

# Marketing Strategy

Your home sold fast & for Top Dollar – Works every time!



## *100 Point Check List*

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## **KEY AREAS OF FOCUS**

### **REPAIRS**

1. The rule of thumb is if something needs repair, fix it! There are likely 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 come up with an amount that is generally much higher than what it would cost you to fix them. You might say to yourself, “These repairs aren’t a 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. In today’s climate of open disclosure and vigilant professional home inspections, the rule is to treat the buyer as you would yourself, particularly for large repairs.

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. As a consumer yourself, you know that buyers 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 windows, including any in the attic and/or garage.
6. Clean 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 kitchen and bath cabinets.
8. Clean and polish all light fixtures.

## NEUTRALIZING

9. Be cautious about selecting colors when painting or replacing carpeting. Your objective is to make your home appeal to the largest possible buying segment. Ask yourself, “How many prospective buyers would be able to move into this 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 allow the buyers 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 ever make.

## SPACE MANAGEMENT

This involves creating the perception of more space.

11. Arrange furniture to give 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. This protects your treasured items and gives 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 pick up clothing, shoes and personal possessions every day while your home is showing.
14. Empty closets of off-season clothing and pack for the move. Organize closets to demonstrate the most efficient use of space. Leave as few items on the floor or shelves as possible and get rid of any storage boxes.
15. Use light to create a greater sense of space. Open all drapes. Turn on all of the lights throughout the home during showings.

## ATMOSPHERE

Place yourself in a potential buyer's shoes and consider the overall atmosphere of your home. Keep in mind your sense of smell as you go through this checklist. Create a warm, shelter-like atmosphere for your home – a place that is safe, comfortable 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 and replace the carpeting, padding and any underlay. If the smell of urine is preventing the sale of your home, do not hesitate to make this investment.
19. If smoking and cooking odors have permeated your home, clean and air out carpets and furniture, and dry-clean your drapes.
20. Mildew odors are another put-off. Don't allow wet towels to accumulate in hampers or dirty clothes to pile up in closets.
21. Odors also collect in your air conditioning filters. Clean the vent covers and change filters at least once a month. Dirty vents circulate both dust and unpleasant odors, detracting from the presentation of 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 or fresh-baked bread are all excellent ways to enhance your property.

## 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 or 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 on a wing chair, or a throw blanket on a couch, can add dimension to a sterile room.
25. Soften potentially unsightly 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 and 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. Where appropriate, increase the wattage of the bulbs to optimize light sources.

## OTHER AREAS OF FOCUS

### EXTERIOR

Check your home for any needed maintenance just as a buyer would. Repaint and touch up as necessary. You can't make a better investment than updating the exterior 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, consider placing a wreath of dried flowers or an attractive milk can on the porch.
31. Ensure 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.
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 downspouts. Touch up peeling areas on gutters.
36. Invest in a new doormat that says "Welcome."

## YARD

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

37. Prune and shape shrubbery and trees to complement your house.
38. Consider adding seasonal flowers along the walks or in the planting areas. Place plants into a well-placed wheelbarrow, an old-fashioned washtub or another novelty you can think of. Such standbys as nasturtiums, petunias, impatiens and verbena are easy to maintain if you 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 a 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 respond positively to a scene set with picnic table and chairs. Cover your picnic table with a fringed, red- and white- checkered cloth, set out plastic plates and glasses and bring out the barbecuing equipment. 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 buyers see when they drive 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, but the clutter is also unsightly.

## **ROOM BY ROOM**

### **FRONT ENTRY**

Whether it's a spacious center-hall or a small entry just large enough for a coat rack and tiny table, this part of your home deserves your particular attention.

44. Study the space and ask what kind of impression it makes. 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. Prospective buyers will carefully inspect your flooring, so make sure the surface is spotless. Add a small rug to protect the area during showings.
46. Your entry hall closet is the first thing people look at - 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**

Approach 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 colorful items on the mantel, but don't make it look like a country craft store.
49. Improve the traffic flow by removing excess furniture. Create 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.
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 cabinets, drawers and closets are crowded and overflowing, buyers assume there is inadequate storage space. Donate items you don't use, store seldom-used items elsewhere and reorganize the shelves. Neat, organized shelves and drawers look larger and more adequate.



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 placemats 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 staging 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 chairs. Consider putting oversized pieces in storage until your house is sold.
59. Enhance the scene by setting the table with an attractive arrangement. Add fresh or silk flowers as a centerpiece.

## KITCHEN

Pay particular attention to your kitchen. This room continues to be the “heart of the home,” and a pleasant, working kitchen is a priority on most buyers’ list. It’s a room that always receives close scrutiny.

60. Avoid clutter! Clear counters of small appliances and maximize the appearance of workspace.
61. Check the countertop around your sink and remove any detergent, cleanser, brushes, etc. that may be cluttering the area.
62. Sinks, cabinets, appliances and countertops should be clean and fresh.
63. All appliances should be absolutely clean, bright, sparkling and shiny!
64. Clean the top of the refrigerator! If you 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 or flowers, or a ceramic mixing bowl and wire whisk.

66. Create the aromas associated with happy homes! Bake some cookies or bread, or pop a frozen apple pie in the oven. A delightful kitchen aroma can also be created with commercial potpourri – or mix up a batch from scratch on top of your stove.
67. If you have a countertop eating area, set two attractive place settings with coordinating napkins and placemats, and place cushions on the stools.

## LAUNDRY ROOM

A separate laundry room is a true asset and is one of the most frequent requests among buyers. 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.
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.

## BEDROOMS

Imagine for a moment that you operate a Bed and Breakfast. How would you change your home's bedrooms to appeal to a paying lodger? Naturally you'd make the beds with your nicest sheets and comforters. Maybe you'd 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 appear larger by painting the room a light color and removing any bureaus that crowd the room. You want 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. Make your closets 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 working. Add battery-powered lights to 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.

## BATHROOMS

Wise sellers pay special attention to preparing their bathrooms, which will be scrutinized by strangers. Bathroom are rooms, after all, and very personal ones. Prospects will inspect yours carefully, so be sure they are 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 storage cabinets under sinks.
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 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 to 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 a Ping-Pong table (with balls and paddles as props), hang some bright posters and put down an area rug to transform the place into a teen retreat. Your setting does not need to be complete and shouldn't be expensive – it's only meant to suggest further possibilities to buyers.
95. Clear off and organize the workbench 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 it's a high-ceiling room or a crawlspace under the eaves, your attic will be examined and should not detract from the well-kept appearance of your home.

96. If your attic is accessed by a steep flight of stairs, be sure they are well lit and clear of objects. If your attic is reached by a folding set of stairs that you pull from the ceiling, be sure to oil the mechanism and provide adequate lighting.
97. Spruce up your attic space: Hide the mousetraps, install bright lights and arrange stored items in a pleasing way. If your attic has windows, clean off the grime and let in as much light as possible.
98. Remove anything that you do not plan to move to your new home. Place any stored material neatly in boxes and trunks, positioned away from any walls.
99. Make sure your major systems, such as heating/air conditioning units and electrical service, are 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 to be sold!