

SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE ...

It would be so easy to end the pain of house selling and buying. Most of us know that something's gotta give in the system; some of us even know *what* that something is, but then there is no getting away from the reality that unless governments intervene with clever legislation compelling us all to use a new *modus operandi*, it isn't going to happen.

I am confident that change is imminent, and apart from a few whingers who are against anything new, the national psyche will yawn a sigh of relief when that change is heralded.

Anyway, the point is I am sick and tired of an inefficient system, which allows solicitors to sit on their backsides when they should be expediting various portions of the bureaucracy along their weary ways, estate agents to collect vastly differing percentages of commissions for doing what often appears to be very little, and worst, surveyors covering every eventuality of the threat of legal action against them, by committing all that is negative but the CONDEMN stamp, to their over-valued reports.

Little did I know that one year after being subjected to this terrible system, I would be selling again. This time I would report every little detail of success and failure, in a system that was yet to change adequately despite ubiquitous appeals from every corner of the media, to the company that I felt would be perfect to spearhead a new age in house buying and selling. This one that has arranged for you to be reading my article!

I have just fallen victim to the classic survey ploy; just before exchange of contracts, my purchaser tells me about the dreadful survey and asks for a £10,000 reduction. He told me of the damp ... there isn't a Victorian house standing without it mind you ... the threat of drains backing up ... again, that threat is always there ... the threat of flooding ... virtually impossible as we live on a hill, but technically possible in our unused cellar ... the smell of drains ... I couldn't detect any untoward odours ... some wet rot ... hurrah, some truth. A lintel does need replacing; I overlooked it during renovation and it should cost all of £50.00 ... The surveyor also demanded woodworm reports, which of course are executed free of charge in the encouraged hope that the firm making the report will get the work ... get it? Can you imagine a firm committing to paper the fact that *no work is required*? Even an amateur could find some kind of related problem.

Well, I dropped 10 grand because I needed to move quickly on the place in which I hoped to live, and then, sensing this urge in me, the vendors upped the price on me by 5 grand. The system is mad for allowing such caprice to reign. I dropped pursuit of that property. If they were dealing with me in such a manner at such an early time in the process, what might they try on the eve of contract exchange? I finally settled on a great apartment in our dream location; a fair offer was accepted by fair people not looking for anything but a fair deal.

NOT!

Whilst writing this piece, I jest not, the estate agent rang me to say that in the light of new information about another offer, his client was reconsidering options, which basically meant that our offer was no longer accepted. I had already sent a cheque to my solicitor for £35.25 for an assurance policy to cover costs should such an eventuality happen. But for it happen while the cheque was in the post was almost unbelievable. And *we* are allowing this to happen. Every single one of us who falls victim to the dreadful process of house buying and selling, without appealing to government for change, and voting with our feet by adopting more appropriate systems such as HOMEOWNERSALES, is guilty.

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Now, a problem associated with telling a story as it unfolds, which is how this particular chronicle is being recounted, is that massive changes can occur which leave the reader feeling that the writer may be more than a little unbalanced. That conclusion is entirely at your disposal, although I would beg to differ, should you have made such a decision about me.

I had earlier suggested in an *off the cuff* remark to the estate agent, that as we would be living in close proximity to the people from whom we would be purchasing, if our offer was accepted, it would be good to meet and decide if we were compatible. You see, it is the top floor of a listed building in Branksome Park, Dorset that we aim to call our own. Well, the latest news is that such a meeting has been called. If the vendors like us, then we will become the new owners of what is currently their property. If not, then so what? If we are not compatible we would not want to live there anyway.

It is always a good idea to meet those with whom you are going to live in close proximity, anyway. Our meeting is more of an audition I grant you, but unbeknownst to the vendors, they too are under scrutiny.

Well, I am happy to tell you that we passed the audition and the apartment is ours, dependent on nothing else going wrong. It isn't only the purchasers of our property on whom we must keep an eye, but their purchasers too, and depending on the length of a chain ... well, things can get ugly through no fault of your own.

During the overall procedure, estate agents did not get back to me when they said they would, vendors were allowed to behave in a less than acceptable manner and the system is solely to blame. So are we for allowing it to continue. We must all take responsibility. Starting right now!

Here's to a rosy future, where house hunting, negotiating and moving are pleasurable acts; where estate agents are fair and up front about their variance of fees, when they admit if they don't know what they are talking about; where surveyors save us from catastrophe without reporting the stupidly obvious to save being sued by an increasingly Americanised public knowing their rights and seeking what truthfully is often not theirs! Where the silly idea that a survey must recoup its costs by dropping the agreed price of a proposed purchase no matter how unfair such a tactic might be.

Here's to ... WWW.HOMEOWNERSALES.CO.UK
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