

The 90 Things You Cannot Afford To Neglect When Selling Your Home

THE BEST WAY TO SELL YOUR HOME IS TO SELL IT FAST!

When your house isn't in the best condition, it sits on the market for far too long and becomes stale. That's when people begin to wonder what's wrong with it...

You only have one defense against one stagnant showing after the next. You need to be absolutely certain your house is in the best condition possible. Marketing has everything to do with presentation. When you present a poor and flawed product, its negative aspects stand out and affect the entire experience.

When you put your home on the market, it needs to be immaculate. It needs to have all of the positive aspects that attract buyers. The market is full of people who spend every weekend looking at new homes. They have seen a lot, and the more they see, the more your home needs to stand out from the crowd. These days, it simply isn't enough to just take care of basic repairs and cleaning. Your home needs to be presented in a light that gets buyers to imagine all the possibilities. You need to make them dream.

TAKE A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

You were once a buyer, and something about your home attracted you to it. Remember what that was and use it as a major selling point. Try to find ways to show off the things you love the most about your home. If you're having a hard time remembering what you love about your home, simply walk through each room and take note of one positive feature. And don't keep everything to yourself. Ask your spouse and your kids what they love about the house. If you cover all the bases of what might appeal to potential buyers, no matter what age or sex, you are much more likely to generate interest in your home.

WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN

Remember, if there is one flaw in the way your home is presented, it will dramatically decrease your chances of selling it. You need to be as thorough as possible. Go through your house several times and take note of anything that looks old, damaged, or needs to be repaired. It's best if you involve your family to assist. More pairs of eyes will only aide in the process.

GET IN THE BUYER'S MINDSET

Buyer's don't take chances. You remember what it was like to purchase your first home. Try as hard as you can to hop right back into that mindset. Start at your front door and imagine you are looking at your house for the first time. What stands out? How does it make you feel? If you were looking for a place to settle down, would you want it to be this house? Remember that if you don't feel like your home is the ideal place to live, your buyers won't either. Present every room in a positive light, and your home will sell fast.

TAKE NO CHANCES

I'll say it again. The best way to sell your house is to sell it fast. It won't sell nearly as fast if it still needs repairs. The longer your house is on the market, the worse its perception becomes, and as its perception worsens, it stays on the market even longer. You probably remember this when you purchased your home. You looked at a few other places and wondered what must be wrong with them if they've been on the market for so long. I like to call this the "death spiral." It's a terrible cycle to get stuck in, and you need to do everything you can to avoid it.

You have no excuses. Take care of every little repair and do whatever is in your power to make your home desirable on the first day you show it, not the last. Your home must be clean, neutral, and spacious. Every room needs to be "staged," with lighting and arrangements that show off its features. If you miss any of these steps, you risk throwing your home into the death spiral. And once it's deep down in that black hole, you might lose any chance of selling it for a decent price.

REPAIR EVERYTHING!

Always repair everything that needs to be repaired. When prospective buyers see something that needs to be taken care of, they often become skeptical of the entire house. Don't give them a chance to doubt a thing. Go through your house and check for peeling paint and wallpaper. Even if it is small, the small things add up to create the perception of neglect. Nothing is more of a deterrent to potential buyers.

If a repair is too large for you to handle right away, and you need to be out of your house by a specific date, remember to be as transparent with your prospective buyers as possible. Set aside some money for your buyers so they can pay for the repairs themselves. If there is any little bit of relevant information about the repair, tell them. There's no sense in omitting anything here. You will be found out, and it will have a negative effect.

DO NOT SETTLE FOR ANYTHING LESS THAN SPARKLING!

This is obvious. You would never purchase a dirty car or a dirty new jacket. Get everything as clean as possible, and try to make your house look brand new. Anything that isn't in pristine condition will be a huge deterrent to potential buyers.

Make all of your woodwork and cabinetry shine. This is the most important in the kitchen, which is a huge selling point for most buyers.

Get all of your carpets and rugs professionally steam cleaned. If pets have damaged your carpet, you may need to replace it.

Go through all of your light fixtures and clean them. Nobody wants to see the dead bugs that have accumulated there throughout the years.

Thoroughly clean all of your windows. It isn't enough to clean them on the inside. Get out the ladder and clean them on the outside as well.

APPEAL TO AS MANY BUYERS AS POSSIBLE

What you like doesn't matter. The only important thing is what your buyers will like. That's why you will want to select neutral tones for your carpeting and paint. Sure, there might be someone out there who appreciates your tastes, but you don't want to take the chance of having your home sit on the market and enter the death spiral. Appeal to as many buyers as you can, and that won't happen.

Think about this too. How many of the people moving into your home will be able to use their own furniture without having to make too many modifications to the walls and carpeting? These are the kinds of things people think about when they are buying. Extra unnecessary labor will deter many people from wanting your home.

CREATE MORE SPACE

Even though we all eventually clutter up our homes with our possessions. Part of the dream of owning a new home is getting more space. In fact, it's often one way people rationalize an emotional decision. When you create the illusion of having more space, you're allowing their rationalizing mind to do its work.

Rent a storage locker for the entire time you show your house. Any unnecessary items like collectibles and other things like large furniture should go in here. Only keep items that add a little bit of personality to your home.

Move your furniture around to create more space. In some cases, you may have to remove furniture from a room in order to open it up a little more.

Place your off-season clothing in storage and clear out your closets as much as possible. People like to feel like they're going to have a lot of space in the closets for their clothing. Never leave anything on the floor.

The more light you have in your home, the more spacious it will seem. People can't see past dark areas, so open up your drapes and place lighting in where there is none. As a rule of thumb, nothing in your house should ever be dark.

MAKE YOUR BUYERS FEEL COMFORTABLE AND AT HOME

Smells are very important to your buyer. Your house should smell clean and inviting. Your first step is to remove every offensive odor. Go through each room and take a mental inventory of what you smell.

It's okay to try and cover up some smells, but most of them won't go away with a few simple products. You have to remove the source.

Pet urine is especially heinous, and there is only way to remove it. You have to go in and replace the carpet where the accident happened. Although it might seem like an expensive task, it is worth every penny.

Think about steam cleaning your carpet and dry cleaning your drapes to remove other offensive odors that have built up over the years.

Unwashed clothing can easily create a distracting mildewy smell. Launder your clothing regularly, and never allow it accumulate in hampers on in your closets.

Set the stage with positive smells that people associate with good times. Think about baking chocolate chip cookies in the oven or adding fresh flowers. Smells tell your buyers what they can do with their home. Give them their dream.

OPEN THEIR MINDS TO THE POSSIBILITIES

Your buyers want to see what they can do with your home. Accessories, lighting, and color can make all the difference. No detail is too small to consider. When setting the stage in a room, do your homework. Attend a few professionally run open houses and jot down some ideas.

Open books on coffee tables, fresh logs for the fire, and baskets of fruit in the kitchen all set the stage for a homey environment. Use them where appropriate.

Do everything you can to allow more light into your rooms. If you have heavy curtains, consider replacing them with something more transparent like white veneer blinds. Clean all of your windows, and add lamps or other lighting to dark corners of your

house. Double check all light fixtures, and make sure they are clean.

Give your buyers an idea of what it will be like to live in your house through all four seasons. Find pictures in your photo album from every season and place them where they will be clearly visible to buyers. This will allow them to open their minds and think of even more possibilities.

If there's something you can't change, don't say anything about it. Your buyer will take note of it anyway. Be honest and allow the buyer to make the decision on her own.

CREATING FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The outside of your home is your buyer's first impression. If it isn't immaculate and attractive, it will give the buyer negative expectations for the rest of the house. The exterior is the most important part of feature of your home, and you need to do a spectacular job presenting it.

You can start with the front door. Is it clean? Has it been painted recently? Are there any seasonal decorations present that will invite people into your home? As a rule of thumb, make sure all doors open smoothly. Your prospective buyers will notice little annoying things like that. Get them fixed.

Always set the stage with colorful flowers and plants. Don't settle for a stale entryway or porch.

Sometimes a seasonal wreath, pumpkin, or flower pot can spruce up your entryway. Try to use plants with strong and earthy aromas like pine.

Go ahead and buy a doormat that says "Welcome Home." It's a subtle psychological suggestion that tells your buyers they need not look any further.

Window and screens should be completely in tact and hole free. Don't let your buyer think of things that need to be replaced. The imaginary expenses add up too quickly.

Check your locks to make sure they open smoothly and work properly. You want to remove any potential annoyances. Getting stuck on a lock is hardly any fun, and your

buyers will remember it.

Have a look over your roof, and clear out your gutter. Spot loose shingles and get them replaced. You might not think people see it, but they do.

I'll say it again. Wash the outside of every window and replace any broken ones. Shattered glass is a huge turn off.

GIVE YOUR BUYER A LUSH GREEN YARD

Your yard should be as neat and well kept as possible. Rake, mow, and edge. Don't leave any debris lying around.

Keep your shrubs under control. Shape them in a pleasing way that accentuates your home.

Add some seasonal flowers to your front walkway. Use some old iron buckets or a child's wagon, and fill them with impatiens, nasturiums, or alyssum. Most of these varieties are easy to maintain and require no more than a few waterings.

Don't forget to set the scene. Take a section of your backyard and use it to set up some tables and a grill. It's okay to set the table with glasses and plates, even though you won't be there. The more realistic it is, the more people will be swept away by what they can do.

BATHROOMS SELL HOMES

Add a few aromatic and decorative items. Consider adding some flowers and scented soap. Pretend for a moment that some very important people will be staying in your home and using the bathroom.

If you have a dominant bathroom color, consider toning it down a bit. You want to have mass market appeal. On the other hand, if your bathroom is too white or neutral, add a few colored towels to spice it up a bit.

THE GARAGE

Increase the space in your garage by organizing everything. Remove unnecessary tools or toys, and put them into storage.

Remove all cars from the garage before each showing. A garage without cars always looks bigger.

Garages tend to be one of the most poorly lit areas of any home. Add more lighting so it appears more spacious.

HOW TO HANDLE SHOWINGS

Always be willing to show your home whenever the need arises. It might be on short notice, and you might have to go out for pizza that night, but the effort is well worth it.

Get your kids involved and help create an emergency house showing plan. That way, when an unexpected showing happens, everyone will know what to do.

As part of your emergency plan, systematically go through your house and turn on the lights. Play around with your lighting options and find what is most pleasing.

Keep your home at a comfortable temperature. If it's summertime, consider opening a few windows to let a nice breeze in. This also combats stale air.

Turn off all T.V.s, radios, and computers. Replace the white noise with soothing background music.

You'll also want to prepare some important and relevant information for your buyers. Get a book together including the ages of your neighbors' children, distance to the grocery store, and other handy things to know. Leave this in the kitchen.

Get your yearly and monthly utilities expenses together and present them in a booklet. Also include information about cable, electric, garbage disposal, and any warranty information on the appliances you are selling with the house.

Take your pets and your children with you or send them away to a friend's house. Never leave your pets at home. They are huge distraction to buyers.

Relax when you present the house, and don't go through extra lengths to talk about its features. You've worked very hard to prepare your home. Allow it to sell itself.

A FINAL NOTE

I never said it was easy. Selling your home will take weeks of hard work. But if you have taken care of everything on this list, you will be in good shape to sell your home fast!