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& Scott**

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Does **Energy Efficiency** Jeopardize IAQ?

By David Johnston, What's Working

In the race to reduce energy use and carbon in the residential housing arena, I'm concerned that we're playing down the importance of indoor air quality in homes. One of the reasons green building took off in the marketplace the way it did is that green treated the house as a system. According to market research, the second most important driver for homeowners to buy a green home is improved indoor air quality, especially when children are in the house.

Indoor air quality assaults come from various sources — organic sources like mold, animal dander and pollen, and inorganic sources like the synthetic chemicals that are in building products and furnishings. On the organic front, mold is the biggest culprit and can actually be caused by botched energy conservation retrofits that trap moisture in



the walls and other building cavities.

On the inorganic front, urea formaldehyde is the number-one issue, according to the California Air Resources Board. Formaldehyde is a known human carcinogen and a strong eye, nose, throat and lung irritant. Many products used inside homes — including particleboard, cabinets, countertops, stair treads and shelving — are glued together with urea formaldehyde that

can off-gas for years.

Other known carcinogens are standard fare in new construction and remodeling: synthetic rubber in carpet; vinyl chloride used to make PVC for flooring materials and shower curtains, and plasticizers that make vinyl pliable. The tighter we make our homes the more concentrated these chemicals become.

At a recent medical conference, it was reported that the average American carries up to 400 synthetic chemicals in their body at any given time. Several of these chemicals, like vinyl chloride, are also found in fish that have never seen land. Exposure to synthetic chemicals is becoming a global epidemic with unknown consequences.

For more information, visit: www.arb.ca.gov/newsrel/nr042707.htm.

Read more posts by David Johnston at www.HousingZone.com.

How To **Out-Behave** the Competition

By Charlie Scott, Woodland, O'Brien & Scott

Want an excellent book to read? Try Dov Seidman's "How: Why How We Do Anything Means Everything... in Business (and in Life)."

This book wonderfully describes how products and services can easily be copied by competitors. The only "thing" that the competition cannot copy is human behavior — how you do what you do. As such, Seidman theorizes that the only way to consistently outperform the competition is to out-behave the competition.

This out-behaving concept is something that many market-leading builders have long known, but have not

been able to articulate. Clearly, customer-centric behaviors beget higher customer satisfaction, a solid marketplace position and increased referral sales. Seidman's theories are 100-percent transferable to our industry. Case in point: Those builders who genuinely care about their customers truly out-behave those builders who do not.

Our proprietary customer enthusiasm ratings have proven that certain behaviors by sales, selections, mortgage, field supervisors and warranty teams are indeed the greatest source of customer satisfaction — and dissatisfaction — during the home buying

experience. It is absolutely vital for home builders to measure these behaviors to improve and ultimately out-behave the competition. The most unbiased and potent tool to measure behaviors is a third-party customer experience and feedback survey.

The part I enjoyed most about this book is that it doesn't teach us what to think to be customer-centric, but how to think.

Read more posts by Charlie Scott at www.HousingZone.com.

