

EP41: 16 Questions You Should Ask Before Hiring A Property Manager

Welcome to the Landlord Logic Show, hosted by John Tiner. John is the owner and CEO of Tiner Property Management, a three-generation family business since 1976. Tiner Property Management expertly manages over 1,000 properties in the greater Sacramento area to place quality tenants quickly while minimizing your risk. John stays up-to-date on all the new laws and regulations and shares his knowledge with do-it-yourself landlords each week. The Landlord Logic Show with the Tiner Property Management Pros.

Joining us now, John Tiner, along with his wife and business partner, Jenny Tiner.

Welcome back to the Landlord Logic Show. We're so glad you're with us today. And the studio with me today is my wife, Jenny. Glad to have you, Jenny.

Thank you, hi everybody, thanks for listening.

And we are a property management firm, then we manage residential properties for owners who need some help with their rental properties. A lot of them only have one or two properties. That's most common for us, but we make it really easy and turnkey for them. That's our niche in the market and for about the price of a gardener, you can have a full-service property management company that takes a lot of the risk out of owning it and helps you collect the rent, helps you coordinate repairs and sends you a check every month and then stays a compliant with all the new laws. That's been a big task over the last few years because there's been a lot of new laws coming to place.

Today, we would like to focus our efforts in this show with helping people who are considering property management to be able to interview property managers and ask the right questions to determine if they're a good match, if they're going to take a good care and do things in a manner that they're really happy with, with regard to their rental properties.

So I want to give you a couple ways to reach out to us. You can, from your cell phone, dial pound 250 and say the word "Tiner." Leave your name and then that'll send you some information and then we'll be able to call you back from that also. You can reach out directly on your phone and that's 916-974-6003. And then of course our website has lots of valuable information for people who want to just check us out kind of quietly. And that's tiner.com spelled T I N E R dot com.

And I'm always surprised that people sometimes they just they don't know what to ask or they don't spend much time vetting out the property manager. We spend a bunch of time vetting tenants, but it's very important to vet a property manager because there's some great ones. And then there's some not so great ones. And then there's some nightmare ones. So it's important to know what to ask so that you can find a good and competent one.

So we want to kind of go through a booklet that I wrote that's available to anybody on our website on the resources page of tiner.com. It's 16 questions you should ask before you hire a property manager and why those questions are so important. So it's not like buying a

dishwasher. You're going to entrust your property that may be worth a half million dollars to someone to manage for you, select tenants that are going to be living in your property. So it's really important that you know how to interview them.

And so we want to go through what I think are 16 very important questions that you should ask before you hire property manager. Jenny, you'll help me out with this.

Yeah. So the first one, how many residences do you manage? How many properties? Yeah. How many doors? In property management, we talk about doors a lot and we're not talking about those 12 doors in a house, we're talking about a rental property as a door. Knowing how many they're managed. There's some advantages to bigger companies and some advantages to smaller companies. But if you have a preference that's good to know, what are you dealing with?

We're now a bigger company, but we started as a smaller company. I've been on both sides. Honestly, for us, we're doing a better job today as a bigger company than we ever could have when we were small. We have more resources. We have more experience, we're just technologies, we're just able to do a better job. Fantastic employees, well-trained.

My dad was talking to me about property managers and how they would do something. I said, "Dad, do you realize that the property managers we have now place more tenants in one year than you did the first 10 years in business?" He was blown away by that. But yes, we develop experience very quickly because we have a lot of experience with all the volume that we have.

Anyway, it's good to know how many they have and part of that is a setup question to the next one, right? How many evictions have you performed in the past five years? Because we want to look at that as a ratio. And so when you ask that question, how many evictions have you performed? Some property managers will say, "Well, we're good at it. We did seven of them last year and I've got three of them going right now."

And what I would offer is that you don't want a property management company that's great at evictions unless maybe you're trying to evict a tenant right now. That might be a good reason to look at it. But what I would want to look at if I was an owner is I want a company that is very good at avoiding evictions. I want a company that is great at tenant selection so that we don't have to do an eviction. So look at that ratio.

I think if a company is doing more than one or two percent evictions out of portfolio. Uh, that's too many. They're not making good tenant selection choices. Uh, for tiny property management, we are doing less than one-tenth of 1%. So literally 99.9% of the tenants that we place don't get a victim each year at tiny properties. So we're proud of that record.

I think that's our distinguishing fact. It is. I know John came back from a, uh, breakfast with other property managers and one of them was talking about how many evictions they were doing and not, and kind of somewhat proud of it. And John's like, why, if you're in the property management business, why would you want to be great and an expert at evictions? John's

always said, I don't, we have to, we do it, but we would rather be more perfection of screening guidelines and, and placing good tenants in the first place.

So that is an important, and evictions are nightmare. And I think that's one time when people don't want to, they're teetering on if they want to be a landlord or tonight, that eviction, it's a scary--It's everybody's fear, because yeah, it takes months to get a tenant out. Usually the tenants that don't pay also trash the property, so there's rehab costs. It's a terrible decision to rent somebody that ends up needing to be evicted. So you really want to pick a company who's good at avoiding that, and those two questions will help you know that.

So then the next one is how many employees do you have? Why is that important?

Well, because you want to make sure that your property manager isn't overwhelmed. Some of the companies have 200 doors per property manager. That's just too many. There's no way they can do a good job with that much on their plate.

At Tiner Properties, we have less than 50 doors per employee. And that's really important because it allows us to give better service. If you call, we can answer. If there's a repair, we can handle it quickly. If there's a tenant issue, we can address it. We're not drowning in too many accounts per person.

Yeah, and I've seen companies where one property manager is juggling 150–200 properties. And it's just not humanly possible to give good service at that level. It's like you said earlier — it's not about technology; it's about human resources. You need enough people to handle the workload.

Right. And I always tell owners: ask that question. How many employees do you have, and how many doors do they manage per employee? That ratio tells you a lot about the level of service you're going to get.

Okay, the next question is: who will be my main point of contact?

Yes, because communication is so important. You don't want to get passed around, not knowing who to talk to. At Tiner Properties, each owner has a designated property manager. That's their go-to person for anything that comes up.

And I think owners really appreciate that. They know exactly who to call, and that property manager knows their property and their situation. It's not just some random person answering the phone.

Exactly. And if for some reason that person isn't available, we always have a backup system in place. But we want owners to feel like they have that personal connection, that one point of contact who knows them and their property.

Alright, next one: how do you handle maintenance requests?

This one is huge. Some companies just hand tenants a list of phone numbers and say, "Call the plumber yourself." We don't think that's good service. At Tiner, tenants submit requests through their online portal, or they can call us, and then we handle everything from there. We coordinate with vendors, we follow up, and we make sure the job is done right.

Yes, and that's important for owners, too. Because if a tenant hires some random handyman, you don't know the quality of the work, you don't know if they're licensed, and you don't know if the price is fair. We have trusted vendors we work with, we know the quality, and we get good pricing because of the volume of work we give them.

And we also keep owners in the loop. For example, if it's a small repair under a certain dollar amount, we'll just take care of it so the tenant isn't waiting. But if it's bigger, we get owner approval before moving forward. So there's a balance between efficiency and keeping the owner informed.

Exactly. Owners like knowing we're watching out for them, but also not being bothered with every little thing.

Yes. Okay, the next question: how do you handle after-hours emergencies?

This is a big one. Because things don't just happen between 9 and 5. A pipe can burst in the middle of the night, or the heater can go out on a weekend. You need to know your property manager has a plan for emergencies.

At Tiner, we have a 24/7 answering service and on-call staff who can respond to emergencies right away. Tenants aren't left waiting until Monday. And owners can rest easy knowing issues are handled promptly.

That's peace of mind. Because emergencies can cause major damage if not addressed quickly. A burst pipe can flood a house in a matter of hours. You don't want a tenant waiting two days for someone to answer the phone.

Exactly. So that's a very important question to ask when you're interviewing property managers.

Alright, next: how do you handle rent collection?

Yes. Some companies still collect checks by mail, and that can be slow and unreliable. At Tiner, we strongly encourage tenants to pay online through their portal. It's faster, it's more secure, and it reduces late payments.

And for owners, that means faster disbursements. We collect rent, we process it quickly, and then owners get their money deposited directly into their account. It's very efficient.

Right. And we do still accept checks if a tenant insists, but the vast majority pay online. And that system has really improved things for everyone.

Okay, the next question: what is your eviction rate?

We touched on this earlier, but it's worth repeating. Evictions are costly and stressful, so you want a company that avoids them as much as possible. At Tiner Properties, our eviction rate is less than one-tenth of 1% per year. That means 99.9% of our tenants do not get evicted.

Yes, and that comes down to screening. We're very careful about who we place. We'd rather wait for the right tenant than rush and put in someone who might not work out.

Exactly. And that's really what protects owners. If you don't have to evict, you save money, time, and stress.

Alright, let's move to the next one: how do you screen tenants?

This is probably the most important question of all. A good tenant makes everything easier. A bad tenant makes everything harder. So you want to know the process.

At Tiner, we check credit, income, employment, rental history, background — the full picture. And we have strict standards, but we're also fair and consistent.

Yes, consistency is key. You have to treat every applicant the same way, or you could run into fair housing issues. But you also want to make sure you're setting high enough standards to protect the owner's investment.

And I think owners appreciate knowing that we don't just hand over the keys. We take the time to verify everything and make sure the tenant is a good fit.

Exactly. And that's why our eviction rate is so low.

And the next question is, what percentage of tenants renew their leases?

Yes, because tenant retention is huge. The longer a tenant stays, the less turnover cost you have. At Tiner Properties, our renewal rate is very high because we select good tenants, we maintain the properties well, and we treat people fairly.

That saves owners a lot of money. Every time a tenant moves out, there are costs — vacancy, cleaning, possible repairs, advertising. If you can keep a tenant for multiple years, you avoid all of that.

Exactly. And that's another thing you can ask a property manager: what is your average length of tenancy? That tells you if they're doing a good job keeping tenants happy.

Okay, next question: what kind of reports will I receive?

This is important because owners want to stay informed. At Tiner, we provide detailed monthly statements, and everything is available online through the owner portal. You can see income, expenses, work orders, everything in one place.

Yes, and at the end of the year, we provide a full statement that makes tax time much easier. You don't have to scramble to find receipts; it's all documented for you. And that's part of good communication. Owners want to know what's happening with their property, and good reporting makes that possible.

Okay, the next question: what are your fees?

Yes. This is an obvious one, but it's important to dig into the details. Some companies advertise a low management fee but then tack on extra charges for every little thing — lease renewals, inspections, maintenance coordination. It can add up quickly.

At Tiner, we're very transparent. Our fees are straightforward, and we don't nickel-and-dime owners. We want people to know exactly what they're paying for. And sometimes the cheapest company ends up being the most expensive if they cut corners or charge hidden fees. So it's not just about the percentage; it's about the value you're getting.

Exactly.

Okay, another question: are you a licensed real estate broker?

Yes. In California, property managers must be licensed real estate brokers, or work under one. If someone isn't licensed, that's a big red flag. You want to make sure they're following the law and held to professional standards. At Tiner Properties, we are fully licensed, and we take that very seriously.

Alright, the next question: what associations do you belong to?

Yes. Membership in professional associations shows that a company is committed to ongoing education and staying current with laws and best practices. For example, we belong to NARPM — the National Association of Residential Property Managers — and we stay active in industry groups. That helps us keep up with changes in the law, new technology, and best practices that ultimately benefit our clients.

Okay, the next question: do you personally own rental properties?

Yes, and the reason that's a good question is it tells you if the property manager truly understands what it's like to be in your shoes. At Tiner, we own rental properties ourselves. We know the challenges, the risks, and the rewards. And I think that perspective makes us more empathetic and practical. We know what matters most to owners because we are owners too.

Exactly.

Alright, next: how do you handle legal compliance?

This is a big one, especially in California where the laws change constantly. You want to know that your property manager is on top of all the regulations — fair housing, habitability, rent control, notice requirements, everything.

At Tiner, we take compliance very seriously. We do ongoing training, we stay up to date on all the changes, and we make sure our processes are legally sound. That protects owners from costly mistakes. Because ignorance of the law is not an excuse. If you get it wrong, you can face penalties, lawsuits, and liability.

Exactly. And that's one of the biggest reasons to hire a property manager — to have someone who knows the law and keeps you compliant.

Okay, last question: what makes you different from other property managers?

Yes, this is a great way to wrap up an interview. It gives the company a chance to tell you their strengths, their philosophy, and why you should choose them. At Tiner Properties, we would say it's our experience, our team, our systems, and our results. We've been in business since 1976, we have a fantastic staff, we use great technology, and we have one of the lowest eviction rates in the industry. And we're still a family business. We care about our clients, we treat them like family, and we're always available to help. That personal touch makes a big difference.

Exactly.

So those are the 16 questions you should ask before hiring a property manager. They'll help you separate the good from the bad and find the right fit for your property. And if you'd like a copy of the full booklet with all the questions and explanations, you can download it for free from our website at tiner.com.

Yes, just go to the Resources page, and it's there for you.

Alright, that's it for today's episode of the Landlord Logic Show. Thanks for listening, and we'll see you next time.