



Preparing for the market

Free report

Things you can do that greatly enhance the chances of successfully selling your home

It's interesting that when people begin house hunting they start with a course of action having specifics in mind as to what they want, how much they'll pay and where they want it. In other words they begin the task of house hunting in a logical state of mind.

Ultimately, however, they generally buy for emotional reasons - for reasons such as lifestyle and image which are often quite different to what they originally had in mind.

The final purchase decision is usually governed by a feeling for a particular house that leads to the conclusion that they belong there.

With this in mind, your task as a home seller is to present your home in a manner that offers a level of ambience that will appeal to the home's potential buyer.

Presentation really does matter. Well presented homes have a far greater chance of selling quickly and a better chance of achieving top dollar.

We stress this because it is not unusual in some localities to see as much as \$10,000 variance between identical style homes - all because of presentation, so some time and effort can be a great investment.

The key to doing this is to view the house, no longer as your home but as a product to be marketed. This can take some effort, but if you want to maximise its potential, the task is necessary. It also helps to inspect other homes for sale and maybe a few display homes - see how they're presented.

And whilst we're not suggesting you can turn an old home into a display home, very often without much effort you can enhance a home's appeal with just a few minor adjustments.

Knox Family Real Estate



Would you buy this home?

Stand back and look at the home objectively. Would you buy this home? Ask a friend - or better still, one of our representatives would be happy to give you some forthright thoughts.

The key is to remember that you're in competition with other properties on the market at the same time in your area. Do what is necessary to make the house stand out from the competition by making it fresher, cleaner and better maintained without going over the top.

Can you renovate - and make a profit?



The task that pays for itself more effectively than any other is painting.

If a home is a bit grubby - maybe the paint is flaking in the bathroom, passageway walls have become tired looking, maybe there's quite a few paint chips where the paint has been knocked over the years: then making the effort to repaint can be well worthwhile.

It's one of a few substantial tasks other than obvious repair work that pays for itself.

If you're wanting to remodel some of your home and you're also thinking about selling it, an important consideration relates to how soon you're likely to be wanting to sell.

This question is important. If you're remodelling with the purpose of improving your lifestyle - so that for a time you're going to enjoy the home, that is a different scenario to making improvements to increase its value for selling.

Generally, (there have been exceptions to this rule) if you're planning to sell soon, the recommendation in regards to major developments is don't. If you're having the work done professionally you probably won't get back what you invested. DIY to a professional level, on the other hand, may well pay handsomely but not everyone has the time, skills, tools and inclination to do this.

If you're planning to stay a while and the decision on which part of the home to be remodelled relates to return-on-investment, the following may help the decision making process.

According to at least one study, kitchens and bathrooms offer the best return and of course if you're planning to stay a while to enjoy the fruits of your work then they'll probably translate into the improvements likely to increase your enjoyment of the property the most.

The survey found that minor kitchen remodelling is likely to result in 94% of the cost being recovered at resale. Bathroom addition 89%, major kitchen remodelling 87%, family room addition 84%, two storey additions 84%, deck addition, 70%, garage if no garage exists 40% and swimming pool 35%.

The task that receives the best return for investment is painting - 100% while new carpets come in at 80%.



How to set impressions

Positive or negative impressions are said to be made within five seconds of entering a home so it pays to create the right scenes and scents to make it attractive to buyers.

Home presentation experts recommend less is best when it comes to room presentation so you need to edit your stuff.

The first and foremost task is to reduce clutter - the trappings gathered over the years that fill a home with its familiarity, but can make a home look and feel small to outsiders.

If you plan to discard things before moving, do it before the home goes on the market or perhaps put surplus furniture, books overflowing from bookshelves or trophies that fill every cranny into storage or at a friends place.

You need to create a feeling of spaciousness, particularly in the kitchen and bathroom.

Countertops should be as clear as possible.

The garden

The garden should be tidied and even if it is not a lush showpiece, at least remove the weeds and throw a few flowering annuals in at the front. Small bucks - good results.

And if you have a family into car repairs - get their stuff moved. Bits of cars, oil stains and hoists for the removal of engines are big no-no's when it comes to presentation.

If you want to enhance your chances of a good price that sort of stuff has to go.

Even if your home is in a down-market area it's important not to look like an industrial site.

Room by room

Presenting your house to its maximum advantage

Lounge, family and dining rooms

If possible, keep the furniture to a minimum so that traffic flow is easier and it appears reasonably spacious and uncluttered. These rooms should appear comfortable, inviting and definitely clear of clutter.

If there are mirrors make sure they're spotless, and the tops of coffee and dining tables once again free of clutter.

A good wood polish gives furniture a gleam and adds a clean smell to these rooms. If you have a display of silverware or something similar in these rooms ensure they're looking their best.

Kitchen

A kitchen can be a home's greatest asset or its biggest liability. The number one task is to ensure there are no cooking odours.

Fatty smells, onion, cabbage and Asian or Indian cooking odours tend to linger so ensure the kitchen is free of these, and even if it is not a stylish kitchen, it should be uncluttered and clean.

Attention should also be given to the stove hood filter because these are often the source of fatty smells.

The sink and cabinet fronts should shine with counter tops bare or at least uncluttered and clean.

Vinyl or ceramic floors need to be clean and any ceramic tiling should sparkle.

When an inspection is taking place make sure you hang out clean, ironed tea-towels while a display or fruit in a fruit bowl is a nice touch.

Bedrooms

Removal of clutter is the number one task if you don't need it, store it or throw it,

Once again spaciousness is the key as the greater impression given of space the better. Why do you think display homes always have small beds in them?

Make sure the bedrooms are well vacuumed. Nothing's worse than carpet fluff or dust around the edges of the beds, and any mirrors such as those on a dressing table need to sparkle.

When an inspection is about to happen make sure the beds are made and toys are cleared (within reason).

Bathrooms

There is one investment worth attending to if you're about to sell - the expenditure of replacing 1970's dark tiling - or badly cracked tiles. Bathrooms need to look light, bright, clean and uncluttered.

Ceramic tiling, basins, baths, shower recesses and mirrors need to be immaculate - even if they're old, most clean up well with a bit of elbow grease.

And if taps drip...now is the time to fix them.

Laundry

Much the same treatment as the bathroom - de-clutter! Many laundries are storage rooms so they often need a fair bit of attention.

Ideally they should appear inviting - not a cesspit of slave-labour.

Carports and garages

Remove as many oil stains as possible with a degreasing agent and of course de-clutter by removing junk, broken tools, old car parts, toys etc.

The same goes for the driveway - tidiness is essential to give a good impression.

The Entry



The entry is where the first impression is set so it needs to be clean and tidy. Paint the front door - even if it remotely needs it.

A nice touch is a few potted flowers such as petunias or vincas to add colour.

Appliances

It is important to clean the exterior of appliances, clean the oven interior and make sure the pantry is tidy and well arranged. You can just about guarantee it will be examined.

Refrigerator doors with a collection of notes sometimes look cute while others look like chaos - or some of the notes are private, ensure it's tidied or removed.



Showers and sinks



New tap washers are not expensive and they're easy to fit. If you haven't done this task before ask your hardware supplier to show you how.

Most importantly, remove any evidence of mildew from the shower recess, and from the ceiling and bath area. There are plenty of sprays that will do the job and you can also get mildew resistant paint.

When an inspection is about to take place make sure the towels displayed are presentable, and that the soap recess in the shower and basin are clean, and that the room has been well aired.

Checklist to avoid price mark-downs

Interior

Walls and ceilings

- Check condition of paint and wallpaper
- Repair cracks, holes or damage to plaster or wallboard

Windows and doors

- It's a painful job - but it has to be done! Windows must look good because it is important to let as much light into the house as possible - which means uncovering them from behind drapes and curtains. Just as it feels great to drive a car with spotless, polished windows, it's the same with a home. No matter if the house is old or new it is essential to clean windows, dust flywire and remove cobwebs from eaves and window frames.
- Check for smooth operation - remove sand in tracks especially from sliding doors
- Replace broken or cracked panes
- Repair glazing
- Check condition of weather stripping or caulking
- Check that doors open fully. If there's any damage - repair or replace. Oil if squeaky - especially the pantry door
- Test doorbell or chimes
- Test burglar alarms

Air-conditioning vents

- If the house is air-conditioned make sure the venting is clean. Grotty air venting in ceilings detracts from appearance

Floors

- Inspect for loose or missing tiles. If you have wooden floors, if possible, silence any squeaks
- Clean the carpets

Bathrooms

- Check the tile joints and grouting
- Check the condition of the paint especially the ceiling above the shower
- Check the condition of the exhaust fan/steam ventilation outlet
- Remove any mildew
- Make sure mirrors and glassware such as shower screens are clean

Kitchen

- Clean and polish appliances that will be on show
- Clean the exhaust fan
- Remove any accumulation of grease or dust from tiles, wall cabinets and floors
- Tidy the pantry
- Empty rubbish bins
- Ensure there are no cooking odours

Electrical system

- Exposed wiring is obviously not acceptable

- Repair broken switches and outlets

Plumbing

- Check for leaks at taps - repair if necessary
- Clear any slow running drains

Cooling systems

- Once again, if the home has ceiling vents make sure they're clean
- If there's a wall air-conditioner, polish it and remove any dust that may have accumulated in the venting
- If you have ceiling fans - remove dust

Laundry

- Check that it's clean and tidy
- Clothes dryer - remove lint
- Try to give an appearance of being spacious - remove any clutter that is moveable
- Check the paintwork
- Check for dripping taps

Exterior

Roof and gutters

- Replace any broken tiles
- If gutters are rusted - replace or repair them
- Eaves - if there are cobwebs - remove. If the eaves are filled in, make sure there's no dust or mould - repaint if necessary

Exterior walls and doors

- Apply a fresh coat of paint to the front door
- Repaint wherever necessary

Driveway

- Ensure it is clean and remove as much oil as possible

Garage/carport

- Ensure that the roll-a-door works smoothly
- Clean & tidy - throw out unnecessary items

Garden

- Mow and edge the lawn
- Prune anything that's out of control
- Weed and mulch flower beds
- Ensure hoses are put away

Swimming pool

- A pool needs to look sparkling clean, green pools are a turn-off. A pool must never appear to be unwanted or have the appearance of impending hard work

Courtyards/patios

- Ensure that cobwebs are removed
- Remove clutter and hose down
- If there's a barbecue, make sure it's clean

Check that the clothesline works and has not accumulated cobwebs

Showing your house to its maximum advantage

Little touches make a difference in presentation. If you find this difficult to understand go visit a few display homes.

First and foremost, unless the view outside is dreadful, open the curtains and let the light in. The more light the better.

Obviously the windows need to be clean otherwise they'll detract from the presentation.

Buyers like a house to be bright and light so accommodate them and turn on most of the lights as well. If you want your windows to really sparkle - the spray-on foam glass cleaners available from commercial glaziers are the best.

Make sure the house smells good. Whilst baking cookies or percolating coffee is a tad overdoing it, at least ensure the house is well aired, the carpets vacuumed with a deodorant, and any pet smells eradicated.

Incense?

If you choose to do this, don't use a powerful incense that leaves your home smelling like a joss-house. Subtlety is the secret - not sledge hammer stuff!

It's probably better to air out the house but close the windows before an inspection.

Obviously everything should be as spotless as possible with sinks, basins and toilets cleaned, tea-towels and hand-towels looking good and of course dishes, pots and pans put away.

Place a small bowl of pot-pourri in the toilets and ensure they're looking as good as a toilet can look.

A fruit bowl laden with nice looking fruit is a nice touch in the kitchen as is a bunch of flowers in the hallway, the lounge or family room. There's something about abundantly filled fruit bowls and filled firewood containers that give a feeling of abundance and warmth. That feeling is one to be created in a home for all it's worth.

Outside:

If it's summer give a light hosing to the garden near the doorways - and if you've got a paved courtyard give that a quick hosing to freshen it up.

And of course remove clothes from clotheslines.

Check that the house temperature is comfortable and then go for a walk leave the agent to accommodate the visitors.

Unless absolutely essential...do not be there. It's a fact, no matter what your people skills are like, owners are a liability in home presentations for one simple reason - buyers feel they are intruding when the home owner is present.

The presence of an owner restricts them from speaking, makes them self conscious and they'll be in and out in no time with just a perfunctory inspection.

You definitely enhance the chance of a sale by not being there.