

Real Estate Agents, Home Inspectors and the Delivery of Information

Home inspectors and real estate agents alike are often confronted with the reality of having to analyze, break down, and explain the results of a home inspection. Inspectors, should be willing to discuss the results of an inspection with any person their customer gives them permission to share the results with. For most experienced home inspectors, this is not a problem because after all, that is what we are there for. However, if you are a real estate agent, this can be a risky proposition for you personally because it can expose you to all kinds of liability. There is a risk because that is not what you are licensed to do as a real estate agent, but it is almost always expected of you by the people that you represent. There is a fine line to walk with each transaction when it comes to the inspections and the condition of a property. So, the question that we should be asking is how can a real estate agent communicate the condition of a property and any recommended repairs without exposing themselves to unnecessary liability? The answer is that real estate agents should let the home inspector take on that task.

Great real estate agents are generally great because they surround themselves with a team, and on that team should be an experienced home inspector. In today's market, there are literally thousands of real estate agents and home inspectors in our area here in Central Florida. If you are one of the real estate agents that are the top tier of this group, you likely have a trusted and experienced home inspector on your team. If you do not, we strongly suggest that you consider adding one or two of this type of home inspector to your team. Deferring the task of discussing the condition of a property to an experienced home inspector will take the liability off of you. No one will ever be exempt from liability in our industry but the goal should be to minimize that exposure. So, by deferring this task to an experienced home inspector, you can basically remain in a position of receiving the same information from the home inspector as your client. You would not be the one offering the information.

Now comes the challenging part. Not all experienced home inspectors are good communicators or are good at discussing the results. Some home inspectors are good communicators, but not the best home inspectors. In my experience, I have found that the biggest concern for most real estate agents is the fear that the home inspector will exaggerate the results and cause the potential homeowner to cancel the sales contract. This is a legitimate concern. I can tell you that this is true for many home inspectors in the industry. Many of them just are not good at communication. I found this reality so prevalent in the home inspection industry that I decided to write a book on it. My book, "The Business of Home Inspection" was written to emphasize the importance of communication for home inspectors in an industry filled with inspectors that do not place a value on accurately conveying information. This may make finding the right home inspector a challenge.

Home inspectors are aware of the liability involved in reviewing results. We are already in a high liability business, so we get it. After all, if something should go wrong down the road, the first call the homeowner will make is to the real estate agent that sold them the home. So, wouldn't it be better to have an experienced home inspector with valuable communication skills there to take on this task? I want you to imagine for a moment two scenarios. The first scenario is one in which you as the real estate agent reviews the results of a home inspection report with your client and then you receive a call from that client a few months later repeating something you told them, or worse, sending you an email of something you emailed them regarding the home inspection. Imagine how that would play out. Scenario number two is that same client calling you when something comes up and you being able to defer that call to the home inspector because although you were representing them, you did not personally go over

the results in great detail. Which of these two scenarios are most likely to be the most favorable to you, the real estate agent?

I realize that it is difficult to put this entirely into practice, but the reality is that if you have an experienced home inspector on your team, everyone benefits from this arrangement. You as the real estate agent can rest assured that the experienced home inspector with good communication skills will do a great inspection for your clients. That is first and foremost the single most important thing. Someone new in the industry and recently certified as a home inspector likely will not bring a level of in the field experience to the inspection and may not be able to answer your client's questions confidently. This is why I use these two terms; experienced inspector with good communication skills. These two very different and important skillsets are both so important when it comes to your client receiving a great inspection as well as an accurate depiction of the property condition, and valuable insight on the best repair options for issues uncovered during the home inspection.

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