Bigger, better, faster: 6 tips to speed up sales and boost value

Often, what helps a home sell faster is also what helps a home sell for more.

Surprisingly enough, just having a low price isn't the key. Homesellers need to think of their property as a product — something to market — instead of home. When they do, the result will be a fast sale at a great price.

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Try these six things to sell a home faster:

1. Stage the yard

The first thing people see when driving up to a home is the yard. Parking at the curb, hence the term "curb appeal," buyers make an instant determination of how desirable a home is by how it looks. First impressions are everything, right?

A beautiful front yard makes a good impression that should continue when potential buyers walk in the house.

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Remove weeds, rake leaves, trim hedges and anything else to clean it up. Then, you can work on staging the yard.

Anything new including plants, grass or mulch will always brighten up a yard. Keep a realistic budget in mind, and skip the major projects (such as a new driveway) unless absolutely necessary.

2. Clean, clean, clean

The power of a good cleaning job, inside and out, can't be emphasized enough. Start outside the house after staging the yard. Pressure washing the walls and cleaning the windows is a good start.

If the sellers are considering repainting, try cleaning first to see how the home looks. Often just removing dirt is enough to brighten the home's look.

Inside the home, homeowners need to get into every corner and crevice to remove dust, grime or dirt. The places people will be most impressed by the work are the kitchen and bathrooms. The more "new" the house looks, especially in those rooms, the better the impression on buyers.

Why all the hard work? Buyers like move-in condition and will pay more for it.

3. Remodel or upgrade

The best returns come from the smallest improvements; new trim (door and window casings, baseboard, crown molding), new paint and new flooring all create a fresh new look around the home at minimal cost.

Stepping up from that includes upgrading appliances, fixtures (lights, faucets, etc.) and replacing windows. These will all make the home look newer and nicer, which helps the home sell faster.

Major remodeling, such as replacing the kitchen or bathrooms, should only be considered if necessary. Although doing major upgrades will help a home sell faster, the time it takes to do the upgrades could be long.

4. Declutter and stage the home

All the “little stuff” sellers have around their house, including collectibles and photos, should be put away.

After that, look at each room and see whether there are extra pieces of furniture that could be removed. The key to decluttering is less is more.

Buyers want to see large rooms where they can visualize living there. The more stuff they have, the harder it is to visualize.

Decluttering makes rooms feel larger, which makes the home more appealing to buyers.

Staging is often ignored or dismissed by agents as not important, most often because of cost. However, buyers and sellers, and their agents, all feel that staging increases the value and appeal of a home.

Equally important is how well a staged home shows in photography. As with curb appeal, the better the home looks inside, the faster it will sell.

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5. Use professional photography and marketing

Use a professional photographer and produce professional marketing materials with the high-quality photos. All too often consumers don’t question the quality of the photos used to market the home.

With over 90 percent of buyers doing their shopping online, professional photos are essentially in attracting more buyers and selling the home faster and at a better price.

Good marketing makes a huge difference in how buyers see a home. Professional photos will be seen by buyers through the MLS and consumer real estate portals. All of which are designed to get buyers to fall in love with and buy the home.

6. Price effectively

A good agent will analyze recent sales and select a price that is designed to entice buyers to make offers. Pricing a home is not like pricing a car or TV. What the buyer ultimately pays is rarely what the list price is.

In most markets, the best strategy to attract the most buyers is to price just a bit low. This frequently results in multiple offers, competitive bidding and a fast sale at a high price.

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The reason this works is that the lower price makes the home visible to more buyers and appears to be a bargain. When this pricing strategy is combined with all the steps mentioned above, buyers see a beautiful home in excellent condition at a great price. Of course, they want to write an offer!

Make it happen

Ultimately, the three key factors in making a home sell faster are cleaning and/or remodeling, staging and professional marketing. As a homeowner, doing all three will maximize both the speed of selling but also price. Although pricing is absolutely critical, the price offered by buyers will be driven by the other three points.

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