatment,” Elena Cardone, a real estate agent at Cardone Global Estates, said. “Just like any other client you would work with, treat them with respect, kindness, and ultimately focus on doing your job well and getting the sale closed.”

6. Know their market and what your client wants

As a 2016 Redfin analysis revealed, celebrity-owned properties stay on the market for an average of 36 days longer than other homes and typically sell for less than the asking price.

With that many options available at such agreeable costs, it can be difficult to decide which of all the choices is best to show your client. The price point is already met, but what other features are they looking for?

Like any other client, you only want to show them options that meet their needs and desires. That’s when communicating with your client or their designated assistant comes in so you can work smarter, not harder.

“Proper communication is key!” Herman said. “Make sure you know their chief of staff or right-hand person who is working on their home project; treat this person with grace and request the best way to communicate with them early on.”

Although it can be exciting to work closely with a celebrity client and to potentially find them their dream home, make sure to keep these key six points in mind. If you do, you will undoubtedly succeed with them, leading to more successful celebrity clients in the future.