

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO **SELLING YOUR HOME IN 2015**



HOW TO PREPARE YOUR PROPERTY AND ATTRACT A BUYER



SO YOU'RE INTERESTED IN SELLING?

Whether you've already found your next place, or you're just testing the waters, selling a home is a major financial and emotional undertaking. In this guide, we'll show you how to prepare your home in order to make a quick sale at the best price.

IMPORTANT FACTORS **FOR BUYERS**

1. **Price**

Price is the bottom line, particularly for first-time buyers. Getting it right the first time will ensure a solid offer (or several) without scaring anyone away.

2. **Condition**

Whether it's replacing the roof or painting the walls, a little home improvement can go a long way.

3. **Presentation**

Use staging, photography, and a strategic marketing approach to find and attract the right buyers.

4. **Location**

Neighborhood, schools, transportation, and other location-related factors are hugely important to buyers...but your house is where it is.

While you can't do much about location, you can perfect the rest of these attributes with the right know-how and a few small investments.





DO I REALLY NEED **A REALTOR?**

These days, there are tons of real estate guides, data, and tools available online. With all the information out there, it's tempting to think you can sell your home all on your own. Nevertheless, 88 percent of sellers last year decided to work with an agent. Here are a few reasons why.

DO I REALLY NEED **A REALTOR?**



i. Market Expertise

The average seller spends a few hours a month looking at homes online. Would you trust your doctor with that much experience? Your mechanic? Your hairstylist? Whether it's insight on pricing, building materials, or today's sought-after design touches, agents have down-in-the-trenches expertise you simply can't get from a casual web search.



ii. Negotiation Skills

Whether you're selling your first, second, or third home, a good agent can usually negotiate for a higher price than you ever could on your own. Plus, agents are contractually obligated to protect your financial interests.



iii. Law and Contract Knowledge

Buying a home is a complicated process, full of financial and legal obligations that no layperson can be expected to keep track of. Agents are required to know their way around a contract and keep up with with changing regulations, ensuring you don't sign a bad deal.

DO I REALLY NEED **A REALTOR?**



iv. Professional Network

Because they're immersed in the real estate world, agents can tap into a much wider network to connect you with buyers. Agents also have relationships with other professionals you'll need: lawyers, appraisers, home inspectors, and contractors, to name a few.



v. Time

Chances are you already have a job, which means you'll be hard pressed to find the time and energy for all of the necessary tasks in preparing and selling your home. Your agent, meanwhile, lives and breathes real estate, and is prepared to handle all the calls, paperwork, scheduling, and legwork involved.



SOLD

1. PRICE

When properly priced, a home should draw an offer within the first twelve showings. Aim too high, however, and you'll likely be waiting much longer. Here are a few ways to find your magic number.

1. PRICE



Market Analysis

Your first and best option is to have your agent compile a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA), which uses MLS data on active, sold, and expired listings in your area, as well as listings with similar amenities and characteristics, to determine what your home is worth.



Professional Appraisal

While it'll cost you a few hundred dollars up front, hiring an appraiser will also give you the most accurate market value estimate for your home. Appraisers are licensed and regulated by state boards and programs.



Online Valuation Tools

Most major real estate sites offer online valuation services using public data such as property records and tax assessments. (Zillow's "Zestimate" is a prime example.) Take such valuations with a grain of salt, as these tools often use old or inaccurate data in their estimates.

1. PRICE

Being Realistic

If you've lived in your current home for several years, you've likely invested lots of time and money into maintaining it, and hopefully made many fond memories. Nevertheless, it's important to be realistic and approach pricing with an eye for current conditions. In a slow market, a seller should also be willing to offer incentives to beat out the competition, including home warranties, appliances, and repairs.





2. CONDITION

To fetch the highest price for your home, you need to reveal its inner beauty without investing in embellishments that could turn people off. While getting your home into selling shape, remember the three r's: **refresh, repair, replace.**

2. CONDITION



Refresh

A fresh coat of paint can work wonders on even the shabbiest rooms. Strip off any old wallpaper and fill holes from nails and picture hangers, then give your interior a fresh coat. Replace bright colors with safer shades of white or beige. Pay special attention to scuffed and dented baseboards, spackling and repainting as necessary.

In addition to interior touch-ups, you should also take steps to maximize curb appeal. For instance, it's often a good idea to repaint your front door (as well) after all, it's the first detail buyers will notice. As for the rest of the exterior, a thorough powerwashing and window cleaning should suffice. When it comes to landscaping, pull weeds and seed any dead patches of grass.

2. CONDITION



Repair

Curb appeal isn't limited to ground level: A worn-out roof is a bad omen that will scare buyers away. Hire a roofer replace any worn or missing shingles or roofing tiles. Have any moss or other plant growth removed. You should also ensure proper drainage by checking that your gutters are clear, clean, and freshly caulked.

Inside, take care of any plumbing issues. Check and replace the seals on all of your toilets. Tighten leaky faucets and refurbish with new o-rings, gaskets, and other parts. Check the lines leading to your dishwasher and washing machine. Be sure to address any faulty wiring as well, fixing any problem sockets or switches to avoid potential embarrassment during a showing.

2. CONDITION



Replace

Some home features are better replaced completely than fixed or refurbished. For starters, updating old light fixtures and window treatments can go far in making an old home shine like new. You may also want to replace carpets, particularly if you have pets. Even stain-free carpets can hold onto undesirable odors. (Depending on cost, consider substituting hardwood or laminate: they're easier to keep clean and fetch a higher price.)

Whatever you replace, be sure to opt for neutral colors and styles that will appeal to a wide range of tastes and decor. Don't install anything too expensive, either--after all, there's a good chance your buyer will replace these themselves.



3. PRESENTATION

Once your home is in salable condition, it's time to spread the word to buyers and actively highlight its best qualities.

3. PRESENTATION



Marketing Basics

Attack on all fronts. Open houses, mailers, yard signs, digital advertising--all strategies and media are fair game when it comes to letting potential buyers know about your home.

Use the Internet. These days, the web is the best medium for promoting your property, with 92 percent of buyers now using the Internet in their home search. A good agent will market your home online with a combination of digital advertising and postings on major real estate websites, as well as a listing page on his or her own marketing site.

3. PRESENTATION



Know your audience. To get the best results, it's important to speak the language of your buyer population. If, for instance, your home is in an area popular with seniors, more traditional marketing and advertising methods may yield better results than, say, a mobile application.

Don't keep it a secret. In 2013, 40 percent of sellers knew their buyer prior to home purchase. While your agent is marketing your property professionally, you should also be ready to contribute by spreading the word about the sale to family and friends.

3. PRESENTATION



Photography

Most potential buyers will first become acquainted with your home through photographs on the web. Great photos bring out your home's inner beauty, while low-quality or uninspired photos send searchers running.

Hire a professional. While there's a lot you can do on your own as an amateur, hiring a professional photographer is the best way to guarantee your photos turn out amazing. A photographer will bring years of experience to bear, along with professional-grade lighting, equipment, and editing software to brighten and beautify their shots.

Use a great camera and accessories. If you're more interested in taking your own photos, you'll need a quality camera. Despite their manufacturers' claims, most smartphones simply won't cut it. Instead, invest in a high-quality digital camera with a wide-angle lens. You should also use tripod to keep your shots straight and steady.

3. PRESENTATION



Pay attention to light and perspective. Take photos from the corner of a room to give the impression of more space. Take indoor photos from chest level, and outdoor photos from a higher vantage point, such as a ladder. In terms of lighting, use natural sunlight whenever possible (mornings are best), and avoid using your camera's flash.

More is better. To give yourself more choices and searchers more insight, take as many photographs as possible. A great photo of a room or feature that needs work is always better than no photo at all, which may signal to searchers that you have something to hide.

Consider video. While it's more labor intensive and requires some additional equipment, a video tour will provide interested buyers with an even more immersive experience of your home.

3. PRESENTATION



Staging

Once you've connected with buyers where they live and attracted them with quality visuals, it's time to stage your home for showing. Research shows that a well-staged home can sell up to 32 percent faster than a home that isn't staged at all.

When staging a home, it's important to remember that you're not just selling the property: you're selling a lifestyle. Because of this, it's often a good idea to hire a professional stager to sell your home's potential within that lifestyle. This person will typically remove all of the seller's furniture and bring in his or her own to create a clean, unified vision. Whether you choose to hire a professional or not, here are a few basic rules to live by when staging your home.

3. PRESENTATION



Lighting: Try to let in as much natural light as possible. Remove thick, heavy curtains and blinds, and avoid blocking windows with furniture. Use lamps with high-wattage bulbs to illuminate spaces that don't receive much outdoor light.

Space: Accentuate the possibilities of your home by removing unnecessary furniture and clutter. This will make your spaces feel bigger and allow buyers to fill in the blanks on their own.

Noise: Ambient noise from outside your home can be a blessing or a liability. If you're in a city, for instance, you might consider closing your windows to minimize street noise. You can also use sound actively in your staging, playing soft, slow, classical music to provide buyers with a comfortable atmosphere to contemplate your space.

3. PRESENTATION



Cleanliness: Make sure all of the surfaces in your home are spotless: there's nothing worse than putting your hand on a table, only to come away with grime or dust. The same goes for floors: even through shoes, buyers can feel the difference between a clean kitchen floor and a dirty one.

Temperature: If your home tends to get stuffy, open the windows to let fresh air in at least ten minutes before buyers arrive. Adjust the thermostat to ensure the temperature is perfect for your visitors.

Smells: Few things put off buyers more than a bad odor. If you have lots of carpets or rugs, make sure they've been steam cleaned thoroughly before you start showing your home. While a scented candle can have a positive impact, it's important to keep your efforts subtle and simple.



BE READY

Finally, it's important to remember that the right buyer could come along at any moment. As a seller, you need to be ready to show your home any time of day, any day of the week. That means keeping the house clean and uncluttered at all times. It also means being ready to leave at a moment's notice to give the buyer comfortable and uninhibited access. To prepare for the unexpected, have some ideas ready of places to visit and spontaneous ways to kill an hour or two.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

My job is to make the process of buying a new home as easy and enjoyable as possible, and I have dedicated my career and livelihood to this goal. 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.

