

BBSG DEFINES CUSTOMER SERVICE

Well defined warranty materials based on nationally recognized guidelines, i.e. Residential Construction Performance Guidelines for Professional Builders & Re-modelers, Third Edition. Materials should go beyond defining what is covered to include what is not covered and what is homeowner maintenance.

A System and procedure for homeowners to report problems needs to be formalized. The process should prompt the homeowner for sufficient information so a timely assessment of the problem results.

Systems and procedures need to be communicated to buyers before closing, i.e., before a problem occurs. Service providers need a method to validate the reported issues against the warranty and provide feedback to the homeowner. Based on BBSG's data, approximately 30% of items submitted result in no work/action required.

Unfortunately homeowners will submit issues knowing that they are not covered, hoping to get something for nothing. Many homeowners choose not to read the warranty materials, preferring to report what they believe should be covered. Most homeowners only understand the symptom, not the cause of the problem. As a result they often report the wrong problem.

These circumstances are either a customer service crises or opportunity depending on how professionally they're handled. A good understanding of the problem is needed to ensure that the correct subcontractor is properly equipped to make the repair so that unnecessary return trips are avoided. Future referrals are likely if the homeowner feels that their issues are properly evaluated and they received feedback as to what will be done or an explanation as why no action will be taken.

Systematic documentation to responsible subcontractors needs to contain contact information for the homeowner and a sufficient description of the problem and requested action, to get to the right person and avoid "scope growth" (i.e., the tendency to add to the work list once the worker arrives).

A method to verify those issues that are addressed should have multiple closure mechanisms. Builders, Subs and homeowners should be able to close items too.

Homeowners should be able to close items when completed. This is only partially effective because some homeowners will not take the time to formally close or will want to leave an item open indefinitely to "be sure it's fixed".

The system should have periodic review cycles and automated closure features, e.g., if a homeowner prompt for status results in no update, an item can be assumed addressed and auto closes after a set time.

Bob Ingle

