



Customer service makes a difference



IAN JOHNSON

GUEST COLUMN

Great customer service is all about making sure customers walk away happy.

Customer service is important in every industry, but it's especially important when buying a new home. Listening to purchasers' concerns, finding ways to resolve issues and making a commitment to take care of their product from the sale to the move-in date and beyond should be the goals of a good home builder.

There are several resources for builders to use to help them deliver an unparalleled level of customer service, and one of these is surveys.

A number of builders utilize third-party survey companies as a resource to gauge their performance, improve their product

and processes and provide direction to their customer service team. Such companies work with home builders to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement during different stages of the home-building process.

Builders typically survey customers twice yearly — 30 days after purchasers move into their new home and again around the one-year anniversary. The surveys and computerized tracking systems implemented by many builders to ensure they deliver top-level customer service will illustrate how consistent their customer service track record really is. If you purchased from a builder who sends out surveys, get involved, fill out the survey to help the builder improve.

Customer service that is consistent and dependable is something a reputable builder should provide not just while building your dream home but also after you move in.

So when you are considering a builder, ask prospective home builders about their customer support process. Who do you talk to with questions when you visit your builder? Is there a contact person for questions about the building process for your particular home? Will the amenity space be finished before you occupy your condo? What condition

will the lobbies be in at time of occupancy? What is their customer service policy after you move in?

A direct contact person during all phases of construction should be available through reputable builders and will help you feel more involved and informed during your home purchase experience. It is a long relationship from the start of a purchase to when homeowners are handed the keys, particularly in the case of high-rise condominiums, and a good experience in that process will lead to referrals for a builder. This is critical to building their business and sustaining the builder's brand in a very competitive market.

The Tarion Warranty Corporation has also established benchmarks for customer service standards and customer service awards for the residential construction industry in Ontario. There are specific warranty time frames outlined by Tarion to address any deficiencies in a new home after occupancy. Reputable builders go above and beyond these benchmarks, and a company's reputation is built on a foundation of quality in all aspects of the industry.

Sourcing only the highest-quality materials

and workmanship or standing by each home and condominium not only offers customers the best product available, it can also help the builder win awards for surpassing industry standards — a key for earning a high level of public trust.

Customer expectations have changed over the years, and builders can find it a significant challenge to meet all the expectations of their purchasers. A good builder will make sure there is constant information available through various media, such as websites or newsletters, to educate and inform their purchasers.

Founded over 90 years ago, multi-award-winning Monarch is Canada's oldest and most experienced builder, with referral rates much higher than industry standards. Monarch purchasers have the confidence of buying nearly a century of experience and excellence.

For an overview of all of Monarch's communities visit www.monarchgroup.net

— Courtesy of Monarch Corporation.

Ian Johnson is Director of Customer Care for Monarch's high-rise division.