THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SELLING A HOME

How to Put Your Home on the Market and Attract Buyers

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SO YOU’RE INTERESTED IN SELLING?

Aside from buying the home of their dreams, selling a property is one of the biggest tasks many people will undertake in their lifetimes. There are numerous intricacies that go into the process of not only putting a home on the market, but also effectively promoting a residence and attracting the right kinds of buyers.

In this detailed guide, I provide a thorough breakdown of everything that goes into the selling process — and how a real estate agent can ensure that process goes quickly and smoothly.

DO I REALLY NEED A REALTOR?

With the advent and continual evolution of online search, you can access significant amounts of information within seconds. What the internet doesn’t offer, though, is provide detailed knowledge of the countless intricacies that go along with selling. Nearly nine in 10 sellers use an agent or broker to help them sell their homes — and you’d be wise to hire one as well to ensure the process goes smoothly.

Data: The National Association of Realtors 2014 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers

Market Expertise

From understanding the local school system and jobs market to researching community home values and past sales history, real estate agents stay on top of all of the essential details they need to know to move your property expeditiously and for the right amount of money. Sure, you can research your neighborhood and general area to discover what your neighbors have gotten for their homes for sale and how much properties in your town have appreciated in value over time, but given agents are already embedded into the community in which they work, they've already done that work for you.

Negotiation Skills

You may know how to make your home look appealing and pitch its best features to prospective buyers, but a certified agent has a thorough understanding of the average buyer's mindset — meaning they know the tricks of the trade that can secure plenty of buyers to show up at your open houses, call to set up personal home tours, and check out your listing online. Add in the fact that agents have skin in the game regarding the sale price (hint: commission), and it's evident they have the knowledge and motivation to ensure you get the best price possible for your home for sale.

Law and Contract Knowledge

The amount of laws, rules, and regulations that have to be dealt with throughout the course of selling a home are seemingly innumerable. No home seller should have to deal with complicated legalese and documents while trying to stage their residence and find a new home to purchase. Instead, they should leave all of that in the hands of their real estate agent. The right agent knows how to structure home contracts so they're not only correct, but lead to quickly and productively close deals.

Professional Network

The best of the best agents are not only knowledgeable and accomplished, but also well-connected. Expert agents spend much of their time building their networks and gaining new relationships with fellow agents and home vendors: everyone from plumbers, electricians, and contractors to appraisers, inspectors, and attorneys. So, when you sign on with an experienced agent, you get much more than their sales and marketing expertise. You also get a comprehensive network of professionals who can help move a sale along speedily.

Time

The internet offers a wealth of information for home sellers, but with much of their time dedicated to their day-to-day — working a 9-to-5, picking up the kids at school, etc. — it can be difficult for them to find a few hours each week to research agents who can help them put their property on the market. That’s why hiring an agent is essential: They’re completely dedicated to spending countless hours combing over data on local home sales, identifying buyer leads, and performing a variety of other sales and marketing tasks (online and offline) to broaden awareness of your listing.

IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR BUYERS

PRICE

Setting the right price for your listing off the bat is vital to selling it in the time frame and for the price you desire.

CONDITION

Making updates, additions, and alterations to your residence can provide a big boost in your sales efforts.

PRESENTATION

The aesthetic of your property plays a major role in how many buyers it attracts to showings and how quickly it sells.

LOCATION

Though you have no control over this particular factor, you can leverage your community's best attributes to help market your home.

PRICE

Assuming you price your property appropriately, your home for sale should start to gain awareness and leads within hours. But what exactly goes into setting a list price? Let’s delve into the primary factors that affect the specific dollar amount you ask for your residence.

Market Analysis

As noted, your real estate agent has considerable intelligence regarding the market in which they work, so leave it to them to source data and create reports that give paint you an accurate picture of what others have done with their listings price-wise. In turn, this information can inform your own price-setting. In addition to what others listed and sold their homes for, though, you need to take into account factors like home style/type, square footage, age, and how long their homes sat on the market.

Professional Appraisal

Hiring a professional appraiser, which usually runs a few hundred dollars, can tell you about the condition of every last detail of your home. These certified and licensed professionals conduct thorough searches of residences to gauge their worth and, as with a market analysis your agent performs, compare homes to those of others nearby in terms of quality, newness, and amenities.

Online Valuation Tools

Search for “home valuation tool” in Google and you’ll get quite a few — er, millions — of results, so there’s no shortage of online resources that can give you a rough estimate of your home’s value. Also, remember just that: These will be rough values. For instance, ZIllow’s “Zestimate” tool is arguably the most popular home value calculator, but it’s certainly flawed and doesn’t always provide the most precise data.

Being Realistic

What your list price really, ultimately comes down to is figuring out what home buyers are spending on properties at the moment in your neck of the woods and what you're comfortable with putting your residence on the market for. There is no one perfect price — rather, you simply need to take some time to evaluate all of these aforementioned factors and consult with your agent to find the idea middle zone.

CONDITION

Should a home inspector pinpoint any parts of your home that need attention before allowing your agent to list your property, you can take care of the problem areas yourself or employ a pro to take on the fixes for you. Specifically, there are three types of upgrades home sellers generally have to make to their residences before listing.

Refresh

Minor projects like painting, spackling, and caulking don’t necessitate hiring a professional to come out (unless, of course, you don’t mind shelling out a a hundred bucks or more for them to do so). These types of small-scale tasks can be taken care of with a little bit of research and buying the right tools and objects at your local hardware store. Specific things to look for in your home include holes where you’ve hung paintings and pictures that need to be filled, toning down the color scheme of certain rooms, and cleanliness of your attic and basement. Curb appeal upgrades like these can go a long way in getting positive feedback from potential buyers.

Repair

Once you've taken care of some slight refreshing of certain corners of your residence, you can turn your attention to more substantial restoration projects. Inspect your kitchen and bathroom for broken cabinetry and handles. Look for cracks in your walls, ceiling, and floor. Determine if you need to re-tile your roof or siding. There are often dozens of small components of your home that need addressing, so carefully investigate your interior and exterior for things to fix.

Replace

Unfortunately, there may be a few aspects of your home that need to be overhauled and replaced entirely. Items like tub liners and certain types of wood floors don’t age gracefully and get scuffed and scratched with regularity. Moreover, pet owners can attest to their friendly feline and canine pals ruining things like carpet. The good news is real estate agents likely know of one or more reputable home improvement professionals who can come by and repair these areas as needed. Should you make major replacements, like new flooring, ensure you select high-quality, visually appealing material. When in doubt, go with a popular paint color, floor material, countertop surface, etc.

PRESENTATION

You've settled on a solid list price, you've made updates to your interior and exterior — now, it's on to staging. Making your home look both functional and beautiful and marketing your revamped home to the right audience takes some skill. Luckily, your agent can help you find the right designers and photographers to ensure your residence looks brand new and appealing.

Marketing Basics

Head online to promote.
First and foremost, develop a presence online with your agent by posting your listing on their site and other real estate portals. Assuming your agent has a modern, mobile-optimized real estate website, you're in good hands. Also, use social media to alert friends, colleagues, and other connections about your new listing.

Create print collateral, too.
Despite the growing preference of home buyers to search for properties online, it's worthwhile to have offline marketing tactics in play. Yard signs, open houses, and flyers can help spread word that your home is on the market. It's harder to measure the effectiveness of offline marketing, but it can still help with word-of-mouth promotion.

Photography

Work with a professional.
You may have a friend or family member who's pretty good behind the lens, but a home sale is too important to leave in the hands of amateur photographers. Hire a pro with a well-documented history of snapping and editing beautiful shots of listings for real estate clients. Ask to see portfolios and get contact information of past clients to see what they have to say about potential candidates.

Get plenty of beautiful shots.

It should go without saying that your photographer should take hundreds (if not thousands) of photos of your home's interior, exterior, and surrounding property. Just to be sure you're on the same page, though, speak at length with the pro you employ to let them know what you'd like to showcase in the photos (e.g. certain areas of the home, shots at certain angles). They certainly know how to get the right pictures, but giving them some guidance isn't out of the norm.

Staging

Keep your home clean and organized. Home buyers want to be able to envision themselves living in a residence they tour, so keep everything tidy. Set the scene for them: Put nice magazines and candles on your coffee table, bring out the nice china for the dining room table, and ensure you're home is dust- and clutter-free. Seeing a messy living space is a turnoff for many prospective buyers, so stay on top of keeping your home in tip-top shape while showing it off.

Work with a professional stager. If you feel your home lacks the requisite pizazz to impress buyers, considering working with a staging pro, who can either give you tips on how to dress up your residence or actually do it for you. Either option will likely run you a few hundred dollars, but if their advice helps you sell your home quicker, you'll be glad you made the minor investment.

Staging Cont'd

Set the mood with pleasant scents. Open house visitors won't stick around for long if they can't bear the aroma of your home. Light plenty of candles in the living areas and use scented cleaning sprays in bathrooms, bedrooms, and the kitchen. Also, consider steam-cleaning any carpeted floors in your house to remove stains and get them smelling like roses.

Don't forget about the exterior. Once you've made the inside of your residence look stunning, it's time to head outside to examine your home's exterior. Assuming you're selling your property in a relatively warm climate, ensure the lawn is mowed, the plants are pruned, and there's no unsightly messes anywhere to be found. Kids' and pets' toys should be put away in a shed or garage, while the siding should be blemish-free.

LOCATION

Highlighting the best qualities of your location can help you convince possible home buyers that your community, and even your particular neighborhood, is one in which they should lay their foundation. All it takes to persuade potential buyers is a carefully thought-out pitch using powerful language.

Power of Persuasion

When it comes to marketing your location, you can never be too specific. Honing in on the nitty-gritty details of your neighborhood and community — like noting how many grocery stores are located in the town and relaying the best places to get a burger — helps home buyers visualize themselves living in the residence and surrounding area. Your agent can write plenty of marketing copy to promote your community, but if you know of any good selling points, let them know so they can spotlight them accordingly.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Conducting all of these tasks and working with various professionals, including your agent, is all a part of the home selling process, but at the end of the day, the best way to help sell your home is to be proactive. If your agent wants to show your home early in the morning to a possible buyer, let them come over to give them a tour. If you think a more neutral living room wall color would be more appealing to buyers, set time aside to re-coat them. In other words, be ready at all times to help your agent market your residence and, in turn, close a deal on your terms.

ABOUT ME

As your agent, I will be your tireless advocate, ensuring that you sell your home quickly and at the price you deserve. Please contact me for a free consultation. I look forward to meeting you.

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View my Client Testimonials here