

THE MOST MONEY FOR YOUR HOME

When selling a house, we all share the same goal - to sell it quickly and at the highest price possible.

If you've placed a house on the market, you may have possibly enjoyed the thrill of receiving that first offer. Unfortunately, you may have also experienced the disappointment of a much lower offer, or one that doesn't come for weeks or months.

Most people buy a house for emotional reasons, most real estate professionals agree. The desire for a comfortable home and lifestyle propels buyers to purchase a specific house.

The easiest way to understand this is to remember your own experience of purchasing a home. You had some idea of what you were looking for, and you probably clutched a list of desirable features. You may have looked at several houses, but none of them seemed just right. Then one day it happened when you least expected it - there it was. Within minutes you knew this was the one; you were overtaken by a powerful emotion. If two houses are similar, buyers will choose the one that touches them emotionally.

The same mind-set applies when the roles are reversed, when you are the seller and not the buyer. Only when a buyer "feels" as if your house can be a home will they acknowledge that it could be. The emotion that overpowers the prospective buyer can be compared to love at first sight.

There are several ways to approach a buyer, but one of the most important ways is to make sure when your house is ready to be placed on the market, it plays to the largest audience. Selling your house should go quickly, smoothly and profitably. Dressing your house to achieve a profitable sale can help you buy your dream home.

Gertrude Singer, a REALTOR with National Realty in Florida, said that the first and most important step to dressing for success is uncluttering.

"Clutter makes rooms and the entire house feel smaller. Uncluttering makes every room in your house look and feel more spacious. Your goal is to create a roomy, comfortable feeling that's inviting to prospective buyers,".

Uncluttering also means organizing. Show buyers that you have a place for everything and everything in its place. By putting everything away neatly, buyers will feel that by living in your house they, too, could be well organized. Ultimately, less is more.

Another important step is cleaning - not just everyday cleaning, but a thorough spring-cleaning. According to John Kuehne with Pruitt Real Estate, Inc., "a deeply clean house not only looks great, it feels uplifting, and as new as when you first bought it."

Kuehne also suggests removing any old and stained carpeting and replacing it with light colored tiles to give the impression of a large, clean room. An unclean house will create doubt and apprehension in a prospective buyer.

If anyone in your household smokes, consider smoking outside, and use a carpet freshening agent each time you vacuum. Singer also suggests burning scented candles or baking a batch of cookies to give your house that homey, lived-in feeling.

Now that you have done away with the clutter, your house is sparkling clean, and the scent of cookies baking in the oven permeates the entrance to your house, your next step should be to concentrate on repairs.

A house will not sell for top dollar if any detail, whether large or small, is in need of maintenance. These would include a leaky faucet, a cracked tile, or peeling paint. These may signal a warning to a buyer, creating the fear that larger maintenance problems could be lurking beneath the surface.

Kuehne suggests the seller make a complete list of repairs, small and large. Look at the house through the buyer's eyes. Replace any cracked or broken window panes, repair wood rot, re-caulk where needed, patch all cracks and nail holes, replace missing or loose tiles, replace old carpet, tighten loose doorknobs, and lubricate squeaky hinges. These fix-ups will ultimately help you receive the offer you want.

And, finally, a word about a beloved member of your family: your pet. Pets that live in your house will make a strong, possibly negative statement. Research shows that half of all potential buyers are either allergic to, dislike, or are afraid of pets. While your house is on the market, keep Fido outside as much as possible. If that's not possible, be sure to clean, vacuum and neutralize odors daily to keep your house smelling fresh. Consider asking a neighbor to watch your pet in their home while you're showing your house to prospective buyers.

There is no magic to getting the most for your home. Every house will sell; eventually - it's just a matter of when and for how much. It only takes one buyer, but which one? You decide.