

The Ultimate Home Sellers Guide

You're serious about selling. There is no messing around here; the time to sell your property is now and you are doing all you can to create the best house, the most competitive price and the most attractive design out there. Buyers won't be able to help themselves; offers will be flying in. Or, at least that's what you'd like to think.

But if you simply throw a sign up in the front yard without any preparation or research you might get a few looky-loo's but probably not a serious offer. If you do get a serious offer you might get hung up in inspection issues, repairs and replacements if not a flat-out contradiction on price. Most real estate agents want homeowners to be as prepared as possible and that means taking some responsibility in preparing your home for listing.

Probably one of the first things you can do is simply to have a listing presentation from a qualified real estate professional. This gives you a good idea of the caliber of your home compared to other properties on the market. If you're unsure of what to change, fix, repair or replace this would be an ideal first step.

An experienced agent can offer tips, suggestions and run the numbers or do the research on what your home is currently worth. Agents should also be able to tell what your home could be worth if you make some improvements. Certain items such as location and layout are difficult if not impossible to change but other items such as updates, upgrades, renovations, replacements or major and minor repairs can work wonders when it comes to increasing your home's value.



Should You Sell the Home Yourself?

Many homeowners at least consider if not attempt to sell their home themselves first. I get it. We want as much from the sale of our home as possible and if we don't have to pay real estate agents, then more money in our pockets.

But, even if everything works out perfectly, you still must take the time and energy to fix up the home, deal with buyers, perhaps deal with a buyer's agent, and handle all the legal documents and process yourself. That's if everything goes right. Chances are, things don't. Each real estate transaction is a monster all its own.

Studies have shown that most homeowners that try and sell a property themselves price it too high and don't prepare the property for such an asking price. The home sits on the market for weeks or even months. The homeowner drops the price, decides to do a few updates, spends more money on advertising and by the time the home sells, it receives a much lower offer than had it been priced correctly from the beginning. Many homeowners lose money because the price of a real estate commission is less than the money they have lost during the marketing phase.

I'm not saying that's everyone but if you can price it correctly from the beginning with the research and confidence of a real estate professional, get insider tips on what buyers are looking for and not have the hassle of dealing with the legal aspects of the purchase and sale contract, all while still getting a hefty profit, why wouldn't you?

Now that this awkward topic is out of the way, let's talk about what homeowners can do to get their property sold.



Ways to increase your home's value

Want the Most From your Home Sale? Here's How

Every home seller wants to get the very most from the profits of their home although not every seller is willing to do what it takes to get those profits. In a buyer's markets, sellers are competing with foreclosures and short sales that may be drastically underpriced. Because of this, many sellers may find themselves underwater, meaning that they owe more on the home than they could sell it for. If you're on the fence wondering if you can get enough for your home, there are some things to increase your chances on gaining more of a profit when it comes time to selling.

Here are five ways to sell your property for a higher price than your competition.

#1. Correct anything that a buyer would address.

And you may not know exactly what these things are. The best way to know what you need to fix, repair or replace is either have your agent or a trusted friend walk through your home making notes, tips, and suggestions. Living in a home for a long time can make us blind to defects and faults in the house. Simple items such as worn door frames, squeaky drawers and leaky faucets can often go overlooked. But, buyers will certainly pinpoint these issues and once everything is corrected and fixed, buyers will feel more comfortable purchasing a home at full price.

#2. Lived-in is not livable.

Buyers know that you live in the home but they don't want to see it. Now is the time to make it look less lived-in. Buyers want to start over in a new home and if they must fix things, paint walls, replace items, or if the entire home looks too cluttered, buyers see nothing but work ahead of them. ***Buyers also cannot always see the potential of the house*** so you should create the perfect setting for them.

Perhaps your couch is old and tattered; maybe your coffee table has too many nicks or scratches in it, or you're trying to hide that gouge in the wall; whatever it is, buyers cannot see past these items so it may be time to completely revamp your furniture and decor. If you can afford it, it would be best to hire a home stager during the time your home is on the market. Yes, this can get expensive but **sellers can usually get several thousand dollars more out of the home simply by having it staged.**

#3. Less is more.

Since you will be packing all your items anyway, start now by getting rid of at least half of the items in closets, drawers, cupboards and pantries. Also, don't stack these items in boxes in the garage because buyers will figure out that these items came from the house. Rent a storage facility or a pod that can be moved to your new home. Buyers want to see plenty of space, open and free-flowing rooms, and a neat and orderly layout. Also, having less furniture means potential homebuyers have a clear pathway through the property.

#4. Smells can make or break a sale.

Just as we get immune to defects we can also get immune to smells. Our odor and smell in our house has become so accustomed to us that we can't smell it anymore, but, home buyers certainly can, especially if you have pets, you smoke, or the home has mildew or mold. This is where having a trusted friend or your agent will come in handy again. Listen to their honest advice about the smell of your home.

If you have pets, make sure you remove the litter box and any evidence of cats or dogs during showings. Keep cages and litter boxes clean during the time your homes on the market. Be careful of what you cook the day of a showing. Many foods have very strong smells such as fried foods, eggs, and heavily spiced dishes. Good scents such as baking cookies or cake can add a pleasant smell to the home but *make sure that it's not overpowering.*

#5. Don't neglect to the outside.

Now that the inside smells amazing, everything is fixed, and the home is free and clear of any clutter, don't neglect the outside because this is usually the first impression buyers have about a home. Make sure the grass is nice and green by giving it a good dose of nitrogen, keep bushes and trees well-trimmed and patios and stairs free and clear of any weeds or overgrowth.

Most MLS (multiple listing service) websites require the featured image of a home either be the outside of the house from the street or the view one would enjoy from the house. This is your online calling card and the main image buyers will see on flyers. Make it a good one.

It might also be a good idea to hire a professional landscaper during the time the homes on the market just to keep the outside perfectly cared for.



Choosing the Right Agent

Once you've made appropriate adjustments, repairs or a replacement, now's the time to consider the right real estate agent. Not all agents prefer to help sellers; many prefer just to represent homebuyers. While any real estate agent can handle both sides of the transaction it's best to work with an agent that specializes in helping sellers specifically. Even though you can use any agent to market and list your home on the local MLS it pays to have someone that understands the process, is proficient in listing and selling property and has the experience and references to back it.

This is not the time to use your cousins, best friends husband just because they're trying to get started in the real estate world. Listing agents need to be dedicated, consistent, proficient and experienced when it comes to negotiating terms and price for their seller.

Here are some questions to ask your real estate agent:



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#1. How will you come up with the asking price?

The agent needs to know the neighborhood, the current market, and today's buyers. **Therefore, it is important to have a listing agent that has also helped buyers so they know what buyers are looking for and what they're willing to pay.**



#2. How long does it take you to sell a property?

If the agent has only listed one or two properties a year and those properties are still on the market, this may not be the best agent for your needs. Agents that can sell properties within 60 to 90 days or so and can do that with several properties throughout the year are usually a good bet.

However, **be cautious of singular agents that sell over 50 homes a year without a team of assistants. They may be overwhelmed and not able to give you and your home the attention you need.**



#3. How will you market my home?

Some amateur agents simply think that you can list the home on the local MLS and buyers will flock to it. This is not always the case. Agents need to market the home not only on the local MLS but to potential buyers and their agents. Many agents have a wealth of networks with other agents and this can help get the property in front of many potential buyers in a short period.

#4. How will you communicate with me?

If your real estate agent list your property and then completely drops off the face of the earth it can be very difficult to communicate when or if you get an offer. Ask how the real estate agent will communicate with you either by text, email, phone, in person or all the above.

Showings and Offer

Once your home is on the market you will get numerous buyers touring your home. It's best to leave the property while buyers and their agents browse your home so they don't feel pressured or uncomfortable with the seller lingering around them. Yes, you may want to answer certain questions they have but that's what your listing agent and their buyer's agent is for. Agents are the mediators between buyer and seller for any questions or negotiations.

It's best to have your home in a show ready state within about 30 minutes. This means you should pack up about half of the items in your home, store them neatly either in the garage or a storage space and be ready to show the home within 30 minutes of a phone call. This can be difficult with kids but not impossible. Remember to put things away after use and clean up any messes right away. You might even consider hiring a professional housecleaner while your home is on the market at least once a week. This can help with the deep cleaning and keep things nice and tidy.

Important Side Note About Agent and Buyer Feedback: [Should I Listen to Feedback?](#)

When an offer does come in, your listing agent will call you with the terms and price. You have the ultimate authority to accept, reject or negotiate the offer. The longer a home sits on the market the lower the offer might be. Therefore, it is so crucial to get the right listing price right out of the gate. You'll get the right buyers and the most profit by pricing it correctly from the beginning. Your listing agent will go over all the terms of the offer and then it's up to you whether you want to counter offer, reject or accept the offer.

Try not to feel emotional or insulted by a [lowball offer](#); buyers are always hoping to get the best deal so you never know by being unemotional, you can negotiate across the board with the right buyer. Counter offers and negotiations can go on for several days or even weeks, especially if were dealing with a bank or a short sale situation.

Try not to get frustrated but understand that this is a very large investment purchase and it can take time. Once both buyer and seller have mutually agreed

upon the listing price and terms the contract is now in place and buyers will have an inspection completed.

Try not to get too nervous during the inspection time as the buyers just want to verify their investment. This is also a negotiation time as buyers may come back with specifics on repairs or replacements. You may either agree, reject, or negotiate these requirements and tell mutual acceptance has happened on both sides again.

[Read more: [What's Trashing Your Home's Value?](#)]

Once the inspection contingency is satisfied the process moves on to closing. Buyers will finalize any financing and this is a great time to finish packing up for the big move. Your closing agent, which could be title, escrow or even your brokerage, will call you for final signing. Be sure to ask any questions during this time so you feel confident about what you are signing and understand everything involved. If something seems amiss be sure to question it.

Conclusion

Selling a home can be stressful but with knowledge and understanding of the process and your responsibility in all of it, it can be easier and as stress-free as possible. But, again, it all comes down to choosing the right agent to help you facilitate the transaction, set the right price from the beginning, and listen to your agent along the way.



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+61 04 60 60 00 60 02 8860 9690

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