

# Never Let' Em Know What You're Doing ...

BY Murray Fraser, OLS

From time to time a notion creeps like a recurring virus through our membership that we should be communicating the facts of our work to our clients and other surveyors. It's time we put an end to this disease.

What is happening to this profession? Has some misinformed outsider decided that we should acknowledge what our clients ordered, confirm that we have taken the information correctly, explain what is involved in the job, project a completion date and the price they will be expected to pay? .... Not on your life. Do not do these things. If the job is short and of a repetitious nature, you may be tempted to jot down the information you take from the lawyer or client to be sure you are both on the same wavelength. No! No! On a longer job where there are many things happening, the job conditions are changing or you have passed a logical point in the job to update your clients, the temptation is always there to let them know ... Oh, No. Keep your guard up, especially if something is happening that may change the quoted price. Some clients call you during the job to "touch base" or to ask for some extras or (heaven forbid) when they can expect the final plan. Never, never tell them straight out what you are doing. Usually you should try to avoid taking those calls but if they catch you unexpectedly, do not take notes while you are on the phone, do not keep records of those calls and do not send a note back to the client confirming what was said. They may even expect you to point out that what was said will change the scope, or timing and price of the job. Uh, uh. Wow, who do they think you are anyway?? An information centre?

Someone suggested that a good idea would be to send a preliminary copy of the results to the clients to let them comment before you finalize. Oh my, no. This would make your clients think they are part of the process. They may want to change something or, worse yet, to question something. They may even want to

order more work and start this whole communication thing over again. Just remember that surprise is the goal. Be tight-lipped.

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Finally when the job is complete and you're sending out the returns and the bill, I've heard that some surveyors even send a letter summing up what they were asked for and what they have done. These letters often include some of the problems they encountered, how they resolved them, what they couldn't resolve and a suggested course of action. They probably highlight any changes or additions made along the way. (You won't have to worry about that one if you have been paying attention) and maybe a thank you note for using your service. Some even include a detailed invoice pointing out where the money was spent. Boy, I just can't believe that one.

On some rare occasions, you may have to communicate with other surveyors. Sometimes you're up against a brick wall and you just can't figure out what those bars you tripped over might mean. Use caution. Don't ask for too much; don't let on what you are doing; don't ask if they know of other surveyors who have done work in the area. Especially do not canvass the other surveyors in the area so that everyone will know what you are doing.

If you are in an indexed area, do not check the index for other work nor should you input what you have done to the index so that others may be tempted to check the index.

Not communicating with other surveyors will lead to conflicts. I love this one. Do not phone them up to try to resolve the conflict. Even better, if they call you, don't try to explain what you have done. If they suggest you look over what they are doing or (the nerve) suggest that you might have a bar in the wrong place. Just get mad. Best of all, slam the phone down.

If you don't do all these things and don't do even more than you might think appropriate at the time (now you're cooking), this is very good. This is going to get you meeting new people ... the Complaints Committee, the Fees Mediation Committee, the Discipline Committee, maybe even the really nice people of the Courts. You will become well-known to clients and surveyors and you can be assured they won't communicate with you.

Oh yes, I forgot... if you get an inquiry from any one of those committees do not reply. They're just another one of these meddling misguided outsiders that want to know what you're doing.

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## EPILOGUE:

The thought just occurred to me.. what if we did communicate? What if we did let 'em know? What if they found out that we really do know what we're doing? What if they ordered more work? What if they paid their bills? What if we tried to cut our investigation costs by finding out what the other surveyors have done? What if we communicated so well that we didn't need the Complaints Committee, the Fees Mediation Committee, the Discipline Committee and even the Public Awareness Committee? Wow, what a concept. Oh well ... back to the drawing board.

