

TOP 5 WAYS TO SELL YOUR HOME FAST

Trying to sell your home? Despite a slowing real estate market, tis still possible to sell your home fast.

Here are five ways to do it.

- Price It Right
- Make It Inviting
- Minimize Surprises
- Get the Word Out
- Throw In a Little Something Extra

1. Price it Right

It's stressful trying to sell your home when new home sales are slowing and prices are falling. Home prices across the nation fell nearly one percent in January from one year ago, according to the Standard & Poor's housing index. Growth hasn't been this slow since 1994. So setting the right price for your home is more important than ever. "If you really want to stimulate a sale, you should underprice your property by just a hair," says Susan Singer, a New York-based real estate broker with Corcoran. By shaving just a few thousand dollars you can generate more foot traffic and create a buzz.

2. Make It Inviting

There's no faster way to turn off a potential buyer than to overwhelm him with a home stuffed with kids' toys, family knickknacks and a stinky kitty litter. Even stodgy furniture can make a property more difficult to unload. That's why many high-end real estate agents employ professional "home stagers" when they want to guarantee a quick sale. Corcoran's Singer says her staged properties tend to sell faster and for more money than ones that aren't prepped in this fashion. For anywhere from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars, these folks will do everything from remove clutter and rearrange furniture to rent all new furnishings.

Fortunately, there are some inexpensive things homeowners can do on their own to attract a buyer. Whether you live in a cozy Cape Cod or a 4,000-square-foot McMansion, make your space feel as open and clean as possible. Get rid of clutter, organize the closets and remove all personal items that may make it more difficult for someone to imagine living in your house, says Michael Corbett, author of "Ready, Set, Sold!"

3. Minimize Surprises

A home that's in good working order will always sell faster than one that needs pricey repairs. That's why Corbett recommends having your property inspected before you put it on the market. The benefits are twofold. First, it's always cheaper and faster to make

your own repairs rather than have a buyer drag out the negotiating process to accommodate any necessary work. Second, you'll also avoid any nasty last-minute surprises that could derail a deal should the buyer's inspector discover you need, say, to replace the roof.

4. Get the Word Out

No matter how you sell your home – on your own or with a broker – make sure you have an eye-catching online listing. Some 80 percent of people start their real estate searches online, according to the National Association of Realtors. While it used to be enough to simply slap up one or two blurry photos, buyers now prefer a slew of pictures so that they don't waste their time touring a home that doesn't meet their requirements.

What should your listing include? If you really want to stand out from the competition consider hiring a professional photographer or finding a broker who uses one. At the very least, take half a dozen or more photos that highlight your home's best features, says Colby Sambrotto, chief officer of Forsalebyowner.com. Make sure to include a shot of the outside on a sunny day, and one of the kitchen, a bathroom, dining room and a bedroom.

5. Throw In a Little Something Extra

As home sales have stalled, we are once again seeing motivated sellers offer traditional incentives, including paying for closing costs or points on a mortgage, says Walter Molony, a spokesman for the National Association of Realtors. Such tactics are especially attractive to first-time shoppers who can afford mortgage payments but struggle to come up with the down payment and closing fees. Here are a couple more ideas. If you installed a 40-inch plasma TV with a surround-sound stereo system in the living room, offer to include it with the house. Chances are you won't be able to take it with you anyway. If you're selling a second home on the water, throw in the Jet Ski and dock rights. If you pad the asking price by just a couple thousand dollars, you'll still come out ahead, says Corbett.