

2-10 HOME BUYERS WARRANTY

With a variety of exceptional product lines and a company of going the extra mile for their customers, this 26-year warranty company has earned the loyalty of the real estate

By Lissa Poirot



The Georgia team (from L to R): Sue Ellen Burchfield, Louri Kearns, Mara Palde, Richard Stiglbauer, Carol Bolka, Jim Burchfield, and Carol Smith. (Not Anne Murry, and Rhonda Pollard.)

WARRANTY®

...y-wide attitude
...-old home
...tate community.



John Clemmer Photography

You've invested months earning the trust of your prospective homeowners. Lunches and weekends have been spent getting to know their tastes and desires, finding them a number of possible homes until – finally – they fell in love with one, made an offer that was accepted and closed the deal. You hoped they enjoyed working with you enough to spread the word about your expert-yet-caaring services. Later you get that panicked phone call – the homeowner's air conditioning system is on the fritz, and it's 95 degrees in the shade. They are hot, angry and demand that you do something about it.

Luckily, you already have! You had convinced the homeowner to buy Home Buyers Resale Warranty coverage for just such an occasion, and the entire HVAC system is covered. They are relieved, and you haven't lost referrals.

Long after a home's construction, inspection and closing, home warranty companies remain a constant in the lives of homeowners. And that gives peace of mind to both homeowners and their real estate agents. "When you buy a home it can look good when it's inspected. That doesn't mean that two months later the air conditioning system won't break or that six months down the road the roof doesn't start leaking," says Blake Allen, Vice President of Sales of Home Buyers Resale Warranty Corporation. "We're the ones homeowners call on when things break down, and we take that responsibility very seriously."

Peace of mind is certainly a benefit to buyers, especially when statistics show homes typically have one to two breakdowns in covered systems or appliances in the first year. And buyer peace of mind equates to more business for their agents. When buyers become sellers, home warranties continue to offer outstanding benefits. The latest survey shows homes marketed with a home warranty sold for a 2.2 percent higher price, 15 percent faster and were 29 percent more likely to sell.

Home warranty companies abound, but only a few deliver multi-line products with fast and efficient customer service that both Realtors® and homeowners can trust. 2-10 Home Buyers Warranty is one such company, and its considerable growth over the last few years is a testament to its high level of trust and customer satisfaction.

"We continue to grow at a tremendous rate," says Richard Stiglbauer, southeast regional manager for the company. "While we have more than doubled in size nationwide, growth in the southeast has been especially strong."

To accommodate this growth, HBW has continued to improve their internal structure to better serve their clients.

For example, says Stiglbauer, "Our approach to building our contractor network has taken a dramatic turn. Rather than employing an abundance of contractors, we are zeroing in on bigger and better contractors who can handle our business. Because of this, real estate agents have more confidence in promoting this benefit to their customers," he explains.

Nationwide, the warranty company covers over a million new and pre-owned homes, operating from offices in Georgia, Texas, Colorado, California and New York. More than 10,000 real estate offices provide

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HBW's warranty, and 14,000 builders across the nation protect their assets with the program. This magnitude of business is the reason they have experienced a 25-percent growth in staff over the last three years, as well as expanding their call centers, who work with clients 24 hours-a-day, 365 days a year.

"At our company, everyone from the CEO down strives to do the right thing," says Stiglbauer. "If for any reason something gets off track, at 2-10, if we owe it we're going to pay for it."

He's especially proud of his southeast sales team – 17 in all – who go above and beyond the call of duty. "Although I'm sure they wouldn't want me to advertise this fact, most of the account executives in the southeast take calls on weekends, evenings and even during vacations. They work as a liaison with contractors, agents and homeowners and our call centers to expediently take care of any situation. Our reps are very hands on."

"I was at another company before I came here, and 2-10 by far exceeds other companies in integrity and ethics," says Carol Bolka, an account executive in the Atlanta area. Bolka, who has worked with the real estate community for years, understands precisely what agents look for in a warranty company. "They stand behind their products and are a great company to be a part of!" she explains of her decision to join the company.

"Our warranties include unlimited square footage," says Vice President of National Accounts and Alliances Sue Ellen Burchfeld. "Many warranty companies will ask real estate agents to call for a



Vice President of National Accounts & Alliances Sue Ellen Burchfield and Southeast Regional Sales Manager Richard Stiglbauer work closely together to ensure that every member of their team lives the company mission. "We're extremely proud of the southeast team's professionalism, dedication and focus," says Burchfield. Adds Stiglbauer, "they're not only strong salespeople, they truly care about all of their customers. They're simply awesome!"

quote when square footage exceeds a certain number. If an agent is estimating square footage to give the homeowner a ballpark, the agent may have to contact the warranty company a couple of times to obtain an accurate quote, which may exceed the original quote by hundreds of dollars. Our unlimited coverage provides a savings to homeowners and makes a proposal easier and safer for the agent."

Services like unlimited square footage, covering multiple systems, and including roof leak repair coverage without additional costs means ease of use for customers. It is also an example of the company's commitment to homeowners. In fact, this commitment is evident in its recent decision to accept all homeowner claims following the government-mandated 13-SEER efficiency change, which became effective in January 2006. This change means all newly manufactured air conditioning equipment must be more environmentally friendly. While industry insiders understand the change, many homeowners don't and may not realize their systems are not 13-SEER, which means if they break down, it isn't as simple as replacing parts – they may need to purchase new systems. Many home warranties won't cover this expense for policies dated before the change.

"We decided to handle this in future contracts, with new language that included 13-SEER coverage" explains Burchfield. "We also made a decision that we would handle 13-SEER for all current warranty holders, period. When it requires 13-SEER, we're going to deliver," she adds.

"We've been in business for over 25 years," explains Allen. "The potential value of claims we pay exceeds the revenue we receive. However, we are the largest home warranty company and get preferential pricing and treatment from our contractors so that what we provide in retail value to homeowners far exceeds what they spend."

In an effort to provide the real estate community with many forms of protection, 2-10 has formed an affiliation with Moisture Free Warranty. The Moisture Free Warranty program protects against moisture intrusion and preserves the value of stucco homes nationwide.

Homebuilders can also benefit from 2-10's professional coverage, such as the ten-year structural warranty, in addition to insurance programs available that cover general liability and provides builder's risk protection. Add those to the real estate brokers' Errors and Omissions coverage and one can see that 2-10 provides important commodities in an increasingly litigious society. Adds Bolka, "Over 60 percent of claims made to E&O insurers involve items typically covered by a home warranty."

Value-added service with all the benefits of more costly warranties and liability programs is what makes 2-10 Home Buyers Warranty a leader in the industry. While the company continues to grow in the southeast, as well as nationwide, it prides itself on customer satisfaction and promises to always offer impeccable service and products to make their customers happy. As Bolka likes to say, "At 2-10, we've got you covered."

Lissa Poirot is Atlanta-based freelance writer whose work has appeared in *Arthritis Today*, *Modern Bride*, *Pregnancy*, *travelgirl*, and *Points North*. She can be contacted at lissapoirot@yahoo.com.



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