

CAHI MONTHLY NEWS



Presidents Corner

We now have the first month of 2023 under our belts. I know some members have reported starting off slow, others say they have a reasonable amount of work. For me, I have had a 50% increase in bookings over last January's totals. That's not much of a guarantee of how the rest of the year will go, but it is a positive start. Realtors that I have talked to have told me that there is an up tick in buyer activity. Unfortunately, inventory is still low and that of course is the linchpin of the market. Those who purchased homes in recent years at extremely low mortgage rates are staying put, and that's not helping inventory.

Some people are comparing this market to the 2008 housing crisis. While there may be some similarity, there are significant differences when compared. The last housing cycle there were 8 million job cuts, this cycle none. Total jobs last cycle were at 138 million, now there are 158 million. The Subprime loans were running rampant in the last cycle, that is not the case currently. New construction is down 3 million units and overall inventory was 4 times higher back then. Mortgage delinquencies are down almost two thirds from the last crisis, and foreclosures are down to .6% from 4.6%. Several Realtors believe the decline in new construction starts is bogging down a comeback in the market. Builders are still having a cost, material and labor problem. This year will certainly be a wait and see game.

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Meeting Dates!

Feb 22nd

Presenter -

TBD

7:00 - 9:00 pm

Due to major facility issues at Best Western in North Haven our meeting location is changing - Check the Events page of our website for updates. Email announcement will also be provided.

MONTHLY MEETINGS – Details & Info

CCAHI's regular monthly meetings are held at the Best Western located at 201 Washington Ave (RT 5), North Haven. Meetings are also broadcast via Zoom.

Meetings are still free to members but RESERVATIONS are a MUST.

Reservations can be made at our CAHI website.

Most meetings are on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 7-9pm. Guests are always welcome! Guests may attend 2 free monthly meetings to experience our presentations, meet our members, and receive a CE attendance certificate. Joining CAHI may be done at anytime of the year through our Membership Page.

Presidents Message Continued:

It was brought to my attention once again at the law seminar that more and more New York inspectors are working in CT. As the exodus of New York residents continues into CT, they bring their favorite home inspector along with them when they purchase just over the line. I know that this compounds the effect the slow market is having on us. I spoke with a state board member. A New York home inspector must have a CT license to work in this state. This is difficult to track at best. The only way to know that a New York inspector is licensed in CT is if a complaint is lodged against him or her regarding the performance of the inspection. In my opinion, the only way to combat this is to ask the Realtors on the state lines to vet their clients inspectors and flag those from New York that don't have a CT license. Those of you on the border should breach this subject with the Realtors in the area if possible. I will speak about this in more detail with the state board as well. However, I do not suspect there will be any swift and immediate justice regarding the matter.

Stan ere is a short story instead of my usual quote. One morning, an elderly man was walking along the beach when he noticed a young boy picking something off the sand and throwing it into the sea. As he got closer, the man realized the child was throwing stranded starfishes that had washed up on the shore back into the breaking waves. Approaching the boy, the man asked what he was doing.

"The starfish will die if they're still on the shore when the sun rises," he replied. Perplexed, the old man said, "But that's pointless! There are countless miles of beach and thousands of starfish. It doesn't matter how many you return to the water, you can't make a difference." Unfazed, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and tossed it into the sea. "It matters to this one," he said.

No matter the odds of success or the scale of the challenge, your actions can make a difference. It's better to light a candle than curse the dark. Every little counts. Doing something to make a positive change is always better than nothing! Make a difference! *Unknown author*

For Sale by Home Inspector

Many of us have expensive equipment or tools that are of value to only Home Inspectors. Sometimes we want to reduce our investment but It is difficult to find someone who sees the value in the equipment. So why not advertise your no longer wanted equipment here in our newsletter. Send your information to the CAHI website.

Here are the first items from John McKenzie. The information he has provided is all that is needed.

RADON monitor inventory reduction. I'm selling 4 Sun Nuclear 1028 continuous radon monitors to reduce my business expenses & inventory. All 4 units are due for annual calibration (\$149 from SunRADON). All the monitors come with the hard shell case and power supply. Selling each monitor for \$600 firm. local pickup arrangements can be discussed privately.. thank you.

John McKenzie

PH: (203) 828-0594

EMAIL: hrhomesinspect.@yahoo.com

GOT SNOW?

Consideration of Winter Conditions in Home Inspection

Modern design standards use ground snow load records and accepted safety factors to engineer house structures for high reliability. This is because snow load on structures is a principal cause of structural collapse. Most homes in our area are designed to support a 20-pound snow-load. This loading can be exceeded by less than 2' of snow! We are encountering more frequent extreme winter weather events. The Buffalo, NY area has had multiple recent incidents of snow accumulation of 4-6 feet! Inspecting for structural weaknesses that may make a home susceptible to damage from winter conditions and educating your Client to understand the threat of heavy snow and ice on their home may save lives and help safeguard against catastrophic property loss.



Warning Signs of Structural Failure -

Heavy snow/ice accumulation often causes cracks in the finishes of walls and ceilings and causes doors and windows to bind. These conditions should be investigated by a professional inspector. Hearing loud cracking noises during a high accumulation event is a danger sign.

Snow depth - The density of 1 ft.² of snow is about

1 to 1.5 pounds. It is important to know however, that snow accumulation becomes increasingly dense with depth. The weight of a square foot of snow 6" deep is about 7.5 pounds. The weight of 48" of snow is eight times that (~60 lbs). However, snow compacts as it accumulates so the design weight used in engineering for 4 feet of snow is 117 psf!

Wet Snow - Snow has varying liquid water content and some accumulated snow can be very heavy when the water content is high. Cold fluffy snow may weigh around 7 psf. Really wet snow can weigh 4 times that. Rain falling on accumulated snow is also a condition of concern as the density of the accumulation and the resulting weight on structures can rise dramatically in a short period of time before the snow has an opportunity to melt.

Raftered Roof Structures - The strength of a rafter roof system depends not only on the dimensions, spacing and condition of the rafters, but also on their connections at top and bottom. Rafters should be directly opposed and tied together against separation with collar ties at maximum 4' on center. Equally important is the connection of the rafters below. Perhaps the strongest connection is when the opposing rafter bottoms are fastened to an attic floor structural member running between them creating a stable triangle. Potentially weak conditions can arise in attics when rafters bear on an exterior attic wall above attic floor level and there is no structural member directly tying the opposing rafter bottoms together. Symptoms of this condition are bellied ridgelines and bulging of the eave line.

Truss Roof Structures - Trusses should be installed according to an engineered design that is not likely available at the time of inspection. However, the installation should be checked for common issues that can result in structural weakness. These include removal or modification of truss web components, rot or other damage to any part of a truss, substandard lumber with knots or other defects, inadequate connection to exterior walls, etc.

Roof Deck Issues - Check for sag between rafters that can result from things such as missing H-clips, span exceeding the rating of sheathing (check the stamp), moisture damage from leaks or poor attic ventilation, sheathing installed in the wrong orientation (the long dimension should be parallel to the eaves for strength), etc. Decks can fail from heavy loads especially from the added weight of persons doing snow removal.

Unbalanced Loads - Roof structural integrity can be jeopardized when one side of the roof has a substantially greater load than the other. This is an especially important consideration in events of heavy accumulation of snow/ice. Winds can cause one side of a roof to be bare while at the same time depositing heavy snow loads on the other. If both sides of the roof have heavy snow loads requiring removal, it is important to balance the removal so that the snow load on one side is not much greater than the other.

Snow Removal - Heavy snow loads may need to be removed to protect a home. This can be a dangerous endeavor from things such as ladder accidents, slippery roof surfaces, sliding snow loads, etc. Roofs can also be damaged resulting in need for repair and/or leaks. Great caution should be used, and consideration given to hiring that work out to a qualified contractor. When removing snow, it should not be scraped down to the roof surface. The important thing is to remove weight. It is generally best not to chip ice, but rather, to get the snow off of it so it has a chance to melt.

Low Pitch - Steeper roofs tend to hold less snow than those with low pitch (generally below 4:12). Special attention should be paid to the structural integrity of low slope roof areas. Ledger attachment, rafter connections, rafter dimensions, etc. should be given close scrutiny.

Sliding Snow Loads - Snow loads, especially on metal roofs, can slide in a mass and be very dangerous and damaging. Metal roofs should have roof jacks to resist sliding snow. In the condition where a steeper slope roof discharges onto a low slope roof below, a heavy sliding snow load may structurally damage the lower roof potentially leading to collapse. Persons can be seriously injured, and substantial property damage can result from sliding snow loads.

Ice Damming - Lack of adequate attic ventilation and attic floor insulation can be very damaging to a home and contribute to accumulation of heavy snow and ice loads. Properly constructed attics have a continuous flow of air along the underside of the roof deck and insulation in the attic floor adequate to prevent excessive heat rising to the underside of the roof deck. This results in the underside and the top side of the roof being at approximately the same temperature so that snow is less likely to stick to the cold roof surface and accumulate, and when it does accumulate is less likely to melt. Poor ventilation and insulation results in the eaves being much colder than the roof surfaces above the heated spaces. Snow melts in the upper heated areas and runs down to the eaves where it encounters the cold condition and freezes. Ice continues to build up there and that ice works its way into the roofing materials and structures often causing serious damage. Keep in mind the requirements for adhered roofing underlayment that is designed to protect against this. Ice is also heavy, imposing potentially damaging loads at the eaves and the growth of sometimes enormous icicles that not only can cause major damage to the soffits, gutters, etc., but also pose an imminent hazard to persons and property. Removing large accumulations of ice is dangerous in many ways.

Inaccessible Fuel Shut-Offs - Large accumulations of snow and ice coming off the eaves of the roof can cover exterior shut off valves on natural gas feeds to homes and can cover propane and fuel oil tanks. Location of these items below the eaves of a roof is a poor choice that should be reported. Clients should be reminded of the importance of maintaining access to fuel shutoffs in case of emergency.

Iced-over Natural Gas Regulators - Regulators on natural gas supplies to homes act to vent overpressure gas to the exterior environment through the screened outlet in the regulator. If regulators become iced over or buried in heavy snow they may cease to provide protection against overpressure gas to the appliances in the house which can be very hazardous. Make sure your Clients understand how important it is to keep the area around a gas regulator clear. Share this information with your Client during a Home Inspection, even in the Summer!

...and don't forget to point out the vigilant winter maintenance required by steep driveways

How To Spot The Early Signs Of Mold

by Home Guide Plan / June 10, 2022

The distinct odor is one of the only signs of mold they ever notice for most people. And unfortunately, mold is relatively common and can be a huge problem in homes. And if it is not dealt with quickly, it can lead to serious health problems. This article will provide you with the early signs of mold to deal with the issue before it gets too big to keep you and your family safe. Remember that mold can grow anywhere there is moisture, so be on the lookout for the following signs.

Your Tile Grout Is Turning Dark

As any homeowner knows, mold can be a severe problem. It is unsightly, but it can also cause respiratory problems and damage to your home. One of the first signs of mold is the darkening of grout lines in tile floors or walls, which is from the growth of mold spores, which thrive in damp, dark environments.

If you notice this problem in your home, it's essential to take action immediately:

1. Try to identify the source of the moisture and address it accordingly.
2. Clean the affected area with a strong bleach solution.
3. Keep an eye on the area and monitor for further signs of mold growth.

By taking these steps, you can help to prevent mold from taking over your home.



There Are Dark Spots On Your Wall

Mold is a type of fungus that can grow both indoors and outdoors. It thrives in damp, warm, and humid environments and can quickly spread if not properly removed. One of the first signs of mold in your home is the appearance of dark spots on your walls. These spots are from moisture seeping through cracks or leaks in the wall.

If you see dark spots on your wall, it's essential to investigate the cause and address it immediately. Otherwise, the mold will continue to spread and can cause serious health problems for you and your family.



You Notice An Odor From Your A/C Unit

Mold thrives in damp, dark places, and air conditioners provide the perfect environment for it to grow. As the temperatures outside start to rise, you may be cranking up your air conditioner to stay cool inside. But what if you begin to notice an unpleasant odor coming from the unit? Unfortunately, this is often a sign that mold has started to grow inside the unit.

The problem is that mold can be very tricky to get rid of, and it can cause a variety of health problems, especially when spores blow through your A/C unit. If you notice an odor coming from your A/C unit, it's crucial to take action. Cleaning the unit and removing any mold growth can help to improve indoor air quality.



You See A Pool Of Water

Mold growth requires four things: a food source (such as wood or paper), mold spores, the right temperature, and moisture. Pools of water are an early sign of mold in your home. Mold spores are everywhere and only need a little moisture to start growing. The right temperature for mold growth is usually between 77 and 86 degrees Fahrenheit.

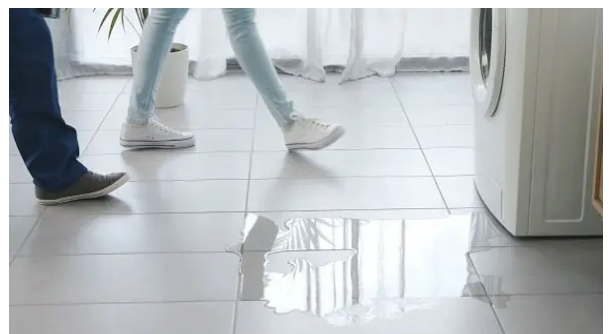
Moisture can come from many sources, including leaks in plumbing, overflows from sinks or tubs, condensation on windows or pipes, or even high humidity. If you see a pool of water in your home, it's essential to dry it up quickly. Otherwise, mold will start to grow and can cause damage to your home and your health.



You Have A Leak In Your Plumbing

One of the most common early signs of mold in your home is a plumbing leak. While a small leak might not seem like a big deal, it can create the perfect conditions for mold to grow. In addition, mold can spread quickly through your home via the plumbing system, making it difficult to detect and treat. Mold and damp, dark places, and plumbing leaks can provide the right environment.

If you suspect that you have a mold problem, it's essential to have your home inspected by a professional as soon as possible. With prompt treatment, you can help prevent the spread of mold and keep your family safe.



You Feel Like You Have A Really Long Cold



Many people don't realize that a seemingly never-ending cold could be an early sign of mold in their home. While it's true that viruses, not bacteria cause the common cold, mold can also cause a lot of the same symptoms. A stuffy nose, fatigue, and general malaise are common signs of cold and mold exposure.

Mold can cause severe respiratory problems, so it's not something to be taken lightly. In addition, people with mold allergies may also experience sneezing, coughing, and watery eyes. If you suspect that you have a mold problem in your home, it's essential to have it addressed as soon as possible.

You Feel Extra Itchy

Most people know that mold is dangerous. It can cause respiratory problems, skin irritation, and even neurological issues. But did you know that feeling itchy can be an early sign of mold in your home? Mold releases spores into the air, which can cause an allergic reaction in some people. As mentioned above, the most common symptoms are coughing, sneezing, and watery eyes.

However, some people also experience itchiness, especially on their skin or scalp. If you notice any of these symptoms, it's essential to check for mold growth in your home. Mold and damp, dark places, so check under sinks, in basements, and behind any appliances that use water. If you find mold, it's essential to clean it up immediately and take steps to prevent future growth.



Other Early Signs Of Mold You May Notice

- Cracks in drywall. These can provide a perfect place for mold to grow and spread.
- Peeling paint can be a sign of high humidity, leading to mold growth. Mildewed towels or clothing are from humidity or poor ventilation.
- Condensation on windows or pipes is another sign of high humidity, leading to mold growth.
- Visible mold growth is the most obvious sign of a mold problem and needs addressing immediately.

Be Aware Of The Early Signs Of Mold Growth

If you notice any of these early signs of mold in your home, it's essential to take action. Mold can cause serious health problems, so it's not something to be ignored. Be sure to have your home inspected by a professional and take steps to prevent future mold growth. With prompt treatment, you can help keep your family safe and healthy.

SURVIVING THE SLOWER SEASON: COMPETITIVE RESEARCH & POSITIONING

Home inspection volume on a national level continues to be softer than normal compared to recent years around this time. Mortgage rates have nearly tripled since this time a year ago, yet housing prices remain high, and according to the National Association of Home Builders, which publishes the Housing Market Index, the housing market is officially in a recession.

As many of us brace for the chillier months of winter, countless home inspection business owners are bracing for future inspection volume challenges due to sustained issues in the housing market and an uncertain economy this year.

Starting off right

We all know the winter months are traditionally a slower period for most inspectors across the country. However, if they aren't careful this quarter, they could easily see a sluggish season for their business turn into an economic blizzard.

Prognosticators of all sorts have already begun their speculation on what our housing market is going to do this year. And those guesses swing wildly based on any number of factors – many of which are still unknown. However, most seem to agree that things are going to be a lot slower in 2023 than they have been in the past few years. And yes, that downturn in our housing market will obviously have an impact on inspection volume. Yet, it's what inspection business owners do during this downturn that will truly separate the success stories from the failed and forgotten. Here's how to pivot right out of the gates this year and improve your odds of becoming a success story when the tale is told.

Differentiation and your market positioning

As incoming leads become scarcer and home inspectors are forced to compete more with each other, they must:

- 1. Perform competitive research to better understand key areas of differentiation between your business and the competition**
- 2. Leverage insights from competitive analysis and refine brand positioning to generate more leads, and build a customer base**

When the pandemic hit the U.S. in early 2020, it brought home inspections – and most business operations at large – to a near screeching halt. However, our economy slowly recovered. Inspectors adapted to the “new normal,” and just a year later, the housing market was positively on fire. However, as we all know now, the fever would eventually break, and the correction would follow.

When the housing market was going gangbusters, there was more than enough inspection volume to go around. Inspection business owners didn't have to be as concerned with what the competition was doing or making sure that they were positioning themselves in the marketplace in a unique and differentiated way. However, as the housing market continues its correction to better fit with current affordability, demand and supply, inspectors are struggling to gain a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive landscape. Making it a critical time to ensure you know what the competition is doing while differentiating your services and presenting brand in a way that will help you not only kick the year off right, but better position your business for the year ahead...and beyond.

Knowing your market: Research & analysis

From painfully slow to fever-pitched busy to now, when was the last time you remember running a competitive analysis for your brand? If the answer is “Never, I’m not sure, or before the pandemic,” then it’s time. If you’ve done one in the past year or so, was it efficient, insightful, and did it cause you to make specific and strategic adjustments that have paid dividends? Because if done correctly, it should.

What is a competitive analysis?

A competitive analysis is a strategy that involves researching other inspection companies in and around your area to gain insight into their services, sales, and marketing tactics. It also enables you to stay atop inspection industry trends and ensure the services you provide are consistently meeting (and exceeding) industry standards.

There are many methods and approaches for performing a competitive analysis, but the must-have benefits any analysis should provide include:

- The identification of your services’ unique value proposition and what makes your inspection services different from the competitors’, which can inform future marketing efforts
- of what your competitors are doing right – this information is critical for staying relevant and ensuring both your services and marketing campaigns are outperforming industry standards
- The identification of where your competitors are falling short — which helps you identify areas of opportunities in the marketplace, and test out new, unique marketing strategies they haven’t taken advantage of
- Learnings from customer reviews what’s missing in competitors’ services, and what you might add to your own services to meet those needs

How to perform a basic competitive analysis?

There’s no denying the value of business intelligence when it comes to your competitors. And the benefits from conducting a competitive analysis are many. However, while you can always engage a firm to assist in doing market research for your inspection business

(ACC performs competitive research for clients all the time), here are some of the steps you can take on your own to get the ball rolling:

1. Determine who your competitors are. Depending on the areas you cover, research what other inspection businesses operate in the same vicinity. Are they sole proprietors or multi-inspector firms?
2. Determine what services your competitors offer. Beyond “inspections,” determine what additional ancillary services your competitors offer.
3. Research your competitors’ sales tactics and approach to service delivery. Look at their website, social media, referral sites, and determine how they manage their lead process. Can you reach them right away via phone or text? Do they have a contact form on their website, a chat option, and/or a “schedule an inspection now” option? And how long does it take to get a response from any of their contact methods?
4. Take a look at your competitors’ pricing, as well as any perks they offer. Are they more expensive? Less expensive? Do they bundle with other ancillary services or offer holiday promotions or special offers throughout the year?
5. Analyze how your competitors market their services. What ads are you seeing from your competitors? What areas of their business are they promoting more than others? Do they do podcasts or participate in webinars? Are they featured in any articles?
6. Take note of your competition’s content strategy. How much content do they produce each month? Is it good? Do people engage with their content on social media?
7. Observe how they promote marketing content. How often do you see their paid or promoted content on social media? Are there sites that link back to their website? Do they lend their insights or voice to industry associations or vendors in the industry – on blogs, podcasts, and social media groups?
8. Look at their social media presence, strategies, and go-to platforms. How many platforms are they active on? Do they have a lot of followers? What kind of content has gotten the most engagement and shares? How often do they post?

Knowing your market: Insights & brand repositioning

Once you've performed a competitive analysis, you can take the information and easily plug it into a simple SWOT analysis to fully inform and identify areas where your business has "strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats" in your market and with your competitors.

Leveraging insights

There will likely be some obvious areas where you can leverage insights gained from your research and SWOT analysis and capitalize on specific "weaknesses" in your competitors. For example, a lot of inspectors choose not to answer a phone call or text while on inspections or after business hours, but also don't utilize the services of a call center or have an alternate customer service option available. This allows calls to go to voicemail or texts to go unanswered until that inspector is available or ready to manage the lead. There are some obvious inherent risks in this approach, some of which we've covered in recent posts on Marketing and Lead Management and Customer Experience, but many inspectors still contend that this isn't an issue for their business. It is! Consider the following. How likely is it that someone who calls an inspection business and gets a voicemail will simply move on to the next inspector or inspection business on their list? The short answer is, "Pretty darn likely." According to a study by Consumer Reports, 75% of callers who can't reach a live person at a business will not leave a voicemail. Maybe this number is less for a bigger, more established inspection business, but do you think they really know what that lost lead number is? Maybe their repeat customers and agents are more likely to leave a voicemail, but will their new business leads? Nope.

The bottom line here is that after you've identified key areas of differentiation between your business and those of the competition and see gaps for opportunity, you can and must fill those gaps.

Brand repositioning

Brands are built with the purpose of making a business more memorable and appealing to a given audience. They achieve this by identifying unique points of difference and communicating that difference in a manner that resonates with that audience.

This is brand positioning 101.

"Repositioning" in marketing is the process a brand goes through to adjust or overhaul its perception in the market to better appeal to its target audience.

Maybe you feel like your home inspection brand is solid as a rock and doesn't require any repositioning. That may be, but the reality is that with the dramatic changes in the housing market over the past 10 months, even the most rock-solid of brands need to alter their positioning to combat issues related to current conditions. The simple purpose being to reposition the brand in the mind of your audience, so they see your brand and its offering as a more viable option than your competitor. And this all rolls up into how we strategically fill those gaps we talked about.

Repositioning strategy

Your brand's position in the home inspection market, especially in your service area, is shaped by the perception people have of your brand. And this perception ultimately stems from the brand experience. How people "feel" when experiencing your business via multiple touchpoints: website, social channels, ads, customer service agents, the actual inspection, the inspection report, and follow-up emails.

After taking stock of your brands current position in the market, and then weighing it against the insights gained from the competitive research and SWOT analysis, you can begin to envision what modifications need to be made to your brand identity. Specifically, alterations or tweaks needing to be made to the personality of your business and the promise you make to your customers. Again, these changes help you fill those gaps of opportunity by amplifying core elements of your brand DNA that are NOT part of your competitors.

For example, maybe you conclude there is an unfulfilled need of your competitors' customers and even yours. According to the 2022 Consumer Patience Study, more than half of all customers (52%) have willingly paid more when making a purchase to work with the business that responded FIRST. So, perhaps you recognize how much instant response to inbound inquiries can power business success and you decide to dramatically improve your brands response time to all incoming leads. Solid! Beyond that, you recognize that consumers are willing to pay an average of 19% more for "always immediate service." (Consumer Reports) And similar to brands like Disney who have created paid options for its guests (Fast Pass & Disney Genie) to bypass long lines and skip merrily right to the front, you establish an option where a customer can pay more to get a same-day inspection or at a time that isn't within normal business hours. Whatever alternations you ultimately make to your brand identity to maximize those opportunity gaps, gain more leads, and close more business, they should never be at the cost of other positive aspects of your identity. Remember, these are strategic modifications, changes to messaging, enhancements to customer experience, tweaks to how you market your business, and more. Don't give up the good to go for the expedient. Take a holistic approach and your brand will reap the rewards, both short and long-term.

ACC (America's Call Center):

ACC is a fully integrated customer service and communication-handling solution exclusively for home inspectors – no matter if you're a sole proprietor or a multi-inspector firm.

ACC has 25 years of experience and knowledge of what it takes to successfully navigate more challenging economic cycles. And when budgets are tight, it's good to have a partner that has a history of producing an increase of 15% – 30% in revenue after

inspectors begin services while only paying an average of \$2 – \$5 an hour for those services. That's a big boost for such a small investment! We are inspectors' smartest approach to growth and the essential partner that will make all the difference for your business. During this shift in our industry, make a shift for your business. Make a shift to ACC.

The following article is in reaction to several organizations providing less expensive self employed devices to monitor and/or treat the quality of our indoor air. Keep this in mind as you are marketed for IAQ related tools and specialty testing. From NYASHI.

Do It Yourself Radon Monitors (DIYRM) are now readily available for sale to the public and have become increasingly popular. Homeowners are using these devices to measure radon levels in homes they own or wish to buy. There are multiple liabilities for licensed Home Inspectors related to these DIY monitors...

First, some shortfalls of various DIYRM:

1. They do not have a self-diagnostic feature. That means that the DIYRM cannot conduct essential diagnostics before each test to ensure that they are working correctly.
2. Homeowners/Buyers generally do not follow professional test protocol and their test results are not reliable.
3. No interruption of power detection. User might rely on readings when the RM may not have been recording for some period.
4. Lack of security features to detect tampering or disturbance.
5. Some manufacturers recommend monitoring a location for at least 2 months with their units to get a good radon level measurement. These devices may not be suited for the typical short-term 2–4-day sampling required in a real estate transaction.
6. DIYRM require routine re-calibration to maintain their ability to monitor radon levels with any accuracy. Homeowners are not likely to bother with this (if that is even available for their device).
7. Also, some do not have software that is compatible with newer smart phones. Always check monitor/phone compatibility before purchasing any radon measurement device.

While these devices may provide some information to Homeowners about radon in their homes, decisions about the safety of the home's living environment and about installation of costly radon mitigation systems are best made with measurements taken by certified professionals who use approved and reliable devices according to accepted protocol.

As for Home Inspector liability...

Any Home Inspector recommending or selling these devices may be liable if that device or the way it is used results in inaccurate information. A Client may rightfully expect that if they buy a unit from a licensed Home Inspector, they can rely on it when they use it for testing a home. Clients and purchasers are not likely to follow, or even be aware of, proper radon testing protocol. This, in combination with using uncertified and/or uncalibrated DIY units, can yield results that do not reliably reflect a home's actual radon level. If the resulting level is low, they may think their home is safe when it might not be. If high, they might install an unnecessary and costly mitigation system.

Who will they blame? You could be on the hook for the cost of subsequent professional testing and/or the cost of installing a mitigation system. Worse, sued for a cancer death! Electronic devices are often made in other countries. A device manufacturer located outside of the US cannot be easily sued, leaving the Home Inspector as a likely first defendant in a lawsuit. HI liability and E&O insurance policies probably don't insure selling these devices (...and that practice also undermines the home inspection profession by promoting non-professional self-testing). Being sued with no insurance backing to provide defense and cover settlement/award costs is no place to be!

DIYRM are continuous radon measurement devices. CRM must be approved and calibrated by a licensed New York State ELAP for them to be used in a real estate transaction. An ELAP (approved environmental lab) is required to comply with NYS Dept. of Health and nationally accredited programs for operation of their calibration facilities and testing and must maintain a formal quality assurance/control program. Most DIYRM companies that calibrate their devices are not an approved ELAP. Using DIYRM for testing homes is outside of NYS regulations and may very well not be covered by HI insurance policies. Home Inspectors using non-compliant devices can also be subject to NYSDOH penalties.

We have been advised that the NYS Department of Health requests that the use of DIYRM for radon measurement in real estate transactions by licensed Home Inspectors be reported for investigation. Reports should be made to:
radon@health.ny.gov or (518) 402-7556.

If you encounter homes being monitored for radon by these devices, warn your Clients and others about these issues and recommend that they only rely on radon testing by qualified professionals when making important health related decisions.

*** NYSAHI publications are not prepared by attorneys and do not provide legal advice. Consult a NYS licensed attorney for any legal advice. ***

Four Journeys, Four Destinations: A Black History Month Inspector Spotlight

By Tanner Weyland / February 1, 2023



Starting a career in home inspection is difficult for anyone, regardless of their background. Each journey comes with its unique set of challenges and triumphs, as the four home inspectors in this article can attest. In a way, you must recraft yourself into someone new to fit the role. You must change who you are into who you want to be.

For our Inspector Spotlight this Black History Month, we are highlighting four Black home inspectors who have each become something in pursuit of success. They've had to bend over backwards to get a realtor to remember them, to stand out as inspectors, to become their own bosses, and to get the support they need as home inspectors in this challenging industry. While none of the stories are the same, they show a willingness to get outside of the box and be exceptional home inspectors. Their advice, their experiences, and their stories can help inspire you in your own home inspection business. These home inspectors are:

- Calvin Ceaser From CalPro Home Inspection Team
- Kenneth Reese From 360 Property Inspections, LLC
- Nita Davidson from Inspector Flow
- Woodrow Roberts Jr. from Inside & Out Professional Home Inspection

Learn from these Black home inspectors and consider who you want to be as an inspector.

Calvin Ceaser: Be a peoples' person.

If anyone is worried about whether or not they can succeed in the home inspection industry if they get into it "late," just take a note from Calvin Ceaser of CalPro Home Inspection Team. At the age of 54, he decided to start his home inspection business. A close friend of his had also recently begun inspecting, so after a few ride-alongs, Ceaser knew it was for him.

But starting his business wasn't easy. Ceaser knew that, without connections with realtors, his business would be dead out of the water. But developing those relationships wasn't as simple as he'd thought it would be.

"I was out marketing, going from office to office, visiting different realtors and trying to get my name out there," Ceaser said. "I learned that a lot of realtors don't work out of their office. It was hard to get to know them because they were out showing [houses]."



Ceaser realized that if he was having a difficult time reaching the agent, potential clients might have a hard time, too. With this in mind, he called the realtor with a pitch.

“I’ve been to your office several times and you’re never there. Aren’t you missing out on business?” Ceaser asked.

She responded, explaining that she may have potentially missed out on clients, but most of her realtors preferred to work from home since most clients were referrals. And this is where Ceaser put himself out there.

He volunteered to stay in the office and answer phones when he was available so that potential clients wouldn’t find a locked door and a voicemail. She was impressed by the offer, and he was set up in the front of the building. This helped many of the other realtors in the office feel more comfortable coming in, since they wouldn’t be alone in the building. This led to them trusting him and using him for their inspections, as well as sharing his info on their social media accounts.

“I gained market share overnight. My business went from almost nothing to working two to three inspections a day,” Ceaser said.

Put people first.

This story highlights a major strength of Ceaser’s: he is a peoples’ person. He takes extra time before and after each inspection to include the both the seller’s agent and the buyer’s agent in any updates on the inspection, and he encourages his clients to tell their agent if they have any concerns with the inspection. Getting to know them and letting them know that they could reach out to him whenever necessary helps them feel comfortable with his inspections. His personability kick-started his business with agent referrals and it continues to help his company grow today.

Ceaser proved that entering and succeeding in home inspecting is less about past experience, and more about the gusto and helpfulness with which you start your business.

“Are you going to have some tough times? Yeah. But the reality is, if you give your best in anything you do, at some point you’re going to succeed,” Ceaser said.

Kenneth Reese: Be your own boss.



Growing up, Kenneth Reese remembers how his parents worked for themselves. He appreciates the freedom and responsibility they had. However, he didn’t experience that for himself working as a project manager. That is, until he was buying a home.

He met the home inspector who would be looking at his house and became intrigued with the profession. It had the flexibility and responsibility that came from being his own boss.

“It [became] one of my dream jobs,” Reese said.

Setting his own schedule and working for himself are a major reason why Reese loves the profession.

“My wife and I do a lot of traveling throughout the year. In the past, it was hard for me to take off from my job. Now that I’m my own boss, I’m able to take off with no problem,” Reese said.

On top of that freedom, Reese appreciates the fulfillment that comes from him helping others with a business he built up solely by himself.

“Most people, they’ve been renting all their lives. When I did [their] inspection, they felt more comfortable. They feel good about buying that house,” he said.

And the best part? Whenever he helps a client avoid buying a problematic home or helps them to knock \$10,000 off a house’s cost, he knows he is helping them as himself: not as some representative of another person’s company but as his own boss.

Great Freedom Means Great Responsibility

Being your own boss isn’t all about trips and flexible schedules, Reese attests. When he started his inspection business, 360 Property Inspections, LLC, Reese recalls the struggle he had getting clients. His first hurdle was attracting realtors who could trust and recommend him to clients and other realtors. As the person in charge, he couldn’t rely on anyone other than himself to create that trust and build those connections.

First, Reese tried to utilize his connections. He called on friends and family that were in the real estate business. Even then, however, he had to prove his skill before they trusted him enough as an inspector to refer other clients to him. For that, he focused on being thorough and timely with his inspections and reports. Clients and realtors appreciate the professionalism that comes when an inspector can do a good job while meeting deadlines.

Realtors and clients also appreciated Reese’s efforts to present himself professionally. When people think of a dress code, they often think of dress codes enforced by others on them—but Reese was his own boss. He knew that he couldn’t become a professional in the eyes of potential clients and realtors if he didn’t hold himself to a higher standard and setting a personal code of professional appearance.

“Have your shirt tucked in. Have on clean clothes. I try to keep my van cleaned and washed every time,” Reese said.

These efforts, along with consistent work on his social media accounts, resulted in Reese growing his business significantly. His current goals include expanding into a multi-inspector firm, as well as increasing the offerings for specialty inspections like pest and others. And the best part? He is the one who made it happen.

Nita Davidson: Be a community creator.

As a real estate investor, Nita Davidson was continually unimpressed by the home inspectors who examined her properties. They would miss defects and issues that she would later discover as she was fixing up the home. So, she decided to start inspecting herself.

“I had already been rehabbing houses at that point in time, so that experience would translate well into the realm of inspecting,” Davidson said.

While Davidson didn’t find the courses or inspections difficult, she struggled to find a community to bring her business questions to. As a female, Black home inspector, she found it difficult to find other inspectors with similar backgrounds. She wondered if there were capable people in her demographic who, unaware of what it took to become an inspector and without other inspectors in their network, would not pursue an inspection career due to lack of information and support.

“I felt that other Black people, other minorities, women, the youth were being locked out of the opportunity,” Davidson said.



Building a Community

So, after inspecting for a few years, Davidson created Inspector Flow, a home inspection school that caters to minorities, women, and youth.

“[It was made] to inform them about the opportunity in this particular real estate trade, provide them standard education in a judgment-free environment, and to help give them some tips and some tools on starting and maintaining their businesses,” Davidson said.

In its first year, Inspector Flow graduated over 60 inspectors Davidson hopes to help many more students get the knowledge they need and navigate complicated state requirements to enter the industry.

“Seeing all the different roadblocks [to becoming a licensed inspector] and the [lack of] equitable access to the education really bothered me. So, I’ve been putting my money and my time where my mouth is and trying to help people,” Davidson said.

To anyone who wants to become an inspector but feels like they doubt their ability to enter the field, Davidson encourages them to “keep flowing.” That means that, whatever comes your way, resolve that you will never quit.

“Keep growing through the highs and lows,” Davidson encourages.

Woodrow Roberts Jr: Be an uncompromising treasure hunter.



Woodrow “Woody” Roberts Jr. really wished he had known about home inspectors before buying a home. Having experience in remodeling, he knew that his prospective home had issues, but the real estate agent assured him that the seller could fix the issues after closing. Hindsight is 20/20, right?

As you can guess, the seller was unwilling to help Roberts with the leaking roof, drywall damage, and termites. Thankfully, a friend of Roberts’, a lawyer, helped resolve the disagreement and get Roberts the help he was promised, but Roberts never forgot the frustration of that moment.

Years later, while working as a public works inspector, he came across an article on home inspectors. He was certainly frustrated that his agent never mentioned the possibility of a home inspection, but he was even more curious about what home inspections entailed. One course later, and he was certified for home inspecting.

Established inspection firms heard that he was switching over to home inspecting, and they reached out, hoping to utilize him and the work ethic he was known for during his previous inspecting career. Those who knew the quality of his inspections during his time in public works would tell him, “I bet if we hid a dime on the job, you’d find it.” That attention to detail made the transition to home inspecting smooth and successful.

“I look at [an inspection] as a treasure hunt. It’s a challenge,” Roberts said.

Clients appreciate treasure hunters.

One client had Roberts inspect four different homes, and rather than becoming disillusioned with Roberts’ work, he appreciated his thoroughness every time—enough to recommend him to all his friends. That client would tell his friends, “If you want to buy a home, get Woody. If you want to sell a home, don’t get him.”

His diligent inspections have not always been winners with builders or real estate agents, but an unfaltering devotion to catching and reporting every defect earned Roberts many fans among his clients. Whenever a real estate agent accused him of “killing a deal,” Roberts would just respond: “No, this house committed suicide. I work for my client—not the real estate agent.”

Eventually, the Veterans Administration (VA) heard about Roberts’ skill and thoroughness and hired him to inspect homes that have been remodeled or built to accommodate veterans.

“[Working for veterans] has been really, really encouraging. It gives me the chance to let these guys know I appreciate their service for our country. It’s an honor for me to do their inspection and make sure they’re taken care of,” Roberts said.

Roberts had many opportunities given to him from those that heard of his high standards, like inspection companies and the VA. Any home inspector would feel grateful for such opportunities. However, it’s important to remember that Roberts only got those calls because of his reputation. Precision and skill created that reputation—the type of precision and skill that only comes from practice and setting a high bar for yourself.

If you want to be known for “finding dimes,” or their equivalent, then you need to practice finding dimes daily. It must become second nature. For anyone who hopes to reach that high bar, Roberts admits that there is only one way to do so: “Get training. Know your craft. You can only be as good as what you know.”

If you build your career on being a treasure hunter among inspectors, as Roberts has, you can always expect your clients to treasure you in return.

Share who you have become.

Every inspector is trying to be something, whether they know it or not. Your actions are the determining factor for what you will become. Many inspectors have taken the leap to become their own bosses. It is much harder taking that next step, however, to become a good boss for yourself, like Reese talked about. Other inspectors are trying desperately to become peoples’ persons, like Ceaser, or uncompromising treasure hunters, like Roberts. Still others are going above and beyond to be community creators, like Davidson. Whatever you choose to be, hopefully these stories can help you become the home inspector and business owner you desire.

We are extremely grateful that these four home inspectors were willing to share their stories. We hope that each of those reading this will help us find other inspiring stories. If you or an inspector you know has a story that is unique, that teaches valuable insights, or show innovation, email us at weprotect@inspectorproinsurance.com with a recommendation. We look forward to hearing from you!

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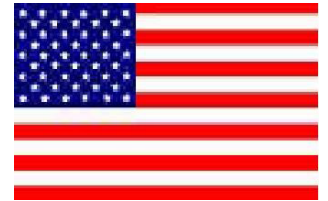
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