



Control key in home inspection.



The Saturday Star (South Africa)
September 10, 2011

With the growing wave of consumerism and the Google generation now starting to dominate the housing market, the estate agent has to adapt to the changing profile of buyers.

Like the doctor facing a Google-informed patient, the estate agent is no longer the "guru" but only one of several sources of information that the buyer will tend to rely on before making a decision.

Agents can no longer assume that they are perceived as the "reliable expert" in a property transaction. They need to work on building trust.

The best way to do this is for the estate agent to "get real" - to be transparent and up front, and communicate honestly and openly all information regarding the target property.

Openness breeds trust and trust breeds sales.

Regarding the physical condition of a property, there are several things an estate agent can do to build confidence with the buyer. This is especially important now that the Consumer Protection Act has dramatically increased buyer awareness of consumer rights.

The agent needs to control the process of home inspection by recommending an inspection company which, while being thorough, professional and objective, is not a negative, destructive "nit-picker".

Both the estate agent and the home inspector need to be aware of two things:

1. No house is perfect.

2. All structures deteriorate over time, and require maintenance and repair.

It is far better for the agent to control the home inspection process by either convincing the seller to perform a pre-listing inspection, or failing this, recommending to the buyer the advantages of a home inspection.

The home inspection industry is not regulated and anyone can call himself a house inspector. The agent should therefore ensure that the home inspector is both trained and accredited, and is also sensitive to the dynamics of the sales process.

It is all too easy for a dogmatic, nit-picking home inspector to "kill the deal" by focusing on the negative aspects of a property and by being unrealistic regarding the degree of "perfection" that should be expected.

A good home inspector should also be able to put defects such as wall cracks or roof leaks into perspective. More often than not, such defects are fairly easily and cheaply repaired, and are nothing like the "train wreck" that the nervous buyer may fear.

Every party involved in a residential property transaction can benefit from a professional home inspection.

An inspection conducted by a buyer may present an opportunity to take the cost of repairs into account in the offer to purchase. An inspection conducted by a seller, prior to listing, can help avoid nasty surprises during negotiations and provide the seller with a list of potential upgrades, together with cost estimates for these upgrades.

The seller may even decide to repair all or some of the defects highlighted in the home inspection report prior to putting the property on the market.

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