5 THINGS HOME SELLERS DO THAT HOME BUYERS HATE

If you want buyers' hearts to beat faster when they see your home, avoid these five deadly home-showing mistakes.

So you're about to put your home on the market? In that case, I assume you want to take every legal and ethical advantage to sell your home for top dollar without dropping your price. To do that you need just ONE thing: An eager, qualified, and willing buyer.

The good news is that buyer is out there looking for your home right now.

But here's what's happening to that buyer. Although they've been looking at houses online for months, they only recently contacted a real estate agent because they need to be in by ___ (Christmas, the start of school, by summer, etc). Now the agent is scrambling to find them a house they like, but the buyers are discovering that seeing houses in person is a lot different than seeing them online. The online pictures never look like the home in reality. The location is never as nice as the marketing made it seem. And the sellers are getting in the way, resulting in buyers being turned off from homes they might have otherwise considered.

How are sellers getting in the way? By making the following kinds of mistakes…

MISTAKE #1: LEAVING YOUR HOME LIKE YOU LIVE IN IT

When marketing your home, you must approach it as a show-piece, not a home. It is no longer your home. It is now a commodity. If you leave the beds unmade, dishes in the sink, dirty clothes on the floor of the kid's rooms, clutter on the counters, or any of the other many ways you might live normally, you are seriously damaging the potential sale of your home.

Buyers see dozens of homes in a row. When they walk into yours, they're instantly comparing it to all the others they just saw. If yours is messy, it will affect how they feel about your home. In my experience, the VAST majority of home buyers do not look past the clutter to see the good "bones" of your house. A messy house immediately lowers its value, and sends many buyers running.

Cooking and other odors are another problem. Frying oil, smelly teenager rooms, and animal odors are big turn-offs. Attempts should be made to air the house and make it "fresh-smelling."

Does that mean you need to stage your home? Staging (decorating it like a showroom) definitely helps sell homes, for the same reason that clutter deters home sales. People buy

based on how they feel. However, you don't need a professional stager if your own home furnishings are nice. They don't have to be new, just tidy. In fact, the only staging you might need to do is removing things. Most families should pack 1/3 to ½ of their goods before selling. That leaves the attention on a few show pieces, allowing the house to shine through.

MISTAKE #2: AVOIDING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Remember the metaphor of the white elephant in the middle of the room? It refers to an obvious problem that no one wants to mention, so everyone talks around it, even though it's right there for all to see. If your home has a white elephant issue, it's usually better to call attention to it, rather than pretending it doesn't exist.

If there are large cracks in your pool decking, for instance, point these out to the buyer and tell them the range of fixes you've explored. Don't offer to fix them or provide an allowance for fixing them, but at least let the buyer know you've addressed them. If the next door neighbor's dogs bark incessantly at strangers, warn the buyers that when they go into the back yard, this will happen for a while until the dogs get to know them. Buyers hate barking dogs! Perhaps prove your point by going outside first.

If the dishwasher is old and beat up, if the countertops are chipped, if the bathtub needs resurfacing, point these things out, but then say, *"I've done so much already by __, __, and __ that I decided I'd just have to leave this for the buyer. I know it's a bit of an inconvenience, but the house has so much to offer in other ways."*

MISTAKE #3: BEING HOME DURING SHOWINGS

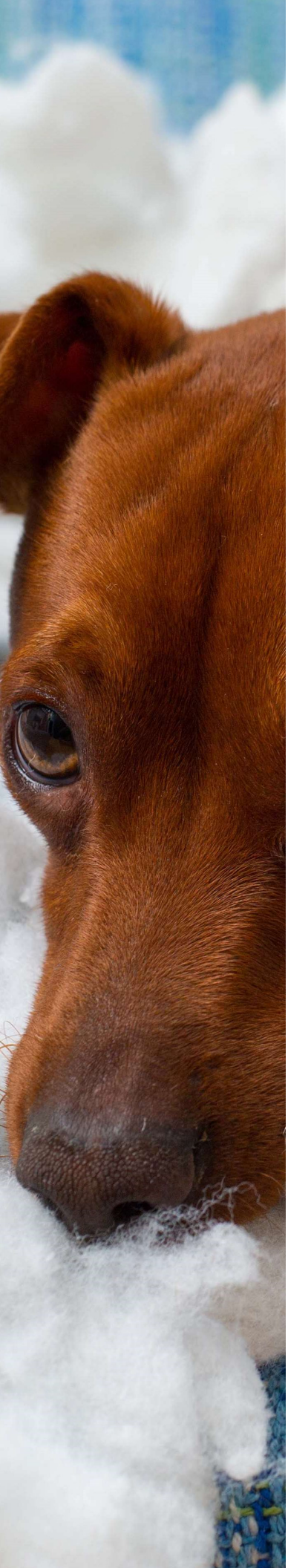
Sellers being at home during a showing are a big reason buyers don't buy a house that might have made their short list. "What?" you say. "Are you saying that just because the seller is in the home, the buyer doesn't buy it?" Yes, that's what I'm saying, believe it or not. The best way to show your house is to **go away and let the agent show it**.

Even trying to be unobtrusive doesn't work. I've seen buyers walk away from perfectly good homes because the seller was hovering in the kitchen, sitting in the backyard, or working in the laundry room. They were trying to stay out of the way, but the seller's presence distracted the buyers, making them feel like intrusive guests who were not free to consider how they'd live in the home themselves.

As a seller, you may want to point out all the wonderful features of your home, but the fact is the buyers just don't care. Buyers want to experience the home for themselves. If there's something unusual that they wouldn't ordinarily notice, you can point it out in writing.

When it comes to showing your house, let the agents do it while you go out for 15 minutes. If you come back after that time and the buyers are still hanging around, that's a good sign, and perfect timing on your part. Now the buyers will have seen all they want. At this point, a few words from you about the wonderful neighborhood would be icing on the cake.

Note: If you have teenagers or night workers/day sleepers at home, this is a challenge that must be overcome. The only solutions might be to work with the agent to schedule showings at specific times—though that has its own set of problems (see #4 below).



MISTAKE #4: MAKING SHOWINGS DIFFICULT TO SCHEDULE

Putting your home on the market when you still live in it means inconvenience. But homes only sell when they can be seen by buyers. And buyers, unfortunately, have wildly varied schedules. Someone might suddenly have an afternoon free from work and call their agent to go look at a few new listings. That agent might want to show your house with as little as an hour notice.

When home sellers create wild conditions for seeing their home, agents throw their hands up in frustration and simply drop that house from the list of potential showings, or they're forced to tell their buyers that your house is not available during the times the buyer can see it. Most buyers will simply move to the next home on their list if they can't get in on their own schedule.

When it comes to scheduling showings, ideally you will do one of two things. The best is that you will have found a new home to move into and will have vacated your home for sale. This allows agents to come and go at will, and buyers to drop in on the spur of the moment.

But in a fast market, most sellers stay in their homes while selling. If you'll be in your home when you sell, you'll want to talk to me about the best ways to balance accessibility against inconvenience. One way to do that is to provide "showing hours" when agents can come and go at will using the secure lock box, while after hours they have to set an appointment with you.

MISTAKE #5: NOT MANAGING PETS

While your pet might be the most wonderful, friendly pet on the planet, some buyers are going to be afraid, turned off, or distracted by it.

I've seen buyers leave houses quickly because the son's tarantula (in a glass aquarium) scared the heck out of them. I've seen buyers leave quickly because they were afraid of the owner's 12 year old toy poodle. I've seen buyers run from squawking birds, turn their nose up at kitty litter, and run away in revulsion from poopie piles all over the back yard.

The inconvenience of showing your home extends to your pets, too. Consider crating the dogs, cleaning the kitty litter and the yard daily, covering the pet spiders and snakes, and finding a babysitter for the birds.

FINAL WORD

When we talk about marketing your home, one of our conversations will be about how to show your home to advantage. I'll give you a list of do's and don'ts that will make it easy for you to self-stage and prepare your home for sale, and we'll work together to solve potential showing problems like those described in this report. Our goal is to sell your home for top dollar as fast as possible and avoiding these mistakes will help tremendously!

Do you have questions or concerns about showing your house? Give us a call. We look forward to talking with you!