Professional financial advice is only as good as the advisor. Choose the right one for you.

Planning the financial part of your life can be complex. You may not have the time, expertise, or desire to do all of the work yourself. That’s where professional advice can be helpful. With scores of financial planners, accountants, lawyers, and insurance specialists competing for your business, finding the right advisor is often just as complicated as trying to do all the planning yourself. With that in mind, here are a few tips to finding a professional advisor that’s right for you.

Determine your needs
If you need help coming up with an investment strategy for retirement, you might consult a financial planner who specializes in investment issues, such as the financial planners at T. Rowe Price. If you’re trying to get advice on life insurance, consider consulting an insurance agent that specializes in life insurance.

Ask for recommendations
Trusted friends and other professionals that you may have used, such as a lawyer or accountant, can often refer you to professional advisors.

Check licensing and credentials
Many professional advisors have a license that lets them perform a service or sell a product. To perform certain tax services, for example, an advisor may be required to hold a certified public accountant (CPA) designation. Make sure your advisor is properly licensed and don’t be afraid to ask about his or her professional experience and other credentials.

Interview several candidates
To discuss your financial issues in an open and honest fashion, you should feel comfortable with your advisor. That’s why you should interview at least three candidates to find one that best suits your personality and needs.

Find out how they’re paid
Some professional advisors are paid by the hour, some are paid commissions on products that they sell, and some are paid a percentage of your assets. Before making your decision, find out exactly what services you’ll be getting and how you’ll be paying for them. Also, don’t be afraid to ask about potential conflicts of interest.

Learn more
Many professional advisors are members of national organizations that can help you find a qualified professional in your area. Visit the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors’ Web site at www.napfa.org to find a list of professional organizations that can point you in the right direction.

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