

WORKING TOGETHER TO RAISE THE BAR:

HOME INSPECTORS DELIVERING EXCELLENCE & BUILDING TRUST

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In true collaboration, Mark Baxley and Chris Kjeldsen frequently reach across the aisle to make each other and the local home inspection industry better. As founders of two of the best multi-inspector companies in Colorado Springs, they are motivated to share what they have learned from their combined thirty years of experience. They take continuing education classes to stay current with the home inspection industry's best practices and technology, and they both teach as well. Chris teaches new inspectors in over thirty states, and both Mark and Chris teach continuing education for real estate agents, covering topics such as the Home Inspection Standards of Practice, inspection agreements, and a number of other topics to help REALTORS® better understand the industry and inspection process.

Neither Mark nor Chris can wrap their heads around the fact that the home inspection

industry is completely unregulated in Colorado, even though 32 other states have licensing requirements. The absence of industry standards means there are no requirements for training, exams, certifications, or continuing education. In addition, home inspection companies aren't required to carry general liability, errors and omissions or workers compensation insurance. Chris and Mark hope that Colorado will soon become a "licensing state" that requires all inspectors to receive advanced training, complete certification programs, enforce higher industry standards, participate in continuing education, and receive specialized training for equipment like thermal imaging cameras. Both have been involved with the Colorado Association of REALTORS®, trying to make this happen. With no licensing requirements in place, it is critical that real estate professionals know what to look for when referring home inspectors

to their clients as not all inspectors are created equal.

What to Look For When Choosing an Inspector

Mark and Chris shared that the first question they are often asked is, "How much does a home inspection cost?" Although the cost of the inspection is important, they assert that other questions should be asked first to find the best inspection company. For example, REALTORS® and their clients should ask if the inspectors are Certified Master Inspectors or Certified Property Inspectors through one of the professional organizations such as American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), or International Association of Certified Home Inspectors (InterNACHI). Also, they should ask if the inspectors adhere to the Standards of Practice established by those professional organizations, which clearly state what inspectors do (and don't do) during an inspection, and that the inspection company

can prove it with their inspection reports. Chris and Mark recommend seeking an inspection company that has longevity, as most fail within their first two years. They also encourage clients and real estate agents to choose a company that:

- Treats the home inspection industry like a profession rather than a hobby
- Runs background checks on new hires
- Encourages classroom and field training for their staff
- Participates in continuing education classes and
- Carries errors and omissions, general liability, and worker's compensation insurance.


Although Colorado doesn't require it, both companies conduct background checks and require their employees to pass exams (like the National Home Inspection Examination) and take continuing education classes.

Real estate agents and clients should research the

A Conversation with **Mark Baxley**, Brick and Mortar Home Inspections, Inc.,
and **Chris Kjeldsen**, Ground Floor Home Inspection, Inc.



home inspector's website and review sample reports to get a sense of what the client is buying. Further, they should ensure that the inspection reports provide detailed descriptions, photos, and videos that clearly and concisely state what the issues are without using overly complex language. The reports should create clarity, not confusion.

 Agents can remind clients that inspectors can inspect only those items that are readily observable and accessible. If they can't see it, they can't inspect it. Simply put, the professional home inspection is a visual, non-invasive inspection that reports on the home's condition at the time of the inspection - a "snapshot in time."

REALTORS® and their clients may also want to ask if the home inspection company uses advanced tools such as drones or thermal imaging cameras and if they are certified or adequately trained in using

those tools. For example, if drones are used, Chris and Mark stated that the drone operators must be FAA certified, and if the inspector uses thermal imaging cameras, the inspector should have received training on how to use the cameras appropriately and how to read and interpret the results. Mark and Chris said that many inspectors improperly use these advanced tools, which hurts their clients.

The final consideration when finding the best inspection company is the cost. Since Colorado is a non-licensing state, the old adage "you get what you pay for" is very true in the inspection industry. Instead of focusing solely on cost, Chris and Mark recommend considering value and quality of service. Those who have not taken the steps to get adequately trained and properly certified are usually the least expensive. In an unregulated industry, cheaper is almost always not better. REALTORS® should remind their clients that they are paying for experience and expertise, which helps them better understand what they are investing in so that they can make a knowledgeable investment.

What the REALTOR® Can Do to Prepare the Buyer for the Inspection
An important step real estate professionals can take to limit aggravations during the home inspection process is to prepare the



buyer for the inspection. This includes setting realistic expectations regarding what the inspectors will focus on: major concerns, functionality, and safety issues. The intent of the home inspection is to put the client in a better position to make an informed buying decision, not to identify every little detail or deficiency in the home. The client should understand that normal wear and tear is expected and will not be included in the inspection report. In addition, unless paid for as an ancillary service, mold and air quality testing are not part of a standard home inspection. Agents can remind clients that inspectors can inspect only those items that are readily

observable and accessible. If they can't see it, they can't inspect it. Simply put, the professional home inspection is a visual, non-invasive inspection that reports on the home's condition at the time of the inspection - a "snapshot in time."

Additionally, it is important that the client understands that home inspectors are "generalists," meaning they know enough to know who to call in for the major issues and will defer to those experts and licensed professionals. Finally, REALTORS® should encourage their clients to review the entire report, contact the inspection company if they have any questions about the

findings, and follow up on any recommendations.

Another critical step real estate professionals can take to prepare the buyer for the inspection is to remind them that it is not a code-compliance inspection. The overall goal of the inspection is to identify any major concerns and ensure the home's systems and components are functioning properly and safely. Because building codes change frequently, it is not reasonable or feasible to expect a seller to make a home built in 1962 comply with current building standards. Mark and Chris shared this example: If the house is older and full of two-pronged outlets, it may not comply with today's electrical codes but may still be safe.

What the REALTOR® Can Do to Prepare the Seller for the Inspection
Chris and Mark also want to remind REALTORS® to prepare the seller for the inspection. The national average time for a quality inspection is two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half hours. A quality inspector can shave some of that time off, but generally not much. Rarely will a quality inspection be done in less than two hours, and if this promise is made to the sellers, they may feel frustrated when they come home to find the inspector still there. They recommend that REALTORS® tell the seller it will take longer than expected to negate that frustration.

Addressing Issues After the Inspection
If questions or concerns arise, REALTORS® are

encouraged to remind their clients to follow the inspection agreement they have in place with the inspector and to have the client contact the inspector directly. The inspector works for the client and has an agreement with the client, not with the real estate agent. When anyone other than the inspector and client is involved, it can create unnecessary confusion and complications.

A Special Note on Meth Testing
Meth testing is prone to high error rates and significant liability and Colorado law requires any contractor that does meth testing to be a licensed industrial hygienist. As a result, most inspectors should not be offering meth testing as an ancillary service, unless they are a licensed industrial hygienist. Instead, Mark and Chris recommend referring that work to a vendor holding that credential.

Beware of Home Warranties or Guarantees
Some companies offer home warranties in conjunction with the home inspection. Generally, those warranties are provided by third-party companies that often find reasons for not honoring a warranty claim. Two of the more common reasons for denying a warranty claim can include the age of the appliance or system or the appliance or system being outside the scope of the general home inspection.

To combat this issue, Mark's company brought this service in-house, offering certain guarantees with every inspection at no additional cost to clients. For example, Brick and Mortar Home Inspections, Inc. offers a 100-day guarantee on mechanical equipment and all built-in appliances. Should a client experience an issue with an appliance within 100 days of the inspection, Brick and Mortar Home Inspections will pay to have a qualified contractor make the necessary repair, even if that appliance was functioning properly at the time of the inspection. Brick and Mortar offers this program because it aligns with one of their core values: "We believe we have a duty to help others." Mark states that Brick and Mortar's long-lasting relationships with an extensive list of trades professionals enable them to offer this service to their clients.

Leading with Passion and Care
In closing, Mark and Chris clearly show why they are leaders in the home inspection industry. Their respect for REALTORS®, clients, and each other is apparent and exemplary. Their passion for excellence is evident in how they operate their businesses and strive to be the best in the industry. Companies like these that do it the right way should be at the top of every real estate professional's referral list.

