

Spruce Up Your Home to Sell Faster!!!!

How to make your place more appealing to buyers.

Anyone forced to move out of a home faces a challenge: How do you get the best price for your humble abode, especially when buyers can be pickier than a diva in a shoe store?



To make your home seem more attractive than all the rest, consider, well, making it seem more attractive than all the rest. The experts call this "staging." You can hire a professional to do the job for you, or you can do much of the work yourself.

If you have a few good friends (who doesn't?) and a couple of free weekends, you can make major improvements without shelling out a lot of money. Think of it as one of those home-and-garden television shows -- just without the chummy banter among thin, well-dressed designers.

Start with some criticism

Start by asking particularly opinionated friends to come over and walk through the house as though they were potential buyers. Ask them to point out anything that might turn off a house shopper. Don't take their comments personally. Everyone who comes to look at your home will walk through a critic. Better to hear the bad news now than suffer the consequences by settling for a lower price, or watching your house sit on the market too long.

With your friends' list of complaints in hand, tackle the job. Next, get rid of clutter. We all have it, and we get used to looking at it. It's time to banish it. Think in terms of making your home look like the picture-perfect rooms in those glossy magazines. What makes them so alluring? To begin with, your husband's shoes aren't strewn all over the floor, and the dining room's not piled high with junk mail and dusty knick-knacks.

Empty it out

Remove things that overwhelm visitors with your personality. We know your collection of porcelain dalmatian dogs is charming, but it may interfere with buyers' efforts to imagine themselves living in the house. Along these lines, experts recommend removing all your family photos. It's my humble opinion that one or two well-placed snapshots give the warm impression that your home made your family happy, and that it can do the same for others.

Consider removing some furniture if your house is stuffed to the gills. To keep costs low, resist the urge to put everything in self-storage. Give away or sell anything you know you won't use in your new home. Don't pile it all into the basement or into a closet. Buyers will look in your closets, your kitchen cabinets, your garage, your basement, and probably even your underwear drawer. Almost nothing's off limits.

Scrub-a-dub-dub

Then, clean. Clean like you've never cleaned before. Pretend Martha Stewart and your mother-in-law will stop by at the same time to inspect for cobwebs in the corners, dust on the mini-blinds, and streaks on the windows. Your potential buyers will consider your house well-maintained if it looks sparkling. Even old kitchens and bathrooms can look newer if they're scrubbed to a shine.

Also go through your home with a bloodhound's nose. Now is the time to eliminate the musty odor in the bathroom and eradicate any scent suggesting that Misty the cat likes to hang out in the basement. I recently found myself charmed by a house for sale in my neighborhood, for no other good reason than the scent of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies hanging in the air.

Janine Scott, Real Estate Broker **Re/Max North Country Realty Inc**

Freshen it up

If you've been to many local open houses, you've probably realized that first impressions count, and that means your front yard and front door should be inviting. Even if you don't have a green thumb, planting a few colorful annuals can cheer up an entrance. (Just pull them out if you can't keep them looking healthy.)

Anything, including the front door, can look fresher with a new coat of paint. Even urbane city dwellers who know a screwdriver only as a drink with orange juice can usually manage to paint. If you're not that handy, this can be one of the less expensive jobs for a professional. Make your priority any room that has decor you can date. Take note if your opinionated friends say something like, "That's so mid-1980s country kitchen."

Now is also the time to fix all the "quirks" that make your house your home. Fix the leaky faucets and running toilets, the broken stair rail, the loose doorknobs, and all the other little things that buyers won't want to do themselves.

Watch your budget

Like many household improvements, this one can get expensive quickly if you let it. Before you know it, you could be thinking about buying that new sofa you've been eyeing, or upgrading all of your kitchen appliances.

But remember -- you don't want to spend all your potential profits. Don't get carried away if you don't want to spend a lot of money on this project. Put some elbow grease into the job -- by cleaning and getting rid of clutter -- before you start the projects that cost you money. Then set a budget, and do whatever gives you the most bang for your buck. Put painting and repair jobs for obvious problems at the top of the list. Flip through some of those glossy magazines for inspiration.

Staging is not glamorous work, but sprucing up your home can mean a faster sale -- and a heftier selling price. \$\$\$\$

Contact *Janine Scott*, Real Estate Broker for all of your real estate matters!

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