**Choosing an Estate Sale Company in Missouri**

Estate sale companies are ***not regulated*** by the State of Missouri and as a result it is very important to be careful when choosing one. Here are some things to look for:

* **A valid business license** to operate in the city where you live.
* Legitimate **liability insurance**, which among other things, shows that you are protected if your property is damaged or destroyed during the sale. Be sure to *read the fine print* because not all insurance policies are created equal.
* A **surety bond**, which is an agreement by a surety company to pay an estate sale company’s client a certain amount if that estate sale company fails to fulfil the terms of their contract.
* A current **DBA registration** with the state of Missouri, which gives a company the ability to do business under a fictitious name.
* Make sure the company utilizes a ***written contract*** that lays out the terms of the agreement and how the sale will be run. For example, **how many employees** will work your sale, how will **sales be registered and reported**, what type of **payment methods** they accept, and what type and the amount of marketing the company uses.
* Read the company’s **online reviews** on sites like Google, Facebook, and Yelp. Also pay attention to the *number of reviews*. A company with 96 reviews with an average of 4.5 stars might be better than one with just 8 reviews with an average of 4.5 stars.

You also want to consider possible **conflicts of interest**. Many estate sale companies in Kansas City own or manage antique stores, flea markets, online marketplaces, or rent booths inside an antique store. These same companies offer to buy the remaining estate after the sale ends. While this type of arrangement can initially appear innocuous, it is a clear conflict of interest as it disincentives a company from selling your estate during the sale for the highest possible amount. Instead, if a less than scrupulous company can over-price your estate, after the sale ends they can buy it at an extreme discount and sell it in their store thus keeping the profits. **Trustworthy companies will focus on liquidation of your assets during the sale.**

**Another common conflict of interest** has to do with **pricing**. For an estate sale to take place all of the items in your estate must be priced. Some common items like DVDs, books, clothing, and linens will be priced using a standard pricing chart, but the rest of your estate will be priced by the estate sale company. Many estate sale companies allow the very same employees who set the prices to buy items from the sale. This is also a very clear conflict of interest. If an employee has a desire to buy an item from an estate you can’t trust that employee to price it appropriately. As such, **reputable estate sale companies will not allow their staff to buy items from a sale that they work.**

Last but not least, before you decide on a company to host your sale, make sure that you have **talked to at least three companies** and that you have been to at least one of each of the three company’s sales. Doing so will give you an idea of not only what their sales and marketing look like, but also how they treat their clients home and estate.