

Top 10 Ways Sellers Can Guarantee Their Home Won't Sell:

1. Be casual, not serious, about selling.

A sage once quipped, "Money is only important when you don't want something enough." Real estate expert R.L. Brown said that if half of the 58,000 sellers in Maricopa County removed their for-sale signs we'd be at normal inventory levels. Actions speak louder than words in this market. Discretionary sellers should wait for a less competitive environment.

2. Price it wrong.

A home properly priced is half sold. No amount of full-color ads, glossy fliers, multiple photos, virtual tours, agent luncheons, Goodyear blimps or pom-pom girls will compensate for a wrong, timid retail price.

3. Ignore your agent.

Attorneys believe if you represent yourself, you have a fool for a client. Doctors don't self-diagnose. Professionals use professionals. Even though many people believe they're experts on raising kids and real estate, full-time, career pros usually know what's best. Listen to them very carefully.

4. Micromanage the marketing.

If you sold cookware in college, carts in California, or carpeting in Cranston, it does not qualify you to second-guess your agent. If you had a real estate license years ago, save your stories about the "good old days" for your children. You can share your concerns and timelines, but leave the details to the listing pro.

5. Reject staging suggestions.

Someday shag multi-colored, sculptured carpeting will come back. Whitewashed cabinets, Navajo white walls, linoleum flooring, lots of personal photos, and Elvis paintings on black velvet need to go. Now.

6. Let Fido loose.

I recently entered a house and had two frisky, friendly black Labs run up to sniff me. Unfortunately, I had light-gray dress slacks on that day. Both wet stains lasted for hours. Until that day I didn't realize dogs enjoyed chewing the tassels on expensive loafers.

7. Talk to the buyers.

Life gets lonely at times. Why not ask the buyers where they grew up? Or how much they qualify for. Tell them about the vacant rental next door. Maybe they could babysit next weekend! Why not share war stories, horror movies or meatloaf recipes?

8. Sell personal items.

Wow, maybe the buyers want to buy the patio furniture or rotary lawnmower. You have only four more boxes of Girl Scout cookies to sell. Why not ask for a donation for the March of Dimes, the Humane Society, the local PBS station? Remember the saying, "loose lips sink ships."

9. Discount that smell.

My house doesn't smell of pets, baby diapers, curry powder, garlic, fried fish, coconut incense, cigars, manure, mulch, dairy farms or low tide. The buyer must be confusing my castle with a tract home.

10. Dismiss feedback.

What do buyers know anyway? They can't possibly mind my barbed wire fence, heavy-duty rebar, backyard bomb shelter, airport runway views, lights from the power plant, hum from the high-voltage lines, railroad tremors, scorpion skeletons, termite mud tubes and pet snakes. What are they thinking?

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This top 10 list is so accurate. We have all had (or currently have) clients who seem to employ one or several of these sale-killing tactics. Showing people this list up front might help them refrain from being their own worst enemy when employing a professional to sell their home. Thank you for posting this.

- Krista Browning, RE/MAX Real Estate Central, Calgary, AB

In our Atlanta-area market we have an oversupply of new-home inventory, with builders offering incredible incentives to buyers. So, what does the resale seller do? Nothing to compete. Suggestions of modernizing, updating, cleaning out, touching up, or offering closing costs up front go unheeded. The mentality of "I'm not going to remodel this house just to sell it" has to change. No one wants to buy someone else's repairs or outdated home, especially when they can go a mile down the road and buy new, possibly for less money with better terms.

- Lori Helman, RE/MAX Center, Dacula, Ga.