

Overcoming Homeowner Price Pushback

Showing Scope of Work Differences and the Value Behind Attic Ventilation Is Key

By Paul Scelsi



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It is the homeowner's right to collect and compare multiple estimates from residential roofing contractors for a new roof. It is also the smart thing to do. But it is unwise and unfair to compare the bottom-line prices without taking the time to understand any scope of work differences between estimates. If one estimate includes fixes

to an improper attic ventilation system and the others do not, the comparison between estimates is no longer apples to apples. This is the frustrating world quality-conscious roofing contractors live in.

One of the hot topics during the Q & A segment of Air Vent's best practices in residential attic ventilation seminars focuses on unreasonable homeowners concentrating exclusively on price. Little regard is given to the details of the project, which, for reputable roofing contractors, includes balanced attic ventilation consisting of intake vents and exhaust vents installed in the correct location and in the correct quantity on the roof. Below are some great tips from an Air Vent seminar attendee, who knows first-hand how time spent discussing attic ventilation can get the residential roofing contract.

Jeff Heitzenrater, President of Operations, Triple Peaks Roofing and Construction, Olmstead Falls, OH, gets ahead of this pain point by scheduling a dedicated block of time with the decision makers at the house as part of his estimating process.

"It is very frustrating when you meet with the homeowner who hasn't taken the time to look over the scope that you're trying to show them," says Heitzenrater. "What we've learned to do in our company is to make sure you have a block of time set aside with both homeowners so you can do a proper attic inspection, you can go on

the roof and inspect it, you can look at the soffits on the outside of the house, and again, going into the attic to make sure you can properly prepare an estimate. But if they do not give you that time, they're always going to revert to just the price."

Heitzenrater commented any good contractor who understands the importance of proper attic ventilation is always going to include it in the estimate for the new roof. That contractor will always be several thousand dollars higher than the roofers who are not doing that, he says. That price difference might be a red flag to the homeowner.

Block out Time up Front

"You have to get a block of time with the homeowner to get them to understand the price difference. When you cannot get that block of time in person, email them or send them to links to videos and testimonials from other homeowners who have had bad attic ventilation and had to buy a roof again because it only lasted eight years instead of the 30 or 50 it was supposed to last. You have to do things to try to overcome those price objections. But ultimately, if you don't show the homeowner the value they will always revert back to the price."

How much time with the homeowners should roofing contractor plan for?

"We try to block out no less than one hour, but I try to get their attention for two hours. I tell the homeowner, 'This is a big purchase. Allow me to be thorough so I can give you what your roof needs,'" says Heitzenrater. "So, I aim for this time frame with their undivided attention. If you can get them to agree to the time block, you can show them the value."

Once the homeowner understands the value of proper attic ventilation, the cost to achieve that is more understandable.

"The biggest thing I think roofing contractors should be showing the homeowner is the shingle manufacturers' limited warranty," says Heitzenrater. "The warranty specifically mentions that proper attic ventilation must be part of the roof or it starts to reduce the warranty. Explain this to the homeowners."

Don't Sell, Help Them Buy

To avoid the homeowner looking at the roofing estimate as simply a price point, Heitzenrater recommends building the value of the project into the presentation shared with the homeowner. But don't try to sell to the homeowner, he cautions. "Instead, you want to help them 'buy' the best purchase for their home," he says.

Heitzenrater suggests building into your presentation value-driven content specific to proper attic ventilation:

- Explain what can go wrong with the roof and attic if it's not properly vented.
- Take photos in the field with your phone anytime you have examples of past problems from other projects.
- Make a short video with your phone and have it handy to show a homeowner. Watch their reaction when they learn, "Wow. This roof was only eight years old and now it needs to be replaced because that homeowner did not want to spend the extra few thousand dollars for proper attic ventilation." Again, Heitzenrater is convinced, "Show the value to these homeowners and they'll generally be happy to buy from you," he says.

"What I have seen during my 30 years in this industry, roofing contractors go into the house and bark at the homeowner: 'This is what you need. You need a ridge vent. You need The Edge Vent. You need the Bernoulli Effect,'" Heitzenrater says. "Instead, sit down and have a sales presentation that you have planned and rehearsed and have fine-tuned. Otherwise, the homeowner will look at you with deer in the headlight eyes."

Walk Away

Helping the homeowner understand the value will not always work. That's when Heitzenrater says you must be willing to walk away. "For the homeowners who are still stubborn and don't care about anything but the bottom line (maybe their house is on the market and they just want to sell it, for example), there's not much you can do but be a good contractor and walk away from that project," Heitzenrater says. "That is not a project you want your name on."

Heitzenrater estimates over the years, he has walked away from one out of every twenty potential roofing projects. "It's a homeowner who will not give me the time of day. So now we have questions ready before even setting up the estimate to make sure the block of time is secured with the key decision makers in the house. If they will not give me the one to two hours, how can I ever build the value for them?" he asks.

He urges roofing contractors to make sure both decision makers from the household are present. "It makes it much easier to build the value you're explaining. With only one decision maker, the process to build value is very difficult," he says.

What if the key decision makers cannot give the roofing contractors two hours of time?

"That's OK Mr. and Mrs. Homeowner. I really need at least one hour. But I may be at your house for two hours. One hour is to inspect the attic, the roof and the perimeter, and one hour is with you," Heitzenrater role plays. And if they can't give the roofing contractor one hour? "Well, Mr. and Mrs. Homeowner, at least provide access to the attic. This allows for an inspection so my company can give you a proper estimate. Otherwise, I can't give you a thorough estimate because I do not know if your attic is vented properly and if your new roof will last and be under the full warranty coverage."

Keep the Door Open


Heitzenrater does not give up if the homeowner has declined his company's estimate after the block of time together reviewing the value. In fact, he keeps in touch.

"For anyone we've spent the one hour or two hours with but don't award the project, we continue to contact them," he says. "We send a few emails with links to videos explaining the importance of attic ventilation and the value of our estimate. We do not stop until an absolute 'NO' is received. Our software automatically sends emails to keep the dialogue open."

An open dialogue can reopen the door.

"Just the other day a homeowner called us back. Our estimate 9 months ago was \$2,500 higher than the other competitors' estimates," Heitzenrater says. "He now wants to sign with our company after learning from our ongoing emails that it would require another \$2,500 to fix the attic ventilation."

Heitzenrater is aware of the challenge facing roofing contractors "It's hard for a contractor to show the value to homeowners because so many contractors are

skipping proper attic ventilation in their estimate," he says. "It's up to the good contractors to never give up, continue to educate homeowners that this is absolutely needed for the health of your home, health of your family." 

Paul Scelsi is marketing communications manager at Air Vent Inc. and leader of its Attic Ventilation: Ask the Expert™ in-person seminars (airvent.com). He hosts the podcast, "Airing it out with Air Vent," and is the chairman the Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association Ventilation Task Force. He is the author of the book, Grab and Hold Their Attention: Creating and Delivering Presentations that Move Your Audience to Action and has been a speaker at CRCA's Trade Show & Seminars. For more information, contact pscelsi@gibraltar1.com.