

How Effectively Do You Communicate?

By: Catherine Pendergast, Education Coordinator
Maine Real Estate Commission

It seems like ages ago that licensees worked mainly from their agency office. Here they met consumers, wrote up listing agreements and offers (so they could make copies on the office copier) and offers were faxed or hand-delivered to the office of a co-broke licensee. Does this sound like your average day today? Probably not.

With the rapid advance of technology, licensees have office equipment at home or go paperless using electronic signatures and cloud-based storage. Text messages and email often replace telephone calls and in-person meetings. These advances may have reduced the time it takes to complete tasks, but it has also increased the chance of ineffective communication which can lead to transaction trouble.

Every transaction is different and involves communication with a variety of parties including your designated broker, other licensees, clients/customers, building inspectors, title companies, surveyors, appraisers, lenders and the list goes on. How are you communicating with them?

Have you ever been involved in a message exchange like this:

Selling licensee: My buyers would like to see 34 Main Street Sat. Is there a lockbox there yet?

Listing licensee: No box – key on nail

Selling licensee: Where?

Listing licensee: Garage

Is the key inside the garage? Outside? Should the licensee have to hunt for the key Saturday?

What about communication with consumers? Do you email documents for electronic signature? How do you communicate the information in those documents? Are you taking time to explain all of the clauses they are agreeing to or are just the parts where you filled in a blank space? How do you know they understand what they are signing? Electronic communication has become even more important during the COVID pandemic. There are numerous programs such as Facetime or livestream platforms (e.g. Zoom) where you can see the person you are communicating with and post documents on the screen for review and discussion.

Methods of communication in which you can see and interact with the person you are communicating with allows for the very important component of *listening*. Active listening is more than just passively hearing a message. It involves a conscious effort to hear and

understand the message. It involves patience to let the other speaker speak without interruption and provides an opportunity to glean information from verbal (e.g. tone of voice, hesitation) and non-verbal (e.g. facial expression, posture) cues.

An issue at the other end of the spectrum is **over** communication. A good communicator says only what needs to be said. Licensees must work in the best interest of their clients and should always keep this in mind. Think about the last broker caravan or open house you attended. Have you ever heard anything from another licensee, affiliated with your company or from another company, that you should not have heard? Maybe confidential information that could be detrimental to their client like “It is a shame they are getting a divorce and will not be able to stay in this beautiful home”. Has your client authorized you to share this confidential information? How do you think the client would feel knowing you made these comments?

You will find much more information on communication in the new Core Courses.

WHICH COURSE DO YOU NEED?

Effective April 1, 2021 the Real Estate Commission core course requirement is dependent upon your license type as follows:

Designated Brokers: *“Core Course for Designated Brokers – 4- Communication”*

Brokers and Associate Brokers: *“Core Course for Brokers and Associate Brokers – 4 - Communication”*

The applicable course noted above is required if:

- your license expiration date is on or after April 1, 2021 (even if you renew before April 1, 2021).
- your license has expired and you renew on or after April 1, 2021.
- you activate a license on or after April 1, 2021.

Licensees with a license expiration date prior to April 1, 2021, who renew prior to April 1, 2021 may fulfill their core course requirement with either *“Core Course for Designated Brokers – 3”* or *“Core Course for Brokers and Associate Brokers –3”* (depending on your license type) or the new core course appropriate for the license type as noted above.