



I Am Listing My Home—Do You Have Advice?

Selling one's home is almost always a very significant event in one's financial and personal life. It is a decision and process that you should not take lightly—especially in a market in which there is a lot of competition with regard to homes on the market. This article will present recommendations from experts.

Model homes are designed to give buyers the illusion of perfection. Mary Cook, an interior designer with Mary Cook & Associates, has built her business around "merchandising" model homes for builders nationwide, and she says sellers could learn from tricks of model merchandisers in preparing their own home for sale. Here are a few tips she shared with the Chicago Tribune:

1. *First impressions count.* "I'd put the effort right into what they see when they walk through the door," Cook says. "If you 'capture' them and elevate their mood right away, it will carry the house better than if you had to earn their 'uplifted emotions' later on in other rooms of the house."

2. *Make sure scale and proportion fit.* Cook says many sellers struggle with high ceilings in McMansions and what to do with those two-story walls. "They say, do I hang pictures at 14 feet? They're hesitant to go out and buy a big, monster piece of art, but if a professional designer would see that you've done that, they'd say it's perfect," Cook says. "If you have a whole bunch of little things, putting them in a group together on the wall can have the same effect, though there's an art to grouping them."

3. *Use color to enhance.* Staying in the safety of a neutral color zone, she says, isn't always going to work, but be careful in the color you choose because

it can have a big effect on buyers. "I remember years ago we did a model home where we painted the walls a banana yellow, and it wasn't received well at all," Cook says. "Older people would catch a glimpse of themselves in the mirror, and it was harsh; they just didn't look good. We changed it to a peachy color, and people seemed to feel better in there. It goes back to elevating the buyer's mood."

The Keys

- ⇒ *Great First Impression*
- ⇒ *Photos*
- ⇒ *Color Scheme*
- ⇒ *Claims*

4. *Stand out.* "Presume that the buyer has three houses lined up, and they're all at the right price," Cook says. "You have to identify all the reasons why somebody would possibly want to live there and what makes your place different." For example, she'll often have a basket on the countertop filled with a collection of dining brochures and maps.

In our second segment, Bankrate.com asked real estate agents what listing red flags are turning off their buyers.

1. *No photos.* "One red flag in many buyers' eyes is the lack of photos for a listing," says Don Tepper with Long & Foster in Burke, Va. "There can be some legitimate reasons for few (or no) photos in a listing: The sellers want privacy, or they have valuables they don't want in the photos. But many would-be buyers--rightly or wrongly--assume that there's something wrong." Tepper recommends about a dozen photos for listings and photos that match the

home's description and showcases its best features.

2. *Outlandish claims.* Referring to the listing as the best property on the market might not be a good idea, says Ziad Najm, a broker at Cedar Real Estate in Mission Viejo, Calif. "Some buyers may be turned off to begin with and some will inevitably be disappointed if the claim doesn't live up to expectations," Najm says. Instead, Najm recommends focusing on adjectives that are flattering to the property but leave some room for interpretation.

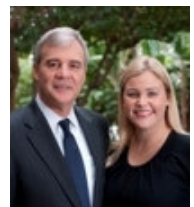
3. *Priced too low.* You want to price the property competitively but pricing too low may make some buyers suspicious or attract unqualified buyers. "Typically, multiple buyers will be attracted to the low asking price and eventually the sales price will climb close to market value as competing offers bid up the price," Najm says. "However, the strategy is not without risk in that some buyers will be alienated by a potential bidding war."

4. *Listing a property "as is" in the description.* That's not a deal breaker but when you see "as is" in a listing, buyers might be cautious, says Diane Conaway, a San Diego broker with RE/MAX United. Some buyers take the "as is" phrase as the "previous owners stole everything including the kitchen and bathrooms," Conaway says. "Our contract states 'as is' anyway..."

Sources: BankRate.com and Chicago Tribune

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