

27 SELLERS TIPS

Because your home may well be your largest asset, selling it is probably one of the most important decisions you will make in your life. To better understand the home selling process, a guide has been prepared from current industry insider reports. Through these 27 tips you will discover how to protect and capitalize on your most important investment, reduce stress, be in control of your situation, and make the most profit possible.

1. Understand why you are selling your home

Your motivation to sell is the determining factor as to how you will approach the process. It affects everything from what you set your asking price at to how much time, money and effort you're willing to invest in order to prepare your home for sale. For example, if your goal is for a quick sale, this would determine one approach. If you want to maximize your profit, the sales process might take longer thus determining a different approach.

2. Keep the reason(s) you are selling to yourself

The reason(s) you are selling your home will affect the way you negotiate its sale. By keeping this to yourself you don't provide ammunition to your prospective buyers. For example, should they learn that you must move quickly, you could be placed at a disadvantage in the negotiation process. When asked, simply say that your housing needs have changed. Remember, the reason(s) you are selling is only for you to know .

3. Before setting a price - do your homework

When you set your price, you make buyers aware of the absolute maximum they have to pay for your home. As a seller, you will want to get a selling price as close to the list price as possible. If you start out by pricing too high you run the risk of not being taken seriously by buyers and their agents. If you are pricing too low it can result in selling for much less than you were hoping for.

Setting your home's sale price

If You Live in a Subdivision - If your home is comprised of similar or identical floor plans, built in the same period, simply look at recent sales in your neighborhood subdivision to give you a good idea of what your home is worth.

If You Live in An Older Neighborhood - As neighborhoods change over time each home may be different in minor or substantial ways and you will probably find that there aren't many homes truly comparable to your own. In this case you may want to consider seeking a Realtor ® to help you with the pricing process.

If You Decide to Sell On Your Own - A good way to establish a value is to look at homes that have sold in your neighborhood within the past 6 months, including those now on the market. This is how prospective buyers will assess the worth of your home. Also a trip to City Hall can provide you with home sale information in its public records, for most communities.

4. Do some "home shopping" yourself

The best way to learn about your competition and discover what turns buyers off is to check out other open houses. Note floor plans, condition, appearance, size of lot, location and other features. Particularly note, not only the asking prices but what they are actually selling for. Remember, if you're serious about getting your home sold fast, don't price it higher than your neighbor's.

5. When getting an appraisal is a benefit

Sometimes a good appraisal can be a benefit in marketing your home. Getting an appraisal is a good way to let prospective buyers know that your home can be financed. However, an appraisal does cost money, has a limited life, and there's no guarantee you'll like the figure you hear.

6. Tax Assessments - what they really mean

Some people think that tax assessments are a way of evaluating a home. The difficulty here is that assessments are based on a number of criteria that may not be related to property values, so they may not necessarily reflect your home's true value.

7. Deciding upon a realtor®

According to the National Association of Realtors, nearly two-thirds of the people surveyed who sell their own homes say they wouldn't do it again themselves. Primary reasons included setting a price, marketing handicaps, liability concerns, and time constraints. When deciding upon a Realtor® , consider two or three. Be as wary of quotes that are too low as those that are too high.

All Realtors® are not the same! A professional Realtor® knows the market and has information on past sales, current listings, a marketing plan, and will provide their background and references. Evaluate each candidate carefully on the basis of their experience, qualifications, enthusiasm and personality. Be sure you choose someone that you trust and feel confident that they will do a good job on your behalf.

If you choose to sell on your own, you can still talk to a Realtor®. Many are more than willing to help do-it-your-selfers with paperwork, contracts, etc. and should problems arise, you now have someone you can readily call upon.

8. Ensure you have room to negotiate

Before settling on your asking price make sure you leave yourself enough room in which to bargain. For example, set your lowest and highest selling price. Then check your priorities to know if you'll price high to maximize your profit or price closer to market value if you want sell quickly.

9. Appearances do matter - make them count!

Appearance is so critical that it would be unwise to ignore this when selling your home. The look and "feel" of your home will generate a greater emotional response than any other factor. Prospective buyers react to what they see, hear, feel, and smell even though you may have priced your home to sell.

10. Invite the honest opinions of others

The biggest mistake you can make at this point is to rely solely on your own judgment. Don't be shy about seeking the honest opinions of others. You need to be objective about your home's good points as well as bad. Fortunately, your Realtor® will be unabashed about discussing what should be done to make your home more marketable.

11. Get it spic n' span clean and fix everything, even if it seems insignificant

Scrub, scour, tidy up, straighten, get rid of the clutter, declare war on dust, repair squeaks, the light switch that doesn't work, and the tiny crack in the bathroom mirror because these can be deal-killers and you'll never know what turns buyers off. Remember, you're not just competing with other resale homes, but brand-new ones as well.

12. Allow prospective buyers to visualize themselves in your home

The last thing you want prospective buyers to feel when viewing your home is that they may be intruding into someone's life. Avoid clutter such as too many knick-knacks, etc. Decorate in neutral colors, like white or beige and place a few carefully chosen items to add warmth and character. You can enhance the attractiveness of your home with a well-placed vase of flowers or potpourri in the bathroom. Home-decor magazines are great for tips.

13. Deal killer odors - must go!

You may not realize but odd smells like traces of food, pets and smoking odors can kill deals quickly. If prospective buyers know you have a dog, or that you smoke, they'll start being aware of odors and seeing stains that may not even exist. Don't leave any clues.

14. Be a smart seller - disclose everything

Smart sellers are proactive in disclosing all known defects to their buyers in writing. This can reduce liability and prevent lawsuits later on.

15. It's better with more prospects

When you maximize your home's marketability, you will most likely attract more than one prospective buyer. It is much better to have several buyers because they will compete with each other; a single buyer will end up competing with you.

16. Keep emotions in check during negotiations

Let go of the emotion you've invested in your home. Be detached, using a business-like manner in your negotiations. You'll definitely have an advantage over those who get caught up emotionally in the situation.

17. Learn why your buyer is motivated

The better you know your buyers the better you can use the negotiation process to your advantage. This allows you to control the pace and duration of the process.

As a rule, buyers are looking to purchase the best affordable property for the least amount of money. Knowing what motivates them enables you to negotiate more effectively. For example, does your buyer need to move quickly. Armed with this information you are in a better position to bargain.

18. What the buyer can really pay

As soon as possible, try to learn the amount of mortgage the buyer is qualified to carry and how much his/her down payment is. If their offer is low, ask their Realtor® about the buyer's ability to pay what your home is worth.

19. When the buyer would like to close

Quite often, when buyers would "like" to close is when they need to close. Knowledge of their deadlines for completing negotiations again creates a negotiating advantage for you.

20. Never sign a deal on your next home until you sell your current home

Beware of closing on your new home while you're still making mortgage payments on the old one or you might end up becoming a seller who is eager (even desperate) for the first deal that comes along.

21. Moving Out Before You Sell Can Put You at a Disadvantage

It has been proven that it's more difficult to sell a home that is vacant because it becomes forlorn looking, forgotten, no longer an appealing sight. Buyers start getting the message that you have a another home and are probably motivated to sell. This could cost you thousands of dollars.

22. Deadlines create a serious disadvantage

Don't try to sell by a certain date. This adds unnecessary pressure and is a serious disadvantage in negotiations.

23. A low offer - don't take it personally

Invariably the initial offer is below what both you and the buyer knows he'll pay for your property. Don't be upset, evaluate the offer objectively. Ensure it spells out the offering price, sufficient deposit, amount of down payment, mortgage amount, a closing date and any special requests. This can simply provide a starting point from which you can negotiate.

24. Turn that low offer around

You can counter a low offer or even an offer that's just under your asking price. This lets the buyer know that the first offer isn't seen as being a serious one. Now you'll be negotiating only with buyers with serious offers.

25. Maybe the buyer's not qualified

If you feel an offer is inadequate, now is the time to make sure the buyer is qualified to carry the size of mortgage the deal requires. Inquire how they arrived at their figure, and suggest they compare your price to the prices of homes for sale in your neighborhood.

26. Ensure the contract is complete

To avoid problems, ensure that all terms, costs and responsibilities are spelled out in the contract of sale. It should include such items as the date it was made, names of parties involved, address of property being sold, purchase price, where deposit monies will be held, date for loan approval, date and place of closing, type of deed, including any contingencies that remain to be settled and what personal property is included (or not) in the sale.

27. Resist deviating from the contract

For example, if the buyer requests a move-in prior to closing, just say no and that you've been advised against it. Now is not the time to take any chances of the deal falling through.