



HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION
of Dayton

Communication: The Key To Success in Home Building

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The HBA has a very successful complaint/dispute mediation program.

Over the years, in fact, more than 95% of all the complaints filed under our Registered Builder Program have been resolved amicably. Only rarely have these disputes gone to binding arbitration or on to the courts.

While we are justifiably proud of this track record, it is also true that most of the complaints we receive should have been solved much earlier, or should never have occurred in the first place.

Communication and flexibility are the keys to a successful relationship with your homebuilder, along with early recognition the construction of a new home often depends on factors that neither the builder nor customer can control.

Take construction scheduling, for example, often a source of frustration for homebuyers. They sign a contract with the builder; the builders says there should be “no problem” in finishing the home within a specific period of time; and then a number of factors conspire to delay the process by 60–90 days.

In the meantime, the buyers have sold their existing home; the kids are scheduled to begin school in a new district but are not yet living in it; and Mom, Dad and the kids have to either store all of their possessions and live with friends or relatives – or take a short-term lease and cram themselves into an apartment or rental home.

Very stressful, to say the least. Families caught in this kind of bind are not happy campers, and the builder usually finds himself at the receiving end of that unhappiness.

But if one takes a look at the facts underneath this kind of scenario, there often is no one to blame but the whims of Mother Nature and the difficulties inherent in buyer decision-making.

Weather is generally not covered in sales contracts, but it remains an important factor, and builders universally find themselves at its mercy. In a few of the past Homearamas, for example, many of the Miami Valley’s very best builders were unable to finish their homes by show’s original start date. An incredibly wet and early winter made it virtually impossible to get into the ground and, if you can’t dig, you can’t build.

Even something as comparatively simple as the selection of fixtures can grind the construction process to a dead halt. If the homebuyer can't reach a final decision, walls can't get closed in, tile can't get installed, and tops can't be set. More important, once this scenario evolves, subs have to be pulled off your job to work on others, and you could find yourself at the end of a long line in terms of getting them back.

Change orders and material shortages can also affect the construction process.

Home building is a very precise science within a very imprecise environment. As a result, three pieces of advice come to mind.

First advice: maintain open lines of communication with your builder. Ask him or her to provide you with regular reports on construction progress. If you authorize change orders, be certain you understand how they might affect your construction schedule.

Second advice: plan prudently. If you have ever tried to assemble a 10-speed bicycle on Christmas Eve, only to find that the instructions are in Taiwanese, you know the consequences of poor planning.

If you are building a 3,000 square foot home and need to be in it by the time school starts in September, don't make your purchase decision in March. Builders can theoretically deliver a house of this size in five months if absolutely everything falls into place – but it almost never does.

Third advice: don't expect that the construction process is immune to the pitfalls, unforeseen circumstances and other challenges which accompany every human endeavor.