

# COMMUNICATION is Key

A primer for new relocation agents



BY ALBANO MAHILAJ

“You and I come by road or rail, but economists travel on infrastructure,” was one of the opening lines Margaret Thatcher used during a conference in 1985. Now, 35 years later, this quote is more relevant than ever and very inspirational to the work of right of way professionals.

I have always believed that as a relocation agent, our work is very important. At times, our work is incredibly complicated and without our full dedication, it would be difficult for any infrastructure project to be completed on time. In many instances, we wear several hats and have to be the bridge of communication between the acquiring agency and those being relocated (displacees).

## An Effective Relocation Agent

In order for a relocation process to be successful, the relocation agent must complete the following steps (for the purposes of this article, these steps have been summarized into three categories):



During the completion of these phases, the relocation agent has to keep track of all the facts as well as conversations they had with all parties. Before meeting with a displacee, an agent should have a scoping meeting with the acquiring agency to retrieve any information they have on the project and the affected occupants. Such meetings are very important, as there could be existing issues and/or relationships within the project residents or between the agency and the displacees.

The agent should have a good working relationship with the appraisers and ask them to clarify any questions or items that may have not been fully addressed during the valuation process. The agent should familiarize themselves with the local real estate market and building codes. Oftentimes, this is achieved by creating relationships with local officials and realtors. Attorneys are

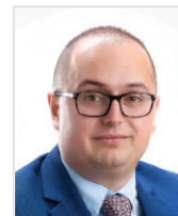
another group that agents may need to educate to ensure their clients receive their full benefits in a timely fashion. It is beneficial to view landowners' attorneys as a partner in this process and not an obstacle to overcome. After all, you both want your client to receive all of the benefits they are entitled to receive.

Agents need to constantly ask questions and probe deeper to make sure they are fully aware of their displacee's situation, wants and needs. Through this information gathering, an agent can best assess the situation and bring resources to bear in getting their displacees successfully relocated.

We were born with two ears and one mouth. When providing relocation assistance, it is always best to use them in that ratio. Listen twice as much as you speak and this will allow you to provide the targeted advisory services and explanation of benefits that best suit the needs of your displacees.

## In Summary

Throughout a relocation process there is one common denominator: **communication**. As relocation agents, we are responsible for creating relationships and maintaining them throughout the complicated relocation process. Building relationships and strong communication will clear a project faster and restore economic vitality and stability to your displacees and the project corridor as a whole. 🚀



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