

The Complete Communicator

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Five Tips on Selling in a Slow Market

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Selling a house in a slow real estate market can be difficult. In times like these, it's not enough to simply list your home and wait; you actually have to *sell your home*. Here are five tips from a real estate sales rep to get you started.

Know Your Market

Learn your market, the value of your property and your competition. Most sellers operate in the dark, simply offering the property for the price they want, without regard to what other homes have sold for and are currently selling for. Undervaluing or overpricing your home can cost you tens of thousands of dollars.

Price Your Home Right

With homes sales slowing and prices plunging, there's little doubt that selling for a good price in today's market is going to be tricky. So if you try to ask as much for your property as your neighbour got a year ago, you're going to turn off potential buyers. Instead, price your home conservatively by looking at similar houses currently on the market. If you really want to stimulate a sale, you should under price your property by just a little. Trimming the price by a few thousand dollars can generate more foot traffic and create a buzz.

Make Your Home Presentable

Keep your house looking good at all times, repair things that are broken, and replace things that are rundown. Add a fresh coat of paint (neutral colors best), freshen up landscaping, trim trees, clean up clutters and remove personal items, so that prospective buyers can picture themselves in the home rather than seeing you there.

Be Flexible with Showings

It only takes one buyer to get your home sold. Don't make your realtor feel as though their request for a showing is an inconvenience.

Offer Flexible Terms

Often, the best way to sell a home more quickly in a buyers market is to adjust the terms of the sale instead of the price. While it may sometimes be necessary to adjust the asking price downward, or to negotiate a lower price with the buyer, sometimes offering an extended closing date will go a lot further.



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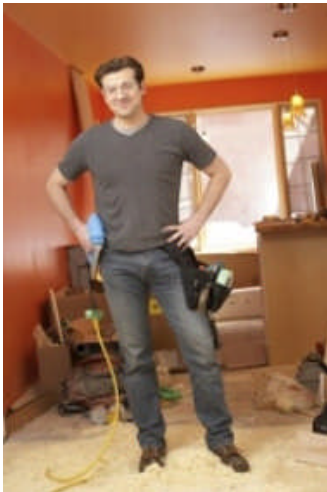
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(Source: Kevin Kittimer, Canwest News Service)

Golden Rules of Renovation

The Canadian Renovator's Council of the Canadian Home Builders' Association offers a number of golden rules to help renovating homeowners achieve their goals.

**Golden Rule# 1:
Don't choose a
renovator on price
alone.**



Keep the golden rules in mind.

The Canadian Renovator's Council of the Canadian Home Builders' Association offers a number of golden rules to help homeowners with their renovation goals.

- **Know what you want.** Take the time you need to explore the possibilities for your home and develop a firm plan. Begins with the fundamentals-what do you need and how you want your "new" home to look, feel and work for you and your family.
- **Set a realistic budget.** Decide as early as possible how much money you want to spend-this allows you and your renovator to focus on the work that is doable within that budget. Experienced renovators can provide sound cost advice.
- **Plan for the long term.** Thinking ahead avoids short-term renovations that may need to be redone in the future. Discuss your short- and long-term goals openly with your renovator. Professional renovators can conduct a thorough inspection of your home and offer suggestions for the most effective sequencing of work over a period of time.
- **Don't jeopardize the quality of your renovation by compromising on the quality of products or materials.** If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well, and that means using products that offer the right combination of performance, durability and aesthetics.
- **Don't choose a renovator on price alone.** While it is always tempting to go for the lowest price, you need to consider the implications of doing so. Does the renovator understand what's involved in your project and have the necessary experience? Will the renovator offer a warranty on the work? Will the renovator still be in business if you need to call back?
- **Protect yourself.** Dealing with a professional renovator is your greatest protection against an incompetent or unfinished job. A written contract spells out the arrangements between you and your renovator and describes your renovation in detail. Professional renovators also carry Worker's Compensation, liability insurance and any licenses required by your province.
- **And don't buy from a door to door salesperson without carefully checking out the company.** Before you enter into any kind of agreement, talk with friends and family. Contact your local Home Builders' Association to see if the company is a member. Also check with the Better Business Bureau to see if anyone has lodged a complaint against the company.

(Source: Canadian Home Builders Association)

Homemade Natural Cleaning Products

A lot of over-the-counter cleaning products are harsh, abrasive and even potentially dangerous to your home and family. If you are concerned about risks to your health or the environment, you may want to consider using homemade, all-natural cleaning products instead. Read on for some easy-to-make and effective homemade cleaning products.

White Vinegar (Don't use Malt!)

The queen of getting it clean, white vinegar, is mildly acidic and disinfecting. It's great for removing calcium deposits, such as those in your humidifier. It's also a potent grease and stain remover. You can use it to clean hard surfaces such as countertops and glass.

Glass/Hard Surface Cleaner: Combine ½ cup white vinegar with a gallon of water. Soak cloth, ring it out slightly and use on your surface. Keep a clean chore towel handy for drying.

Pure Soap

Pure soaps, such as Castile, don't contain any synthetic colours, scents or additives and are usually available in health and natural product stores. Pure soap is great for basic light cleaning and can be combined with a few drops of an essential oil for an added air-freshener effect.

Lemon Juice

Lemon juice is a great grease-cutter. When washing your dishes, add it to your water along with a pure soap. Lemon juice is also great for cutting through grease on porcelain and aluminum.

All-Purpose Cleanser: Combine ½ cup of pure soap, such as Castile, with one gallon of hot water and ¼ cup of lemon juice.

Salt

Salt is a great basic scrub that will give you extra cleaning power. Great for smaller jobs like removing tea stains from the inside of cups or cleaning out the coffee pot. Just fill pot with ice cubes, pour in some salt and swirl.

Baking Soda

Baking soda is another effective scrub and a gentler alternative to salt. You can also place an open box in your fridge and freezer to help eliminate odors.

Sink Scrub: Combine equal amounts of salt and baking soda to make a scrub for your kitchen sink.

(Source: Allison Dick, HGTV.ca)



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Homemade, all-natural cleaning products are easier on the environment.
