

The home inspection – An inspector’s perspective

By

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The home inspection industry has greatly evolved from what it was back in the '70s and '80s to what it is today. The need and desire for “the inspection” was created by the real estate industry itself. Back then, agents could be great at listing and selling a home but often lacked knowledge when it came to the mechanics of a house. To deflect the potential liability, agents would refer knowledgeable contractors or engineers with keen understanding of homes to examine and comment on the condition of the house – hence the birth of “home inspectors”.

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Fast forward some 40 years later to 2020. A home inspector is now considered a trained professional with a broad knowledge of houses, defect recognition and general construction. Today’s home inspection is a vital and necessary part of almost all residential real estate transactions in North America. Inspectors now follow a well thought out and concise Standards of Practice (SOP), use high-tech electronic reporting systems, sophisticated diagnostic-testing equipment and ladders to get us into all sorts of attics, roofs and crawl spaces.

Inspectors and real estate agents have an odd love-hate relationship. Although these two professionals often seem to be conflicted, we do need each other. Agents and inspectors know that, and as home inspectors we do rely on relationships and referrals from real estate agents for a good portion of our business. We thank you for that. You refer us to the clients and at that point the client can, and hopefully will, do their research on the various names of inspectors provided by their agent and then choose the person with whom they are most comfortable.

We then all meet onsite at the home to be inspected. Most well-trained and experienced home inspectors follow a routine – I know I do. The inspector typically explains to the clients what their process is and sets expectations of what can and cannot be inspected. In general terms, our job is to determine if there is anything “significantly wrong” with the property. Every home has things that need to be repaired whether it is due to age or lack of maintenance. It is not unreasonable to need to put one to three per cent of the value of the property back into the home in the first few months – that’s normal.

Let us do our jobs! We understand that it has been a long haul to get to this point with your clients. Yes, you want to know the condition of the house as much as the clients do. While doing our inspections and identifying an issue, we typically would explain to our mutual client what the issue is and how best to correct it. State the problem – suggest a solution is how I like to look at

it. We usually try to keep the agents abreast of our findings, so they trust and understand the final report. Contradicting the inspector onsite, in front of the client, is rarely a good look for the people who are present. Agents and inspectors work and look best when they trust and respect each other's role.

Neither agents nor home inspectors should embrace the risks associated with providing prices to complete repairs or renovations inspired by the inspection report. There are far too many variables and the relevant professionals should be called in when a quotation is needed. Court time is notoriously expensive when we "guess" incorrectly.

Typically, it is the newer agents who are keen to know everything about the transaction and will follow you during the inspection. We respect their desire for information and knowledge about the house. The more seasoned agents understand the process and tend to leave the inspector and the clients to themselves. This can be a productive use of the agent's time – working on the next listing. If the agent needs to be informed about something urgent, we will call them over to chat. And most inspections end with a summary discussion to go over the key issues – items of significance.

Home inspectors love to talk amongst themselves and chat online and in person when possible about our daily finds and client/agent interactions. An often-heard remark from inspectors is regarding the agent who has been referring the inspector for a long time, but when a deal dies as a consequence of the inspection, the referrals stop. They stop until the agent has a relative buying a home and then that inspector gets the call – a high compliment to the inspector. Shouldn't we all provide a level of service worthy of a loved one?