

# Streets of London

Negotiating the sale or purchase of a property can be a long and drawn-out process, yet success can depend on last-minute precision timing. This is tough when you're there on the spot, and even tougher when you're on the other side of the world.

Russell Hunt, of Property Hunt, earned his grounding in property as a teenager: his father, who worked in commercial property, taught him to drive by dragging him off to building-sites and shopping centres all over southern England. Russell started his own career in property public relations, but soon found the real estate side of the business more interesting. He trained as an estate agent, but also cut his teeth by buying a few central London properties to let himself.

"My life and career have been very much London-focussed," explains Russell. "London is a very cosmopolitan city, full of opportunities, but the key to being a good estate agent here is being in the network: knowing the right people and identifying properties before they even come onto the market. For people who live abroad, that's almost impossible."

Property Hunt has been in business for ten months, with Russell acting as the 'eyes and ears' of out-of-town clients who want to buy or sell property in London. With relatives living in Singapore, much of his business to date has come from here, but he also has clients in Hong Kong. "One Hong Kong buyer was here for a day; we mapped out 14 properties for him to view. He concluded on one, which my builders then gave

a makeover; I negotiated a management fee for him, and it is now rented out. Not everyone wants to do a property tour; some people are happy that a friend or relative see a place, and others simply want the right yield regardless of the property."

Access to the market is critical, but how does Russell also manage to be accessible to his overseas clients? "Well, it wasn't planned that way," he comments with a grimace, "but with a four-month-old baby in the house, I tend to be available most hours of the night as well as the day! Seriously, though, good communication and getting the brief right in the first place are very important. We are currently expanding the business. Caroline Fancourt, who frequently travels between Singapore and London, will be Property Hunt's 'feet on the ground', so that people have a face-to-face contact if they are more comfortable with that. We are also adding a specialist in south-west London, Surrey and the south-east who comes from a property law background."

Russell has chosen to keep Property Hunt focussed on search services and not dilute into management, though he has trusted contacts he refers people to once their property has been bought and rented out. He has found, however, that a sales service is a good complement to a search service: Property Hunt appoints an estate agent (with whom they share commission) then effectively acts as the seller, communicating with the agent on a daily basis and securing the best price for the sale – at no extra cost to the vendor.

**Property Hunt has an excellent website at [www.property-hunt.co.uk](http://www.property-hunt.co.uk). You can also meet Russell in person in February, during a week-long visit to Singapore that includes a drinks evening on 22 February. Contact Property Hunt via [info@property-hunt.co.uk](mailto:info@property-hunt.co.uk) to receive details of the event.**

**by Philippa Barr**

