



100 WAYS

TO SELL YOUR HOME FASTER

AND FOR MORE MONEY



MARKETING YOUR PRODUCT

Of all the things homeowners control when selling their home, the condition of the property is one of the most important. A crucial part of marketing any project is the presentation of the product. Corporations and retail businesses understand this concept, and pay millions of dollars each year to advertising and marketing consultants to get the best advice possible. The same is true of real property. In order to compete effectively with other sellers, homeowners must present their homes to the marketplace in an attractive and desirable condition. When you bought your home, you probably shopped by comparison – well, buyers are still doing that today. According to the National Association of REALTORS, the average purchaser looks at eighteen (18) properties prior to purchasing a home. Regardless of how many properties are on the market, available buyers will always seek the best-priced property in the best condition.

THINK LIKE A BUYER

You are not just selling a house; you are selling shelter, security, lifestyle and dreams. People always want the best for themselves and your home should represent the buyer's answer to this goal. Put yourself in the buyer's shoes! Remember, they arrive at your front door wanting to find the right home. Don't make them search somewhere else. If you have done your homework, every room in your home will create a desire for the buyer to stay.

START MAKING A LIST

Walk outside and take a look at the property through the critical eyes of a buyer. Is there anything that needs repairing, looks worn or is outdated? Start writing these items down on your list. Walk through the interior and do the same. Ask for the assistance of everyone in your family. After all, a shorter sales time will benefit everybody in the family!



WHY DID YOU PURCHASE THIS PROPERTY?

You know this home better than anyone else. Think back to when you first walked in this house. What attracted you to this property? These features should be among the first that you enhance. Ask your spouse and your children to add their own special positive reactions. Your teenager(s) may remember how she fell in love with your home years ago because of the “climbing” tree in the backyard. Listen carefully to your children’s perceptions. Tour every room, the attic, basement, garage and yard. Note at least one positive feature in each area. Include the items that attracted you and those desirable features you have added.



DO EVERYTHING BEFORE YOU PUT YOUR HOME ON THE MARKET!!!

The longer a house is on the market, the more likely prospective purchasers are to suspect that something is wrong with the house. Remember back to all the times you have looked at properties during a home search. Chances are that whenever you came across a property that had been on the market for a while, the first thought that went through your mind was, “I wonder what is wrong with that house? Why hasn’t it sold?” Don’t let that happen to you. Complete all of your repairs, improvements and enhancements prior to your first showing. The following pages will guide you step by step through the process of preparing your home for sale in order to achieve the goals you have set for a successful transaction. Your six (6) areas of concentration are: repairing, cleaning, neutralizing, space management, atmosphere and staging. None of these activities are fun to do but all are an extremely important part of selling your home.



KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

REPAIRS:

1. The rule of thumb is...if something needs repair, fix it! There are probably many things in your home that you have simply become accustomed to over time, things that you have been “promising yourself” to attend to. Well, now is the time. The buyer will mentally add up the cost of repairing all those minor flaws and end up with an amount that is generally much higher than what it would cost you. You might be saying to yourself, “These repairs aren’t any big deal,” but the buyer is thinking, “If the owners did not take care of these little items, then what about the roof or plumbing or air conditioner?”
2. Check all walls for peeling paint, chipped corners and loose wallpaper.
3. Large repairs: In today’s climate of open disclosure and vigilant professional home inspections, the rule is – treat the buyer as you would yourself. Repair any problems with major systems or offer an allowance for the buyer to make repairs after closing. Always disclose anything that you know about the property. Don’t get caught in a legal battle, full disclosure is one of the many laws surrounding the transaction. Having been a consumer yourself, you know that buyers will more readily make a purchase decision with someone they trust.

CLEANING:

4. Every area of the home must sparkle and shine! Each hour spent will be well worth the effort.
5. Clean all of the windows, including attic and garage.
6. Clean all wall-to-wall carpeting and area rugs. Clean and polish linoleum, tile and wooden floors. Consider refinishing wood floors if necessary.
7. Clean and polish all woodwork if necessary. Pay particular attention to the kitchen and bath cabinets.
8. Clean and polish all the light fixtures.



KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

NEUTRALIZING:

9. Be cautious about selecting colors when painting or replacing carpeting. Your objective here is to make your home appeal to the largest possible buying segment. Ask yourself, “How many of the available buyers would be able to move into your house with their own furniture and not have to replace the carpeting?” Position your home on the market to be as appealing to as many people as possible and to allow the buyer to mentally picture the home as theirs.

10. Forget your personal taste – the market is always buyer driven! The average buyer will have a hard time looking beyond blue carpeting and bold wallpapers. Consider replacing unusual or bold colors with neutral tones. Two coats of off-white paint may be the best investment you have ever made.

SPACE MANAGEMENT:

This involves creating the illusion of more space

11. Arrange furniture to give the rooms as spacious a feeling as possible. Consider removing furniture from rooms that are crowded. If necessary, place large furniture in storage.

12. Pack up collectibles – both to protect and to give the room a more spacious feel. Leave just enough accessories to give the home a personal touch. Pack the rest.

13. Remove all clutter and make it a habit to pick up clothing, shoes and personal possessions each and every day for possible showings.

14. Empty closets of off-season clothing and pack for the move. Organize them to demonstrate the most efficient use of space. Leave as few items on the floor or shelves as possible. Keep in mind closets are not for box storage anymore.

15. Use light to create a sense of space. All drapes should be open. Turn on all of the lights throughout the home for showings.



KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

ATMOSPHERE:

When placing yourself in the potential buyer's shoes, you will want to consider the overall atmosphere of your home. Keep in mind your sense of smell as you go through this checklist. Create the atmosphere of your home as a shelter, a place that is safe and warm and in good condition.

16. A clean smelling house creates a positive image in the buyer's mind. Be aware of any odors from cooking, cigarettes/cigars, pets, etc., that may have adverse effects on potential buyers. Remember that some people are much more sensitive to odors than others. Smokers rarely notice the odor of tobacco that fills their homes, and pet owners may be oblivious to objectionable dog odors.

17. You can use products like carpet deodorizers, air fresheners and room deodorizers but, the best strategy is to remove the source of the smell rather than cover it up.

18. Often the only way to remove the smell of pet urine from flooring is to rip up the carpeting, padding and any underlay and replace them. If this is preventing the sale of your home, do not hesitate to make this investment.

19. If smoking and cooking odors have permeated your home, have your carpets and furniture cleaned and air out or dry-clean your drapes.

20. Mildew odors are another no-no. Don't allow wet towels to accumulate in hampers or dirty clothes to pile up in closets.

21. Another source for odors to collect is in your air conditioning filters. Clean the vent covers and change filters at least once a month. High accumulation of dust will detract from the presentation of your home and circulate odors throughout your home.

22. Once offensive odors are removed, consider adding delightful scents. Recent studies have shown that humans have strong, positive responses to certain smells. Cinnamon, fresh flowers, breads baking are all excellent ways to enhance your property for sale.



KEY AREAS OF FOCUS



STAGING:

This part of preparing your home for sale is the most fun and involves the use of color, lighting and accessories to emphasize the best features of your home.

23. Study magazine ads or furniture showrooms to see how small details can make rooms more attractive and appealing. The effect of a vase of flowers, an open book on the coffee table, a basket of birch logs by the fireplace, etc., can make the difference in a room. Be careful not to create distracting clutter.

24. The use of a brightly colored pillow in a wing chair or a throw blanket on a couch can add dimension to a sterile room.

25. Soften potentially offending views but always let light into your rooms. Replace heavy curtains with sheer white panels. Never apologize for things you cannot change. The buyer will either decide to accept or reject the property regardless of the words you say. Just present the home in the best way possible with complete honesty!

26. Go through your photo albums and select pictures of your house and yard during all four seasons. If hung at eye level in a well-lighted area, the pictures will speak for themselves and give you yet another selling edge.

27. Take advantage of natural light as much as possible by cleaning windows, opening shades and drapes, etc. Add lamps and lighting where necessary. Be sure that all fixtures are clean and have functioning bulbs. Increase the wattage of the bulbs to manufacturer recommendations.



OTHER AREAS OF FOCUS

EXTERIOR:

Check your home for any needed maintenance just as a buyer would. Repaint to touch up as necessary. You can't make a better investment when you are selling your house. Don't let the outside turn buyers off before the inside turns them on.

28. Color has the power to attract. A tub of geraniums, a pot of petunias or a basket of begonias on the front steps is a welcoming touch.

29. If you have a porch or front deck, set the stage with pots of flowers and attractively arrange outdoor furniture.

30. If you are selling during the fall or winter months, consider using a wreath of dried flowers or place an attractive milk can on the porch.

31. Check to see that all doors and windows are in good working order. Give special attention to your home's exterior doors and front entry. Clean and paint doors if necessary. Remember that you have only one chance to make a good first impression that is likely to color the remainder of the house tour.

32. Wash all windows and replace any broken or cracked windowpanes.

33. Screens should be free of any tears or holes.

34. Inspect all locks to ensure that they are functioning properly.

35. Check for loose or missing shingles. Clean out gutters and down spouts. Touch up peeling areas on gutters.

36. Invest in a new doormat that says, "Welcome."



OTHER AREAS OF FOCUS

YARD:

Make sure the yard is neatly mowed, raked and edged.

37. Prune and shape shrubbery and trees to compliment your house.

38. Consider adding seasonal flowers along the walks or in the planting areas. Plop the plants into a well-placed wheelbarrow, an old fashioned washtub or what novelty you can think of. Such standbys as nasturtiums, petunias, impatiens and verbenas are easy to maintain if you only remember to water them regularly. Try a row of sweet smelling alyssum to line a short sidewalk or pop in some perky dwarf marigolds to form a cheerful oasis of color in your yard.

39. Add an inch or two of bark mulch around your shrubs and trees.

40. If you have the room, set up your old badminton or volleyball net suggesting a scene of family fun!

41. It is important to devote at least one area of your yard to outdoor living. Buyers will still recognize a scene set with picnic table and chairs and respond positively to it. Cover your picnic table with a fringed, red and white checked cloth, set out plastic plates and glasses, bring out the barbecuing equipment and buyers will almost smell the hot dogs cooking!

DRIVEWAY:

The surface of your driveway should be beyond reproach. After all, it is one of the first things a buyer will see when he drives up.

42. Sweep and wash the driveway and walks to remove debris, dirt and stains. Repair and patch any cracks, edge the sides and pull up any weeds.

43. The driveway is no place for children's toys. Not only are such things dangerous, the clutter is unsightly.



ROOM BY ROOM

Front Entry:

Whether a graciously proportioned center-hall or a small space just large enough for a coat rack and tiny table, this part of your home deserves your particular attention.

44. Study your entry hall and ask yourself what kind of impression it makes of your home. Dried flowers or a small plant can make a striking focal point on a hall table any time of the year. Virtually any entry hall will benefit from a well-placed mirror to enlarge the area.

45. Your entry hall flooring will be observed carefully by the prospective buyer so make sure the surface is spotless and add a small rug to protect the area during showings.

46. Your entry hall closet is the first one inspected – make it appear roomy. Add a few extra hangers. Hang a bag of cedar chips or a pomander ball to give it a pleasant, fresh scent. Remove all off-season clothing.

Living Areas:

Think of these areas as if they were furniture showrooms. Your job is to make each room generate a positive response. Add touches that make a room look truly inviting.

47. Sweep and clean the fireplace. Place a few logs on the grate to create an attractive appearance. You are welcome to have a fire going for showings during the winter months – it creates a great atmosphere.

48. Place something colorful on the mantel, but don't make it look like a country craft store.

49. Improve the traffic flow by removing excess furniture. Have easy traffic flow patterns. Be sure that all doors open fully and easily.

50. Remove oversized television sets if they dominate the room. If necessary, substitute with a smaller one until you move.



ROOM BY ROOM

51. Draw attention to exposed beams or a cathedral ceiling with special lighting. Be sure to remove any cobwebs and dust.

52. In the heat of the summer, place a bowl of lemons or limes on the counter to provide a fresh pleasant aroma.

53. Clean and organize all storage space. If your cabinets, drawers and closets are crowded and overflowing, buyers assume that your storage space is inadequate. Give away items you don't use, storing seldom-used items elsewhere and reorganize the shelves. Neat, organized shelves and drawers look larger and more adequate for prospective buyer's needs.

54. Large, cheerful kitchen windows are an advantage and should be highlighted as a special feature of your home. Take a critical look at the window treatment – is it clean, sharp and up-to-date? Do the curtains need washing or the blinds need cleaning. Would the window area look better without any treatment?

55. Set the table for an informal meal with bright place mats and a generous bowl of fruit as a centerpiece.

56. Clean, mop and vacuum all floors on a regular basis.

Dining Room:

Avoid going overboard. To be effective, any stage setting that you create should reflect the character of your entire home appropriately.

57. Visually enlarge a small dining area. If your dining table has extra leaves, take one or two out. Consider placing your dining table against a wall if you cannot move around it with ease.

58. Remove any extra “company” chairs. Consider putting oversized pieces in storage until your house is sold.

59. Set the scene by setting the table with an attractive arrangement. Add fresh or silk flowers as a centerpiece.



ROOM BY ROOM



Kitchen:

Pay particular attention to your kitchen – this room continues to be the “heart of the home.” A pleasant, working kitchen is near the top of most buyers’ list of priorities and is a room that buyers always scrutinize closely.

60. Avoid clutter! Clear counters of small appliances and store whenever possible to maximize the appearance of workspace.

61. Check the countertop around your sink and remove any detergent, cleanser, brushes, etc., which may be cluttering the area.

62. Sinks, cabinets, appliances and counter tops should be clean and fresh.

63. All appliances should be absolutely clean, bright, sparkling and shiny!

64. Clean off the top of the refrigerator! If you must use that space for storage, use baskets and bowls to camouflage the items kept there.

65. Set the scene with an open cookbook, a basket filled with fruit, a basket of silk flowers, or a ceramic mixing bowl and wire whisk.

66. Create the aromas associated with happy homes! Bake some cookies from premixed, refrigerated cookie dough, start baking a loaf of refrigerated bread dough or pop a frozen apple pie in the oven. A delightful kitchen aroma can be created with commercial potpourri. preparation or mix up a batch from scratch on top of your stove. Above is an easy recipe to try and the smell is wonderful!

67. If you have a countertop eating area, set two attractive place settings with coordinating napkins and placemats, and place cushions on the stools.



ROOM BY ROOM

Laundry Room:

A separate laundry room is a true asset and is one of the most frequent requests that buyers make during a home search. Don't hide this treasure behind closed doors. Spruce up the room and open the door proudly for inspection.

68. Add a fresh coat of paint or put up cheerful wallpaper.

69. Organize all closets and storage areas.

70. Remove all dirty laundry. Keep current with your laundry or store all dirty laundry in a closed container.

71. Clean and polish the washer and dryer. Don't forget to clean the flooring and baseboards under and around the washer and dryer.

72. Consider adding an attractive, coordinated throw rug.

Stairways:

Stairways should provide an attractive transition from one level of your home to another.

73. Make sure the stairs are safe! Stair lighting should be more than adequate. Stairs must be clutter free, stair railings tight and secure and runners or carpeting tacked securely. Remove any items from the surface of the stairs and store elsewhere.

74. If the stairs are a focal point of the main living areas, carefully choose accents to improve the visual appeal. If you have a wide, gracious staircase, emphasize this feature by hanging a few pictures along the wall. Draw attention to a handsome lighting fixture by polishing the brass and dusting each small light bulb or crystal prism. Any stair landing should also have an attractive focal point, be it a fern on a plant stand, a dramatic poster, a chiming clock, or a special chair on a large stair landing. If the staircase is narrow, fool the eye by minimizing clutter.



ROOM BY ROOM

Bedrooms:

Imagine for a moment that you are in the “Bed-n-Breakfast” business. How would you change your home’s bedrooms to appeal to a paying lodger? Naturally you would make the beds with your prettiest sheets and comforters. Maybe you would add a vase of flowers on the dressing table or a cozy armchair in the corner. Every bedroom in your home should invite prospective buyers to settle right in!

75. Large master bedrooms are particularly popular among today’s homebuyers. Make your bedroom larger. Paint the room a light color, remove one of the bureaus if the room is crowded to minimize clutter and maximize spaciousness. Aim for a restful, subdued “look.”

76. A private bathroom off of the master bedroom is a real plus! Decorate to coordinate with the color scheme of your bedroom, creating the “suite” effect.

77. Virtually all buyers are looking for a house with plenty of closet space. Try to make what you have appear generous and well-planned. Remove and store all out-of-season clothing. Remove any items from the floor area – this will make a closet seem more spacious.

78. Make sure all articles in the closet smell fresh and clean. When prospective buyers open your closet door, they should be greeted with a whiff of fresh smelling air.

79. Make sure all closet lights have adequate wattage and are operating. Add battery lights to the closets that lack built-in lighting. Lighted closets look bigger, are more attractive and allow buyers to inspect the interiors easily.

80. Take the time to explain the importance of marketing to your children. Encourage them to participate in preparing your home for showing – particularly the principle of appealing to the widest possible market segment. Ask your children to cooperate by making their beds and picking up their rooms prior to showings. Consider promising a special reward if they willingly participate in your house-selling goals.

81. Have children pack any items that are not currently in use and dispose of unused possessions.

82. Remove any crowded, unusual or personal wall hangings such as posters and store them until your home is sold.



ROOM BY ROOM

Bathrooms:

Wise sellers take special pains with preparing their bathroom(s) for scrutiny by strangers. The bathroom is a room, after all, and a very personal one. Prospects will inspect yours carefully, so be sure it is immaculate.

83. Cleanliness is the key! Make sure that all surfaces are spotless.

84. Replace worn or dirty shower curtains, clean and repair caulking and remove non-skid bath surface decals that are in poor condition.

85. Clear off countertops and store all personal care products out of sight.

86. Repair any faucets that leak or do not function properly. Clean off mineral deposits with vinegar or commercial products.

87. Clean and organize all cabinets and drawers. Don't forget the medicine cabinet; dispose of old prescriptions and polish the shelves. The same goes for the storage cabinet under the sink(s).

88. Remember to appeal to a wide range of buyers. Play down dominant colors with contrasting neutral colored towels and accessories. If your bathroom is mostly white or neutral, add a few cheerful accents of color, such as towels in the popular new shades. Don't hesitate to buy a few new towels and a rug. After all, you will be taking these things with you to your new home.

89. Scrub and wax an old floor. Cover the largest area you can with a freshly washed rug.

90. Decorate and personalize – create a pleasing, individual look. Consider bringing out your best towels and perfumed guest soaps. Add a plant for color and freshness.

91. A gentle hint of fragrance in the air is fine – but keep it subtle.



Garage:

92. Sweep and wash the floor to remove dirt and stains. Organize tools, lawn and garden equipment, bicycles, etc. A clean, organized garage appears larger.

93. If the area is dark, add more light. If it is small and accommodates only one car, remove your car before buyers visit. An empty garage always looks larger. If you have a two-car garage with very little extra room, remove one of your cars so that buyers can make their inspection in comfort.

94. If your garage is appropriate to use as a recreation area, set up your PingPong table (with balls and paddles as props), hang some bright posters, put down an area rug, and you have transformed the place into a teen retreat. Your setting does not need to be complete and should not cost a large amount – it's only meant to suggest further possibilities to buyers.

95. Clear off and organize the workbench in your garage and draw attention to it as a sales feature. Make sure the lighting is excellent and stage the area as a comfortable place in which to work. Add a throw rug as cushioning against the cement flooring.

Attic:

Whether a high-ceiling room or a crawlspace under the eaves for storage, your attic will be examined and should not detract from the well-kept appearance of your home.

96. If a steep flight of stairs gains access to your attic, be sure they are clear of objects and well lit. If your attic is reached by a folding set of stairs that you pull from the ceiling, be sure to oil the mechanism and there is adequate lighting.

97. Spruce up your attic space: hide the mousetraps, install bright lights, arrange stored items in an eye pleasing way. If your attic does have windows, be sure to clean off the grime and let in as much light as possible.

98. Get rid of anything that you do not plan to move to your new home. Place remaining stored material neatly in boxes and trunks, and position away from any walls.

99. Make sure your major systems, such as heating/air conditioning units and electrical service is operating properly. If appropriate, vacuum out these units and install a clean filter.

100. As a final touch, take a damp cloth and wipe off any dust and grime from the surface of your water heater and heating/air-conditioning unit. Apply a coat of wax when you are finished. When you accomplish the items on this list that apply, you have prepared your home for...