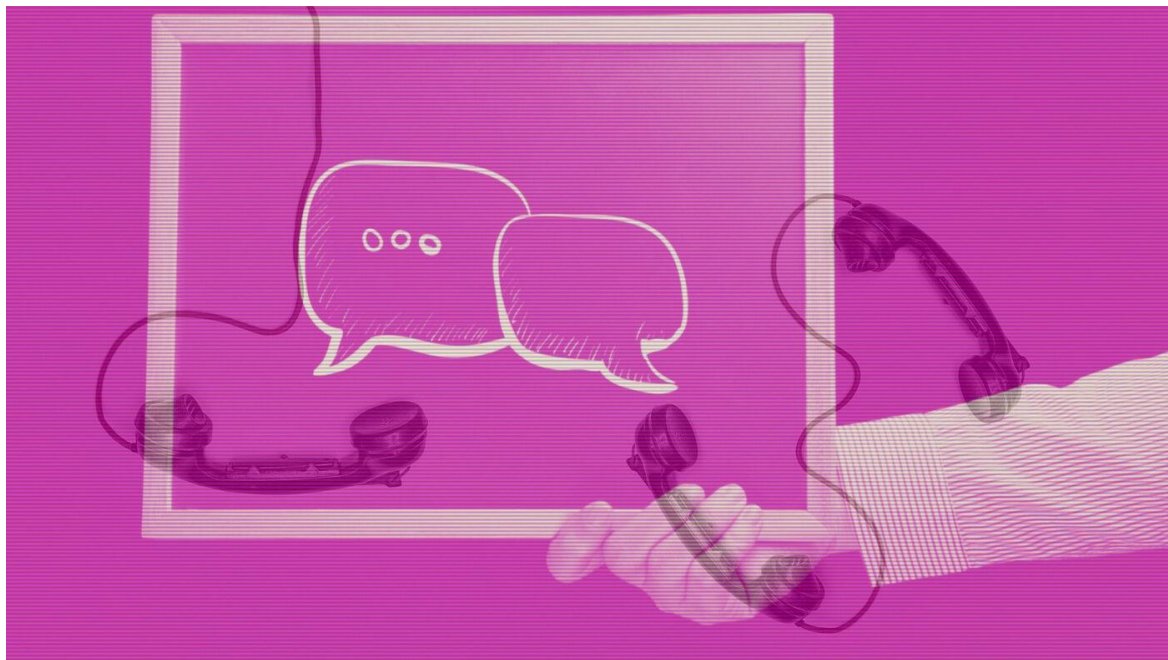


# Who said what? 5 communication obstacles that can derail a transaction

From misinformation to misunderstanding, so many communication errors can occur during a real estate transaction. That's why agents need to better understand how they happen and how to prevent them



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As most real estate agents know, there's always a host of **communication** challenges that crop up when showing, negotiating and moving through a transaction. No matter what side of the aisle you're on in working with a buyer, seller or both, a real estate transaction is rife with misinformation, miscommunication or the absence of information to begin with.

Why does this happen? Well, there's a variety of reasons — the experience and skill (or lack thereof) of agents involved, different communication styles, minimal attention to detail, and difficulty in obtaining and sharing important information.

Miscommunication could also happen because some agents might have different levels of focus or sense of urgency. So, let's dive deeper into each one of those things and discuss how to improve and prevent challenges in communication.

## **1. Varying experience and skill levels**

Agents walk into a transaction with varying levels of **experience and training** — be it just a year or 15 of being in the business. There could be an agent with just one year of experience who is very astute, absorbs everything like a sponge, is well-trained, asks the right questions, takes a proactive approach and seeks **help from mentors** and their manager when needed.

Conversely, you could have an agent with several years of experience who is lazy, **distracted** and exerts minimal effort. You could also have rookies whose lack of experience is obvious, but they attempt to cover up what they don't know. They might be afraid to ask questions or seek help, so they end up making things worse with lack of communication or skipping over critical pieces of information.

The best remedy for this? No matter which side you are working, never assume anything. Check, double-check and then reconfirm important milestones and pieces of information in the transaction over and over. It's your job to ensure everything is done right and handled in the best way possible.

For example, inexperienced agents working on their first listing may not fully realize that when a seller moves out in [time for closing](#), the house needs to be clean, empty and free of unwanted items. However, they probably should leave extra paint, tile and flooring items that match what's currently in the house. This is just case in the future owner needs to make touch-ups or repairs. A new agent who doesn't know better may just let a seller move out

The experienced buyer's agent might jump straight into crisis mode if they come across something unacceptable to them during the walk-through with the buyers. All to say, it's better to straighten out confusion about something early on into the transaction instead of having it blow up at the end.

## **2. Differing communication styles**

Some agents [communicate frequently](#) and share a lot of relevant and detailed information. Other agents don't and only respond to questions when asked. In a transaction, dealing with that kind of agent can be challenging and often leads to a communication breakdown. Now, I'm not talking about sharing information that's deemed confidential or irrelevant to the transaction (like, where the [sellers are moving](#) to or why they're selling the house).

In some cases, it feels like one agent is almost conducting an inquisition to get very basic questions answered about important milestones in the transaction (such as the status of the buyer's loan application, whether the appraisal has been ordered, etc.) often with little to no information being shared by the agent or the buyer's lender.

Conversely, some agents make sure that the lender is reaching out to both agents in the transaction to continually communicate important lender milestones at each step — from [loan application](#), appraisal and approval to when the clear-to-close has been obtained.

This is particularly relevant during the inspection or due-diligence period when almost always, more information is always needed as a result of a property inspection and other investigations.

Some listing agents embrace these requests and work with their sellers to proactively provide the information needed. Others, however, can become distant and difficult to obtain information from. Oftentimes, the seller is the reason the latter happens, but in those situations, the agent should relay that they at least communicated the requests to the seller, but that they haven't responded or provided any of the information that was asked for.

When there are differing communication styles, the agent who is the better communicator should take the lead. Being passive-aggressive with the less-communicative agent is not going to move the transaction forward. The more-communicative agent should explain the reason for the communication and the importance of the information being obtained.

If you're an agent who's less communicative and interactive by nature, it's important for you to understand that, while it may seem that the cross-selling agent is coming at you with umpteen things, the information they're seeking is likely necessary for ensuring a smooth transaction.

For example, working together to ensure the final walk-through goes well will help cut down the fire drill phone calls, back-and-forth texts and unnecessary, last-minute interference.

### **3. Minimal attention to details**

They say the devil is in the details, and in real estate, this has never been more true. Details absolutely matter, and can make or break the transaction. Agents who don't communicate details are often leaving out the most important pieces of information, which can derail a deal.

Examples include, "Oh, I forgot to mention — the seller couldn't sell their washer and dryer, so they're going to just end up leaving it." Or, "We didn't realize that the property was rented while the buyer is going to be closing on their vacation or second home." Or, "Actually, it turns out the sellers don't have an active termite bond in place. They checked and realized they let it lapse a year ago."

If a property is subject to a legal proceeding such as a bankruptcy, [divorce or probate](#), for example, it's critical that details are communicated to the selling agent in writing as to the terms and conditions of the sale in the form of an addendum. That way, there won't be any surprises.

Make sure to communicate with the selling agent as to what to expect, as well as any public notices that will be legally required to be published and that may disclose the buyers' names and current offer. This is critically important, as surprise is never a good thing in real estate.

The typical response from a non-detail-oriented agent is often, "Oh, I just assumed that was going to stay or go." Or, "I thought they said they had (a warranty, termite bond, etc.) in place, they told me the roof was only a couple of years old (when questioned where the documentation or permits are)."

We know what happens when agents assume things. It's just never good. Agents should never think that all is taken care of, no matter what side of the transaction they are working.

Instead, at the beginning of a transaction, make [a checklist of things](#) to check, double-check and then recheck again — from appliances, trash cans and recycling bins to any service plans or warranties that come with the home. Other details to consider: termite bonds, product manuals, instructions for how certain things work, like pool equipment, timers, irrigation systems and more.

In the rush of handling the transaction, it can be easy to forget about these things that are often left to sort through till the very end.

When it comes to who will be at the property and when, no detail should be omitted. All listing agents and sellers deserve the courtesy of knowing who will be at their home, for approximately how long and when.

The communication needs to be more than just, “the inspection is scheduled Monday at 10 a.m.” The selling agent needs to share the name of [the inspectors](#), inspection companies, contractors or anyone else who will be in attendance.

They need to know if only one or both buyers are going to be present. If the buyers’ parents and extended family are going to be attending or stopping by at some point, the listing agent and seller deserve to know that, too. [Due to COVID-19](#), in some states, you have to have a signed form by everyone entering the property in advance. They need to attest that they don’t have symptoms, are sick or have been exposed to anyone with the virus.

## **4. Varying levels of focus**

Agents often come into real estate as well as a transaction with varying levels of focus. The level of focus (or the lack of it) can affect the level of communication in a transaction.

Does it ever seem that you have to continually follow up with an agent multiple times to get [answers to questions](#) or needed information? When you do get a response, does it seem like some questions are answered and others are not? And when you try again to fill the missing pieces in the provided information (which is answered in multiple emails and a string of text messages), do you find yourself still lacking pivotal details? This definitely happens a lot.

Sometimes, agents receive the information in bits and pieces, and are left to sift through, decipher and assemble everything in a way that makes sense to the buyer or seller. Other times, in the middle of a transaction, out of the blue, they’ll get a request from the selling agent to extend the loan approval — with little to no explanation why. They’ll



expect you, as the agent, to have your seller sign it with no questions asked.

Some agents are laser-focused on their transactions every day of the week. They'll rarely miss an email or leave a text unanswered. Their communication is organized for immediate response and retrieval. **Other agents** ask to have the same information resent to them again and again and can get fuzzy on the details.

You never know what kind of agent you're going to be working with in a cross-sale. Unless you're working with an agent you've dealt with before, you're just never going to know what their level of commitment is going to be like.

If you've ever had a cross sale with a part-time agent (who you did not know was working part-time), you may have experienced what it's like to deal with late answers and only after-hours responses.

All to say, if you find yourself working with someone who doesn't seem to be on top of things, you may need to roll up your sleeves and take the lead. You might find yourself handling certain things that shouldn't really be your responsibility, but are critical to ensuring the **transaction closes on time**.

This might mean contacting the lender several times a week, offering to meet an appraiser, helping the agent with reliable service providers to tackle repairs or offering your handyman to simply haul away garbage and unwanted items.

As much as no one likes having to do someone else's job, in real estate, the lines are often blurred. If you leave things to chance and



assume they will get taken care of, you might set yourself up for a huge disaster later.

## 5. Sense of urgency

Most communication in real estate often has a sense of urgency about it. Even if it's simply to advise about something such as the appraisal being ordered, the other agent should promptly acknowledge the communication.

While there's definitely a difference between urgent and *important*, agents should always strive to respond and engage with [an email](#), [text message](#) or a call. No response may mean the email was not received, fell through the cracks or went straight to junk or spam. This is especially important when there's truly an urgent matter that needs attention — like a property that didn't appraise or an inspection that revealed some major issues.

If you're unable to answer the call at that specific moment, at least let the other person know when you'll be available to chat. Silence is like the kiss of death in real estate. No news often means potentially bad news is on the horizon, and things are about to unravel very quickly.

Conversely, you should know what issues deserve to be labeled as "urgent." Simply relaying information in an effort to let the other agent know the transaction is on track is not urgent. Not everything is an emergency. If you call another agent and they don't answer, the solution is not to keep calling until they do. Texting, for example, is a great way to relay what the nature of the call is about until you're able to connect properly.

The art of communication is a delicate dance between all parties involved in a transaction, but especially when it's agent to agent. What's said, how it's said and the information included (or missed) can affect the outcome of the transaction. Good or bad communication has the power to alter the sentiment of the buyer and seller, as well as leave a lasting impression on everyone involved for years to come.

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