



HUGH HERON



# Buyers, builders work as a team

A positive attitude serves everyone

Charles Swindoll is a pastor and radio personality in Texas. One of his most famous lines is "I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it; we are in charge of our attitudes." I agree with him, and I see the need for this kind of understanding in the new-home building industry – on both sides of the table. In the builder-buyer relationship, each party has to acknowledge the other's circumstances, and approaching the situation with an agreeable attitude accomplishes a lot more.

New-home builders produce a product, but we're also in the service industry. And anyone who works in service will tell you that sometimes the unexpected happens and customers become impatient. Buying a new home is the

biggest financial commitment most people make in their lives, and it's natural for them to want everything to be perfect. Builders need to understand the emotional commitment our buyers make as well as the financial one.

That's why customer service is now often called "customer care" – because builders do care. We have to be sensitive to our homeowners' needs and wishes, even though the low-rise market in the GTA is so competitive. Homebuyers deserve to be treated fairly and with respect from the moment they walk into our sales offices. And of course we must continue that caring through to the end of the warranty period after buyers move in.

Home building, however, is not an exact science. Builders have a responsibility to deliver a quality

home in a timely fashion, but sometimes we face materials and labour shortages or unexpected delays with municipal approvals. It's the nature of this business. But reliable builders will make their homeowners aware of shortfalls and will do everything possible to amend the situation. Plus, even good builders make occasional mistakes, and as completed homes settle, items such as nail pops or surface cracks may occur. We understand our obligation to fix these, and purchasers need to be reasonable about what we can and cannot do in a given time period. Regardless, it's our responsibility to communicate honestly.

Communication is a two-way street. Whether you're a provider of service or a recipient, moaning and groaning usually works against you. A negative attitude

gets people's backs up, whereas pleasant inquiries and responses keep things on a more professional level.

There's a certain level of trust that must exist in order to work together. When a builder hands over the keys to a new home, it's very livable. Usually the items that are fixed under the warranty are things that will enhance your quality of life but not make a huge difference. It's important to keep things in perspective and realize that the builder is interested in correcting deficiencies as quickly as possible, too.

After a homebuyer takes possession, the relationship with the builder lasts at least another seven years through the warranty period. We need homeowners to be reasonable about things such as allowing tradespeople in dur-

ing weekdays to complete work. That is when these professionals are available – not evenings and weekends, as so many people request.

Builders rely on our most important asset – people – in handling service requests and we work tremendously hard to keep our customers happy. When it comes to building and buying new homes, we're on this road together. A little positive attitude on the parts of both builders and purchasers can help to make the home-buying experience a pleasant journey.

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