



Crisis Management 101

What can we do to become better at crisis management? Let's look at five simple strategies:

1. **Step Toward the Crisis:** When faced with a problem, many agents take the ostrich approach to problem solving. They bury their heads in the sand and hope the crisis will pass. This is the worst possible way to deal with any problem. Any crisis left to its own devices will no doubt fester and become much worse with each hour that passes. Most attorneys will tell you, "Justice deferred is justice denied."

We should face the crisis head on by first listening to the client to identify the problem. From this point, we can begin to understand exactly what the issues are so that we can start to work on a possible resolution.

2. **Define and Clarify the Crisis:** Occasionally, issues get all jumbled up into one big kettle of discontent. To separate fact from fiction and to give your clients the best chance at moving towards a successful end result, we need to develop our investigative skills.

How can a person learn investigative skills? They simply learn to ask great questions. Many of our clients will feel a great sense of relief when they have been able to vent their feelings and express their concerns. Use this simple list below as a guide:

- Encourage – "Please tell me more ..."
 - Clarify – "When did that happen?"
 - Normalizing – "I've had other clients ..."
 - Empathizing – "I can appreciate that ..."
 - Soliciting – "I would like your ideas on that ..."
 - Validating – "I appreciate your willingness ..."
3. **Unemotionally Discuss the Issues:** This is easy to say and hard to do. People become emotional during a crisis; so it is easy, as real estate professionals to become swept up into the hurricane of emotion. Is that what we are paid to do? Absolutely not!



Do you hire a doctor to become emotional during surgery? Do you hire an attorney to get rattled during trial? The same is true of real estate professionals. We must remain calm and positive, a port in the storm; even when your own clients are upset. We must remain calm even when other immature agents (this is also a very negative statement) are emotional during a transaction. That's just part of being a real estate professional.

Occasionally people and problems get mixed up together. To separate the two, you may ask the person who is upset this question, "Listen, it sounds like you're upset. Are you upset at me or the situation?"

4. **Develop a Solution to the Crisis:** We want you to notice that we did not use the word answer. An answer often implies that the person with the problem ended up getting exactly what they wanted. We know from experience that this is rarely true. A professional crisis manager looks for ways to create solutions where both parties may have to give some ground to create an agreement they can live with.

How do you find a solution? One way is to simply ask the parties involved. Use this script, "What do you think the solution is? If that's not possible, is there anything else that would make you feel better about the situation?"

Another way to find a solution is to ask for input from others in your office. Often, we are surrounded by a brain trust of agents who may have experienced similar problems and who may be able to offer unique solutions that no one has thought of yet. In addition, we should ask the other side of the transaction for their input. They may be able to offer a different perspective on the challenge at hand.

5. **Take Action Now!** Once you have agreement to the solution, you must immediately take action. Often we don't necessarily have to create a perfect agreement as long as we are taking the steps to move everyone forward. Many of our clients will recognize that it may take time to solve a crisis. What they want to know is that steps are being taken to begin the process.

To give them a sense of control you may want to provide your clients with updates on exactly what you are doing and what your next step will be. By focusing on the next step, everyone can begin to think proactively and positively.

Make A Commitment: I will implement the five simple strategies for every person to deal more effectively with their next crisis.

Deadline: _____