â??STICKS AND STONESâ?•: CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

Description

Thereâ??s an old childhood saying, â??Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.â?• Any adult KNOWS thatâ??s not true. Often the words do a person more permanent damage than any physical injury, which brings me to my point:

WORDS MATTER. USE THEM PROPERLY.

Using terms properly (or to be more specific, making sure you donâ??t use words improperly) may help dial back some of the hostility in certain parts of the state with regard to the seller side of a residential transaction.

We all know thereâ??s no such thing as a â??**split settlement**.â?• Stop using the term as shorthand for the situation where the seller has someone either assisting or representing them who is a different person than the settlement agent. Find another term, either â??sellerâ??s assistantâ?• or â??sellerâ??s attorneyâ?• or invent your own nonsense term to apply.

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â??Representâ?• is another term to be avoided by people owning or working for a lay settlement company. Only attorneys licensed to practice in Virginia may *represent* a seller. Think of *represent* as a â??word of art.â?• It has special meaning within the law, and especially does not apply to lay settlement service providers. This term inflames some attorneys as they are well aware that non-attorneys and attorneys working for lay settlement providers are incapable of representing anyone in the settlement process. As an alternative, use â??assistâ?• instead.

â?•**Client**â?• is a third term that should be used carefully. By statute real estate agents have clients. Attorneys have clients. Title and settlement agents have customers, or perhaps consumers if they are getting a mortgage loan on their property.

How do you break yourself and your staff of bad habits, using careless wording? One suggestion is to use a â??swear jar.â?• Many families have members put in a quarter (dollar?) every time they swear, or in this case, misuse a word. Periodically, there is either an â??officeâ?• family party using the funds to bring in a special treat, or there is a drawing so all the funds go to one person, or the funds are donated to a charity. The goal is to stop using the words inappropriately by making yourself and all in your office aware every time a word is used incorrectly, even in casual conversation.

Good luck. Iâ??m sure all of us in the industry can quickly eliminate wrongful language if we focus on the issue. Let the community know what your office does to break these bad habits.



Kay Creasman
Kay M. Creasman, Esq., is Vice President and Virginia State Counsel for Old Republic Title. She is a past president of Virginia Land Title Association (2003-04) and former chair of the Real Property Section of the Virginia State Bar (2018-19). She currently sits on the Board of Governors for the Virginia Bar Association Real Estate Section. You may contact her at kcreasman@oldrepublictitle.com.

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vltaexaminer