

SOMETHING WENT WRONG – NOW WHAT?

Consumers are increasingly invited to publicly judge the service and quality of the product they receive by posting to online and social media review sites – TripAdvisor, Yelp, Google Reviews, Facebook reviews, this list goes on and on.

But when something goes wrong with your real estate transaction, before we go full keyboard warrior, it could be helpful to understand a few key points about the business of being a real estate professional, whether that is a sales agent, a business broker, a property manager or an auctioneer.

Emotions run high: Real estate, no matter which part of the market – buying, selling or renting – is an emotional event for the vast majority. Agents need to be adept at managing people in fragile emotional states. Think of all the reasons why someone might sell – divorce, mortgage stress, death, loss of employment, the list goes on and on. It's challenging to manage people at their most vulnerable while also achieving the best possible results for that transaction.

Expectations vs reality: Is the source of your dissatisfaction related to the outcome of the transaction and were your expectations realistic? Were you hoping for a sale price or a purchase price that was unrealistic for this property in this market? One way to check before you vent online, might be to ask other agents who operate in the same area. What do they think is realistic? Even if you're looking at data that gives a good indication of where the market is at, it's useful to remember that sometimes the market can turn quickly.

The rule of fives: Ask yourself, in five days, five months and five years – will this still matter? If the answer is no, then perhaps just give yourself five minutes to feel outraged and then move on.

For those who feel they have a genuine grievance against a real estate professional we have a few suggestions that might make a successful outcome more likely.

Tips for taking action:

1. **Breathe:** It's human nature to be angry when we feel our best interests have been ignored or violated. It's tempting to jump online and vent, seeking immediate validation from friends and family, without really stopping to ask ourselves if outrage is justified. Perhaps plain old 'miffed' would be more appropriate?
2. **Be clear, be concise:** If you feel you have a genuine complaint that deserves remedy, then first steps would be to approach the agent to resolve the issue directly. If that fails, all good agencies will have a complaints procedure. Contact the agency and ask for the complaints process. If they don't have a procedure, ask to speak to the principal.
3. **Be realistic:** Have a clear idea about what you are seeking that would remedy the situation to your satisfaction. It might also be a good idea to keep a potential compromise in mind. Be reasonable and be prepared to negotiate.

4. **Next steps:** If you aren't satisfied with the principal or agency's response, you may wish to go to the Office of Fair Trading. However, be aware that the Office of Fair Trading does not have the power to force a business to compensate you or rectify a problem. Visit www.qld.gov.au/law/fair-trading.

Remember, everyone is human and we all make mistakes. The vast majority of real estate agents work hard to achieve the best outcome possible. If, after other avenues are exhausted, you choose to leave a negative review online, you may wish to let the agency know to give them a final opportunity to remedy the situation.

-ENDS-

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