

AHIT success stories: **Dotty Dosé of Echo Home Inspection**



Don't try to ask Dotty Dosé about being a woman in a male-dominated industry. Even after 27 years as the president/founder of Echo Home Inspection in suburban Chicago, she's too busy looking forward to worry about such mundane topics.

Truth be told, the housing industry is the only career she has known for the past 47 years.

In the late 1960s, the agent who sold Dosé and her husband their house when they moved from Chicago to the suburbs said she would make a great Realtor, so she took him up on the offer. Dosé worked as a real estate agent until the early 1980s when interest rates reached 18%.

That's when she moved to the builder/contractor side of the business, using her home as a model. She enjoyed that work, but when the owner of the company died and his children took over, things changed, and Dosé was ready to move on.

A neighbor approached her and said he liked the way she did business and wondered whether she would like to join him doing appraisals or home inspections. Not wanting to work for someone else, Dosé decided home inspections was the way to go.

Shortly after, her new business partner moved away, and Dosé's husband was injured on the job, leaving him on disability. Suddenly, this home inspection company she had started in 1989 as a way to make a little extra money would have to become much more.

"I had to take this job and make it something that would keep a roof over our heads," Dosé said.

That's when her years of experience and contacts in the industry really kicked in.

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Dosé also has leaned heavily on marketing over the years. Her company became famous for the buckets of Dosé's homemade cookies she would bring around to Realtors and others (although nowadays, she admits the cookies they give out are store-bought, except for the occasional batch she makes for her longtime friends in the business).

These days the marketing is more sophisticated – and expensive – but Dosé said the extra spending on that end has paid off handsomely. She also proudly points to Echo's 100-day warranty on inspections and the recall check her company offers on any kind of appliance as reasons for Echo's success.

Echo also does things differently than most home inspection companies by using two inspectors on every job.

"That's pretty uncommon," Dosé said of her crew of six, two-person licensed inspection teams. "That's something we started years and years ago."

"My guys make a little bit less, but they can do more inspections. It's the time factor. That's the best feature of that. And I think we're more thorough."



Because Dosé puts such a premium on not wasting customers' time, she requires her inspectors to be on the job 30 minutes before each scheduled appointment.

"We call it Echo time," she said. "That way, they're just about done with the outside when the Realtor gets there with the client. We'll take them around the outside and show them what, if there are any, concerns (they might have). ... Then we'll go in, and you're looking at an hour and a half instead of four. Especially with a 4:30 appointment, you don't want to be there four hours."

Dosé also promotes a family atmosphere, including allowing her inspectors to take one weekday off each week. "They know those days they can take a doctor's appointment or whatever," Dosé said, adding she's never had an inspector leave her company except for retirement.

That respect for others also includes Echo's customers. When someone leaves a phone message, you can bet the call will be returned promptly, no matter when that call comes in.

"We answer the phone 24/7," she said. "If you call me and get my message, I say I'll call you back within 15 minutes, and I do."

Dosé is dumbfounded by companies that don't return calls, but periodically Echo will call its competition to see what kind of responses they give, and it's not uncommon, she said, to not get a call back.

Over the years, Dosé also has learned she can't do it all. That's why she has two full-time employees in the office, as well as a full-time marketing person. Although not a licensed home inspector, Dotty is an AHIT grad who uses her considerable people skills outside the office, which helps keep Echo front of mind.

Oh, and one more thing not to try to ask Dosé about. Retirement.

She's having too much fun.

"I just love it," she said. "I do a lot of the social things now. I'm not too full time."

But she's not too old to call it a career, either.

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