

A Guide to Selling Your Home On **Your Own**



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Chris Holland



GETTING READY TO SELL

How to shorten your time on the market

Home staging can mean different things

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Everything from just decluttering a home, or a rearrangement of furniture, up to making minor repairs, or even completely emptying the house and renting new furniture, are all considered efforts to stage a home. It appears that the more effort, and money, one puts into staging the home, the more they are repaid for their efforts when the home sells.

Benefits of staging

If you are considering putting your home on the market, realize that it might take some preparation to get your home show ready. Statistics show that when a home is staged, it can bring in up to many thousands of dollars more than a home that isn't staged. Also, staging helps in all types of markets. When there are a lot of homes for sale in an area, referred to as a buyer's market, the home that's staged is more noticeable to buyers, and the price for it can't be low-balled the same as a house that doesn't look as good. Alternatively, in a seller's market, when there are few homes for sale and real estate is in high demand, staged homes again stand out, often attracting numerous offers. In this way, the price can get driven up as buyers compete with each other for the home. Either way, the homeowner who took the time to stage comes out the winner.

Key elements of staging

- ▶ Getting rid of excess furniture and knick knacks is key. A cluttered house becomes invisible to a buyer, blanketed under the accoutrements of someone else's life. If necessary, rent storage for all your extra stuff. If you have a storage room, empty it, or set it up to look like an office or weight room, to highlight features you don't use, but someone else might love. Sometimes all that's needed is an objective rearranging of your things to create more space and order.
- ▶ Another key area is repairs. Don't launch into major renovations, but do fix up obvious minor flaws, especially around the front door. First impressions are key. Keep in mind that people viewing your home will likely open cupboards and closets. Repair squeaks and sticks so they don't notice a problem. Since doorways have a tendency to get worn, consider new paint.

HIRING A PROFESSIONAL STAGER

Home staging is more than just “decorating” or “decluttering”

Done properly, home staging is marketing a home’s best features, down playing its flaws and understanding the psychology of what makes a person fall in love with a home. New wall color, drapes and rental furniture create a pleasant family room in what was previously a depressing and cluttered basement.

Real estate knowledge is critical

Before you hire a home stager, find out how much they really know about real estate. Have they bought and sold their own homes in a variety of market conditions? Do they really know what it takes to turn a house into a “hot property”?

Penny wise and pound foolish

Beware of hiring a home stager based on price alone. You may save yourself a couple of hundred dollars only to lose the tens of thousands you could have earned if your home was staged properly from day one.

Qualities of a professional

When you hire a professional home stager, part of their role is calming these anxieties and answering your questions. Before hiring anyone, consider the following:

- Ask lots of questions. This is your chance to see if you would feel comfortable working with them. Does this person seem organized, calm and in control? Do they listen to my needs?
- It’s also their chance to learn more about your needs and explain how they can help.
- You might want to do a little research online to help with your staging ideas, or even look into hiring a professional in your area. No doubt you’ll be glad you did.

Ways to increase your home's salability

Your home's salability rating is primarily a function of condition. Improving the value of your property typically requires making improvements that add square footage or enhances functionality, e.g., a room addition or converting a closet to a bathroom.

Bathrooms: clean, bright and hygienic

- ☐ Ceramic fixtures must sparkle
- ☐ Polish handles and controls
- ☐ Replace toilet seats (they are inexpensive and make the toilet look new)
- ☐ Buy all new shower curtains
- ☐ Bathrooms must smell fresh
- ☐ Fresh color coordinated towels (use a special "home-showing" set)

Closets and other storage mysteries

- ☐ Store personal items (razors, toothbrushes, shampoos, etc.)
- ☐ Keep closets clean
- ☐ Sort, store and pack out-of-season clothes
- ☐ Organize shoes, ties, belts, scarves, etc.
- ☐ Repair shelving and hardware
- ☐ Make sure doors operate easily

You do "do windows", don't you?

- ☐ Clean windows reflect well on you
- ☐ Clean windows make a home brighter
- ☐ Clean windows make window coverings more attractive

Appliances/Mechanicals

- ☐ Clean all appliances, inside and out
- ☐ Vacuum or dust around the furnace
- ☐ Change the furnace filter (every 30 days)
- ☐ Clean the water heater/water softener tanks
- ☐ Repair noisy or poorly operating equipment

Landscaping ... is your grass greener?

- ☐ Keep your lawn mowed frequently
- ☐ "Weed" beds and trim trees and shrubs
- ☐ Sod or reseed problems areas
- ☐ Repair, repaint or clean lamps/lamp posts, the mailbox, birdbaths/ statuary, basketball goals

Decorating

- ☐ Polish and dust wood surfaces
- ☐ Reglue peeling wallpaper
- ☐ Fill, patch, and paint nail holes
- ☐ Replace broken switch plates and electrical outlet covers
- ☐ Replace burned out bulbs

- ☐ Repaint walls neutral colors
- ☐ Clean and polish hardwood floors and clean carpets (replace when worn or offer a carpet allowance)

Repairs

- ☐ Obvious repairs must be completed before showing your home, e.g. roof, gutters, and down spouts (clean the gutters)
- ☐ Window panes
- ☐ Water pipe leaks
- ☐ Broken locks and latches
- ☐ Driveway and sidewalks
- ☐ Replace missing siding or tuck point brick/stone work

Your front door makes the first impression

- ☐ Clean or paint the front door
- ☐ Wash glass in storm door and porch lights
- ☐ Adjust latches, locks, and handles
- ☐ Repair front walk/steps and keep them clean and free of debris
- ☐ Polish hardware including knobs, locks and door knockers
- ☐ Clean doorbell and insure its proper operation

Remove clutter

- ☐ Personal collections must be organized (better yet, pack and store them!)
- ☐ Items on horizontal surfaces should be kept to a minimum
- ☐ Pack and store knick knacks
- ☐ Remove yesterday's newspaper, display current magazine issues only
- ☐ Sort and discard personal items (or have a garage sale!)
- ☐ Store extra furniture
- ☐ Keep toys, schoolbooks, athletic equipment picked up

The kitchen ... the most important room in the house

- ☐ Countertops must be clean and uncluttered
- ☐ Stove top, oven, sink, dishwasher (everything must be spic and span)
- ☐ Wet mop the floor as often as necessary
- ☐ Organize pantry, cabinets, and storage areas
- ☐ Keep food storage areas (cabinets, pantry, refrigerator) clean and fresh
- ☐ Buyers judge the whole house by the condition of the oven/stove top

Determine the value of your home

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Whether the market is going up or down, you want to price your home ahead of the market; ahead of it on the way up and ahead of it on the way down. The properties that sell in the shortest amount of time in a buyers' market are generally those that are ahead of the market.



FOR SALE

Reduced Price

DON'T CHASE THE MARKET

The market value of your home IS

- Based on today's market
 - Current competition
 - Current financing
 - Current economic conditions
- Based on the Buyer's perception of property condition
- Based on location
- Based on normal marketing time

The market value of your home is NOT

- What you have in it
- What you need out of it
- What it once appraised for
- What you heard a neighbor's house sold for
- What the tax assessor says it's worth
- What it is insured for
- Based on memories and treasures
- Based on prices of homes where you are moving

Warning signs that a price adjustment may be needed:

- If agents are not previewing or they preview but don't show the property, they are eliminating your property from consideration.
- If your home is being shown but no offers are generated, buyers are finding better competing properties in your price range.
- In either case, it is an indication that your home is not priced appropriately for the current market.

Remember Proper price combined with
customized marketing = SOLD

Chris Holland

A photograph of a family of three standing in a grassy yard, looking at a red 'FOR SALE' sign. The sign is white with a red border and the words 'FOR SALE' in white capital letters. The family consists of a woman with blonde hair wearing a light blue shirt and a white skirt, a man with dark hair wearing a yellow and white plaid shirt and blue jeans, and a young child with blonde hair wearing a light blue shirt and white pants. They are standing in front of a yellow house with white shutters. The background is slightly blurred.

**FOR
SALE**

Questions to help you analyze
your pricing strategy

- # HOW?
- Is my opinion of value based on the actual neighborhood sale prices?
 - How many homes in my area are competing right now?
 - How does my home compare to those that are similar?
 - Is my home consistent with larger or smaller homes in the surrounding area?
 - Have any neighboring homes been on the market too long or even expired several times? If so, why?
 - Which improvements have I made that will actually increase value? Which improvements won't?
 - Are my financial needs influencing my asking price?
 - Is my original purchase price influencing my asking price?
 - What is my gain buying and /or selling in the present market?
 - Are the benefits of moving important enough to price my home competitively in the market?
 - Am I willing to price right and will I achieve my goals?
 - Have I identified a real estate agent whom I can trust and who is willing to guide me through the process of selling my home?
 - If I decide to seek the services of a real estate agent, will my decision be based on the agent's opinion of price?
 - Should I select an agent based on experience, marketing plan and services?
- # WHAT?

Chris Holland

Different meanings of **PRICE**



Market price

The highest price the property will bring to the seller if exposed for sale on the open market (Allowing reasonable time to find a willing buyer and with neither the buyer nor seller operating under duress).

Pricing to sell

Pricing fairly at market value so that it sells. This does not mean:

- Compromising and selling for less
- Giving it away

Asking price

The listed or advertised price

Price adjustment

Adjusting the asking price

Sold price

The actual negotiated and paid price

C.M.A.

COMPARABLE MARKET ANALYSIS

Detailed, documented, statistical data

Every real estate transaction must be supported with detailed, documented, statistical data about real estate transactions in the area. The best indicator of market value for most single family homes is the sales comparison approach. This type of analysis will include:

- A complete list of real estate sales, including private sales, surrounding the subject property within the last year.
- A complete list of similar properties that have sold in the area.
- A complete list of similar properties currently on the market in your area.
- A computer-generated Comparable Market Analysis showing, among other details, the average asking and selling price for similar properties in the area.
- A summary page, incorporating all the data we have compiled for your consideration, in a concise and easily understood format.

Expireds

Not all homes put on the market will sell. The prices at which these homes expired represent the “out of reach” price. If you price there, then your home may not sell.

For sale: upper end of price range

These are asking prices only. They have not been attained in the market. Examine the number of days on market and if it has been a long time, the homes are priced too high.

Solds: determine price range

These are actual sale prices and are your best evidence on which to base your pricing decision. Assuming the homes are similar to yours, you should be able to obtain similar prices. In a rising market these represent the lower end of the range. In a declining market these represent the higher end of the range.

Determining an asking price shouldn't be taken lightly.

Setting your asking price communicates to the buyer the absolute maximum they have to pay for your home. The trick for the seller is to get a selling price as close to the offering price as possible. If you start out by pricing too high, you might not be taken seriously by prospective buyers and their agents. A price too low may send the wrong message to prospective buyers.

Check prices of homes that have sold in your neighborhood in the past three to six months.

This is a shift from what was normally six to 12 months. In years past, we also made every attempt to only compare homes of similar features and qualities. Today, buyers are not so much looking for a particular style or features in a home as they are for the best deal, often compromising their wants for a bigger bang for the dollar. If you live in a subdivision comprised of homes with similar or identical floor plans, built in the same time period, then looking at recent sales in the neighborhood might be all you have to do to get a good ballpark figure.

However, many people live in older neighborhoods that have changed quite a bit over the years. Every home in your neighborhood may be different in minor or substantial ways—the house next door may have added another bedroom, for example, or the one across the street might have been built recently to fill a vacant lot. As a neighborhood evolves, you may find that there aren't any homes that are truly comparable to your own. Once you think you've decided on a price, take a step back and ask yourself, "if I were a buyer in this market and were willing and able to pay X for a home (X being the price of your home) what options would I have in the market?" If what you find would cause you to buy another home before yours, then it's likely the actual buyers will think the same."

Chris Holland

A smiling couple, a man and a woman, are standing in front of a large, two-story house with light-colored siding and brown shutters. The woman is standing behind the man, and both have their arms raised in a celebratory gesture. The house has a covered front porch and a large window with a decorative pediment. The scene is set outdoors with some greenery visible on the left.

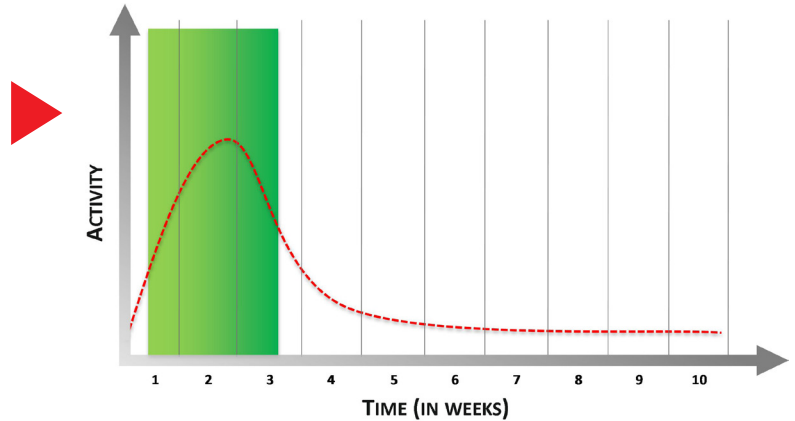
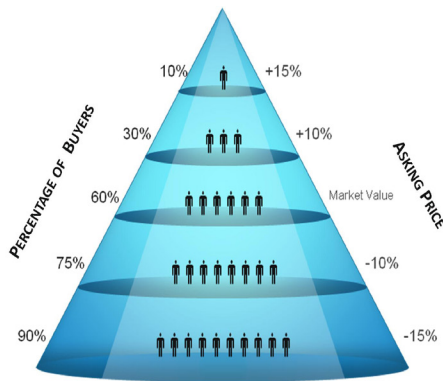
OPTIMIZE THE SALES PRICE

Properly pricing your home

Properly pricing your home is perhaps the most crucial factor in making a sale. Although you set the price, buyers determine the value. They'll compare your home and your asking price to similar homes on the market. If your price doesn't stack up, they may reject it and move on to the next home. And the longer your property sits on the market, the less marketable it becomes because buyers begin to wonder if something is wrong with it.

Selling price activity

A property attracts the most attention and interest from real estate agents and buyers in the first 10 days on the market. Take advantage of this surge in activity, and make sure your home is priced competitively from the first day it is listed.



Intelligent pricing

An overpriced home attracts fewer qualified buyers, has fewer showings and may not even generate any offers. When priced at market value a home will attract a reasonable percentage of the buyers currently in the market.

Importance of intelligent pricing

TIMELY SALE AND CLOSING. When your home sells faster you save carrying costs, mortgage payments and other ownership costs, plus you won't lose sleep.

LESS INCONVENIENCE. If you have moved before, you know the energy it takes to prepare for showings: keeping the home clean, making child care arrangements and altering your lifestyle; proper pricing reduces this.

INCREASED REAL ESTATE AGENT RESPONSE. When real estate agents are excited about a home and its price, they make special efforts to contact all their potential buyers. If overpriced, they'd wait for a price reduction or the listing to expire.

BETTER RESPONSE FROM ADVERTISING AND SIGN CALLS. Ad and sign calls to agents don't turn into showings when the price is not realistic.

ATTRACT HIGHER OFFERS. When a home is priced right, buyers are less likely to offer much less than the asking price, out of fear of losing a good home. Buyers become very serious with good prices.

MEANS MORE MONEY TO SELLERS. If a home is priced right, the excitement of the market produces higher sale prices. You will NET more in both actual sale price and less carrying costs.

Chris Holland

A man in a dark suit, glasses, and a striped tie is standing outdoors next to a light-colored house with red trim. He is holding a silver flip phone to his ear with his right hand and a black clipboard with a pen in his left hand. He is looking upwards and to the right. The background shows a cloudy sky and some greenery.

Document the condition and value
of your real estate

Proving the value of your home

► Home inspections

The first thing you might want to do is hire a home inspector to examine your property and document all their findings. There are actually several benefits to hiring a home inspector. The first is that you'll discover any issues and have a chance to correct them before buyers start looking at your home. If you find something you don't feel the need to correct, don't have time, or can't afford, you can at least determine the cost of fixing it and have that information when it comes time to negotiate price. The second reason to have your home inspected is you then have documented proof of the condition of your property from an objective third party. Of course, "objective third party" is a key component so make sure you hire a well known inspector with good credentials.

► What to expect

The buyer normally hires a contractor or home inspector to check out the home. The inspector does not care about cosmetic problems that the buyer could easily see such as peeling wallpaper, torn carpet, or flaking paint. The inspector shows an interest only in the structural and mechanical aspects of the home, problems a buyer is unlikely to notice. These include termite damage, foundation and structural problems, and the age and condition of the roof. The inspector also will examine the condition of the chimney, storm windows, gutters, electrical wiring, and plumbing. If possible, you will want to accompany the inspector and take notes.

A man wearing a yellow hard hat and a dark blue t-shirt is focused on working with a bundle of colorful electrical wires. He is holding a pair of wire cutters. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a utility room or a home's electrical panel area.

Chris Holland

Should You Have a **Home Inspection?**

Pre-listing inspections are becoming an increasingly popular way for sellers to not only reduce the possibility of last-minute surprises but also give their home a marketing edge. And perhaps most importantly, it demonstrates to potential buyers the confidence the seller has in their home and that there's nothing to hide.

Eventually the buyer is going to conduct an inspection

You may as well know what they are going to find by getting one first.
Having an inspection performed ahead of time helps in many ways:

1. You can choose a certified inspector rather than be at the mercy of the buyer's choice of inspector.
2. You can schedule the inspections at your convenience.
3. It might alert you to any items of immediate personal concern, such as radon gas or active termite infestation.
4. You can assist the inspector during the inspection, something normally not done during a buyer's inspection.
5. You can have the inspector correct any misstatements in the inspection report before it is generated.
6. The report can help you realistically price the home if problems exist.
7. The report can help you substantiate a higher asking price if problems don't exist or have been corrected.
8. A seller inspection reveals problems ahead of time which: might make the home show better; gives you time to make repairs and shop for competitive contractors; permits you to attach repair estimates or paid invoices to the inspection report; removes overinflated buyer procured estimates from the negotiation table.
9. The report might alert you to any immediate safety issues found, before agents and visitors tour the home.
10. The report provides a third-party, unbiased opinion to offer to potential buyers.
11. A seller inspection permits a clean home inspection report to be used as a marketing tool.
12. A seller inspection is the ultimate gesture in forthrightness on your part.
13. The report might relieve a prospective buyer's unfounded suspicions, before they walk away.
14. A seller inspection lightens negotiations and 11th-hour negotiations.
15. The report might encourage the buyer to waive the inspection contingency.
16. The deal is less likely to fall apart the way they often do when a buyer's inspection unexpectedly reveals a problem.
17. The report provides full disclosure protection from future legal claims.

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Proving the value **OF YOUR HOME**



How can you, the homeowner, convince prospective buyers that your property is worth your asking price? Get a trusted third party to document the condition and value of your real estate.

▶ Get an **objective opinion**

Once you've identified/corrected any issues with your home it's probably in your best interest to have an "objective" third-party's opinion of value prior to determining your asking price. An appraiser will provide you an accurate description of your home's features and a detailed analysis of the most recent and similar "comparable sales," or as they're commonly called, "Comps".

▶ Importance of home **appraisers**

In addition to helping set a realistic selling price so your home will attract buyers, a professional appraisal can:

- Be a very valuable negotiating tool.
- Impress buyers with written proof of your home's value.
- Make you aware of certain manageable improvements that can increase the value of your home, or problems and eliminate last-minute repairs that might delay a closing.

▶ Document home **improvements**

Another thing you can do to help demonstrate both the quality of the home and the care you've shown for it is to prepare a list of all the minor & major enhancements and repairs that have recently taken place. If you're not the original owner and have details on work done before you bought it, it might be a good idea to include those as well.

▶ Building trust with **buyers**

Think about it from the buyer's perspective. If a homeowner gives you a copy of a home inspection, real estate appraisal, and documents on all the enhancements and repairs for the property, you'll likely feel that they've not only done a good job taking care of the home but also that they're being upfront with all the details and can be trusted.

HIRING AN APPRAISER

What type of questions should you ask?

- What professional designations do you hold?
- Are you licensed or certified in the state in which you live?
- How long have you been in practice?
- What level of experience do you have in this particular market and with this type of property?
- Are you familiar with property in this neighborhood?
- What types of clients have you had (homeowners, estates, lenders, relocation companies)?

The Appraisal Institute

Appraisal Institute members earn designations that mandate stringent educational requirements, considerable professional experience, and adherence to standards of professional practice that exceed those required by state or federal law. Moreover, members' required participation in continuing education programs, including those that emphasize the most up-to-date valuation techniques, make Appraisal Institute-designated members the preferred source for high-quality appraisal services.



MAXIMUM EXPOSURE GETTING YOUR HOME NOTICED

- ▶ **Staging:** Stage your home to showcase features that buyers are most interested in: uncluttered rooms and closets, fresh paint and pleasing drive-up appeal. Staging your home will ensure that when people see it, they love it. Most of the staging steps are simple things that you can easily do yourself with little time and money.
- ▶ **Yard signs:** The For Sale sign may very well provide a prospective buyer with an impression of your motivation to sell and of the home's value. Instead of putting up any old For Sale sign in your front yard, make your sign stand out! Use color photos and bold, bright writing to advertise. Encourage home shoppers to immediately call you. It's free advertising! And if your home is a corner lot, put up two signs.
- ▶ **Property flyer:** Outline the various selling points of your home. Include features such as square footage, number of bedrooms/bathrooms, and any amenities such as a pool, deck, spa, etc. Also, make sure to have a brochure box by your sign and don't forget to replenish them as needed.

- ▶ **Friends and family:** Distribute flyers to neighbors, encouraging them to tell their family and friends about your home.
- ▶ **Internet:** Optimize your home's internet presence by posting it on websites and adding multiple photographs and creative descriptions. With the prevalence of the internet, it is to your advantage to advertise online. The internet is a fast way to reach millions of people. Make sure to include the web address in your ads and property flyer so that serious buyers can further research your home. See "Advertising on the Internet" in this section for a more comprehensive guide.
- ▶ **Virtual tour:** Every home should have a virtual tour, even if it's only two spins. Buyers love, love, love virtual tours. A good virtual tour will grab buyers by the hand and lead them from room to room. Place it on multiple websites to attract local and out-of-town buyers.
- ▶ **Homebook:** Create a home book for your property. Showcasing additional information and photos of your home and neighborhood will attract extra attention. Include information about schools, shopping, arts and entertainment, government and utilities. Provide copies of your homebook to area real estate agents/offices that specialize in selling homes in your neighborhood.
- ▶ **Open house:** Not every home is suitable for an open house due to location or other factors, and sometimes the only way to determine that is to try. If nobody comes, that's probably a good indication. However, if your home is located near a high traffic area where buyers often swarm, then it's a good candidate.
 - Place open house signs throughout the area directing buyers
 - Advertise open house times online
 - Invite the neighbors; they're going to come anyway



MAXIMUM EXPOSURE TIPS FOR TAKING PICTURES

Most home buyers begin a home search online, so good photos are essential. Listings without a photo or with only an exterior shot are often passed over and ignored. Buyers are visual. Follow these tips and your house photos will look ten times better than the competition:

1. Use a tripod. It provides steadiness and allows you to operate your digital camera's controls — specifically, shooting interiors at a slower speed.
2. Strive for even lighting. Professionals use strobe lights to brighten the dark spots. One of the mistakes that amateur photographers make is to shut all the blinds and turn on every artificial light in the room. This creates “halos” around each lamp. Don't shoot when sunlight is streaming in from the windows. And use the flash on the camera to even things out.
3. Remove all clutter. Also remove all personal photos. The goal is to have potential buyers envision themselves living in your house; your family's photos interfere with that process.
4. Wet down the brick patio and concrete pool surround to avoid it being too bright in the photo. Wetting it down also brings out the rich color in the brick.
5. Don't be afraid of the shade. Gardens look richer when they aren't shot in the blazing sun.
6. Leave no detail unattended. Tape the folds of the dining room tablecloth so it doesn't pucker out. Position chairs uniformly (about 1 foot) from the table's edge.
7. Shooting a pool presents special challenges because of the reflective nature of the water. Use a flash and try your shot in late afternoon or early morning.
8. Change the perspective for exterior shots. If you shoot the home from the traditional front on shot, it is generic. Be creative and make the pictures memorable.
9. Consider using a software program such as Photoshop to touch things up. It is an easy way to eliminate unsightly elements and punching up colors and obscuring some less desirable elements.
10. Tell a story. Your photo's still may not win awards but the key thing is to create an impression that this house will be someone's home. The goal of every picture is to sell the home. Even if you use an outside photographer, tell them the idea's you want to get across and the target market.

► General tips

- Use a wide-angled lens
- Shoot more photos than you think you need
- Take close-ups of interesting features

► Exterior photographs

- Crop out sidewalks and streets
- Remove vehicles from driveway/front of home
- Shoot up-close & angled photos
- Avoid shade on the house
- Clear away vegetation blocking front door and path to door
- If you have a yard, buyers will want to see it
- Emphasize space and shoot long
- Mow the lawn & trim bushes
- Put away children's toys
- Avoid shooting into the sun

► Interior photographs

- Open drapes & blinds
- Turn on lights
- Focus on interesting details like the condition of a wood floor or a fireplace mantle
- Remove trash cans & close toilet lids in bathrooms
- Use floral arrangements in kitchens & dining rooms
- Avoid shooting into mirrors because your image will reflect



MAXIMUM EXPOSURE ADVERTISING ON THE INTERNET

The internet is emerging as the leading medium for selling real estate.

Statistics show that 43% of all home buyers found the property they bought on the web. This is why a web presence is so important. Your home must be properly displayed on the internet, or it will be invisible to prospective home buyers

The National Association of REALTORS reports that more than 92% of all home buyers go online to search for a home.

The internet is a fast and cost effective way to reach millions of buyers, and it's for these reasons that your home should be online.

Luring prospective buyers to your home does not have to be a challenging task. There are always going to be people looking to move. It is your job to spread the word that you have a fabulous home on the market. It is imperative that you differentiate your home from the others for sale in your area. Above all, your task is to advertise your home as quickly and as cost efficiently as possible.

1 Covering the basics

Include all key elements in your property description. If you miss an important detail, a prospective buyer might pass over your home:

- Property address & directions
- Name of subdivision or location
- Sales price
- Number of bedrooms and baths
- Year the home was built
- Style of home & number of stories
- Acreage or lot size
- Other rooms: family-den-media-library, etc
- Type of flooring
- Type of garage
- Features such as fireplace or pool
- Appliances & upgrades
- Contact information, including phone number

2 Describe buyer features and benefits

Features are a description of the home. Benefits are how the buyer will use that feature. A benefit makes the feature personal, and it's what sells homes. Don't just inform, instead, illustrate.

For example:

Fenced Yard: Privacy, sunning area, place for pets to play, lush lawn to run barefoot on, room for a pool, space to grow fresh vegetables or plant flower gardens.

Dual Pane Windows: Lower utility bills, energy efficiency gives peace of mind to environmentally concerned consumers, warmer in winter and cooler in summer, low maintenance, easy to operate and clean.

MAXIMUM EXPOSURE **CREATE A FLYER FOR USE** ONLINE, PRINT & EMAIL

A flyer for your home will prove to be one of the strongest marketing tools

Upon seeing your home, buyers naturally have many questions about the home. How big is it? How many bedrooms and bathrooms are there? What are the special features of the home? When you prepare a flyer, you should include several key pieces of information:

1. Total square footage of the home
2. Number of bedrooms and bathrooms
3. The names of local schools
4. Your contact information
5. The address of the home
6. A color photograph of the home
7. Dimensions of the bedrooms, dining room, Living room, and kitchen
8. Dates and times of future open houses

Create a flyer online for **FREE**

Use vFlyer.com to create flyers. It offers unlimited use free for consumers. When you are finished creating the flyer, press publish. Best of all, vFlyer automatically publishes your flyer on the following Websites:

- Oodle
- Google base
- Edgeio
- Trulia
- Vast
- PropSmart

▶ Don't clutter the page with too much information

It's unlikely that every single thing about your home is a salable fact. Even so, the buyer isn't likely to read the entire fact sheet if it is filled with too much information. Choose the absolute best features of your home and use those rather than trying to include everything that makes the house valuable.

▶ The picture you use on your flyer is important

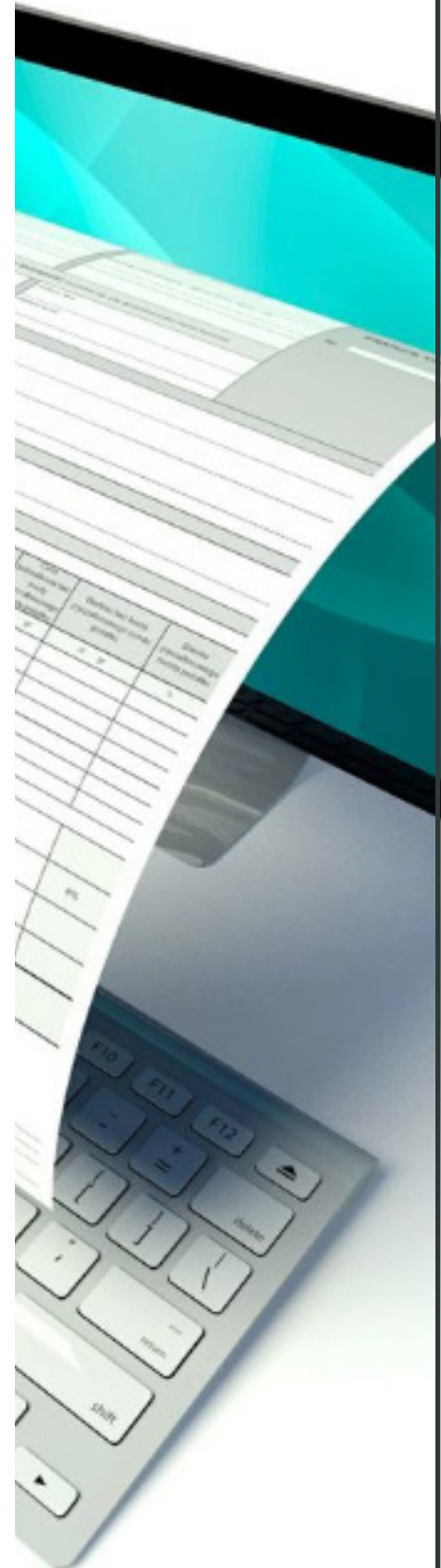
If you have already taken a picture for listing your home in a real estate magazine or other advertising vehicle, that picture might very well work.

▶ Make sure the exterior of the home is attractive

The lawn should be manicured, and there should be no distracting objects in the picture. You might also include pictures of the inside of the home to give buyers a better view of what you have to offer.

▶ Your flyer will look best on glossy paper

Although it might be a couple of cents more than some alternatives, it will present your For Sale By Owner home in its best light. This is exactly what you need to ensure a successful offer.



Chris Holland



MAXIMUM EXPOSURE

WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT

If you aren't getting enough showings because the exterior of your home looks like every other home in the neighborhood -- whether it's a single family home or a townhome/condo, it might not be price. It might be because there is an abundance of inventory on the market, and buyers have too much to choose from.

6 ways to increase traffic

- ▶ **MAKE YOUR HOME EASY TO SHOW.** When the phone rings and it is either a prospective buyer or agent wanting to see your home, make every attempt to accommodate their schedule in setting an appointment. Don't advertise "by appointment only" on your marketing materials or sign, cooperating agents will likely show another property that isn't so restrictive.
- ▶ **USE A LOCKBOX.** Real estate professionals can keep your doors open to prospects by way of a lock box that allows themselves and other licensed agents to show your home. They can accommodate a prospect's schedule when perhaps you can't.
- ▶ **PROTECT/COOPERATE WITH AGENTS.** You "agree" to cooperate (pay a set commission) with Buyer Agents. You do not have to list your home with an agent to "cooperate" with real estate agents or "welcome" Buyer Agents to show your home in your advertising.
- ▶ **CATER LUNCH FOR BROKERS TOUR AND OFFER DRAWING.** Nothing works better to attract agents to your home than a free lunch. Instead of zipping through a home on tour, agents will generally linger in the home, noticing details a fast tour would miss. Offer a drawing for a free gift certificate or game tickets.
- ▶ **HOST AN OPEN HOUSE EXTRAVAGANZA.** Organize other sellers in your neighborhood to work together on advertising a neighborhood open house or ask your agent to blitz the area. Publicize the event everywhere.
- ▶ **MAKE A LIMITED TIME OFFER.** Advertise a limited time offer that buyers can snatch up if they act quickly. Everybody wants a deal, and buyers are more motivated if that offer is going to soon vanish. For example, offer to:
 - Pay down the buyer's interest rate for several years.
 - Credit a percentage of the sales price toward the buyer's closing costs.
 - Prepay taxes or insurance for a year.

MAXIMUM EXPOSURE SHOWING YOUR HOME

Maximizing first impressions

- ▶ **MAKE A PROMOTIONAL VOICE MESSAGE.** Give callers a sense of what's best about your home, but don't make it too long. You want them to leave a message so that you can follow up. For security purposes confirm their phone number. Use caller ID or allow the answering machine to take the message even when you are home. Then call them back.
- ▶ **MAKE A PROMOTIONAL FLYER OF YOUR HOME.** When a prospective buyer calls, keep a record of their name and email address. To encourage the buyer to give you this information, offer to email them the promotional flyer on your home. Be sure your flyer includes:
 - A description and main features of your home
 - A small map and directions
 - Contact numbers
 - Your home's web address



POST NOTES / FEATURE CARDS

- Ask visitors to sign the guest registry
- Highlight features and amenities of your home (crown molding, lighting fixtures, custom cabinetry, alarm system, whirlpools)
- Point out examples of better than average construction (insulated windows)
- Explain any current repairs being made (“this faucet is being repaired”)
- List items that are included in the sale (chandelier, dishwasher)
- Invite shy prospects to open or enter (walk-in closets)
- Instruct prospects to try something (“turn on gas fireplace”)
- Offer them a promotional packet (“please take one”)

OPEN EVERY INTERIOR DOOR

A crucial part of selling anything is the staging and presentation of the product. Opening every interior door makes your home appear larger; it improves traffic flow and welcomes shy prospects to wander around.



Chris Holland

MAXIMUM EXPOSURE SHOWING YOUR HOME

Provide access

If buyers cannot see your home, they won't offer to buy it. Today, qualified buyers have busy schedules. So do you. Most buyers are actively looking at several possible homes. If they can't get into your home, they may make an offer on another one. Worse yet, the best buyers are often the ones who need to move right away or are out-of-town buyers. Their schedules are even tighter.

Showing safety

Showing your home yourself is quite different than having a real estate agent do it for you. Selling your home yourself can be a rewarding experience, however there are not the usual screening processes built into the selling situation that are customary when you engage the services of a real estate agent. These processes are designed to screen out those individuals that do not have a genuine interest in purchasing the home, or those who have more sinister motives. It is unfortunate that there are those who prey on individuals trying to sell their home on their own, but this is something that can be easily prevented with a bit of planning and forethought. There are some definite principles that you should operate on when selling your home yourself.



SHOWING

NEVER SHOW THE HOUSE WITHOUT AN APPOINTMENT. This is a great way to separate those who just want a “look inside” with those who are genuinely interested in buying.

DON'T SHOW YOUR HOME ALONE. Always be sure that there are at least 2 adults in the home. Also, don't allow the showing to “split up.” Interested buyers should be respectful of your home and your rules for showing it. If viewers start making insinuations or excuses to break up the viewing group then you may have something to be concerned about.

During a showing of your own home you must **REMAIN VIGILANT OF WHAT YOUR GUESTS ARE DOING** and the way that they reply to your questions.

BE MINDFUL OF THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE THEM. Telling someone that you will not be at home during a certain period is a bad start.

BEWARE OF QUESTIONS that seem to be trying to assess the level of security or the comings and goings of your family. Essentially there are two necessary steps that you can observe to ensure a high quality of viewers:

- Ask for an appointment
- Require a pre-qualification or pre-approval letter from their mortgage lender

SAFETY

Chris Holland



How do I know if a **buyer is qualified?**

Don't Waste Your Time On Unqualified Buyers!
Do What Real Estate Agents Do

How much of your valuable time and money will you spend on the masses to find just one buyer? Most people don't want to talk about their finances, even with their best friend. But finding out if someone is financially qualified to buy your house is the best way to know that if they make you an offer they can back it up, and that they are really in the market to buy now.

A good real estate agent will get their buyers pre-qualified or pre-approved with a lender **BEFORE** they take them house shopping. Asking a potential buyer for a letter from their lender is a great way to verify that they are both ready and capable of buying your home, without asking personal and annoying financial questions.

Questions for pre-qualifying buyers

Every real estate agent has war stories about indecisive, demanding, disloyal, or financially irresponsible clients. They've learned firsthand how important it is to prequalify buyers. Ask buyers to fill out a detailed questionnaire to determine their motivation before signing a contract.

Below are some questions that might help determine if your prospective buyer is ready, willing and able

1. How long have you been looking?
2. Are you working with an agent? If so, whom?
3. Do you rent or own your current home?
4. If own, must you sell your current home? If so, where is it located, how long has it been for sale?
5. If renting, must you complete a lease period before buying? How long is the lease? How much is the rent?
6. How soon do you need to move?
7. How long have you been looking?
8. What's the name of the lender that prequalified you?
9. Is there a particular location you prefer?
10. How many bedrooms do you need?
11. Will anyone else be helping you make the buying decision?
12. What special requirements do you need in a property?
13. Where are you employed?
16. Where is your spouse employed?
17. Have you purchased a home before?

Chris Holland



THE PURCHASE CONTRACT

It may be called a sales contract, real estate contract, purchase agreement, sales agreement or purchase and sale agreement. Whatever it is called, it is a legal document. When signed by both parties, it's a contract that will govern the entire transaction.

Key provisions of the **purchase contract**

Purchase contract, in most cases, is a standard form contract with any necessary exhibits attached. The riders include a property disclosure statement, financial contingency, appraisal contingency, and association/assessment exhibit. The contract can include many provisions but should include the following items:

- Date of purchase offer, time limit of offer, acceptance and binding date.
- The purchase price of the home.
- Amount of the earnest money.
- A legal description of the property.
- The closing date.
- The closing attorney.
- Due diligence period.
- A financial contingency exhibit if the buyer intends to apply for a loan. This states that the buyer intends to obtain a loan in a specified amount at a specified interest rate within a specified period of time. If the buyer is unable to obtain financing, the buyer may be released from his obligation. The seller usually allows the buyer 14 to 21 days to obtain a loan commitment.
- Provision that the seller will provide good title to the home.
- Any restrictions or limitations that could affect title.
- Provision for paying utility bills, property taxes, and similar expenses through the closing date.
- Provision for return of the buyer's earnest money deposit if the sale is not completed as, for example, when the buyer has been unable to obtain financing after reasonable or good faith efforts to do so.
- Provision for taking possession. Along with a firm date for transferring possession from the seller to the buyer, the buyer should include a provision that requires the seller to pay a specific amount of rent per day if the seller does not leave the home by the agreed date. Provision for a walk-through inspection within a specified period before the date of closing to allow the buyer to make sure conditions are as they should be according to the contract.
- Signatures of the parties.

HOW TO CHOOSE **AN ATTORNEY**

Consider the following factors:

AREA OF SPECIALTY:

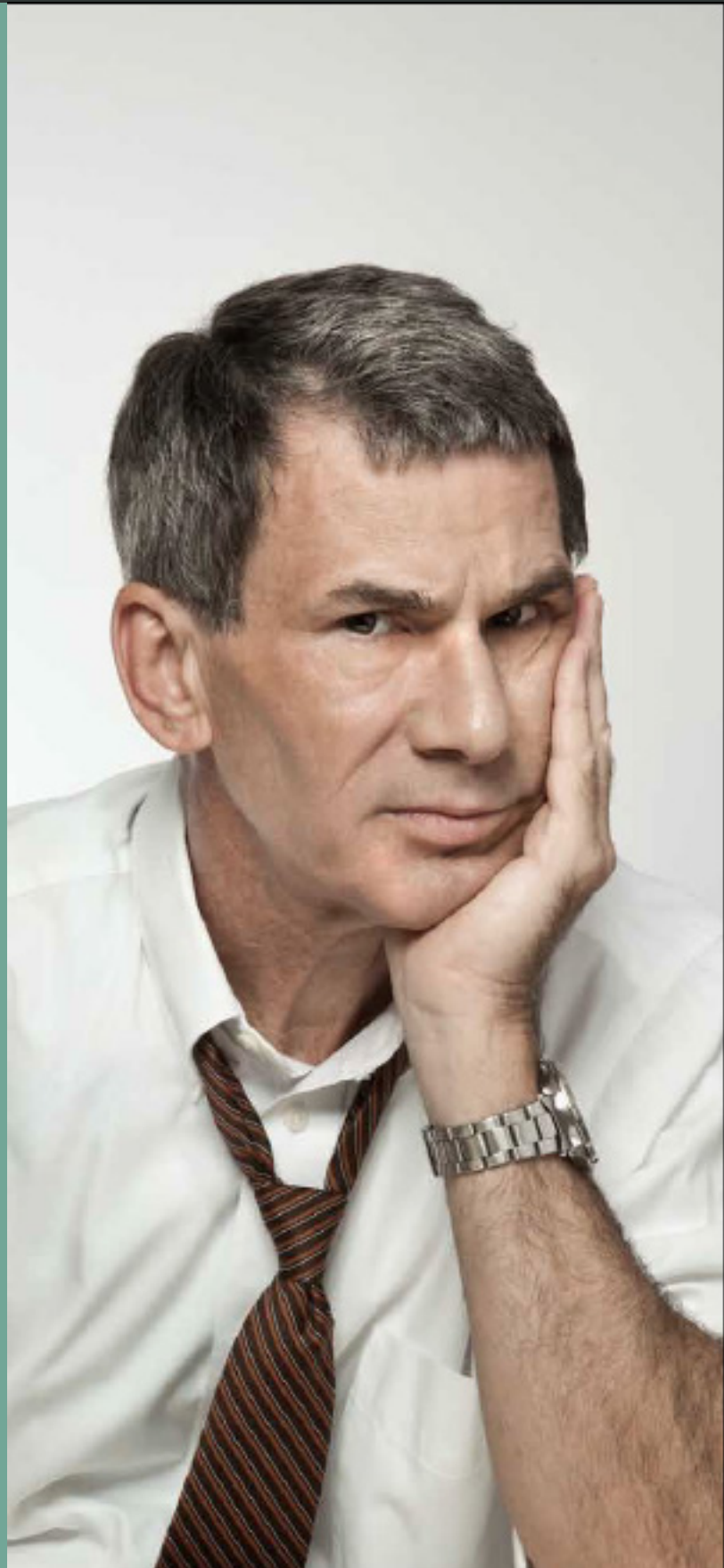
While it is not necessary to engage an attorney who specializes in real estate transactions, you will want an attorney who is familiar with the laws and practices regarding real estate in your area. It's a good idea to select an attorney who has had some recent experience in handling real estate matters.

OFFICE LOCATION:

Your attorney will need to review agreements and papers and appear at the closing. Costs can be minimized with a local attorney.

COMFORT LEVEL:

Real estate transactions can be very trying. You will want to hire an attorney who can smooth the way, not one who will create obstacles to your purchase or sale of a home.



► FEES FOR SERVICES

Fees for services normally are competitive, but the major factors in determining the fee will be the complexity of the transaction and the time required to complete it. The estimated fee the lawyer discusses on your first visit usually is just that -- an estimate. The actual fee will depend on the type and amount of work involved. For example, if your attorney reviews a purchase offer only once or twice and the transaction moves forward without problems, the estimated fee should be close to the actual fee. If your attorney reviews several purchase offers or problems arise that require your attorney's intervention, the fee will be higher than the estimate.

Attorneys who are familiar with real estate work should be able to give you a fairly accurate estimate of what their work will entail. If you run into problems, be sure to ask your attorney how much the extra time is affecting your final bill. It may be helpful to remember that spending a bit more in attorney's fees so that potential problems are resolved before closing on your purchase may save you time and money later when you decide to sell the property. As the seller, it is likely that you will have to bear the cost of resolving these deferred problems before you're able to sell.

► DISCUSS ATTORNEY FEES IN ADVANCE

Ask about fees during your first visit, this is the only way to avoid surprises. You might be like many who are uncomfortable asking about a professional's fees, but most attorneys expect to discuss fees. In fact, you might be wise to avoid working with an attorney who wants to postpone this discussion. Most attorneys charge by the hour, but some have an established fee for a real estate transaction.