

Real Estate

SELLING GUIDE

Get your
home
ready for
sale to find
the right
buyer and
best price



SOLD

Make Your Listing Stand Out

When real estate prices are falling, the home buying experience becomes a buyer's market.

Creating an effective real estate listing should contain a balance of pertinent property information mixed with a little emotional appeal.

The standard mini paragraph listed in the local newspaper is not going to cut it when it comes to separating your home for sale from the pack. Creative descriptions and visual aids are the best way to get noticed — both in print and online — and the smart seller will go after as much exposure as he or she can afford.

PHOTOS OF THE PROPERTY

The tried and true single-shot photograph taken from the curb may not get you to first base in a competitive housing market. Today's home buyer is smart and savvy and likes to have all the facts at their fingertips. Be sure to take multiple photos and publish the highlights from every room.

Although the interior of the home is the main event, be sure to get a good photo of the backyard, whether it is landscaped or not. The outdoor living space is key to the buyer's final decision. A spacious yard opens the buyer's mind to possibilities with home expansion, garden parties or a quiet place to retreat.

OPEN HOUSES

Many times a buyer will have their eye on a particular property but can't make it to an open house that runs just



PHOTO: YURI_ARCURS / YAYMICRO.COM

Today's real estate shoppers want lots of information at their fingertips. Look for an agent who can put your home in the best light.

a few hours on the weekend.

Major real estate companies know the value of holding a couple of open houses during the week to make the showing available to everyone. If you plan to include a mid-week evening showing, be sure that the electricity is turned on and there are no dark corners.

You may have to install some light bulbs or set up your own lighting system for properties that have been empty for quite some time.

Most importantly, be sure that the indoor and outdoor walkways are nice and bright to avoid a slip-and-fall accident on the property.

Your open house should be advertised in the local newspapers in advance, and be sure to use plenty of

arrow signs to guide the buying traffic in from the main intersection.

RESOURCES

In most cases, your home buyer will already be living in the area where he or she wishes to purchase. Newspaper advertising is excellent, and the aggressive agent may wish to increase the interest by listing online.

Real estate websites, whether your own or renting a space on a site, are often the first place the potential buyer will look to find their dream house.

Sporting full color and room for plenty of pictures, use as many web and print advertising formats as you can afford. No, they are not cheap, but they

do have a proven track record to get the properties sold.

INFORMATION SELLS

To attract more attention to your property for sale, buyers like to see at a glance the vital statistics for the area.

On your website ads, you may opt to include information on the school district and neighborhood amenities such as dining and shopping. In addition, buzz words such as "minutes to the freeway" and "one block from the mall" can make or break your sale.

In a competitive market, your real estate listing has to sell more than just a house. It has to sell a happy lifestyle and fit it to your buyer's dream.

Let the Buyers Inside

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR AN OPEN HOUSE

Selling your home is can be a fantastic and rewarding experience, especially when you take all the steps to ensure smooth sailing from start to finish.

Preparing your home for an open house is a key factor toward proper presentation and one area of the real estate sale where you should take every measure to get it right.

AVAILABILITY

Your home should be available for buyer browsing every weekend for the duration of the sale. If you are able to vacate the home for a mid-week open house, all the better for rapid results and a sale.

Proper handling of the open house is to hand the keys over to your listing agent for a full day of showcasing two to three days a week for an occupied residence. Be sure your listing agent is marketing the open house in advance and uses plenty of signs to point the way from the main boulevards to your front door.

Web site marketing and local ads in the newspapers create greater exposure to make your open house venture a prosperous one with dozens of home buyers responding to your listing agent's efforts.

PRESENTATION

Your home should be sparkling clean to include baseboard scrubbing, the removal of cobwebs, and taking excess furniture and per-



PHOTO: FEVERPITCHED / YAYMICRO.COM

Pulling off a successful open house requires lots of planning from both you and your real estate agent.

sonal effects away from the main frame of the home. Store toys, books and anything else

that takes away from the spatial orientation of the interior. In addition, if you are pre-

sending the home with a dining room, be sure the area is set up for that purpose or contains

nothing at all. To have an office or gym in a designated dining area may confuse the buyer as to the actual living space in the home.

Your experienced listing agent will help you prepare your home for market with the proper usage of each room in the house. Lawns must be maintained and backyards should be open and clear of unused items that will make the outdoor living space appear smaller.

STEP OUT FOR THE DAY

There is no written rule that the home owner must not be present during open house. However, if you want your buyers to be comfortable, vacating the premises is a sound plan.

Many home owners get emotional over their property or make judgement calls about the potential buyers, both of which can undermine the efforts of a strong listing agent. When you are having an open house, plan to be gone for a good eight hours to maximize the showing options and make the day productive.

Vacating may be uncomfortable at times, but it is a part of the professional selling process and will serve you well in the end.

Time to Talk Money

GET EXPERT ADVICE ON SETTING THE RIGHT PRICE

Selling a home requires careful calculation to be sure you meet the fair market price and attract qualified buyers.

Many homes that are overpriced find themselves languishing on the market for an inordinate amount of time, causing stress and financial strain on the home owner. And if the home is underpriced, you may be able to sell it quickly but end up costing yourself money.

Finding the right price point for your home is made easy by using industry tools to shape and guide your price range. Always objective and never emotional, your home should be priced to meet competitive standards for your general neighborhood and city block.

COMPS

The comps, or comparatives, are a basic guideline of what other homes in your vicinity are selling for. The homes that are the most similar to your type of property will give you an idea of where your perfect price point is.

Factors such as a corner lot, in-ground swimming pool and interior upgrades will affect the total sale price, so to begin, just stick with the square footage, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, and size of the garage.

UPGRADES

When you are selling your home and wish to remodel it for a better showing condi-

tion, be sure to use caution with how much you intend to spend. Not all home improvements will recoup your rehabilitation investment, no mat-

ter how luxurious you believe the enhancements are.

The tried and true remodeling efforts that yield a high return are upgraded and

modernized kitchens and bathrooms. Fresh paint is also a good idea, and new carpets add an attractive appearance.

However, investing in crown moldings, a swimming pool, or expensive nooks, such as a wet bar, are hit and miss with the buyers and may not warrant the total cost of the rehab money flowing back to your pocket when closing the sale.

APPRAISAL AND THE BANKS

When a buyer makes an offer on your home, he or she is under the assumption that the property is going to appraise for your asking price. Most home buyers will finance the property with a loan and very few can offer a cash deal.

When a bank funds the property mortgage, the amount of the loan may not exceed the appraised value of the home. If the buyer has entered into agreement with an overpriced property, he or she may make up the overage with a deposit, but in most cases the home purchase deal is scrapped because the property price was set too high by mistake.



Two Types of Professionals

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REAL ESTATE AGENT AND A REALTOR?

Real estate professionals come with many job functions such as loan officer, home inspector, appraiser, broker and sales agent. Perhaps the two most confusing titles are those of real estate agent and Realtor. Are they the same thing? Not exactly.

The real estate agent and the Realtor provide many of the same services for home buyers and sellers. However, the breadth of knowledge, recognition and assurance of ongoing real estate training is the defining line that separates the two.

REAL ESTATE AGENTS

Depending on what state the real estate agent is practicing in, the option to obtain a Realtor title will vary. When a real estate student passes the state real estate exam, he or she will automatically become a real estate agent. This is sufficient to go



to work for a broker and begin work with the broker's clients.

The real estate agent is under the authority of the broker, who is ultimately responsible for every real estate transaction in his or her office. Should a lawsuit arise, it is the broker that typically must deal with the legal issues, so he or she should be greatly concerned about the education of the agents in the office.

Real estate agents are fully competent to assist buyers and sellers in the real estate transaction, but in some states, the agent does not have their own access to lock boxes and premium online selling tools. The real estate agent will need to use broker keys to show properties and may not carry the same prestige as an agent that has upgraded their skills to Realtor.

REALTORS

A Realtor is given that title by becoming a member of the National Association of Realtors that recognizes an agent to be one of their own.

This means that the real estate agent has undergone extended real estate training beyond the call of the state board exams to rise to a professional level for residential and commercial property sales. The Realtor is a member of an elite group that trains and shapes new agents into highly competent real-estate machines.

Depending on the size, branding and location of a real estate office, some brokers insist that all of their agents become Realtors. This ensures a consistent quality of service to the broker's clients and guards against the agent making a tragic mistake that could result in costly problems.

The Realtor title is not free and has a number of mandatory fees associated with membership. The

real estate agent must pay an initial fee, yearly deposits on the lock box and agent key, and will be asked to attend a series of meetings and events.

In addition to making life easier at the office for the broker, a sales agent that upgrades to a Realtor status will have the opportunity to work with the sale of commercial properties. This aspect of the industry can be very lucrative, but also carries a great deal of responsibility from the agent.



Make a Wise Investment

REMODELING CAN IMPROVE YOUR HOME'S VALUE

When it comes to home improvement and increasing the value of your property, not all home projects are created equal.

To save time, money and get your full financial return on your investment, take some tips from the experts to do the job right.

KITCHENS ARE A GO

Kitchen upgrades are one of the best home improvement strategies to get more bang for your selling buck. Tired old tiles can be replaced with granite countertops to give the kitchen a modern and contemporary feel. In addition, you may wish to add an island work station if you have sufficient floor space to increase your kitchen's utility.

Down with the drapery and in with clean vertical blinds to make the room pop with extra living space and a neutral appeal to the new prospective buyer.

SUMPTUOUS BATHROOMS

We might not spend a great deal of time in our bathrooms. However, when we do go there, it better be nice. Granite countertops, lighted vanity mirrors and expansive shelf space equal money in

the bank when your home is going to market.

Try to keep the decor to a minimum to create a feeling of a larger living space. To add color without bringing in excessive items, you may opt for a stained glass window and bronze toned faucets for the finishing touch.

If you wish to enhance the tile work without breaking the

bank, try a few selective tile pattern prints to add to your existing white or neutral tile color scheme.

ATTIC AND BASEMENT

Many homes appear to be in mint condition in the main living spaces, but they may be lacking when it comes to extra

rooms above and below the home.

If your attic is full of cobwebs or needs some organization, be sure to fix the problem and make this added space shine. Likewise, a basement in need of finishing can make or break a sale if the buyers intend to use the extra room for storage or recreation. Clear away the junk and apply a fresh coat of paint to bring your attic or basement up to par.

SWIMMING POOLS ARE RISKY

Many home owners who reside in fair-weather states falsely believe that adding a

swimming pool is an automatic selling tool. Nothing could be further from the truth.

When a home buyer hires an agent, the presence of a pool in the backyard is a green light for swimmers and a red light for cautious parents with young children. Its a fifty-fifty gamble that a buyer will appreciate your investment into a pool, so if you plan on selling your home soon, hold off on the addition of a swimming pool.

Instead, spiffy up your backyard living space with colorful planters, a variety of flowers or perhaps drop in a cascading waterfall to relax and refresh your outdoor guests.



Consider Staging Your Home

Let's face it. The process of selling your home can be extremely competitive and often difficult to find the buyer you are looking for.

Tough times mean tough solutions, and home sellers that mean business when selling their property may have to call in the experts to get noticed.

Home staging is a new phenomenon that separates the ordinary from the extraordinary and makes that house for sale take center stage. Traditional open house preparations work with what they have, but the home staging operation creates with illusion what they don't have and can maximize a property's full potential.

A home seller seeking accolades and attention from the buyers will do well to invest a few hundred dollars into a professional home stager to transform the property into a work of art.

WHO ARE HOME STAGERS?

A home stage professional will have a great deal of knowledge in the real estate business, and their cutting-edge advantage is that most are professional artists. The property for sale is their canvas, and he or she will go to work to create an illusion of larger living spaces, comfortable corners and sense of overall appeal to the home.

A good home stager has a well trained eye for color, coordination, textures and spatial orientation. If you wish to sell your home as a work of art, a home stage professional is worth of every penny of the fee.

THE ART OF ACCESSORIES

From accessories to scents, the home stage artists knows just what to



PHOTO: IRIAN88W / YAYMICRO.COM

A well-staged home will have stylish furniture and minimal decorations, letting buyers imagine their own belongings in your space.

do to create a warm sense of space and an attractive property to the prospective buyers.

Scented candles, chocolate chip cookies baking in the oven, floral arrangements and planters are all tricks of the trade to decorate with style and grace in grand fashion — the way a Hollywood set would be coordinated.

PRODUCT PLACEMENTS

The home stage artist may ask you to clear away all of your bathroom products and leave the countertops clean and wide open. Remove the bathroom scale, towels

hanging over the shower door and everything else that does not seem inviting.

Like a five-star hotel bathroom, your home is transformed with baskets containing spa treatment oils, cinnamon fragrances, luxurious towels wrapped in ribbon, and rose petals. The list of ideas is endless to create a sumptuous environment.

Regardless of the space you have to work with, your home staging professional can transform your living space into a first-class act.

EXTERIOR

Your outdoor living space is just as

important as the interior, and a good home stage artist will get your backyard in mint showroom condition.

This is one part of the staging process where you will have to roll up your sleeves and participate.

Be sure to clear away all the junk, any rusted items such as a lawn chair, barbecue grill or old toys.

Backyard landscaping and decorating can be costly to rebuild the entire area, so you may wish to use an optical illusion of a designer yard by keeping your colorful and fragrant accessories confined to the door and porch.

Leave a Great Impression

IMPROVE YOUR HOME'S CURB APPEAL TO GET NOTICED BY BUYERS

First impressions count. When it's time to take your house to market, curb appeal can make or break the sale.

However, you don't need to break the bank to enhance your home, and by following a few simple guidelines you can transform your house from beaten down to best on the block with some do-it-yourself tips.

FRONT DOOR

The front door to the property is a real eye-catcher and needs to grab some attention and make itself known.

Remove tired and worn-out screens and give your front door a makeover with a vibrant coat of paint. To create a frame for your door, paint the trim in a darker color than the door.

PORCH

Straight, clean lines are in order for the porch to add a sense of space and sharpen the effect of a freshly painted door. Be sure to remove unused objects such as baskets, decorations, tired chairs and anything else that will detract from your living space.

FRONT LAWN

Keep it clean and keep it green. A front lawn that is well cared for speaks volumes about what's in store for the

interior living space. Fresh sod and plenty of water will make your green grass thrive, and a splash of color adds a special touch.

ADDING COLOR TO YOUR LAWN

Flowers can be expensive, and some species require abundant care. However, low cost pansies make a dramatic addition to an outdoor space and are easily transplanted in a mature state.

To cut back on cost and make your garden pop, try lining the just the walkway with a colorful selection of flowers to draw the eye to the path, porch and front door.

EVENING CURB APPEAL

Some buyers are prone to property drive-bys after hours, so you want to make your home stand out at night. By adding a line of solar lights along the pathway, you can create a soft glow that outlines the yard and creates a symmetrical ambience.

In addition, a low-voltage porch light in soft yellow or orange adds warmth and enough illumination to showcase your home at night.



Adding a few potted plants and cleaning up your home's landscaping can make a good first impression.

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