



Preparing Your Buyer for an Inspection

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A few months ago I wrote an article about preparing a home for an inspection. This is a good thing to do. It makes it appear to the inspector and the buyer that the seller is putting their best foot forward. Another thing that can be done, and perhaps even more beneficial, is to prepare your buyer for the inspection.

It must be frustrating to have a deal that you've worked very hard on fall through because of what was found during an inspection. Sometimes it's what needs to happen given the buyer's goals and expectations for the property in question. Sometimes your buyer gets cold feet because the report details a lot of items that overwhelm them, or the few items that come up are fairly expensive to fix. In either case a lost deal may be avoided if you take the time to prepare your client for what's possible and to look at potential solutions before the situation arises. Here are some ideas about what you can discuss with your client.

Let your buyer know that all homes have defects. It's true. Brand new homes have defects. There are thousands of details in a home. There is no possible way that any home is free from all defects. Have your client think about the seriousness of each defect. Does the defect have to be fixed? Does it have to be fixed now? How much will it cost to fix? Most defects can be lived with. The people that live in the home now are living with them. When you talk with your client tell them what defects you worry about most when you purchase a home.

At the end of the inspection when I'm discussing my findings with the buyer I will sometimes ask them what defects they are going to ask to have corrected by the seller. Sometimes they say all of them. This comes as a surprise to me. Even in a buyers market it would be unlikely to have this kind of expectation met. They're likely to be set up for disappointment before they make a request. A more reasonable strategy may be to coach them in the art of negotiating so that they will be in a better place to make more realistic requests of the seller and of you. However, it's a good idea to also prepare your client for the possibility that the seller isn't willing to fix anything.

In the event that the client decides not to purchase a property because of what was discovered during an inspection, support them in their decision and move on. Get on the MLS system and find another home for them to look at. As hard as it may be, see the situation from their perspective and empathize with them. Let them know that you are there to support them and whatever decision they make. This will help you keep them as a client, and get referrals from them.

Know your client and what their sensitivities are. Ask them. Is this their first time home purchase? They may need a little more handholding. Has your client had sensitivities to mold in the past? If you've talked about these kinds of issues up front your client is much less likely to be alarmed if they come up during an inspection.

More ammo in your arsenal can be the price offered for the home. If your client is getting a home for below market price it's reasonable to expect to have to make some improvements to the property. If they're paying top dollar it's reasonable to help them go to the seller and ask for concessions.

If you're using a new inspector ask them about their reports and what to expect about their style. Report this to your client instead of making assumptions about what the inspector's reports may be like.

Be prepared, and prepare your clients for the next time a tough situation arises. Hopefully it won't be so tough!