

## Wooing the market

There can be few people who doubt the residential property market currently favours buyers and that sellers, faced with extensive competition from alternative options, must do everything possible to present their homes in the most appealing fashion.

By [John Roberts](#) 31 Jul 2013

A sound way of determining if your house is market-ready is to ask yourself: would you buy your own home? It is a question requiring honesty, best answered through an objective analysis of its best and worst features.

If being objective is difficult, get input from someone else who will be honest, since honesty is how to determine a realistic selling date and achievable price. Sellers generally do not see their homes with the same eyes as prospective buyers - broken windows, peeling paintwork, missing roof tiles, sagging gates and mould in the shower tend to become common place. Yet, they are detractors that will stand out a mile to buyers who will either be put off the property completely or use those issues to justify a low offer.

Property professionals constantly see sellers repeating mistakes, directly impacting on the pricing they achieve or even reaching the point in the negotiations where an offer can be placed on the table.

### First impressions count

What then would be some pointers for achieving the ideal show house and thus bringing potential buyers to the door?

Gary Player famously stated you only get one chance to make a first impression. The curb, as the property sense of arrival, is essential in shaping visitors' perspectives - and that means being show-house ready includes ensuring the garden or landscaping is tidy, manicured and inviting.

If the gates sag, the driveway is broken and the unkempt garden full of weeds, schedule some maintenance before putting it on the market. Remove obstacles and repair or replace anything that could be distracting - broken roof tiles, loose gutters, cracked paving tiles and poorly maintained garage doors or driveways can be distracting.

It is now that a repaint should be considered. Painting is one of the most effective ways of sprucing up a property, but, while your favourite colour may be purple, choose a neutral shade to broaden the appeal. Internally, neutral colours provide buyers with a blank canvas on which to place their signature.

Cluttered rooms have a negative impact on potential home buyers, so another critical part of show house preparation is removing excess furniture, cleaning out garages, neatening studies and cleaning out cupboards.

People also love light meaning bright interiors sell homes. Typically older homes have heavy curtaining, so attempt to bring in as much light as possible. If natural sunlight is limited, ensure the lighting is new and bright. For viewings ensure every light is turned on and make sure the bathrooms are well lit and bedside lamps actually work.

## **A buyer's perspective**

Invest time and effort into analysing every room and undertaking those repairs you have been ignoring for months or years. Door and window handles, garden gates, balustrading, built-in cupboards, tiles and air-conditioners all require regular maintenance and repairs, so get it done before putting the house on the market. Replace worn items with new ones.

Pay attention to detail by reviewing your home from a buyer's perspective. Worn light switches and old silicone strips can easily be replaced; bathrooms need to be spotless; and fresh white beads are essential to selling. Shower floor and doors need to be immaculate and glass hobs and extractor fans should be as good as new.

Avoid anything that could provide strong odours including items that relate to cooking or pets in the home. Animal smells are extremely off-putting and while you may be oblivious to doggy odours emanating from your carpets, buyers will not be.

This is exactly the type of problem an honest friend should share to allow you to do the requisite cleaning to make your home market-ready. Remember that smell is a powerful sense so use it to your advantage by including fragrant scents in the rooms and cupboards.

## **Value for money**

However, it is also critical to remember that buyers prepared to upgrade or renovate properties are in the vast minority and are unwilling to pay a premium for a property for fear of over-capitalising. It is thus imperative that sellers ask themselves what they would expect to get for their money and then, if their home offers this.

While shortcomings like location are unchangeable, there are budget-friendly improvements that significantly improve the property's appearance and appeal.

Sellers should tour their neighbourhood to see other properties on the market; establish the competition and ascertain asking prices.

The bottom line is that if you want the top price for your home, you have to give the market a top product. If not doing that, buyers will simply move on to the next property.

## **ABOUT JOHN ROBERTS**

John Roberts is CEO of Just Property Group.  
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