

10 Things To Do Before Listing Your House



Maximize Your Profit and Minimize Your Stress

PLAN TO WIN

If you want to sell your house for the most money possible you need to go into the selling process with a plan to win. Just listing your house with an agent is no longer enough. Competition is fierce and having a plan to win is required if you want to sell high, sell fast and sell stress-free.

We've put together our 10 step plan to do all that. Follow these 10 steps to help you get top dollar offers for your house.

1. Professional Home Inspections

Most houses sold these days are inspected before the sale of the house is complete, and the majority of inspections are performed by professional inspectors hired by a buyer. The buyer then uses the inspection report to justify absurd repairs or unreasonable sales price reductions.

By having your house inspected prior to listing you will have a clear, unbiased picture of any issues with your house, and you can remediate those issues before the buyer even knows about them.

Over 30% of sales contracts are canceled by the buyer because of issues found during inspections. By having an inspection performed prior to listing you can rest easy during the sales process because you already know any issues have been resolved.



2. Repairs and Deferred Maintenance

Your house, like most things in life, needs a little love and attention to stay in tip-top shape. But most of us get busy and we put off routine maintenance items for another day. Make sure that day comes before listing your house. Identify and repair the items that need attention before putting your house up for sale.

Most repairs will come on the exterior of the house. Such things are rotting wood, peeling paint, broken windows, loose shutters, and cracks in the brick should all be resolved prior to listing. A professional



home inspector will identify all these items for you but if you're not having your house inspected prior to listing, walk around the outside of your house and look for things that are worn or damaged.

Anything that's in need of repair on the interior should also been addressed. Broken appliances, burned out lights, leaking faucets, doors that won't close and anything else that is not operating as intended should be fixed. This will make the repair negotiations less stressful and your buyer won't be asking for thousands of dollars off the price of the house to fix these things.

3. HVAC Inspection and Maintenance

Your heating and air conditioning system is used every day but most homeowners don't have the system serviced until there is a problem. We have reviewed thousands of home inspection reports and every one has advised to have the HVAC system inspected and serviced.

By having your HVAC system serviced prior to listing you're telling buyers that you're a pro-active homeowner that has kept your house well maintained. Having your HVAC system serviced can save you thousands of dollars on unnecessary repairs and reduce the need for the buyer to bring in their own HVAC company to inspect the system.

Use a reputable HVAC company that will provide a warranty on the work that they do. Also have them provide a written report of work done and provide this report to buyers.



4. Upgrades and Updates

Nobody likes needlessly spending money but sometimes it's necessary to invest on updating your house prior to selling. This is especially true when a house is more than 20 years old and still has many original features. Our rule-of-thumb for updating a house is that you should expect a 300% return on your investment. Spending \$1,000 to sell your house for \$1,000 more doesn't make sense but spending \$5,000 to sell your house for \$15,000 more makes good financial sense.



Most updates will center around replacing items that are worn or dated. Updating old kitchen appliances will always pay off well. Other items such as replacing worn carpet, replacing old and dated light fixtures and ceiling fans, outdated countertops and old faucets will usually return much more than you spend.

Buyers will always pay more for a house when they perceive that there's less work to be done once they move in. Your real estate agent should be able to tell you which updates will bring you a good return on your investment.

5. Landscaping

You never get a second chance to make a good first impression! That saying is very true in real estate. A buyer's first impression of your house is when they drive up. Buyers are forming their opinions from the moment they first see your house from the street. A good first impression will help buyers overlook small issues on the inside. A bad first impression and those small issues become perceived major issues.

Having great curb appeal does not have to be expensive. Keeping the yard mowed is a must. Before putting your house on the market you should take some time to maintain the landscaping. Tidy up bushes and shrubs, prune back trees, especially tree limbs overhanging the house or touching the roof. Put down fresh mulch in the beds and lastly but most importantly, give the yard a little color with flowers.



Spending a few hours and a few hundred dollars on sprucing up the landscaping will definitely pay for itself in the long run. Fresh, clean, colorful landscaping will set the tone for buyers as they view your house.

6. Painting

While the first impression of your property's exterior is extremely important, first impressions upon entering the house is just as important. Painting the interior of the house helps with a clean and fresh look, sets the mood and can help highlight specific features. Buyers are particular about a few areas – the entrance, the kitchen and the bathrooms. These are the highest traffic areas of a house and will likely have the most wear and tear, marks on the walls and baseboards, holes from hanging pictures etc. Clean it up and paint with neutral colors to show off the features of each room and show the areas are well maintained and clean.

The benefits of a fresh coat of paint are many. It shows the house is well maintained, provides a fresh and clean appearance, can highlight features of the house, less work for the buyer when they move-in and buyers are not as likely to look for flaws elsewhere if the walls, trim, doors etc., are freshly painted and appear in tip-top condition.



When choosing paint colors stay with light, neutral tones. A light gray, tan or off-white are the colors we recommend when painting interiors.

7. Clean, Clean, Clean

This should go without saying but cleaning your house prior to listing is a must. A dirty house is a red-flag for buyers. We're not just talking about picking up stuff in the middle of the room. We're talking about a deep cleaning. Cleaning all the areas that haven't been touched since you moved in.

The areas that we find overlooked most often are ceiling fans, air conditioning registers, tops of refrigerators, closets, floors, carpets, and garages.

Don't forget about the smell of your house either. Buyers make decisions on smell as much as sight. A foul odor can ruin a buyer's perception of your house just as much as seeing dirt. Break out the cleaning supplies and clean all hard surfaces thoroughly. Give your house that fresh clean smell.

This should all be done prior to having pictures taken for listing your house. A buyer will determine if they want to see your house based on the pictures they see online.



8. Declutter

The biggest reason people give for moving is lack of space in their current house. They feel they have out-grown the space, therefore they are looking for a home that gives them more space to grow into. If they come to your home and see that you are running out of space, its the biggest turnoff you could give. Simple decluttering will really make all the difference.



Space sells and the quickest and easiest way to add space is to minimize your things. You want to ensure that a buyer can open all cupboards and doors easily, that there are no obstacles in the way or things that will cascade onto them! Anything that triggers a red flag for your buyer about space really isn't good.

Before listing your home you will want to remove your personal items. The family pictures on the walls, the knick-knacks sitting on the fireplace mantel and your cherished collectibles. Many times buyers will have children with them

when visiting your house and breakable items are magnets to little kid's hands.

We use the one-month rule-of-thumb on decluttering. Look around your house at everything and if you haven't touch something in one month, box it up and put it in storage. Removing all the items that you have collected over the years will add so much perceived space to your house.

9. Lock Up Your Valuables

In 2019, a couple in California visited an open house, and while the woman distracted the agent with questions, the man went to the bedroom and stole over \$50,000 in jewelry. While locking up your valuables will not add value to your house, it will save you money by not having unscrupulous people walk off with them. You can't trust everyone who comes into your house, even when you're trying to sell it. Sometimes things disappear during a showing or an open house, and there's little the seller or the agents can do to get those things back. Take care to hide your valuables or move them to a safe space away from your home.

When people hear the word valuables they immediately think of jewelry but valuables are anything of value to you. The list of items we give our clients to remove from the house or lock away in a safe place are: jewelry, guns, personal documents with financial information, money, credit cards and prescription drugs. These are all items that can be picked up and concealed easily and will disappear.



Thinking that it's the job of the agent showing your house to monitor their client is foolish. Agents are there to show your house, not safeguard it. Lock away your valuables and rest easy that they are safe and sound.

10. Choose The Right Agent

Probably the best way to maximize your profits when selling your house is to choose the right agent to represent you. So how do you choose the right agent? You ask questions! You should want to work with an agent that makes you feel comfortable and that makes the home selling process easy. But more importantly you will want to choose an agent that has the experience to handle the complexity of selling your house.

The average real estate agent closes only 3.5 transactions a year, and 70% of those transactions are representing the buyer. It's hard to call a real estate agent that closes 4 transactions or less per year an experienced agent. You will want to work with an agent who represents and closes at least one seller per month.

Unfortunately there are many homeowners who have lost thousands of dollars because their agent talked them into accepting an offer just so the agent could close the deal. Real estate agents only get paid when a transaction closes. Sometimes inexperienced agents will give advice that gets them paid rather than what's best for their client.

Working with an experienced agent that closes at least 12 transactions a year will give you the peace of mind that they are working for your best interest and not theirs.

Lastly, read the reviews and testimonials of their clients. It should be a red flag if you're considering working with an agent with very few reviews and testimonials. Great agents have many reviews and can provide you with a list of former clients that you can talk to.