

In My Opinion...

Dean Says:

“Do You Need to Make It Right?”

Charlene Kisker



Television has enormous power to move people's emotions and shape attitudes. It even has the ability to motivate people to take action to remedy the unfortunate performance of others. I suppose this derives from the fact that years of exposure to television have self-fulfilled the old adage: "A picture is worth a thousand words."

The Discovery Home cable television channel includes a Canadian-produced program entitled "Holmes on Homes." In this show, the host, contractor Mike Holmes, visits various homes where shoddy remodeling work or shoddy original construction has left the homeowner with a grave dilemma. Using his skills, plus a strong determination to "Make It Right," Mike fixes the problem. Often he has to totally demolish the previous work and start from scratch to create a workmanlike solution.

From relative humble beginnings, this show—now in its sixth season—has heightened the awareness of the viewers regarding code-compliant construction and launched Mike Holmes into big-time celebrity status throughout Canada, and

tion for doing quality work. In fact, he advertises that he builds "beyond code." Every interaction with him during the building process exceeded my expectations. He did a beautiful job with the fit and finish of my home. He set himself on a very rigorous construction schedule and he met that schedule perfectly. Every thing he promised, he delivered. The house has outstanding appearance, and outstanding value.

now in the U.S. This show offers lots of enjoyable moments. Seeing the right way to do something has a fascination all its own. Seeing shoddy work turned into beautiful and functional solutions tugs heartily on the viewer's emotions. We all want to see the bad guys conquered by the good guys.

What kind of workmanship would we discover if we looked at the work you do each day? Whether you work as an Authority Having Jurisdiction, a fire alarm system designer, a fire alarm system installer, a manufacturer of fire alarm equipment, what kind of work do you do? Do you do it right? If you find shoddy work, do you make it right?

It seems to me that a lot of grief would disappear if only people would make an effort to do the very best work they can. It starts by not trying to do something for which you have not received training and for which you have not had proper experience. Knowing your own limitations will go a long way to help you perform at an appropriate level of competency.

Once you have the training and experience to do a job, then you must determine to not cut corners. "Good enough" should become an enemy. "Good enough" simply isn't. Doing every job well brings great rewards over the long haul.

The house I live in could serve as an example. The general contractor who built my home has an excellent reputa-

tion for doing quality work. In fact, he advertises that he builds "beyond code." Every interaction with him during the building process exceeded my expectations. He did a beautiful job with the fit and finish of my home. He set himself on a very rigorous construction schedule and he met that schedule perfectly. Every thing he promised, he delivered. The house has outstanding appearance, and outstanding value.

The only problems: the roof leaked, the plumbing leaked, and the heating system still doesn't work right. Why? To meet his rigorous completion schedule, this most excellent contractor had to use subcontractors that he had not used before. Their workmanship did not match his expected and desired workmanship. Because he had other projects in the works at the same time, he did not supervise the subs like he would have liked.

Now, in fairness to him, he has done everything he can to make it right. I would still recommend him most highly to anyone. But, he learned a very valuable lesson from the experience of building my house. Never again will he use subcontractors that he has not thoroughly supervised in order to build a high level of trust.

As you go about your work, don't cut corners. Set up a process and stick to it. Determine to give each job your best effort, then deliver. Don't allow yourself to fall into the trap of "good enough."

And, when you find shoddy work, make it right. Whether you discover that the "last guy" didn't have a clue what he or she was doing, or you find subtle errors that an owner might not notice. Don't sweep them under the rug. Tell the owner what you have found and what you need to do to fix it. Better to bring light into the darkness than to end up in court when a fire occurs and someone dies.

We sometimes lose sight of the fact that our business has a seriousness about it. We deal with preserving lives and property. We help keep people and their possessions safe. We simply don't have

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Dean Says...

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the luxury of taking a cavalier attitude toward job performance.

So, do it right and make it right. You have to do so. You absolutely, positively have to do so.

Okay?

Wayne Says...

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- provide spare parts for defective items found during the test.

The operation matrix or narrative comprises one of the more important documents necessary to properly test the system. This document will help ensure that the contractor tests the specified operation of each interfaced system for compliance.

Of course, the fire inspector becomes the most important person present at the acceptance test. The owner may or may not attend the test. Or, he or she may have a third party consulting engineer present to ensure the proper completion of the test and that the fire alarm system truly meets the owner's fire protection goals.

The professional contractor understands the importance of properly commissioning a fire alarm system *before* calling the fire inspector. By planning ahead and coordinating the other contractors for a successful acceptance test, the alarm contractor also avoids the inevitable confrontations and disappointments when a failed test delays the issuance of the certificate of occupancy. A contractor should not allow his or her fear of the *Code* to substitute for his or her own conscience. Rather, the contractor should let his or her conscience establish a proper professional attitude.

For More Information...

- ...Seminar programs, web-based fire alarm training, NEMA Handbooks, and other materials:

Automatic Fire Alarm Association
 P.O. Box 951807
 Lake Mary, FL 32795-1807
 Phone: 407-322-6288
 FAX: 407-322-7488
 E-mail: fire-alarm@afaa.org
 www.afaa.org

- ...Fire protection codes, standards, and recommended practices, fire safety educational resources, and fire alarm and fire protection seminars:

National Fire Protection Association
 1 Batterymarch Park
 P.O. Box 9101
 Quincy, MA 02269-9101
 Phone: 617-770-3000
 www.nfpa.org

- ...Fire alarm certification program:

International Municipal Signal Association
 165 East Union Street
 P.O. Box 539
 Newark, NY 14513-0539
 Phone: 315-331-2182
 FAX: 315-331-8205
 E-mail: info@imsasafety.org
 www.imsasafety.org

- ...Fire alarm certification program:

National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies
 1420 King Street
 Alexandria, VA 22314-2794
 Phone: 888-476-4238
 www.nicet.org

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