

Million-dollar home-selling techniques to move your humble dwelling fast

By Marilyn Kennedy Melia • Bankrate.com

Any home seller can glean inspiration by examining techniques that are used to sell high-end houses.

Here are 4 strategies that sellers use to sell swanky homes:

- Grabbing the attention of likely buyers.
- Doing something more interesting than a standard open house.
- Creating awesome photos, then showing them effectively.
- Staging with "lifestyle touches."



Getting noticed by likely buyers

The job of a real estate professional is to attract as many serious buyers as possible, says Bud Clark, managing broker for Willis Allen Real Estate, a San Diego brokerage affiliated with Christie's International Real Estate.

Owners of 7-figure homes typically receive lavish marketing. It's about "reaching the people who can buy these properties," Clark says. These buyers expect quality presentations.

Ben Moss, a real estate agent with ONE Sotheby's International Realty in Coral Gables, Florida, says: "As an agent, I try to be creative: 'How will I get the right people into this house?'"

Terry Denoux, owner of Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate Northwest Living in Bend, Oregon, says he finds inspiration by asking sellers, "What will you miss most about your home?" If a spectacular view is a favorite feature, it can mean an open party in the evening on the deck, he explains.

"You have to present to them a lifestyle they want."

And that brings up open houses.

Spicing up the open house

"It is rare that a home will sell from an open house," Denoux says.

A high-end practice -- throwing a party or special event where agents and potential buyers are invited -- can substitute for the traditional open house.

"I have invite-only cocktail parties and generally incorporate a fun theme, whether it be a wine and cheese party or even having acrobats," says Samantha DeBianchi of DeBianchi Real Estate in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The aim, she explains, is "something exciting that leaves the buyers having fun and still remembering the property."

When he had a condo listing in an artsy neighborhood, Mike Ferrante, an agent with Century 21 HomeStar in Highland Heights, Ohio, organized other agents with listings in the building to hold a joint open house, then invited galleries and restaurants to offer samples.

Inviting a local business gives potential buyers a "taste of the neighborhood," agrees Rachel Musiker, spokeswoman for Redfin, adding that agents of the real estate firm have "held opens catered by a coffee shop around the corner."

Creating awesome photographs

It's not so much the camera or equipment that makes for quality presentations, it's the person behind the lens, says Alan Blakely, founder of the trade group Real Estate Photographers of America and International.

At the high end, Blakey says, "they may spend several thousand dollars to hire an architectural photographer" who is "trained to shoot for magazines and will take more time, and produce photos that are more polished."

Below that level, quality is attainable, Blakely says. In large markets, it's common for brokerages to have staff photographers. And, third-party photo firms specializing in real estate offer levels of service.

One of the key ways to select a listing agent, says Moss, is to view how the agent has treated past listings on the Web and in brochures and ads.

Drones and slideshows

Although agents say some drone photography is relatively inexpensive, an often more cost-effective alternative is a camera mounted on a pole, which provides an expansive aerial view, says Cynthia Nowak, spokeswoman for Surefield, a Seattle real estate company that uses 3-D home-tour technology.

On the Web, the video slideshow is still common, whereby viewers click on views of rooms and a home's outside, although some agents say it's outdated.

The 3-D tour, "which gives you a feel for the size of the rooms," says Nowak, is what some realty companies now use as a standard offering for all listings, not just high-end.

Staging with 'lifestyle touches'

The purpose of staging -- decluttering and redecorating -- is to impart "the lure of living there," says Michael Seiler, professor of real estate and finance at William & Mary.

Donna Dazzo, president of Designed to Appeal, a New York City and Hamptons staging firm, agrees: "You have to present to them a lifestyle they want."

If she's staging a pricey home on a golf course, for instance, Maureen Bray, president of the Real Estate Staging Association, says she'll highlight the lifestyle with golf clubs tucked into a corner of a mud room and other golf-themed touches.

But for a midprice home in a suburb, where the lifestyle attraction is soccer and Little League teams, "a well-organized garage, with sports equipment neatly displayed" is an effective enticer, Bray says.

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Posted: Dec. 18, 2015