

How To Sell Your Home For More Money

*Strategies That Any Homeowner Can
Use*

By David Dowell

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Chapter 1

About The Author



David Dowell is a Real Estate Broker and Attorney at Law in Orlando, Florida. He has written this book to help home owners sell their homes for top dollar fast.

David has laid out his proven marketing strategies inside this book for you to use.

If you don't have time to implement them yourself, then you can hire David to implement them for you.

David is a resident of Windermere and has lived here in the Orlando area for nearly 25 years. As a graduate of the Indiana University School of Business and Indiana University School of Law, he has knowledge of all the legal aspects of real estate transactions. David is able to assist you with the initial valuation of your home, legal contracts, marketing, and all steps through the final closing - and beyond. With all the complexities and legal pitfalls in today's real estate market, David's legal background is a necessity to successfully sell your home for top dollar with no headaches. He also has exceptional attention to detail.

David loves the Orlando area and is familiar with all of the local neighborhoods - both traditional homes and vacation homes. He puts a special emphasis on international marketing, knowing that foreign residents make up a large percentage of today's buyers, and that this will help his customer's get top value for their homes.

In his free time, David likes to play golf, coach little league baseball and travel. He is happily married to his lovely wife Jackie, originally from Peru, and has two energetic 5 year old twin boys.

David owns Pan Am Real Estate LLC and Dowell Law, P.A. , and can be contacted by phone/text at (407) 864-2265 or by email at david@PanAmOrlando.com.

Chapter 2

The Easiest Way to Sell Your Home For More Money

Dear Reader,

This book lays out 15 different things you can do to sell your home for more money. Yes, it is possible to sell your home for more money. But, more than what? More than your neighbor's home. More than a similar home. More than the identical home next door.

In fact, I'm going to give you case studies of identical homes that sold for different prices. But, first we have to talk about something important:

I'm going to address the elephant in the room.

Most people think that a home will usually sell for exactly what it is "worth." I'm here to tell you that isn't true.

Homes do NOT always sell for what they are "worth."

- Sometimes they sell for more.
- Sometimes less.

Here is a story that illustrates why this happens. Cheryl & Richard recently sold their homes. They own identical townhomes. They are located 5 doors down from each other. Both townhomes are identical in their appeal to a buyer. They both have the same layout. The builder built all the townhomes in the neighborhood with the same floor plan.

They sold their homes within a month of each other. **Bottom Line:** They had the same basic appeal to a buyer. A reasonable per-

son would look at the situation and assume they both sold for the same price. Not so. Here's what happened.

- **Cheryl sold her home for \$202,000.**
- **Richard sold his for \$188,000.**

That's a difference of \$14,000. Nothing to sneeze at. I know why Richard's supposedly identical home sold for less money. I'll tell you why and give you the addresses later in this book.

Here's another example.

But, it's not as clear of a case study as the first one. Why not? The two homes are not identical. Close, but not identical.

Chuck and Richard owned very similar homes in the same neighborhood. Both were very similar in terms of square footage, bedrooms, baths, etc. But, they didn't sell for a similar price.

- **John sold his home for \$321,000.**
- **Chuck sold his for \$285,000.**

Here is why Chuck sold his home for less money.

Chuck was an uneducated seller. He wanted to sell his home. A random buyer contacted him and offered to buy his home. The buyer offered to pay \$285,000. They were approved for a loan. It looked like a good deal on the surface. So, Chuck accepted their offer and sold his home to them.

The buyer was working with a Realtor. So, Chuck did save on the commission. He paid them half the typical commission. But, he still lost \$25,000 when you factor in the commissions.

This book details the 15 different ways you can avoid selling your home for less.

If you educate yourself on the strategies in this book, then you will sell your home for more money.

Here is the most important thing you must do if you want to sell your home for more money.

It is one of the 15 strategies I talk about in this book. It is the first thing you should do before you put your home on the market. If you skip this step, then you risk losing money on your sale. Chuck skipped it. And... it's why he sold his home for \$36,000 less than his neighbor.

Why did Chuck sell his house for \$36,000 less than his neighbor?

Because he didn't know what his house was actually worth! Unfortunately, Chuck never researched his home's value.

He didn't get an appraisal or a second opinion from another Realtor.

I know that seems elementary. But, you'd be amazed at how many people neglect to do this. And... unfortunately, they often lose money as a result.

It's easy to find out what your home is worth:

Here is a simple way that is 100% free! I am happy to put together a Comparable Market Analysis for your home.

I will give you the following information:

- **Detailed information on each home that has sold in your area** in the last 6 months along with the **final sale price**. If you are thinking of selling your home, then this information will help you price your home realistically.
- **Detailed information on all of the homes for sale in your area** and their **asking price**. These are your competition.

To Request A Copy Of My Free Home Value Report And Find Out Exactly What Your Home Is Worth, Go To...

www.OrlandoHomeValues.com

This is all 100% completely free with no obligation. After you submit your info you will receive my free report with the information. You can use that information to determine what your home is worth. I recommend printing it out and driving past the other homes.

You can look at those homes from the outside and see how they compare to your home. This will help you get a really good idea of what your home is worth. My contact info will be in the report so you can ask me any questions.

I don't charge a dime for this report, even though an appraiser would charge you \$300-500. I recently heard of a homeowner paying \$700 just for a simple appraisal.

After you request this info I will not start hounding you with constant phone calls. I prefer to run my business a little differently from that. If YOU decide that you would like to get my more specific professional opinion on your home's value, then you can contact me. We can talk over the phone or I can meet with you in person. Your choice.

Chapter 3

Four Reasons Why Home Sellers Hire a Realtor

I am sure you have wondered why people even hire a Realtor. Well, here are a few reasons why.

Reason #1: We can sell homes for more money.

In fact, most sellers net more money in their pocket, even after they pay the agent's commission.

The typical home sold by an agent sells for \$230,000, while the typical For-Sale-by-Owner home sells for \$184,000.

That doesn't mean that every agent is going to sell your home for more money. But, the numbers do show that agents do sell homes for more.

In fact, many sellers actually make money hiring a Realtor to sell their home. Here are a couple of real life examples:

- Brandon had his home on the market for \$220,000. He wasn't getting much activity. The buyers who did look at it were not serious.

They showed little interest in buying the home and made lowball offers on his home. He listed his home with an agent for \$240,000.

3 weeks later he received an offer and the buyer agreed to pay full price. He actually ended up with more money in his pocket, even after paying the real estate commission.

- Jimmy & Kaye had their home on the market for \$380,000. It wasn't selling. After a few months they hired a Realtor

and increased the price to \$420,000.

A few months later the home sold for \$408,000. They actually made more money, even after paying the real estate commission.

Now, do these stories happen every day? No. Does this happen to every For-Sale-by-Owner that hires a Realtor? No.

But, they happen more often than not. In most cases the agent can sell the home for more money than the seller could sell it for on their own.

Reason #2: The whole process is easier when you hire a Realtor.

Let me give you a concrete example. I talked to a Title Company Manager who handles For-Sale-by-Owner Closings and Realtor Closings.

He told me that when a For-Sale-by-Owner sells their home it takes about 30-45 days for the two parties to sign off on the sale contract.

He said that sometimes they don't even sign it until they sit down for the closing. When a property is sold by a Realtor, the sale contract is usually signed in 45 hours.

Why does this matter to you?

Have you ever heard of "Buyer's Remorse?" It's where a buyer makes a decision to buy your home, and then as soon as they have made that decision, they immediately begin to question the decision.

It doesn't matter if the decision was good or bad. I've seen buyers get buyer's remorse when they were stealing homes. They still question it. And, sometimes they freak out and change their mind.

If you have a signed contract, then you can hold their feet to the fire. If not, then they walk and you have to sell your house all over again.

**This isn't to say that you can't
sell your house yourself.**

You probably can. But, unless you have sold a lot of homes yourself, then you probably aren't set up as well as a professional Realtor is. Does that make sense?

**Reason #3: A good Realtor can
save 80-100 hours of your time.**

That is because we handle all of the work for you. We are experts at financing, loan conditions, home inspections, surveys, title work, termite inspections, appraisals, negotiating, etc.

Some people have estimated that there are 189-213 different things that an agent does to sell a home.

That list is shorter or longer, depending on the property. I haven't familiarized myself with every item on that list. But, I do know from personal experience that selling a home does take a lot of time.

Reason #4: We solve problems.

That is the most important thing a Realtor can do. After all, it's one thing to have a buyer that wants to buy your house. But, just because they decide at that moment to buy a house doesn't mean they will.

Here is a story that illustrates this perfectly.

A seller put her home on the market. The perfect buyer came along and made a full price offer for the home.

The seller and the buyer signed a contract and the buyer started working on financing. The buyer ran into a problem with the financing and cancelled the contract.

Later on the seller told the story to an agent. It turns out that the problem the buyer had was completely solvable. But, the seller didn't know how to solve it. As a result the buyer couldn't obtain financing to buy the home.

The agent is confident that if they had been involved in the sale, then the buyer WOULD have obtained financing and bought the home.

Unfortunately, the seller had to put the home back on the market. It took another 5 months to sell. The seller had to pay an additional 5 months' worth of mortgage payments, property tax payments, and homeowner's insurance premiums.

In addition, she had to maintain the lawn, pay the electric bill, and maintain the property. If we add up all of those expenses, we can easily say that the lost sale cost her \$9,575.

This reminds me of the old story of the importance of "Knowing Where to Tap."

Have you ever heard the story? I'll retell it for you: "A huge steamship boiler system was not working properly. The steamship captain hired a top boiler expert to fix it.

After hearing about the problem the expert asked a few questions and inspected the boiler room. He looked at the pipes that twisted and turned every which way, listened to the boiler and all of the machinery.

He thought for a minute, reached into his tools, and grabbed a small hammer. He gently tapped one valve and "Voila" the problem was fixed. He sent a bill for \$1,000 to the owner of the steamship.

When the owner saw the \$1,000 invoice he was mad as a hornet's nest!

He called the expert and confronted him about the bill. "You were only there for 15 minutes! How dare you charge me \$1,000!" he said. The expert heard him out and told him that he would send over a new bill.

The owner received another bill the next day. The bill was itemized as follows:

Tapping the valve: \$.50.

Knowing where to tap: \$995.50

Total: \$1,000.00.

Specialized Knowledge is one of the most valuable resources in the world.

Fortunately, for you, I have specialized knowledge. I know how to sell homes for more money. I know precisely where to "tap the valve" and to solve any problems that come up.

In fact, you will usually make money when you hire me to sell your house.

I know that sounds crazy. The fact that I can sell your home for more money is usually enough to pay my commission.

Here is how you make money hiring me. I save you countless hours chasing down surveys, handling inspections, etc.

What is your time worth?

If it isn't worth anything, then you should sell your home yourself. But, I know that isn't the case. Your time isn't worthless!

I know from personal experience that most homeowners are successful, hardworking individuals.

You have probably spent countless hours becoming skilled at

your profession. I am sure that you have a lot of "specialized knowledge" in your area of expertise.

An outsider might look at what you do and think it's easy. It's not. You know it and I know it.

So, run the numbers. Consider it carefully. And, when you are ready to hire a highly skilled, professional Realtor, then I give me a call. I'll be glad to help you.

Best Regards,

David Dowell

Pan Am Real Estate

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Chapter 4

The Second Most Important Thing You Can Do To Sell Your Home for More Money

If you are like many homeowners, then you will spend an astronomical amount of time showing your home to buyers that may not even be interested in buying it.

It can get to the point of taking over your life. The average home showing takes 3-4 hours of your time. Most owners have to show their homes 8-10 times before making a sale, and some homes are shown as many as 30 times.

That means the average person spends 24-40 hours of his or her life selling one home, and some people dedicate 80-120 hours to the process.

Many homeowners jump at the chance to show their homes to anyone and everyone. When a buyer calls, they drop everything for the showing. That's a big reason why it takes them anywhere from 8-30 showings to make a sale.

In the beginning, you take the showings in stride, but over time, they create a great deal of stress. The stress isn't just on you. It is on your entire family and it will only get worse as long as you continue showing your home to people who don't want to buy it.

Take a minute to think of what goes on whenever you have to show your home.

Toddlers have to go into the playpen while you clean the house from top to bottom. Then, they have to sit in the car or go to a nearby park so you can show the house to potential buyers.

Kids don't like chaos. It is very stressful on them. They might start acting out more or requiring extra attention to combat the

stress.

You have to clean the house from top to bottom. This is stressful on your spouse. He or she has to help with cleaning the house every time there is a showing.

Once the cleaning is over, your spouse gets to take the kids to the park. That can be hard work by itself, but it is even harder after spending all day at work.

Your pet gets locked in a crate. If you have a dog, then he can't run around during the showing. He can't even run around while you are cleaning up the house. That means he gets to spend hours in his crate when you have to show the house.

You do all of this, only to risk showing the house to someone who was never going to buy it in the first place.

It's sad but true. Most of the people who look at a house are not going to purchase that particular house. Oftentimes they are not serious buyers. Or, they are not interested in your house and are only looking at it because of curiosity.

I'm going to let you in on a little secret.

Many Realtors show buyers a bunch of houses because they want to increase their odds of selling them a home.

According to the National Association of Realtors, the average Realtor sells seven houses a year, so each home represents approximately two months' worth of income for that Realtor.

That means that each customer a Realtor gets is incredibly important. The Realtor wants to close that deal so he can earn his commission.

Sadly, most Realtors go about it the wrong way. They think they can increase their odds of making sales by showing as many houses as possible to that potential buyer.

They flood the buyer with options, hoping he will bite. At the

same time, they don't understand what the buyer is looking for, so they are unable to deliver.

Let's look at an example of how the process typically works. In this example, a Realtor has a potential buyer who tells him he wants to buy a 3 bed/2 bath house in a specific area. He is willing to spend around \$200,000 dollars.

The Realtor will stop right then and print out every listing that meets that description. He will also print out some listings that come close to meeting that description. They might not have 3 bedrooms or they might be slightly over budget.

He takes his client out and they go from one house to the next. The buyer might see a ton of houses, but in most cases, he won't be interested in any of them. None of them has that special something that he wants in a house.

The buyer will have to go on several outings to find the perfect house. This leads to a lot of wasted time for the buyer and the seller.

In fact, most buyers end up seeing anywhere from 20-50 houses before they make a purchase. If the buyer looks at 30 houses and each seller wastes 3-4 hours per showing, then that buyer will end up wasting 90-120 hours of his time and the sellers' time.

So many of these hours could be saved if sellers learned how to qualify buyers ahead of time. Then, buyers could look at listings and know if they wanted a particular property immediately.

They would not go out to the property if they didn't want it. If you were the seller, you would not have to prepare your house for a buyer who wasn't going to make a purchase.

Instead, you would only prepare your home for buyers who were interested in your house. You would cut down on the number of showings, but each showing would have the potential to turn into a sale.

The good news is that this report shows you how to find the serious buyers and get them in-

terested in buying your house.

Instead of showing your house to anyone and everyone, only show it to people who are interested in buying it. That will help you sell your house faster and reduce your family's stress.

I will show you how to do just that later in this report. First, though, you need to examine the mentality that is hurting your ability to sell your home.

How do we attract the best buyers to our home?

The key to this entire home selling approach revolutionary finding discovered by an Italian Economist. His name was Vilfredo Pareto.

The most important thing we can learn from Pareto is the Pareto Principle, also known as the 80/20 rule.

In 1906, Pareto was doing a study and discovered that 80% of all the land was owned by 20% of the people.

He also noticed that 20% of the pea pods in his garden contained 80% of the seeds. It's the same thing today. Today, 80% of the wealth is owned by 20% of the people.

The 80/20 rule applies to most things in life.

For example:

- 80% of your income is derived from 20% of your work.
- 80 percent of a business's income is going to be derived from 20 percent of their customers.
- If you go to a job, 80 percent of your income is going to be derived from 20 percent of your work.

Whenever we go to work, there's always 20 percent. That is the most valuable bit of work that we do for our boss, our customers, our patients, our clients, etc.

- 80 percent of our value to that person is derived from 20 percent of our work.

You can apply this rule to everything in your life.

You might wonder what all of this means. In a nutshell, it means that some things are substantially more important than other things. In other words, things are not equal. Approximately 20% of what you do matters. The other 80% is insignificant.

It is important to understand that this is not always split at 80/20. It can be 70/30 or another percentage. The key is that the two numbers are not equal and they are usually close to 80/20.

You have to understand this concept before you can save time when selling your home.

How can you apply the 80/20 Principle to selling your home?

Because so many Realtors and sellers buy into the false idea that more is more, they completely ignore the Pareto Principle.

The 20% is vital and the 80% is trivial.

Now that you know what the 80/20 rule is, you probably want to know how to use it when you are selling your home.

When you use the 80/20 principle to sell your home, you aren't trying to sell people on the entire home. You know that 80% of your home's features are trivial.

That is because they are the same features that all of the homes in your neighborhood have. Instead of focusing on those trivial features, you need to focus on the vital features.

These features make your home unique. These features will make it easier to sell your home for the full asking price.

In order to understand this, let's look at some examples.

The 80/20 Rule and picking

from similar houses

Earlier, I went over an example where someone was looking for a 3 bed/2 bath house for about \$200,000. Let's expand that example and assume that there are five houses that meet that description in a specific area.

The Realtor and the buyer go to the area to look at the five houses. They are all close to being the same house and they are close in price. On paper, you might think that the buyer will have a hard time deciding between those five house.

That is not the case, all because of the 80/20 rule. In this case, let's say that four of the houses don't have a pool, but one of the houses does. The buyer sees the first four houses that don't have the pool and he is not interested.

He turns his nose up and either doesn't put in an offer at all or makes a lowball offer. Then, he sees the final house and it has a pool.

Suddenly, he is ready to pay the full asking price, even if the house is more expensive than the other four he saw. He doesn't put his bid in based on the 80% of the features the five homes shared.

Instead, he put the bid in based on the 20% that was unique about the final home. The 80/20 rule sold this home. The 80/20 rule doesn't just help people sell houses.

The 80/20 Rule causes homes to sell for more money.

I am going to go over a real life example. In this example, a Realtor friend of mine was taking a potential buyer around to view houses.

They went from house to house, and in each case, the buyer put in offers that were 10-20% below the asking price. He would not budge. My friend wasn't sure if he was ever going to make a sale.

Finally, they went to the house that didn't have a lot of curb

appeal. It was not a good looking home. Even though the house didn't look great, it was the one that finally broke the tough negotiator down.

Suddenly he was willing to offer the full asking price. You might wonder why this house broke him. It wasn't because he had a thing for ugly houses. Instead, it was because of the 80/20 rule.

My Realtor friend took him to houses that shared 80% of the same features, and the buyer did not care about any of those features. He was not interested in bedrooms and bathrooms. Instead, he was interested in that extra feature that this one home had.

In this case, the house was on a hill and had a gorgeous view. All of the other houses were on flat land. That view sold the buyer. He didn't buy the house because it had hardwood floors.

He didn't buy the house because he liked the floor plan or the manicured lawn. It was completely based on that hill and view. That view caused him to stop negotiating and offer full price on the spot. That is the power of the 80/20 rule.

If you learn how to tap into this rule, you won't have to settle for less than your asking price.

It can even help sell homes without the buyer even physically seeing them

In some cases, the 80/20 rule even helps people make sales without conducting a showing. This is a huge time saver. I have another real life example of this. In this case, this house languished on the market for months.

Unlike the house in the previous example, it was not ugly. In fact, it was a very nice custom home. As nice as it was, it sat on the market for seven months without any offers.

The seller could not figure out why the house wouldn't sell. He ended up firing his agent and hiring a new one. This new agent knew the importance of finding that one special feature. He went out and examined the house and lot.

That is when he made the big discovery. The house sat on a gorgeous 5-acre lot. All of the other houses that were being sold in the area sat on lots that were 1-2 acres.

Not only was the lot bigger, but it was also more private than the other lots that were up for sale. The new Realtor marketed the 5-acre lot. He mentioned that the house was nice, but he spent most of his time focused on the lot.

He knew that the house was not the selling point, so he shifted people's attention to the unique feature. It ended up being snatched up by someone who was relocating to the area. The person had noticed the house for sale in the past, but it hadn't caught his eye.

That changed when he found out it was on a 5-acre lot. He was suddenly very interested. He was so interested in the home that he made an offer from 1,000 miles away, before he even saw it in person.

He was afraid that someone else would buy it before he did and he would lose out on his dream house. That sale happened in 45 days.

The house had sat on the market for eight months without so much as a nibble, and then it was purchased in 45 days, sight unseen, all because of the 80/20 rule.

By changing the focus, the Realtor was able to generate lots of interest quickly. The house was no longer unsellable. Instead, it was one of the hottest homes on the market.

Selling to Interested Buyers

When you stop creating advertisements that sound like the other houses in your area, you can attract interested people. This is a very simple concept.

When you find something that is unique about your house and you base your advertisement around that one item, it will catch people's eyes. Those who want that one item will come out to see it in person.

Then, you will stop wasting your time showing your house to people who are not interested. Instead, you will show it to people who are motivated to make a purchase.

That means you won't have to show it as much and you won't have to sift through lowball offers.

With that in mind, it is essential that you take the time to find your home's most attractive and unique features. Compare your home to others that are up for sale in the neighborhood and see what makes it stand out.

Potential Unique Features

While each house has its own unique features, I want to go over some ideas to get you started.

- **Views are excellent features.** For example, your house might sit on top of a hill. Its high vantage point might give it a spectacular view of the surrounding area.
- **Maybe your home looks out on an open field that is frequented by wildlife.** There are lots of people who would like that view.
- **Your house might even have an unobstructed view of the sunset.** That would interest lots of potential buyers.
- **Patios are another great feature.** Maybe the rest of your neighbors don't have patios, or they do but the patios are smaller than yours. That vital feature could help you sell your home.
- Location is something else that can set your property apart from others. Now, I'm not talking about your location in town. I'm talking about your location compared to the surrounding homes.

I once saw someone pay extra for a townhouse because of its location in the complex. The complex had 200 townhouses on it. Most of them did not have a yard. A few of them shared a large half acre "yard area."

One of the owners whose townhome backed up to this yard area was able to sell his townhouse for a higher price.

It set his property apart from the others that were on the market, because it was a characteristic shared by maybe 10% of the owners.

He was the only townhome on the market that offered that feature. That made it a very easy sale.

Another townhome seller (in the same complex) found a different unique feature. He did not have a yard but he was still able to use his location to his advantage.

His property backed up to a lake and a fountain. That extra feature helped him sell his townhouse quickly and for a great price.

- **You also might have a private location.** For instance, your lot might be partially concealed by trees, or you might have an empty lot next to you. You can use this to market your property.
- **You might have a unique backyard.** If you have a larger backyard than your neighbors, then use that to your advantage.
- A shady backyard can also help you sell your property. Some people like the idea of lounging in the shade.
- A fenced in backyard is also a big selling point. People with kids and pets flock to homes with fenced in backyards.
- **You can also look at other features.** For instance, a finished basement can help you sell your home. You can also market a large attic, an extra-large garage, a swimming pool, or anything else that makes your home stand out.

Just look for the 20% that is different and find a way to market it. That is how you will get results. You can't just throw the information into your listing, though.

You need to go about it in the right way so you can appeal to your target market.

Having the information you need to advertise your property is an excellent first step. It is just the first step, though. Once you have the information, you need to put it in your listing.

Simply adding it in is not enough. You need to make sure people see it or it will not help you.

It all starts with a picture.

The Picture. When people visit a real estate website, it takes them a split second to decide if they are interested in a property. That is because they see a picture of it. Before they even know it, their brains tell them yes or no.

If their brains tell them yes, they click on the listing. If their brains tell them no, then they move on to the next property.

It is your job to make sure people's brains say "yes" when they see your picture. You do that by photographing the unique feature and then using it as the display picture.

Of course, some people won't be interested after they see your display picture. That is okay. Remember that you only want to appeal to people who will buy your property.

You are just wasting your time if you appeal to people who aren't interested in your unique features. With that in mind, this will also help you weed out people who are not interested.

That means you won't have to do showings for people who don't want to purchase your property.

Description

You also need to focus on your description. Put the one or two special features right at the beginning of the description so people will see them immediately. You can also put them in your headline.

This will help you attract the right people. If you do this, you will notice that the quality of your leads will improve. You will show your home to people who are ready to make a purchase.

You will also get more offers that are close to or at the asking price. While all of this is great news, you still have one more thing you can do to increase your sales

How to turn a negative into a positive

Nothing kills a sale like a big negative does. Fortunately, you can often turn a negative into a positive. Let me go over an example so you can understand how this works.

Let's imagine that you own a condo that was built ten years ago. You want to sell your condo, but you have some competition from a new complex down the road. This complex is selling brand new condos.

The condos are the same but the asking price for the new condos is about \$40,000 more than the asking price for your condo. Lots of buyers will snatch up the brand new condos just because they are new.

They don't think about the fact that in five years, it won't matter that one condo is five years old and the other is fifteen years old.

The five year old condo will NOT fetch an extra \$40,000 compared to the 15 year old condo. When the buyer of the new condo sells it, they will actually lose money because they won't recoup the extra \$40,000 they spent.

They aren't thinking of that, though.

They are thinking about getting that new condo. That can make it hard to sell your condo. Fortunately, you can educate buyers and get them interested in your condo.

Create an ad with a headline that says, "Don't buy a new condo in (Complex Name) until you see this house." Then you could go over all of the reasons why people would benefit from buying used.

The cost is an obvious reason and one you should certainly include. It is far from the only reason though. For example, new

houses are typically not as attractive because they don't have established trees.

Their yards might even still need sod, and they don't have any plants. That all leads to more work and more money. If you do a good job of explaining this, you can turn your negative into a positive and make the sale.

Now, let's say you are trying to sell a house in a neighborhood that has not been established. An empty neighborhood can be a negative but you can turn it into a positive by talking about how quiet it is.

For instance, create an ad that explains how peaceful the home is. Some potential buyers will look at this as a huge positive.

These are just two examples. You can turn any negative into a positive by reframing it. Remember, you control your story. It is up to you to get it out there in a positive way.

Now you have the information you need to make the sale. If you follow this system, you can cut down on your showings and speed up the sales process, all while making more money.

Just keep the 80/20 rule in mind during the selling process and you will be successful.

Chapter 5

The Secret Strategy the Rich & Famous Use to Sell their Home for More Money.

The Rich & Famous use this secret strategy to sell their home. One Realtor reports that this secret strategy caused one condo to sell for \$110,000 more than a similar condo in the same building.

- One seller used this strategy and sold their condo for \$549,000.
- The other did NOT use this strategy and sold their condo for \$439,000.

Why did one condo sell for more than another condo?

Because the seller used this secret strategy! The Realtors mentioned have intimate knowledge of the homes and both agents verified that none of the homes were bank owned, short sales, or a distress sale.

The only reason they could explain why one home sold for more than another was because the sellers used this secret home selling strategy.

I've also seen this secret strategy cause homes right here in our local area for more money.

Let me explain how I discovered this secret strategy. An agent I know met a wealthy guy who was selling his condo. The seller had a special request.

He would hire that agent, but only if he agreed to help him use this secret method to sell the condo. It was crazy and the agent was skeptical.

But, he thought it was an interesting strategy and decided to give it a shot. The agent helped him prepare the condo for sale.

The condo was priced at \$554,900. Two similar condos in the same complex were for sale for \$479,000 and \$439,000.

The similar condos for sale were priced much lower than this condo!

The agent was skeptical that the condo would sell for the \$554,900 price. But, he thought the secret strategy was pretty cool and he really wanted to see how it worked out. The condo went on the market.

Not a lot happened. The agent started to doubt the strategy. The condo was showed regularly but no one was making offers. The condo was getting lots of showings.

Most of the buyers (and agents) said the condo was over-priced. The agent was having second thoughts. He was starting to doubt the strategy. After all, an almost identical condo was available for \$439,000.

After about 4 months on the market the condo sold.... for \$549,000. The sales price was a record high for the condo complex.

I know some of you might be thinking, "The unit was a penthouse and that is why it sold for more money." Let me address that.

This unit wasn't a penthouse. It was on the 6th floor of a 10 floor complex. But, the 10th floor units weren't penthouses either. The developer built the complex without any penthouses.

The agent crossed his fingers thinking there might be a problem. Maybe the buyer would find out that they were overpaying. It didn't happen.

**The place successfully sold for \$549,000,
which was a record high.**

The price was \$110,000 higher than the previous condo that had sold 2.5 months earlier for \$439,000. The higher price wasn't because prices were rapidly increasing.

The next unit that sold afterwards (28 days later) sold for \$435,000. (It was a less desirable second floor unit.) 5 months later, another similar condo sold for \$450,000.

This all sounds crazy. I didn't believe it until I checked the sales data myself. Everything checked out.

I have a question for you.

Would you like to use this secret strategy to sell your home for more money? It does take some extra time and some extra work. But, the payoff is well worth the effort.

So, what is the secret strategy?

What was the special request that the wealthy home seller had for his agent? It was simple. He wanted to stage the condo.

Staging is where you spruce up a home to make it as appealing as possible. It might sound crazy, but it causes homes to sell for more money. In fact, a whole lot more.

Now, there are a million people that will tell you how to stage your home. But, very few will show you case studies that prove it will cause your home to sell for more money.

Fortunately, an agent I know put together a case study for this. Here it is:

Staging Report from my Realtor Friend

Dear Reader,

I wanted to give you the most convincing proof possible. It's very hard for people to believe that one home will sell for more than another home.

I did some research and looked for similar homes that had sold for different amounts of money.

The clearest example I could find was in the neighborhood I live in.

It's in Jacksonville, Florida. I live in a development of about 200 similar townhomes.

Every single townhome in my neighborhood is 3 stories with 3 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms. Every single one has the exact same layout.

I looked for two sales there. Here is what I found.

- 4438 Capital Dome Drive in Jacksonville, Florida **sold on August 26th, 2013 for \$202,000.**
- 4456 Capital Dome Drive (5 doors down) **sold on July 26th, 2013 for \$188,000.**

I live in this neighborhood so I am familiar with these properties. You could not ask for a better example of two identical properties that sold for different prices.

Here is why the two homes were basically identical:

- The lot they sit on is identical as far as how desirable it is to a buyer.

- They both had the same kitchen with the same cabinets and tile floor.
- They both had nice hardwood floors in the living room.
- Everything else in these townhomes were identical. I looked at everything that had to do with these sales. Here is why 4438 sold for \$14,000 more than 4456:

Although 4438 is not professionally staged, it has a more appealing appearance than 4456.

- The agent on 4438 took better quality, more appealing photos of the home.
- Those two little things is why one town-home sold for more than the other.

Final Proof.

Here is a link to the Property Appraiser's Website for these homes:

Here is the Public Record of the sale of 4438:

http://apps.coj.net/pao_propertySearch/Basic/Detail.aspx?RE=1677274060

Here is link to the Public Record of the sale of 4456:

http://apps.coj.net/pao_propertySearch/Basic/Detail.aspx?RE=1677274035

--- End Of Staging Report ---

Now that you are convinced that staging will help you sell your home for more money, the next chapter has 10 tips on how to spruce up your home so it sells for more money.

There are two options you have for staging your home.

Option 1: Do it yourself. If you want to do that, then scroll down and start reading the Next Chapter: *10 Tips for Staging Your Home*.

Option 2: Hire a professional home stager. If this is the route you want to go, then contact me for a list of references. I'll let you know which home stagers I have worked with and who I recommend that will do a good job for you.

Chapter 6

10 Staging Tricks Every Homeowner Should Use When Selling Their Home

Buyers decide in the first 8 seconds of seeing a home if they are interested in it or not. That is why it's so important to stage it.

You can hire someone to do much of the hard labor for you, but there are some things that you alone can handle.

Solid Tip # 1: Spotless is the name of the game.

It is vital to do a thorough, deep cleaning of your home. It works for people selling their car — they get more money that way — and it will work for you.

By deep cleaning, I mean you should do the following:

De-clutter: Begin with de-cluttering. Here's the standard rule of thumb: go through your home and get rid of 50% of your belongings.

Items like photographs, highly personalized items, out-of-season clothes, random junk and excessive furniture — these all need to go.

Now, don't get upset. You don't have to throw the stuff out.

Donate it. Sell it at a yard sale. Give it away. Someone can use what you don't need. And for precious items (i.e. family photos), put them into a safe, offsite storage location. Once you de-clutter — Wow! How much roomier and nicer your home feels.

The goal here is to depersonalize the home so potential buyers can envision themselves living there.

Hardcore Cleaning: Now that the clutter is gone, move on to hardcore cleaning. Be meticulous. Tidy up each room from top to bottom.

Make sure you don't forget to:

- Get rid of cobweb first. This keeps you from getting dust bunnies all over freshly cleaned floors and furniture later.
- Dust ceiling fans and lighting fixtures while you're cleaning out the cobwebs.
- Dust your blinds.
- Wash walls, unless you'll be painting.
- Clean all glass surfaces: mirrors, television screens, patio doors and windows.
- Polish all wooden surfaces.
- Wipe down any leather furniture.
- Clean out and reorganize the closets and cabinets.
- Attack all appliances with cleaning fervor. Make them shine!
- Sinks, toilets, tubs, showers, faucets and countertops need to be impeccable. Every room is important, but the kitchen and bathrooms will take you over the top. They need to be eat-off-of-the-floor clean.
- Vacuum rugs, shampoo carpet and mop like your life depends on it.
- Side note: Attack these tasks last, or you'll inevitably have to do them twice.

Solid Tip #2: Painting provides a prime canvas.

If you haven't painted your house in the last year, consider doing the entire inside of the home right now.

If you have painted it, you might want to repaint a second time.

When I say repaint, I mean repaint everything. Paint the ceilings. Paint the trim and window casings. Paint the doors. Don't forget inside closets. And, of course, paint the walls.

Just make sure you paint the right way. An artist creates a new painting on a plain, primed canvas.

Through your efforts with painting, you are hand delivering your potential buyers, a clean, primed canvas where they can imagine their family in your home.

Keeping all of this in mind, proceed with your home's canvas using neutral colors. That doesn't mean everything must be completely lifeless or stark white.

Rather, you want your colors to be unobtrusive.

So, stick with gray, beige, off white and white colors. Even if you just painted the master bath turquoise and added cute polka dot trim — change it! Remember, a blank canvas opens the imagination to endless possibilities. Polka dots don't.

Solid Tip #3: The kitchen and bathrooms are super important.

Buyers are most turned off by dirty, grungy bathrooms and kitchens.

Let's face it. Nobody wants to eat from a place they feel is nasty. Likewise, no one wants to be naked in a disgusting place.

Now that doesn't mean you can create stunning bathrooms and kitchens, all the while leaving the rest of the home a mess, and still expect to sell your house for top dollar. But you do need to address your bathroom and kitchen first.

Keep this in mind: potential buyers might forgive a less than stellar child's room, but a questionable bathroom or kitchen could cost you a possible sale.

So, let's get started.

Now, you've done a deep clean of the whole house, and you most likely painted the whole house — including the bathrooms and kitchen. So it's time to move on to a pressing issue: to get new appliances or to not get new appliances?

That is the question. Good idea or just a money pit?

Should I Really Buy New Appliances? It really depends on you and your particular situation. No doubt, new appliances make an impact with buyers.

When the National Association of Realtors did a survey, most surveyed buyers between 2010 and 2012 were:

- Very concerned with buying a home that featured new appliances
- Roughly 17% of these folks preferred stainless steel.
- The most important factor: appliances are available.
- Most buyers who were unable to get their sought after appliances said they would have been willing to pay, on average, nearly \$2,000 more for them.

Potential buyers want appliances included and will pay more for them.

If you can afford it, new appliances might be the very act that sets your house apart from the home that is for sale across the street. But, if new appliances are a bit out of your reach, offer your used, immaculately clean, fully functioning ones.

Updating Hardware. Stop and take a nice, long look at your bathroom and kitchen hardware. You'll probably notice that they look a whole lot used. Well, they are.

It isn't that big of a deal until you put yourself in a buyer's shoes. They're looking at your old house as their potential new home. Old, worn out fixtures aren't going to speak to them the way that nice, shiny, new hardware will.

That doesn't mean you should run out buy all new fixtures.

Unless your knobs, pulls, handles and hinges are broken, there is no real reason to replace them.

That's right.

Get that new look simply by thoroughly washing and repainting them. I'm not kidding. There is spray paint made specifically for this reason. And the project is incredibly cheap.

Here are some ideas of household hardware you give a paint overhaul to:

- towel bars
- toilet paper holders
- door handles
- hinges
- old light fixtures

The goal is to patch your home up nicely with as little cash as possible. This is a great way to do it.

On the other hand, if you do have broken or completely worn out hardware, then you're better to replace the whole set unless you can find matching pieces. Then you could cleverly paint the old and new to match.

Warning: just make sure that if you end up replacing your knobs, that you get matching exposed hinges for cabinet doors and the like. Consistency is a good thing when selling a home.

Other Excellent and Cheap Update Ideas for the Bath and Kitchen:

- Buy a new toilet seat.
- Refurbish worn out looking cabinets with a faux paint project.
- Replace an old, ugly bathroom sink with a pedestal variety.
- Repair grout in tile backsplashes, floors and tub surrounds.

Solid Tip #4: You can never, ever have enough storage.

According the National Association of Realtors, a majority of recent home buyers would have preferred improved and greater closet space, as well as other storage opportunities. People have lots of stuff, and they need somewhere to hide it all.

So give them the storage to just that! Give buyers great storage, and you've won their hearts.

Now, if you can add new closets to your home with ease, that's a huge bonus for you. Really, building a simple closet isn't all that difficult if you are even just moderately handy. If you are selling an older home, where closet space is typically at a minimum, this will help!

But, putting in new closets isn't always a possibility. For instance, if your rooms are already small, you might not want to take square footage away from them. Or, you do not have the skills or the funds to hire someone to do build new space. These are the moments we turn to closet organizers for help. For instance:

- You can custom design your closet kit online through a place like Closet Maid.
- Your standard superstore or hardware store often has exactly what you need in an inexpensive, pre-fabricated form. Organizers may not enlarge your closets, but vertical and horizontal space will be maximized that way.

Now, don't let me lead you astray: "storage" is not restricted to closets.

Storage is actually all of your cabinets, clothes closets, linen closets, and attic and basement space.

So, make sure that you organize your cabinets. The same places that provide closet organizers can help you with this. Additionally, don't be afraid to add extra shelving in your laundry room or in the linen closet.

Wherever you can attractively and inexpensively add storage solutions will eventually be to your benefit. Really, buyers love this stuff.

Solid Tip #5: The bedroom addition trick.

Who doesn't want to add tons of extra value to a home? Here's an easy way: add another bedroom relatively inexpensively.

Okay, before you start laughing at me, let me explain.

I didn't say you should add square footage to your home. No. Add another bedroom. "Now, how are you going to manage that?"

you ask. Simple: add a closet to that extra junk room. Voila! You have a bedroom.

That's right. Make your den, your office, your spare room, your attic into a third or fourth bedroom by building a closet.

Now, before you start building new closets, keep these two little piece of information in mind:

- If 3 bedroom homes are selling well in your neighborhood, a fourth bedroom might give you a real advantage.
- However, if people in your area are looking for one or two bedroom homes, what good is a fourth bedroom going to do you? Don't waste your money if that is the case.

Do some homework before you start. Ask your real estate agent's take on this. If your agent doesn't know or if you don't have an agent, I'd be happy to help you determine whether or not you'd benefit from a simple bedroom addition.

Back to the point: if you need a significant boost to your home's worth, adding another bedroom is one great way to do it.

Solid Tip #6: Mechanical Maintenance.

It is very easy to get wrapped up in the more eye-pleasing aspects of getting a home ready for sell. However, you should never be overlook the upkeep of all of the mechanical aspects of your home.

Mechanicals you should look at:

- electrical boxes and wiring
- natural gas lines
- plumbing
- central heating and air system

If these pieces of your home are old, outdated or not working properly, you are lowering your home's price significantly.

According to the National Realtor's Association, 65% of home buyers surveyed were very concerned with whether or not their new home had a central air system. Of the 31 features inquired about, this was the most important one across the board.

Yes, people buying homes want to purchase something that reflects their aesthetic tastes and their lifestyles.

However, they also want to buy a home that is safe and sound.

Faulty electrical systems don't provide that.

Neither does leaky plumbing that induces mold infestations.

These areas are not necessarily entertaining or fun to improve on, but they are extremely important. Plus, if these areas are overlooked, you could run into some trouble with inspections and appraisals.

Obviously, these particular home updating projects should be left up to the professionals.

- Have a certified plumber come in and check over your entire water system for leaks.
- Hire an electrician to check out your wiring.
- Contact your local HVAC Company and have them provide a thorough service on your heat pump.
- Call you natural gas supplier and let them double check the mechanics surrounding your tank and lines.

Buyers love a house that's been worked on and updated beautifully. However, they love safe, secure homes for their families even more. Take care of these mechanical odds and ends, and you'll see profit from it.

Having antiquated wiring and plumbing replaced isn't cheap, I'll admit. If you would rather not tackle this stuff, and you have mechanical issues, drop your selling price.

It might remedy the situation for you.

Solid Tip #7: Handling the carpeting and flooring debacle.

Floors are not only something that buyers notice in your home, they can be quite expensive and difficult to replace.

The truth is, you might not even want to replace them.

You see, putting down new floor coverings of any kind, whether it be carpeting, hardwood or vinyl, can get pricey. It all depends on the size of your rooms and the flooring medium used.

If you want to get around replacing it, here's some tips to do just that:

Carpeting. Hey, everybody's carpet takes a beating. Pets, young children, muddy shoes, cups of early morning coffee all have up close and personal acquaintances with your rugs.

And, it is very, very evident, too.

There is no way that a good vacuum is going to handle this mess. So, you should...

Shampoo. Luckily, you can either rent or purchase a carpet shampooer fairly inexpensively. Now, if your carpet just needs a good washing and doesn't necessarily have set in stains, this is a great place to start.

- First, move all of the furniture from the room you're working on.
- Then follow the shampooer's instructions.

- Lastly, make sure that you don't walk on the carpet again until it's completely dry.
- You should see a significant difference in both the smell and look of your carpet.

Steam Clean: Now, it might be that your rugs need way more juice than a regular carpet shampooer can offer. You need to step up your game a little bit, and go with a good steam cleaning.

- Either rent a steam cleaning shampooer or...
- Hire a professional carpet cleaner such as Stanley Steemer. Yes, it's a little more expensive, but it can also make a tremendous difference in your carpeting.
- What the steam cleaning doesn't remove, cover with rugs.
- Don't take me wrong. Don't be dishonest. If your carpet is in bad enough shape that a steam cleaning doesn't take out all of the stains, it will be evident that the carpet needs replacing to buyers.
- Area and throw rugs can just make it a little less unattractive.

Why Not Replace It? I know what you're thinking. You think you probably should just replace your carpet, but that really isn't a great idea most of the time.

First off, replacing carpeting is very, very expensive for most people to fit into their budgets. Additionally, it would be an absolute shame if you went through the trouble of re-carpeting only to discover that a family loved everything about your house but the new beige wall-to-wall rug.

My advice to you is that you do the best with it that you can.

Clean it and put down rugs. Keep it vacuumed. Stop the kids from eating and drinking on it effective immediately. Pets need to find rooms with slick floors for easy mopping to roll around in. Do everything you can to keep this carpet from getting worse.

It will pay off.

Now, if a buyer loves everything you've done in your home, except for the ugly carpeting, they just might overlook it. They may try to negotiate a lower price or ask for a flooring allowance in your contract. I'll admit that isn't ideal.

But, you have to spend less money and do less work now.

Other Flooring Types. Take the same approach with all of your floor types. If you have tile that's a little worse for wear, clean it thoroughly.

If that doesn't work, have it re-grouted. Take tiny steps until you find the right fix. Your hardwood floor can probably get by with a good wax.

Does your linoleum shine when you use a really good mopping solution on it?

There are some instances where you might feel your only option is to replace your flooring. Make this a last resort. All your floor might need to look great is some tender, love and care. So work on that baby until in gleams.

On the other hand, if it is cheaper to replace your floor than to repair it, go ahead and put in a new floor covering.

Or, if your current flooring is damaged in irreparable ways, consider replacing it. If you do, look to less expensive flooring options. For example, vinyl self-stick tiles are inexpensive, easy to put down and a breeze to replace when damaged.

Solid Tip #8: Brighten up the house with new bright light bulbs.

Lighting is an essential element to consider updating in when prepping the house for sale. As with the flooring, this is an area that you want to address by repairing what you can and replacing what is absolutely falling apart.

Just remember to be moderate and practical with your updates.

With this in mind, don't go too overboard to make the lights look as nice as possible.

Here's a cost saving idea: refurbish the good light fixtures that you have. Follow these steps to save much needed cash:

- Use the spray painting principles you did on your handles, pulls and knobs.
- Try new globes for an updated look.
- Replace any light fixtures that are broken, damaged or dangerous in any way.
- If repairing an old fixture cost more than replacing, just replace it.
- Purchase new fluorescent light bulbs to brighten the place.
- Make sure lights that you aren't updating are clean.
- Don't forget the outside lights, as well!

Great lighting is important when showing a home. When potential buyers can get a really good, bright look at your house, they feel they can trust you.

And, bright lighting makes an area look more open and attractive!

Oh, one more tip: change old, haggard ceiling fan blades with inexpensive ones which can be bought at any hardware superstore.

Solid Tip #9: Revamp the front entrance.

OK, my friends, take a step outside of the house and onto your front lawn. Don't feel bad if you've gotten so wrapped up in updating and improving the inside of your home that you have neglected the outside. It happens to all of us.

But, it is now time to rectify the situation quickly and effectively. Here is what to address first: the front entrance. And the first thing we are going to work on there is the Lock and Knob.

Take a hard look at your doorknob. I'm serious. Look at it.

- Is it a mousy little thing from the 1970's?
- Is it dented or rusted?
- Could someone break in with only a bobby pin and concentration?

If "Yes" was the answer to any of these questions, you certainly need to replace your door handle with a heavy duty deadbolt and knob combination.

Why? A less-than sturdy looking door knob on your front door tells potential home buyers your home isn't secure. It makes them feel uncomfortable, and they won't even know why.

So, get a nice, big, sturdy set and they'll feel that your home is safe as can be.

Now, take a good look at your door. Is it pleasing to look at? Or is it weathered and dinged up? Do you have a metal door that has never seen a coat of paint? Time for change. And here are two simple ways to do so:

- Add a dash of color to it. Choose one that compliments the

color of your home. Or go with a faux painting technique that allows you to transform your metal door into what looks like a wood grain door.

- If your door is beyond hope, and you can't touch it up, have it fixed or replace the door entirely. Go with whichever costs less.

Solid Tip #10: Curb Appeal is very important.

You've addressed the living area inside of your home. Your front entrance is inviting. Now it's time to really take a good hard look at your front yard.

Curb appeal is really important. Buyers should drive by, look at your home and immediately feel as though they want to go inside.

This will not happen if you have poor landscaping, the outside of your home looks dingy, the front porch steps are broken and your mailbox is hanging on by a thread.

Look around your yard and list everything that needs work.

- Are your shrubs, trees, flower gardens and walkways tidy?
- Is there trash or unsightly elements in your yard?
- Does everything (front light, garage door, porch rails, etc.) working properly?
- Does your home's exterior need a bath?
- Could any element, like patio furniture or the garage door, be updated through quick painting projects?

This might seem like an extensive list, but it takes hard work to get a home ready to sell. Anyone can put their house on the market, but not everyone sells their homes quickly or with great profits.

Chapter 7

How To Negotiate Like Donald Trump and Get More Money for Your Home

I've got Bad News.... And Good News:

First, the Bad News. There is a good chance that the buyer of your home will be a great negotiator.

If you don't know anything about negotiating, then you risk getting taken advantage of by them.

Now for the Good News. This book reveals how an average negotiator can avoid being taken advantage of by a better negotiator.

There are two things that determine who wins a negotiation.

- **The motivation of the people negotiating.**
- **How skilled they are at negotiating.**

Here is a story that is played out every day, all across America. This happens over and over again.

There is a good chance it could happen to you.

A seller is selling his home. He is an average negotiator. Not that great. But, not horrible either.

Unfortunately, he is a motivated seller.

- He has had the home on the market for 8 months.

- He has already relocated to another city.
- The home and associated upkeep have been stressing him out.
- He is super busy at work and doesn't have the emotional energy to deal with another problem.

A buyer wants to buy his home. The buyer is highly motivated to buy this home because it is the perfect home for him. He has been looking for a home just like this for a long time and couldn't find it.

So, the buyer is highly motivated to buy this home. In fact, his wife is scared that if they negotiate too hard, then they will lose this house!

This buyer is an incredible negotiator.

He's cool and collected. First, he gathers all the facts. He finds out that the home hasn't been shown in 2 months. Then, he finds out the seller has already moved.

He looks the seller up on Facebook and stumbles across a rather revealing Facebook Post. The seller vented about real estate and home badly he wants to sell the house. Now, let's ask ourselves a question.

Who do you think is going to win this negotiation?

Yep. The buyer. Yes, both people are motivated. But, one did a better job at negotiating. As a result he wins! He buys the home for \$43,000 less than the fair market value.

Don't let this happen to you!

I put together a free report that anyone can use to negotiate a higher sales price for their home. It has tips and advice that even a caveman could use. Here is the report:

How To Negotiate The Highest Sales Price For Your Home.

Let's start with some negotiating mistakes to avoid. After all, what you don't do is going to be more important than what you do! One slip of the tongue can really hurt your negotiating mistake (and your pocketbook too!)

Common Negotiating Mistake #1: Not learning the other party's motivation.

Price isn't the only reason people buy. Maybe they really like a certain feature that your home has. They might be willing to pay more because of that feature.

Sometimes they might even absolutely love that feature. They have been home hunting for a while and finally found a home that met their needs completely. That means they are willing to pay more for your home.

If you meet the buyers, then ask them why they are buying a home. They might tell you that they are being transferred and have to find a home by a certain date.

If you know that, you will be able to negotiate a higher sales price. If the buyers have an agent, then ask the agent for information. Here are some questions you can ask:

- "Why do the buyers like this home?"
- "Where are they moving from?"
- "How does this home compare to other homes?"

No, you shouldn't be asking them as bluntly as that. **But, you can often find the answers in a roundabout way.**

For example, you could say, "You will love our town because of the X (insert a unique feature of your town.) Do they have an X where you live now?"

That will start the conversation about where they are moving

from. You can learn a lot from what they say. It will be helpful during the negotiations. You would be amazed at what some people will tell you.

Common Negotiating Mistake #2: Meeting in the middle.

(This is the most common mistake that novice home sellers make.) It's the easiest way to sell your home for \$10,000 less than you should. I don't want to come across cocky, but meeting in the middle is really lame.

It's the most common thing that everyone does and the problem is that everyone thinks they have to do it. That's a big mistake. There is no rule book that says you have to "meet in the middle."

Here is a quick story that illustrates this. A home was on the market for \$240,000. The buyers made an offer for \$220,000.

The agent told the seller to reject the offer and told the other agent that they should come back with a better offer. (The house had only been on the market for 2 days.)

The buyer came back and "Met in the middle" with a \$230,000 offer. The agent knew they were serious buyers and really wanted the house.

The seller thought the buyer was being a good person by "meeting in the middle." He was willing to accept the \$230,000 offer.

The agent told him to give a little, but not "meet in the middle." He recommended that he counter at \$237,500 and see what happened.

The buyers came back with \$235,000 and after some more negotiations the buyer and seller agreed on \$237,000. **So, what can you take from this.**

Don't meet in the middle. Instead, give 10-20% and let the other guy give 50%. You'll gain a little bit more with each round of negotiations.

Common Negotiating Mistake #3: Talking too much.

This is the worst sin of negotiating. Don't tell the buyer's or their agent your life's story.

What do you think would pop into a buyer's head if they heard this out of a seller's mouth? "We must sell the home because it is in foreclosure and if we don't sell it by June 23rd, then the bank will foreclose on it."

Immediately they will think, "I wonder what they owe on the house. Because if it doesn't sell they will have a foreclosure. The seller's probably just want to get what they owe on the home so they can avoid foreclosure."

This is an extreme example, but it shows you how a simple slip of the tongue could cause a seller to lose a large amount of their hard earned equity.

A seller facing foreclosure in that situation might be desperate enough to "get out" with none of their equity just to avoid foreclosure.

But, what if the buyer was willing to pay the market value for the home? That seller just lost all their equity! When a buyer asks why you are selling answer them without giving away any extra information.

You could say, "Oh, we would like to move to Omaha." (Or whatever place you are moving to.) You don't need to say much more than that. And don't tell them you have a job transfer!

Common Negotiating Mistake #4: Making the first move.

Many buyers will ask what your bottom line is. They know that they can usually negotiate a home seller down to an even lower price.

Don't fall for it. You've already made the first move by setting a price for your home. Tell the buyers that you need to think it

over and get back to them.

Then, ask them what they like about your home. If they tell you, then you can determine their motivation to buy your home. After that, ask them what they are thinking of offering on your home.

The reason this rule is so important is that in some negotiations you may offer more at the beginning than the other party is willing to accept.

Here is an example of this. A person I know was trying to buy something. He had a price in mind that he was willing to pay. He thought the best price he could get was \$1,500, but he was willing to pay up to \$2,000.

He asked the seller what he wanted for the item. The seller responded that he didn't know what he wanted. He offered the seller \$1,500 and the seller accepted it.

Later on he learned that the seller was desperate. The seller had a price in mind of \$800 to \$1,000.

If the seller had mentioned an opening price first, then he would have saved \$500! Instead he lost \$500.

Common Negotiating Mistake #5: Letting your ego get involved.

What is your final goal? You want to sell your property quickly for top dollar, right? Keep that goal in mind during the entire negotiation.

I have seen people kill a potential top dollar sale simply because they didn't like the buyer. Or, the buyer started negotiations with a lowball offer and the seller got offended.

"I refuse to negotiate with someone who insulted me with that lowball offer", they said. And a good buyer moved on to buy another house.

Most buyers with lowball offers can be negotiated to a higher price.

Some buyers have a big ego and think they are great negotiators (when they actually aren't.) What is their definition of a great negotiator?

Someone with a big ego that tells people off and walks around like they own the world. They think that being abrasive and rude will get them a better deal. They'll throw around "take it or leave it" offers.

I can tell you from personal experience that most buyers are willing to pay more than their "take it or leave it" offer.

You just have to keep the negotiations going, even though you might be a little unhappy or angry with what they are doing.

I have seen home sellers tell off a buyer that said something rude. That buyer could have bought their house. The buyer might actually be a very nice person. Keep your eye on the goal and don't get distracted by petty things.

You want to sell your house for top dollar. Let anything a buyer says that is rude, or otherwise offensive, roll off like water off a duck's back.

Common Negotiating Mistake #6: Failing to take time on the counter offer.

Many times you will be pressured to reply right away to an offer. Buyers are impatient and if they really like your house, then they will want an answer to their offer right away. But, you know what else that means?

It also means they are probably willing to pay more for your property.

Take the time to talk to your realtor. You need to take a little time and consider the situation.

Have you been able to find out any information on the buyers? Use that to put yourself in the buyer's shoes. A little space and an objective third party will lead to more effective decision making.

Now that you know what mistakes to

avoid, here is how to negotiate for the highest price possible.

Finally, you are where you want to be in the home selling business. You've worked yourself senseless updating your home, cleaning it and pretty much creating an appealing abode for home seekers.

Then, you get your first viewers. Yes! Now, you're at another first with someone making an offer on the property. You suddenly realize that you're in a very precarious situation, and you may have no idea how to proceed.

I can help you with that so don't sweat it. Try to realize that this is one of the most important financial decisions of your life. I know, I just told you not to sweat it and then I throw that at you.

But, in truth, most people don't stand a chance of coming into this kind of money more than once or twice in their lives, if that.

So, you want to make the very best of this situation for yourself, for your future and for your children's futures. The more money you make, the better off you'll be. But you already knew that part.

That is why I'd like to guide you through more than just the standard approach to negotiating the sale of your home.

I want to see you come away from this deal with a few less debts, a wonderful new home and some extra cash under the mattress.

While there are times when the offer, counter offer, deal approach works best, there are also times when you could come away with thousands more through simple strategic planning.

Let's explore your options, and then you can choose which is best for you.

Negotiation Technique #1: The typical negotiating approach.

You are probably familiar with the way most people approach the buying and selling process. The home is put on the market, and when an interested buyer comes by, they make an offer to the homeowner.

Typically, the homeowner will then make a counter offer, which can be accepted or rejected by the bidder. Sometimes this back and forth can go on for a while. There are both pros and cons to this particular situation.

Pros

One positive to the typical negotiating method is that the transaction is fairly straightforward and easy to understand.

It makes the seller seem flexible and willing to work with the buyer's needs. It's a bang, bang, boom sort of situation, and everybody knows exactly what's going on.

This strategy can work quite well for folks who are willing to take lower offers to simply be rid of a home. It's a pretty straightforward process; well, as much as any home purchasing transaction can be straight forward.

Cons

A serious negative to this approach is that once you begin this back and forth negotiating tactic, your home is off of the market until the deal is either sealed or discarded. Let me put it in perspective for you.

Let's just theorize that Sally Sue, who checked out your home last week, calls with a much higher bidding price five minutes after you make a counter offer to your current bidder.

You are now legally bound to put Madame Sue on hold until you see if your current negotiations work out or not. The bottom line is that you could be making substantially less money and there's not a thing in the world you can do about it.

Another con to the standard approach is that you might feel pressured to take low ball offers from deal seekers out of fear that

nothing better will come along.

If the cons outweigh the pros in your situation, let me ease your mind. You don't have to go through those negatives, because there are many negotiating approaches that you can take. Allow me to enlighten you.

Negotiating Technique #2: Reject an offer, but throw the bidder a bone.

Now, let's just say that a buyer comes around, loves your property and makes an offer. You are happy that they want the home, but you're a little less than thrilled with their bid.

You find yourself on the fence. You wonder if you should just get the deal over with and take what you can get, or if you should hold out for a better offer in the future.

That's a valid concern, and there is a way to handle this. Go ahead and reject their offer. That's right. Take a step that most folks have a hard time taking and simply say that one dreaded word, "No."

Saying no can sometimes take you exactly where you want to go. Just don't stop with the negative answer. Reject their offer, but invite them to resubmit a higher bid. That takes some of the pressure off of you. There are several ways a deal like this can go.

The potential buyers are not usually going to expect you to take their very first bid, and they might be throwing out a lowball offer just to see how far down you're willing to go.

You can send your own little message by rejecting that less than desirable offer, but keeping them in the loop.

They'll know without a doubt that they ventured far too low. If they sincerely want your property, and not just a bargain, they are likely to come back to you with a much higher bid.

As always, there are two sides to every coin. In the event that the bidders really do want your property, out of all of the other properties available, this procedure can work well.

However, you are liable to lose the deal if this is just a person gobbling up cheap real estate the way some people gobble cookies. While that may seem bad at first, in retrospect it leaves you completely open to better offers in the future.

Useful Tips

- It's most desirable to use this approach when your home is fresh on the market or if you have an open house scheduled soon.
- Keep in mind that whole legal counter offer thing-a-ma-jig, too. The instant you make a counter offer to a low bid, which could just be a real estate gobbler on the prowl, you've tied yourself to dealing only with that bidder until you come to a consensus.

During the time that you and your bidder are coming to a common decision, you can't entertain any other offers. That wastes your valuable time, and could cost you better bids.

Negotiation Technique #3: Bring on the bidding war.

Did you know that there is such a thing as a bidding war? This is usually a carefully crafted situation that can literally bring the bid on a home above the price the homeowners are asking for in the first place.

Here, allow me to explain how this can happen.

The Process

- The first thing that you do is to put your desirable home on the market.
- Ideally, you also schedule an open house for just a few days later.
- As you put your home on the market, you also put in a disclaimer that you're not going to entertain any bids made on said home until after the completion of the open house.

Well, you're probably thinking that this is ludicrous! How is going through all of this trouble going to help you sell your home

quickly, and for top dollar? You could be missing out on real bids!

Hold on to your horses, cowboy, because there's more to this story. The answers to your questions are simple as can be. Human nature will take over, my friend. You and I have just created a prime situation for competition to abound.

Everyone who sees the home and loves it will want to make a bid. Shoot, some really competitive players will want to bid just to see if they can win the prize! They'll all know from the onset that you are potentially getting offers from countless other people, too.

You have just been set up to take multiple bids at once, and this gives you the freedom to go with the best one.

Potential homeowners who really want your house for their own are going to start bidding high, and they might keep overbidding each other.

In this type of situation, or a bidding war, it is not uncommon at all for the seller to come away with more than their asking price.

The reality of the situation is that you might only get one bid out of the whole shebang. However, the bidder isn't privy to that information. The fact that they know they could be competing against other offers works in your favor, as well.

They are going to try to make an offer that's better than everyone else's because they don't have a clue that there is no one else at all. At the end of the day, who does the winner turn out to be? You do!

Negotiating Technique #4: An expiration date for extra motivation.

Let me remind you. Once a buyer makes an offer you don't want to accept, and you then make a counter offer, you are legally bound to see the negotiation process through until you and the bidder either comes to agreeable conditions or agrees to part ways.

This means that you can't take a higher offer if one comes a long, and that is just a rotten situation to be in. However, there is a

way that you can counteract this problem.

You can set yourself up for a higher selling price and a shorter waiting time all at the same time. To help your cause, selling your home quickly for the most money possible that is, put an expiration date on your counter offer.

Basically, what that means is that you give your bidder a certain amount of time to either agree or disagree with your terms. This benefits your outcome in a couple of ways.

Benefits of a short expiration date

- First off, a short expiration date motivates your potential buyers to make a speedy decision. Either you'll go into a contract with them, or they'll move on to greener pastures.
- If the bidder moves on, you are free to negotiate with other bidders quickly.
- If they accept your terms in short order, you sell your property faster.

Now, I encourage you to be reasonable about this. The last thing you want to do is turn your buyer off by making the time-frame too short, particularly if they aren't that far off from your ideal price with their current offer.

However, feel free to go below the standard time used in your state. So, if the typical deadline is three days, make yours two.

The potential buyers will know you mean business, but that you also respect that this is a life changing decision for them, as well as for yourself.

There's also another reason to expedite these contracts besides quickly closing a deal or being free to negotiate with other buyers. The longer your home is on the market, the less desirable it appears to potential buyers.

If the deal falls through, you've extended the number of days your home has been on the market. In other words, valuable time has been wasted.

By shortening that time, you're shortening your overall number of marketed days in the event this deal doesn't go through.

Negotiating Technique #5: Pay the piper, but raise the price.

More and more, buyers are asking sellers to pay their closing costs, which are normally around 3% of the actual price of the home.

I know it makes you shudder to even think of handing out that kind of cash. However, this kind of deal could actually work to your benefit. Let me explain.

The Buyer's Perspective

Let's look at this from a buyer's perspective for a moment. Many homebuyers just can't afford to come up with those kinds of additional costs.

Often, they are strapped for cash after coming up with the down payment for your home, money for new appliances, moving expenses and redecoration needs.

Your Perspective

On the other hand, it isn't quite fair for you to come up with that much cash so they can buy a home, now is it. After all, they not only want you to pay the closing costs but also to come down on your original price.

I'll give it to you straight. You should pay those closing costs. Wait! Before you decide I've lost my marbles and toss your PC out of the nearest window, allow me to show you how paying those costs will work for you and not against you in the long run.

You should pay the closing costs, but you should also increase the price the buyers pay for your home by the same amount. Let me restate that.

If the only thing keeping you from selling your home is the out of pocket costs for closing fees, and you're able to pay it, it

would be beneficial for you to do so. But, you should recoup that money by raising the price on your home by the same amount.

You see, the buyers may not be able to come up with the extra cash for the closing costs, but they can often borrow more money with their loan.

Many buyers just don't realize that if you pay their closing costs, you are giving up some substantial profit on your home's sale. So, help them realize that fact in your counter offer.

Here's how you handle the situation. Basically, when the buyer submits an offer that includes you paying the closing costs, simply counter with an offer that says you'll do just that. That is, you'll do just that as long as they agree to the higher price you're proposing for your home.

Some numbers, please

- Let's say, for instance, that your asking price is \$250,000.
- Closing costs would be approximately \$7,500.
- Your bidder makes an offer for \$240,000 and additionally asks you to pay the closing costs.
- You and I, we understand that this means you would be letting your home go for \$17,500 less than you asked for it. That's a nice chunk of change, and often more than anyone with a brain and a house worth the asking price is willing to go.
- So you make a more reasonable request. Simply counter offer by agreeing to pay the \$7,500 in closing costs as long as the bidder is willing to pay the original price of \$250,000 for the property.
- Now, you've come down to a much more reasonable amount of loss at \$7,500.
- The seller is still getting a deal, and you're still getting a fair price.
- (Keep in mind these numbers are approximations, please. I'm a realtor, not a mathematician. I think you can see the point,

though. Thanks!)

Ideally, this approach allows you to come out smelling like a rose, because you'll get back the money you invested for closing costs as soon as the deal is done.

However, there is one major hurdle that could hinder you. In the event that your home won't actually stand for the amount of money you're asking, you'll have to go back to the drawing board.

A bank is not going to loan more money than your home is worth in any event, and especially in today's economy.

However, paying closing costs in many situations can be a great way to close a deal. It can actually mean the difference in your possible buyer choosing to go into debt for your home rather than the guy's down the street.

It's just a matter of asking a fair price for an outstanding home from the very beginning.

A Final Tip: How to immediately gain the upper hand in any negotiation.

If you ever feel that you are getting "taken advantage of in any negotiation, then do this. Tell the buyer that you are changing your mind. Yes, that's right. You are taking your home off the market.

The dynamics of the negotiations will change right away. Now, the buyer will have to sell you on why you should sell the home to them. In addition, they will have to make a really sweet offer in order to have any chance of you accepting it.

Now, I'm not saying you should use this in every negotiation. But, this is a very effective strategy when you feel that you are losing the negotiation. And, I only recommend using it in that type of a situation.

If the buyer doesn't buy the house, then you can always change your mind and continue to try and sell it.

After all, there is nothing wrong with changing your mind.

Lying, cheating, and stealing are wrong. But changing your mind isn't! Does that make sense?

Chapter 8

A Big Mistake that Cost One Home Seller \$36,000.

Chuck wanted to sell his home. Then, a buyer contacted him and told him that someone wanted to buy his home. The buyer offered to buy his home for \$285,000.

They were approved for a loan. "Will you sell your home to us", the buyers asked?

On the surface it all seemed like a great deal. Chuck could sell his home quickly and avoid the inconvenience of the normal home selling process.

Without further ado, Chuck accepted the \$285,000 offer and moved on with his life.

A few weeks later Chuck's neighbor sold his house for \$321,000. The neighbor's house was very similar to Chuck's home. A little bit smaller but otherwise comparable to Chuck's. It wasn't in better shape than Chuck's House.

Why did Chuck sell his house for \$36,000 less than his neighbor?

- Why did he work so hard to pay down his mortgage?
- Why did he work so hard to keep his house in tip top shape only to sell it for less than it was worth?

Because he didn't know what his house was actually worth! Unfortunately, Chuck never checked with anyone to find out what his house was worth.

He didn't get an appraisal or a second

opinion from another Realtor.

Here is how to avoid having this happen to you. Obtain a second opinion of the value of your home, BEFORE you put it on the market.

If you don't price your home correctly, then you will either:

- **Sell your home for less than it's worth.**

Or,

- **Waste time** while your home sits on the market (because it's not priced correctly.)

Here is how to avoid having this happen to you. Price your home so it sells quickly and for the the highest price possible.

If we're being honest here, we probably all have skewed ideas of the worth of our homes. Either we think it is far more marvelous than it actually is, or we're so tired of it that we think it is a horrendous cross to bear.

Add to that your hopes and dreams of what to do with your money once you sell, and pricing your own home is a complete danger zone. This is one area where the aid of a realtor really does come in handy.

Danger Zone #1: Pricing Below Value

Possibly, a home that is priced too low could eventually aid a seller in the start of a bidding war so that the price is driven above what the sellers wanted to make in the first place.

However, conditions must be ripe for this kind of arrangement to work. Plus, well-laid, professional plans are crucial to this maneuver's success.

On the other hand, and what normally happens when a home is priced far below market value, potential buyers are left feeling as

though there is some hidden, ominous fault with the property - even if there isn't.

That kind of mentality can leave a home simply hung out to dry, which wastes valuable time. The longer a property stays on the market, the less money sellers are likely to make.

Danger Zone #2: Pricing Above Value

Pricing too high, obviously, leaves your home sitting stagnant in the water while all of your neighbors' homes are snatched off of the market. Why would anyone purchase your home if one very similar is priced thousands lower nearby?

Common sense says that your home is not going anywhere anytime soon. Now, you're sitting and playing the waiting game while your peak selling time is slowly dwindling away.

These dangers are why getting an accurate price on your home from the get-go is imperative to your selling for top dollar.

There are several ways that you can proceed with discovering this mythical figure, but it isn't necessarily a simple or cost-free endeavor.

Avoid the most common mistake that novice home sellers make.

They don't check comparable sales and just put the home on the market. It sounds too simple to be true. But, it happens all the time.

At other times, they do not check the highest and best value of the property and sell a prime development property for pennies on the dollar.

One savvy investor bought a prime development property for about \$275,000 and re-sold it for over a Million Dollars! The sell-

ers made the mistake of selling their property without checking out all their options.

Understand how different market settings affect how you should price your home.

First, you need to determine whether or not you are in a Buyer or Seller's Market.

While you're scouting out other homes for sale in your area, you should also pay attention to how long they've been on the market.

Places like Zillow and Realtor.com often have a little section under each home that tells how long it has been up for sale in their systems, although not necessarily how long they've been on the market.

If homes in your neighborhood are getting snatched up right and left, you stand a good chance of the same happening for you permitted that your home is priced right.

This would be referred to as a seller's market, and you could get more profit from your home's sale.

On the other hand, if the 'Home for Sale' signs in your area seem to be growing roots and taking up permanent residence, then you are probably in a buyer's market.

How to price your home in a seller's market.

Sold homes don't matter that much. You should price your home to be competitive with the other homes on the market. But, you don't have to match the price of what homes have sold for.

For example, we recently sold a home that we thought was about \$100,000 overpriced. Comparable homes were selling for about \$525,000 to \$550,000. But, home prices in the area were in-

creasing rapidly.

There was nothing similar available for less than \$650,000. The seller owed \$650,000 and so we priced the property at \$699,900. And guess what? It sold 3 months later for \$674,000.

How to price your home in a buyer's market.

If your local market is a buyer's market, then you should look at all of the other homes for sale and make sure that your home is priced competitively with them.

If your home is not selling, then you will need to adjust the price until it sells. This is never fun.

How to determine your home's exact value.

There's more than one way to find out the value of your home. You can use the following method singularly, but a combination of some or all of these suggestions will likely give you the best pricing direction.

Hire an appraiser: Before a buyer can get a home loan, the bank will require an approved appraiser to come out and make a valuation of the desired property.

However, one good way to get an accurate dollar value of your home now is to hire an appraiser yourself well beforehand. The cost can run anywhere between \$300 and \$600, or more, depending on your location.

Hire a realtor: A Comparative Market Analysis is one of the tasks a real estate agent takes on when hired by sellers anyway, although it is just part and parcel when you hire a realtor to sell your home.

Do your own homework: There is a free way of getting a decent valuation of your home, but it is risky and time consuming.

You can use the Internet to scout out other homes that are for sale in your area, and narrow them down to those that are similar to yours. The prices on these homes can give you a good benchmark to go from in your own price.

How to find accurate comparable sales and use them to determine your home's exact value

Go to Realtor.com and click on the "Recently Sold" Button on the top. To search for homes similar to yours, enter criteria, such as square footage, the number of bedrooms, etc.

The key to finding accurate comparable sales is to find the properties that are closest in location, condition, square footage, features, etc.

How to determine which comparable sales you should use and which to ignore

The following comparable sales should not be used. Very few of these properties sell for a fair value. Here is why each of these property types are NOT good comparable sales.

Bank Owned / REO Properties. Banks always sell their homes for less than they are worth. I don't know exactly why this is. But, they do it so often that I know it is true.

The average bank owned home in today's market is selling for 5-10% less than its fair value. This is true even for the homes that are in good shape.

Short Sales. Buyers and their agents hate short sales, because they are tricky and unreliable. Oftentimes a buyer will fall in love with a short sale home, only to find out that the banks won't approve the short sale.

Agents do not like to show them for the same reasons. As a result, the pool of buyers for a short sale is much smaller than on

regular listing.

Ugly Homes. Unappealing homes. Homes that aren't kept up. People buy homes because of emotion. Logic doesn't always apply. Because of this, a well kept up home will sell for more money.

We have seen well kept up homes sell for 10-15% more than an unappealing home. We have seen professionally staged homes sell for 20% more than an un-staged property.

Yes, the condition of a home counts. Don't use an ugly home as a comparable.

Are you in a Buyer's or Seller's Market?

While you're scouting out other homes for sale in your area, you should also pay attention to how long they've been on the market.

Places like Zillow and Realtor.com often have a little section under each home that tells how long it has been up for sale in their systems, although not necessarily how long they've been on the market.

If homes in your neighborhood are getting snatched up right and left, you stand a good chance of the same happening for you permitted that your home is priced right.

This would be referred to as a seller's market, and you could get more profit from your home's sale.

On the other hand, if the 'Home for Sale' signs in your area seem to be growing roots and taking up permanent residence, you might benefit from setting a little lower price than your competitors. You may not make as much profit as you would have liked, but some profit is better than none at all.

It's all in the timing

Timing is a slippery slope for sure. If you take too much time with actually going through with a sell, just holding out for the perfect offer, you're probably doing yourself a disservice.

What is more likely to happen is that buyers will notice your home is just sitting there, and only offer lower prices. Market statistics suggest that the first offer is most often the highest, anyway.

Conversely, if you need to sell quickly, you don't have a whole lot of wiggle room when it comes to negotiating. You need to get out of the home, and you're limited to taking whatever bids are thrown at you.

To all things there are a time and a season

More often than not, the best seasons to put a house on the market are in the spring and fall. Keep this in mind as you prepare your home for sale. If timing allows for it, shoot for your next hot season to begin the marketing process.

For instance, if you decide you want to sell in June, plan to put your home up for sale in the fall. Use the intermittent months for necessary preparations.

A Little Nudge

It isn't uncommon to get to a place where you're desperate to get this selling business over with, and yet, there are no takers. Give your prospective buyers a little nudge. Make them feel as if they're getting the deal of a lifetime!

Everyone loves a bargain. There are several ways that you could use this psychological tendency to your advantage.

- Offer an allowance for decorating, new appliances or even landscaping. Look at the flaws of your home, and instead of trying to correct them with MORE improvements, correct them with money. Buyers love being able to pick out all of their own,

new stuff.

- Consider paying for a home warranty. They aren't typically astronomically expensive, usually just a few hundred bucks, and they give a new homeowner the peace of mind to buy your used home.
- Think about paying the closing costs. While this may seem a little unfair, if you can sell your house quickly, you'll be benefiting tremendously. Remember, the longer your home marines on the market, the less you're going to make anyway.

Chapter 9

Two Additional Ways To Sell Your Home For More Money

Are you making a common seller mistake that's stopping your home from selling? What else can you be doing to ensure that your home is going to sell?

In this report, you'll discover the biggest mistake home sellers make, a proven marketing secret, how to "sweeten the deal" for buyers, what buyers don't want to see in your home, the three key places you want looking the best, and finally, how to stage your home and make it look its absolute best.

Now I know that was a mouthful, but believe me, these topics are crucial to selling your home, and quite honestly, most other real estate agents and sellers are oblivious to these proven methods.

A very common mistake that most sellers make is that they don't have professional pictures taken of the home!



And most Realtors don't take the time and energy to get decent pictures. They will show up with their point and shoot camera, take a few shots and call it good.

Professional pictures will make your home look so much better. Photographers know what to do to make their subject look its absolute best.

Whether it's a cute puppy, a newly married couple, or a home for sale, professional pictures are a complete necessity in my book.

You have to view your house from a buyer's prospective.

If you owned the house in this picture, you may not notice the trees that dominate the photo, the blue coloring tint, or the really bad angle that that this was taken from.

Heck, even if you don't want to hire a photographer, at least get someone (I can do this) to touch up the pictures and make them look their absolute best.

Look at the picture below:



BEFORE

AFTER

This is what just a little bit of editing can do for your pictures.

Pictures sell your home. It's the first thing a buyer notices and it's what will keep them interested. Get professional pictures taken!

What can you do to sweeten the deal for the buyer?

Everyone is looking for a deal; this includes you, me, your mom, everyone. If people think they are getting a bargain, then they are going to hear that little voice inside of their head saying, “do it, do it, don’t pass it up!”

Marketers have been using this method for centuries, and that’s because it works. If you want to convince someone to buy your home, offer them something that no one else is offering. Even it’s something that seems insignificant to you, it may be the closing deal for the buyer.

I cannot think of a better example of this than a home I had a listing on a few months ago. The client (who wishes to remain anonymous) had been trying to sell this home for almost a year and was getting ready to just give up. In fact, he had come very close to selling his house at one point, but the deal fell through.

Now getting people interested in his home was not the problem. People were looking at a lot of homes in his neighborhood, and his was one of the nicer ones in that particular neighborhood. This was the problem...

Yes, his house was nice, but so were a few other houses in that neighborhood. He was having a hard problem closing the deal on his house because it seemed like everyone would eventually turn their interest to one of these other homes.

I finally talked him into “sweetening the deal”. He needed something that would make his house stand out. He needed an incentive to get people to buy his house instead of the ones that were almost just as nice right down the street. So here’s what we did...

We had someone look at his house on a Monday morning, but they said they were also going to check out the other houses

down the street when they left his house.

But before they moved on, I said, “I just want to give you something to consider. We will agree to pre-pay the entire first year of property taxes. Just think of it as a bonus.”

They were back on Tuesday and wanted to buy the house! All they needed was a little incentive to make his house stand from the other similar homes.

Once again, it doesn’t have to be much, and it doesn’t have to be the incentive I used in the example. You could even tell them you’d include free cleaning or lawn care for a year. The list goes on and on and the only thing stopping it is our creativity. Put yourself in your buyer’s shoes and ask yourself what kind of “deal” would you like to get when buying a home.

Chapter 10

Understanding the Eight Steps To Selling Your Home

Step 1: Preparing to put your home on the market.

There are several steps that you need to take in order to prepare your property for showing. The time-consuming part is why I suggest that you give yourself a little stint between actually deciding to sell and putting a sign out front.

Lots and Lots of Paperwork. One of the very first items you're going to want to check off is getting all appropriate paperwork in order. The list is a bit extensive, and is by no means an 'across the board' kind of deal.

Precisely what you need often varies by state. Even worse is the fact that it just as often varies by county. The best way to find out exactly what you need is to check with a local real estate agent.

Of course, I am always at your disposal and can help you sort out what you need for all of my surrounding areas. Just give me a ring, and I'll help you out.

Dig Out Your Title Insurance Policy. Be prepared to provide proof of your title insurance. Most mortgage companies require that you present this before loan approval can be made, so it is advantageous to have it within arm's reach before you actually nail down a buyer.

Title insurance can be tricky business, and a professional needs to handle the whole situation. Customs of who pays for title insurance is different across the nation.

You may recall hiring someone to ‘search your deed’ when you originally bought the home you are now selling. Title insurance is bought at that time, although you may not have even been aware that that was what you were doing.

It basically guarantees that the deed to your property was searched from the present back to its U.S. Patent. The insurance is for protection against human error, because let’s face it: mistakes do happen.

The process will also have to be done again with your current sell, but it’s very handy to have your prior paperwork nearby.

Surveys Are Sometimes Required. Some states require by law that if a home buyer is using a mortgage loan to purchase a property that mortgage surveys be done. This guarantees that the property is as is should be without any encroachments.

An example of an encroachment might be that a neighbor has gone over the boundary line of your property with their garage, or that you might have put a fence in that is actually on their land. All improvements will also be noted on this survey.

Many states also require that the boundary of the land be surveyed. Again, every place is different. Make sure you check with a professional to find out exactly what your specific laws require.

Some States Demand Disclosure Statements. It isn’t uncommon for states to mandate that a seller provide potential buyers with certain disclosures about the property being sold.

Some examples of disclosures are natural hazards, pest control and lead paint. These few are certainly not the limit of what can be required of you. An attorney or a qualified real estate agent, such as myself, can help you to determine what is needed from you specifically.

A Pre-Inspection Report is Recommended. Technically, it isn't normally a requirement for you to have a *pre-inspection* performed. Regardless of whether you're forced to or not, it's a good idea.

You see, most of the time certain inspections are going to have to be done before a mortgage lender will indeed offer the money for your buyer's to purchase your property.

In the event that some part of your home doesn't pass inspection, you are in a whole wide world of very complicated trouble.

Now, if you go ahead and pony up the cash to get a pre-inspection done, you have every opportunity to make repairs yourself, and before the mortgage company in your future ever finds out about the problems.

Or, you could also choose to make allowances in your asking price for the repair of any faults once the home is out of your hands. Another route you could take is selling the home 'As Is,' but that's a whole other ballgame unto itself.

I can't say it enough, and you might be a little tired of it, but you really need to check with a professional before assuming anything.

The rules for these sorts of circumstances are just too diverse from location to location for you to take anything to chance. The last thing you want is to have legal repercussions from this sell hounding you years from now.

A Home Warranty is a Great Idea. A home warranty is becoming a greater and greater incentive to prospective home buyers. These warranties are purchased by you, the seller, at the close of your property.

Most often, a basic package is below \$500 and guarantees a

number of different home features for a year. These could include major appliances, electrical, plumbing, and heating and air systems, among other things.

You'll want to really research and understand what you're getting, because there are all sorts of home warranty packages available. Having the one you've chosen on hand while showing your property can really put your potential buyers at ease.

Step 2: Marketing your home.

Marketing is not easy, nor is it necessarily cheap. The main reason you probably have chosen the FSBO route is to save yourself a good bit of money, so you're going to want to heavily consider your marketing strategy.

There are all kinds of tools at your disposal, from the traditional signage to information packets to internet listings. You'll want to set a budget for your marketing, and stick to it.

This is where a realtor really does come in handy. I think you'll probably be quite surprised at how much time, money and effort it takes to make effective marketing happen.

Old Fashioned Newspaper Ads. Sometimes, the old tried and true methods still work, and newspaper ads do. Most of the time, a classified ad is priced based on the number of lines or words that is being published.

There are also extra charges for photos and special lettering such as bold and italics. That's why you're going to want to get to the point quickly in your ad, but also add enough insight to hook prospective buyers.

Use special lettering sparingly. You're going to want to include:

- Price
- Number of bedrooms and bathrooms
- Street address
- Square feet
- Special features, such as hardwood floors or a finished attic
- Also, avoid too many abbreviations, as this can be overwhelming as well as confusing.

When you get ready to place your ad, ask your newspaper personnel when most other real estate ads are heavily incorporated into the paper. Most often, this will be on the weekends.

Shoot for that same time frame for your ad to run. Most home buyers are going to know when the real estate ads are heavy as well, and that is when they're going to be looking.

Keep in mind that placing this kind of ad can be tricky. Even saying something that seems harmless like, "A nice home in a Christian neighborhood," can get you into tons of trouble.

Federal fair housing laws are pretty strict about how you are allowed to market your home, and anything that could be considered discriminatory is dangerous - even if you mean nothing harmful by it. Nothing in your ad should even allude to discrimination against potential buyers based on:

- Religion
- Race
- National origin
- Color
- Sex
- Familial status
- Handicaps

- Any number of other factors

Check out more information on this at the U.S. Depart. Of Housing and Urban Development site at HUD.gov.

Get a High Quality Sign. You absolutely need a high quality sign for your yard. Although many people are going to the Internet for their first-stop home shopping these days, a sign lets potential buyers know they've found the right place when hunting your property down.

There are also those folks who still take the time to drive around and search out homes that feel right, and they find them by the signs.

Your sign should not be scrawled on poster paper with a sharpie and stapled to a tomato stake. Trust me, this is not the way to get a buyer who not only is willing to pay near your asking price, but also who is able to pay near your asking price.

Rather, you want your sign to lend a professional, well-groomed appearance that works well with your curb appeal. Make sure that your phone number and other vital information are clearly able to be seen from the road.

You might also find it advantageous to add a box or tube to your sign for fliers with more information on your home. Keep these fliers handy, because you're likely to run out more than once. And, of course, before you go constructing signs rivaling a billboard, check out any restrictions on signage in your community.

Using Listing Services and Internet Ads. Even if you aren't a computer age guru, you can likely handle posting your home with any number of online listing services.

Often, you get more space for details at a cheaper price than with printed publications. There is any number of different sites

available to help you market your home for sale. A qualified real estate agent would know precisely which ones to choose for your home and for the area in which you live.

You can go with the freebies, like Craigslist and Facebook – but beware of scammers. There are also places like Zillow, Trulia and Realtor.com who will advertise your home for a fee.

Those programs that add your home to the Multiple Listing Service sometimes offer additional help with things like paperwork and pricing. Of course, those services cost extra.

Compiling Information Packets. Often overlooked, information packets can really help you out when you want potential buyers to remember your wonderful home more than anyone else's wonderful home.

You see, most folks looking to buy a home take a peek at more than one place before settling on their favorite. If you have graced them with a simple information packet loaded with photos and details about your property, they are very likely to look closely at it...and remember your home.

Make sure that you have your information packets available on your sign, but also hand them out whenever someone comes by for a showing. If you decide to throw an open house, have plenty available there as well.

Your Information Packet Checklist.

- 🍏 Lots of high quality photos
- 🍏 Your contact information. Be thorough, and give several contact methods such as home phone, cell phone and email address.
- 🍏 Home address
- 🍏 Price of the property

- 🍏 Number of bedrooms and sizes
- 🍏 Number of bathrooms
- 🍏 Point out special features, such as outbuildings and whirlpool tubs
- 🍏 Square footage
- 🍏 Elaborate on improvements and updates
- 🍏 Size of lot
- 🍏 Community details
- 🍏 School district
- 🍏 Information on neighborhood association, if applicable

Step 3: Showing your home

At last, you reap the rewards of all of your marketing work. People begin to call and ask questions about your property.

Now, you need to answer their questions honestly while also getting a feel for whether they're just browsing or if they are seriously interested in buying. When it feels right, invite them to come by and take a look.

When a seller chooses to go with a real estate agent, they are typically given 24 hour notice when someone wants to come and look at their home. FSBO's have more leeway with scheduling showings, in a sense, but there are a couple of things to consider before penciling in a showing three days from now.

Have you ever heard the saying, "Get it while the getting is good?" Your callers may be totally interested in looking at your house today, but in three days' time, they could very well have been tempted by another property.

You also shouldn't be surprised in the least to find that you're sitting in your living room speaking with a prospective buyer who

turns out to be sitting in your driveway.

Once you ask if he'd like to come by and look, you are going to have a hard time explaining that he needs to wait until another day. I mean, he's right outside.

As such, keep your house in top-notch shape so that interested folks can come by at any time without you suffering from extreme embarrassment or jeopardizing a sale.

In the event that you are welcoming buyer's agents to show your home, you will likely want to invest in a lockbox. This will allow you to leave the premises while the agents are showing your home, and give them a secure way to enter.

Step 4: Hosting an Open House.

An open house is more or less advertising all over the place that anyone who wants to have a look at your lovely home may do so at such and such time on such and such date.

Your most successful open houses are usually going to be on weekends between 12:00 noon and 5:00pm. In order for your open house to draw in an adequate number of viewers, you need to publicize it like mad.

Make sure you put out plenty of high quality signs for people searching for your home to follow. As guests arrive, give the grand tour of your home as if it were Buckingham Palace. Hopefully, you'll hook a big one!

Your Open House Checklist

- 🍏 **Sign-In Sheets** – This is very handy for knowing who came to your home, how to contact them and whether or not they're working with an agent. Keep several sheets near

your entrance with plenty of pens, and request each visitor to sign in.

🍏 **Information on Sales Price** – Hire a real estate agent to work up your CMA, or do the research on other similar homes in your area. Have this information *in writing* handy so that you can justify your sales price if need be.

🍏 **Give the Kids a Vacation** – Everyone loves their kids, but an open house really isn't the best place for them to be. It can be overwhelming for the little ones to think of selling their home, and they may cause a fuss. Additionally, some viewers may find the pitter patter of little feet non-plussing. Take the kids to a safe sitter, like grandma or a trusted neighbor, for the day. An added bonus is that you'll actually be able to focus on the open house rather than your little ones.

🍏 **Preparation is Essential** – There are tons and tons of questions that you're going to have to answer during an open house. Think about the potential ones beforehand and be prepared. The best way to do this is to think of the things you would want to know about a property if you were thinking of purchasing it. If you don't know the answer to one of these questions, find it before you open your doors to the public. To get you off on the right foot, common question topics are:

- Shopping opportunities
- School information
- Parks
- Various services (recycling, trash pickup, etc.)
- Utility costs
- Taxes

- Examples of financing options
- Neighbor friendliness

🍏 Touch Base Later - Once the open house is over, and you can breathe again, you'll be glad that you had sign in sheets. You're going to want to contact each visitor to see if they're truly interested in your property. You'll also want to see what they thought of your place. Don't be offended if you get some critical answers. You can use this valuable information to improve your home before more viewers come by.

Another issue that is a real biggie when following up from an open house is whether or not the folks who are interested in buying your home are actually *capable* of buying your home. Without enough purchasing power, buying is a lost cause. For this reason you might consider qualifying your prospective buyers.

Step 5: Negotiations with the buyer.

At long last, you have received an offer on your home! Congratulations! Now, the question is, what do you do with the thing? Without a trusted real estate agent to guide you, negotiations can be very frightening situations.

And they should be! But let's see what I can do to ease the way for you a little. Okay. You begin negotiations. You might get a verbal or written offer, and that's fine.

However, insist that the verbal offer be put into writing immediately for your own legal protection. Your standard real estate purchase agreements are easy to find, believe it or not.

They're usually available at the local real estate association, or the local bar association. You might also be able to purchase them in certain bookstores or office supply shops. Have some on

hand as soon as you start showing your home.

You don't have to accept an offer as it comes, although that is an option to you. You can also choose to reject it outright, or you may make a counteroffer. Entering into a contract is scary.

That's probably one of the biggest reasons that folks end up changing to a real estate agent. However, if you're a little queasy about the whole situation, but are still committed to FSBO, you can always add a little addendum to your contract which says, "Contingent on the approval of my attorney."

Yes, you need an attorney, and he'll likely make up the offer and final contract. Don't be surprised if you have to make a counteroffer, because there is an excellent chance that you will.

It isn't always about the selling price that negotiations commence, although that is a common reason. Other reasons could be disagreements on precisely what will go with the property, contingencies, closing and move-in dates as well as which party is responsible for the payment of closing costs.

Keep in mind that you need to be fair throughout the whole negotiation. Just don't forget that you need to be fair to yourself as well as to your buyer.

Everything, and I mean everything, must be in writing or you're just shooting in the dark. You can withdraw your counteroffer at any time before the buyer accepts it.

The same goes for the buyer withdrawing their offer before you accept. I highly advise that you seek out a professional at this point to help you along the way, because negotiations can be very complicated.

Step 6: The Closing Process.

Hallelujah! You've worked through negotiations with your buyer. All *i*'s have been dotted and all *t*'s have been crossed on your legally binding contract. Now it's time to get ready to close this puppy.

This part, you absolutely cannot do alone. You'll need to hire a lawyer, an escrow holder or a title company to function as your closing agent. Depending on your needs, and those of your buyer, you will likely close in 30, 45 or 60 days.

Using an Escrow Holder. Often, contracts in real estate require an escrow holder. The escrow holder is a third-party, and is impartial to the outcome of the transaction being made.

Both buyers and sellers are protected with this kind of arrangement. Legal protection is allowed everyone involved in the transaction during the closing process.

Usually, the escrow holder handles each of the necessary steps throughout the closing. Keep in mind that there are alternatives to an escrow holder depending on the location in which you live.

Using an Attorney. Again, real estate laws vary by location. Many necessitate the use of a lawyer during these transactions, and this is especially true along the East Coast.

The attorney in these cases takes on the role of the escrow holder. It is highly encouraged, however, that a seller utilizes an attorney throughout the closing process whether required to or not. After all, this is serious business and having an attorney at your back can't hurt a thing.

Using a Title Company. Title companies can provide title insurance, and also often have access to your escrow and closing needs. You need to have a clear understanding of what your state specifically requires of you before hiring any providers to aid in

the closing of your property.

Your work isn't finished yet, my friend. As a matter of fact, you're just now getting started. Keep these three things in the forefront of your mind, and your closing should go smoothly.

1. Your buyer must get their loan approval.
2. You must meet all of the expectations of the buyer's lender. This could include an appraisal, title insurance, survey and title inspection. Remember, this changes from location to location, and by lender.
3. Next comes the inspections. Hopefully, you've already done a pre-inspection and the ones required by the bank will run smoothly.

After the offer is accepted

There are several hurdles to cross before the closing. You need to keep up with all of the details that are swirling around you at this point and keep everything on schedule.

1. **The Loan Application**: If this is a cash sale then skip to number 3; otherwise, the buyer, if they have not done this by now, will initiate the loan application usually within 3 to 5 days after the contract is totally negotiated and signed.

2. **Credit Report**: Although a simple "on-line" credit report may have been performed already on the buyer, the lender will order a special "home mortgage credit report" which derives data from several different sources.

If there are any problems, your agent will be notified. Some credit problems can be worked with, others can't. It usually takes anywhere from 5 to 10 days to obtain a "home mortgage credit report."

3. **Inspections**: If the buyer used an "Inspection contingency

clause," which usually provides for either a 10 or 15 day inspection period, an appointment will be made with you or your agent for the home inspection service to perform the inspection.

The inspection process usually takes 2-3 hours, and the buyer may accompany the inspector. The home inspector will bring a bag of many gadgets and will inspect everything from the roof to the electric circuit box.

4. **Inspection results:** The inspection report is usually delivered to the buyer or their agent within a day or two after the inspection. The buyer will examine the report and will either

(1) Accept the premises "as is" and proceed with the sale,

(2) Accept the property with a condition that certain item (s) be taken care off in order to continue with the sale. Sometimes the items on the buyer's "punch list" may exceed the liability as negotiated in the contract.

If this happens then you have a right to negotiate only to do your share, or you may elect to do all the repairs, especially if they are repairs that would need to be done anyway just to sell your home. Sometimes, items may be listed that are not normally the seller's responsibility, such as cosmetic items.

Or (3) the Buyer may elect to terminate the agreement because of the inspection results. The Buyer has that right, if the standard inspection contingent clause was used.

In most cases some negotiating will go on after the inspection report is submitted. In some cases the inspector may state that something is not working properly, when, in fact, it is working properly.

You have the right to hire your own professional to dispute the home inspectors findings. This occurs sometimes because the

home inspector is a general inspector and is just trying to cover his liabilities.

Sometimes the home inspector may state that there is a possible problem and recommends that a professional should be consulted (i.e. Heating/AC, roofers etc.). In this case the buyer may add to their "punch list" to have the Heating/AC or roof checked by a professional.

5. **Appraisal**: If your contract has an appraisal contingency or loan contingency, an appraisal will be performed. The appraiser will call either you or your agent for an appointment. He or she will come out to your home and do some measurements, take pictures and notes, and go back to the office to write it up.

Depending on the type of loan, the appraiser may also do a minimum home inspection, which includes a visual inspection of the roof and flipping switches on to see if major appliances work.

Typically it takes about 10 days from the date the appraisal was ordered to completion. If your home appraises lower than contract amount, there may be some re-negotiations, or the buyer may even back out of the deal unless an adjustment is made.

6. **Loan approval**: After the appraisal, and all the paperwork required to verify the buyer's ability to pay the mortgage is accumulated, the "loan package" is sent to the Underwriter.

Most of the underwriters are out of town, and this process usually takes 3-5 days. Some of the lenders are doing point of contact underwriting by way of computer. It is not unusual for this step to take place within the last week before the closing date.

7. **Title Work**: Normally the Seller is providing title insurance for the Buyer. If you have not done so already, your agent will bring or fax copies of the contract to the title agent or attorney that you and your listing agent had previously discussed using.

If this was a cash sale, the title work is usually ordered just after the contract is negotiated. If this sale is contingent on financing, then typically the title work will be held up pending, credit report, inspections, and appraisal steps being satisfied.

Normally your agent will keep in touch with the Title Company or attorney and advise them of the buyer's loan progress.

*The title agent or attorney also handles all the arrangements with your mortgage holder(s) regarding the final payoffs. You need not do anything.

8. **Survey**: After the loan is approved, or earlier at the discretion of the loan officer, the survey is ordered by the buyer, their agent or lender. This usually does not occur until the last 10 days of the process.

Many times it takes place on the morning of the closing. It is not necessary for you to be home for the survey, they do not need to come into your home. The only evidence of the survey having been done is the classic wood stakes with red or orange ribbon at the corners of your property.

9. **Pest inspection**: The "Termite" inspection is actually an inspection of all wood destroying organisms, including but not limited to, dry wood and subterranean termites, wood boring beetles, carpenter ants, and wood rot caused by "wet rot" or by fungi.

The pest inspection paperwork, called the "WDO" cannot be more than 30 days old. If the sale is contingent on financing, the inspection is usually not ordered until there is a full loan approval; however, if the loan approval is imminent but not official within the final week before the closing date, then it might be wise to order it anyway.

Your agent will advise you on this. If you have an active termite contract, then you should call that Termite company to set up

the inspection. If you do not have a termite contract, then you and your agent will discuss selection of a company to do the inspection, and either one of you may make the phone call.

You will need to be home for the inspection. If you cannot be there for the inspection, then your agent may be able to help coordinate the inspection on your behalf. When you call to make the inspection appointment, make sure to inform the inspector that the purpose of the inspection is for a real estate sale.

10. **Pest Inspection results:** The Termite company will either give you the written report at the time of inspection, or they may deliver or mail it to you or your agent. It is very important that your agent get the original inspection report as soon as possible.

If you ordered the report yourself, please advise your agent by who and when the inspection is being performed, so your agent can follow-up on the paper work. Copies have to be faxed or delivered to all parties concerned, including the Lender, Closing Agent, and the Buyer or Buyer's agent.

***NEGATIVE REPORTS:** Occasional a negative report is received indicating that a **termite infestation** has been found, or worse than that, a **wood boring beetle infestation**. Your contract may cover only certain types of pest.

If you have a subterranean termite infestation, then a ground treatment is done which may involve boring holes in the slab for treatment. If you have a dry wood or boring beetle infestation, then your home may have to be "tented." This can run over \$1000.

***DAMAGE:** If damage is indicated, then the lender or buyer may need to examine the damage before repairs are performed. This is their right. If repairs exceed your liability, you have the right to cancel the deal; however, you will still need to do the repairs for the next buyer and all negative reports must be disclosed

to all future potential buyers. This is the law.

***WOOD ROT:** If the property is cited for wood decay; and expect this to happen in at least 50% of all deals, then the lender will either require that the repairs be done, or they may send out an inspector to determine whether the wood decay has caused any structural damage.

If the inspection determines the wood rot to be cosmetic only, then you may not have to do anything about it. Most wood decay problems are not very expensive to correct.

After treatment and/or repairs are done, the lender may require another inspection by the pest company or by their own inspector.

11. **Moving logistics:** If you have not done so already within the last 10 days before the scheduled closing date, you should notify your power company, phone company, gas company, cable company and any other utilities you might have that you will be terminating service for the day of closing.

If you are moving out before the closing date, leave your utilities on until the day of closing. This is important in case repairs are required, pest treatment, and for final inspections and walk through.

You should also cancel any other services associated with the home such as water softener service, pool maintenance, lawn maintain, satellite service, security dial up service, your home owner's insurance, etc.

12. **Occupancy Logistics:** Unless your contract specified a date different then the closing date for the buyer to take occupancy, you will be expected to turn over the keys to the buyer at the closing.

If you or the buyer desires a different arrangement, then this must be negotiated between yourself and the buyer. If you anticipate a problem due to logistics to turn over the keys to the buyer at the closing, you should make a request for a deviation as quickly as possible.

If the buyer is also selling their home on the same date, there may be a logistics problem with the buyer also, making it impossible for the buyer to deviate. Due to many liabilities it is advisable to make a clean break at the time of closing.

Even though there is always a slight possibility of the deal not closing until you are actually sitting at the closing table, you should proceed forward and make the necessary arrangements to comply with the occupancy as specified in the contract.

12. **The final walk-through:** Usually within 24 to 48 hours before closing, the buyer, along with their agent, will do their final "walk through" to verify that all repairs (if any) have been finished, and to make sure that what they contracted for is still in the same condition.

If there are any problems your agent will be notified. Most problems should have been "ironed out" by now, but if the walk through results in a non-acceptance by the buyer, there may be some re-negotiation.

Step 7: The Closing.

You should arrive at the closing at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time. Most title companies allow an hour for each closing, and they try to keep to their schedule.

A cash sale closing usually only takes 10 - 15 minutes; whereas, a closing with a new loan usually takes about 45 minutes. If there are problems or paper mistakes, it may take longer. The

closing agent will collect all moneys and disperse all money.

You should receive a check at the end of the closing for your net proceeds. In rare cases, it may be several hours later before the closing agent can disperse you money.

During the closing, you will meet with your buyer and other necessary parties, such as your attorney, to transfer the ownership of your property. Sometimes closing is also referred to as a settlement.

All paperwork is signed, agreements completed and details finalized at the closing. Normally, the whole transaction takes about an hour. Exactly where and how your closing will take place simply depends on the customs used where you live.

Quite often, the closing takes place at the closing agent's office. Make sure to stay in touch with this agent to make 100% certain that your sell doesn't get off track. There shouldn't be any surprises at the closing.

All expected costs should already have been covered and put into writing between you and the buyer. Following, you will find a list of items that are commonly paid for by sellers at closing, although this is not set in stone.

- Title insurance
- Escrow or attorney's fee
- Transfer tax
- Survey costs
- Home warranty fee
- Mortgage payoff
- Outstanding utility bills
- Recording fee

- Survey costs
- Inspection costs
- Buyer's agent commission

Step 8: Moving.

The closing is usually the time that the buyer takes possession of the property, which more or less means that you need to be out of the home by then.

There are situations where a rental agreement is set up between the buyer and seller, but it's far less complicated if you go ahead and tackle the packing and moving process before closing. Keep the following in mind as you do so.

Where you Currently Reside

- 🍏 Provide a forwarding address to your post office.
- 🍏 Don't forget to give your friends, family and acquaintances your current contact information.
- 🍏 Submit changes of address to your magazine subscriptions, credit cards, etc.

Insurance and Banking

- 🍏 Order new checks and transfer money if you're switching banks.
- 🍏 Make sure all insurance companies have your new address (auto, life, fire and health).
- 🍏 Get cashier's check for closing, if necessary.
- 🍏 Obtain credit references.

Health and Prescriptions

- 🍏 Get referrals for new physician from your current doctor.
- 🍏 Have your prescriptions transferred.

🍏 Get copies of your family's medical and dental histories.

🍏 Also, get your family's medical and dental records.

Utilities

Take care of both the connection at your new home and disconnection at your old one:

🍏 Electric

🍏 Propane/oil

🍏 Water

🍏 Waste management

🍏 Cable

🍏 Home phone

🍏 Internet

Organizations: Religious, Education, Civic

🍏 Move membership.

🍏 Move registrations and records.

🍏 Request introduction letters.

Pets

🍏 Make transportation arrangements.

🍏 Check into licenses, tags, vaccinations, etc.

Be Sure to Remember to:

🍏 Clean out the fridge

🍏 Defrost the freezer

🍏 Rugs: clean and wrap

🍏 Service appliances

🍏 Ask about insurance coverage with your moving company.

The Day You Move

🍏 Keep important documents and expensive jewelry with you,

or send through registered mail.

- 🍏 Use travelers checks and/or cash while moving.
- 🍏 Contact a family member or friend with your moving schedule and planned route.
- 🍏 Leave any extra house keys with the buyer, real estate agent or a trusted neighbor.
- 🍏 Notify buyer of key's placement immediately.

At Your New Home

- 🍏 Make sure pilot lights are lit on the hot water heater, furnace, stove and incinerator.
- 🍏 Make sure all utilities function properly.
- 🍏 Check appliances for proper functioning.
- 🍏 Retrieve any held mail from your new postman.
- 🍏 Fill out voter's registration card.
- 🍏 Change the address on your driver's license, or get a new one.
- 🍏 Your vehicles also need to be registered.

Chapter 11

What You Have to Disclosure When You Sell Your Home

Even though you now have all the tools to make your house the most saleable it can possibly be, you need to know that you can't polish out every imperfection in your home, some problems cannot and should not be taken away by a little bit of elbow grease.

Many states in America now require by law that the seller of a property must offer written disclosures about any unseen physical or socioeconomically problems affecting the property and the property's neighborhood.

Once you have a potential buyer you are obligated to disclose any major problems that may affect the property's value.

I know it seems counterproductive to tell a potential buyer things wrong with your home, especially being so close to the sale, but this transparency will not only create a stronger and more trustworthy relationship with the buyer, it will also keep you out of potential litigation or in some serious cases, criminal charges in the future.

Why disclosing negative items actually helps you sell your home.

I know this may sound crazy. But, it's true. And, I have a crazy story that backs this up. A friend of mine was selling an old used truck. It was about 20 years old and had over 200,000 miles on it.

He put it up for sale and showed it to someone that wanted to buy it. Now, the truck was in pretty good shape for a vehicle with

200,000 miles. But, it did have some problems.

Now, the seller did not want to have to worry about the buyer complaining about the problems after he had bought the truck. And, he didn't care if he sold it or not.

So, here's what he did. As soon as he met the buyer he immediately showed him all of the things wrong with the truck.

"The passenger door window doesn't roll up or down", he said. Then, he proceeded to spend the next 5 minutes telling him everything that was wrong with it.

"Look at the driver's side door. The hinge is a little weird and it doesn't always shut completely.

When you accelerate you have to keep steady pressure on the accelerator. Otherwise, the truck may jump out of gear and then kick back into gear.

The entire truck will jerk forward. It's kind of hard on the transmission when it does that."

The buyer ate it up!

He bought it on the spot. He knew that most 20 year old trucks would have problems. And, he figured that a seller who was so upfront about the problems wouldn't be hiding any problems from him.

Now, you would think that the guy was selling the truck for a really good deal. Nope. He had owned it for just over a year and was actually selling it for 30% more than he had bought it a year before.

No, he didn't buy it for a really cheap price the year before. He actually bought it from a used car dealership for a fair price.

Now, he had done a little bit of work on the truck and fixed a

few things. But, all in all, it wasn't a bargain of any sort.

This same strategy works for selling a home. Most buyers are not stupid. They know if they buy an older home, it is going to have some problems.

The more forthcoming you are about the potential problems, then the more relaxed they will become about buying your house.

Ok, let's keep going.

If you see something, say something

One thing you should know is that in most states you don't have to worry about discussing issues that you have no knowledge of. Don't run out and hire an inspector to nit-pick every little detail of your home with the intention of finding problems that may not even affect the property value.

The problems you have to report are the ones that you know about. Leaky pipes, rotting wood, basement flooding, and basically anything about your property that has bothered you and you know that it will bother the new residents.

However you can't be cavalier about the unknown issues. There are certain scenarios where turning a blind eye could get you in some real hot water. Depending on what state you are selling you house in, you may be held responsible for not discovering any unknown potential problems.

It's very important to educate yourself about the specific disclosures that your state requires. Some states are very strict while others are more lenient. To get a decent idea of what you may be up against, let's take a look at all the regulations in California, one of the most stringent disclosure report states in the nation.

The State of California Disclosure Requirements:

- Any significant defects regarding walls, ceilings, floors, roofs, windows, doors, foundation, fences, driveways, plumbing and electrical systems.
- Lack of compliance with child safety standards.
- Additions or modifications to any rooms in the house.
- Use of Hazardous substances on property.
- Zoning violations.
- Regular neighborhood noise disturbances.
- Any features on property shared with neighbors.
- Damage to property from fire, earthquake, floods, or landslides.
- Deaths on Property (within three years).
- The location of any publicly registered sex offenders or at least ensuring the buyers have knowledge of the sex offender database.

What your state expects from you

Many states share the similar strict regulations of disclosure that California has. But, you'll want to find out specifically what is expected from you by checking with your state department of real estate. The state department can get you all the forms and checklists you need to make sure you've meet all the requirements of your home state.

It's also very important to not just take a macro surveying of what needs to done, you need to get micro too. Contact your city planning department to make sure your property is up to date with all the local ordinances, ordinances that would not be covered in the state regulations.

Overlooking issues such as misplaced land borders or an un-

regulated build could scare off prospective buyers which is the last thing you want on the eve of a sale.

On second thought, get an inspection

As you saw from California's very thorough requirements and all the local disclosures that may fall through the cracks, you may want to consider hiring a property inspector even if it is not required by your state.

While the results of an inspection may cause unplanned investments in renovations, you will be saving money from what could be a much more costly lawsuit in the future if undisclosed issues are discovered after the sale.

Also, having an inspection beforehand will also give you the upper hand when negotiating with the prospective buyer since there will be no last minute surprises or unfounded demands that set the sale off course.

A disclosure for all

There are some disclosures that every home seller must know because they are required in all fifty states. The use of lead-based paints or other hazard materials can be harmful to the inhabitant of a home, especially if young children will be living there. If any of these materials have been used in your home, the buyer needs to know.

The Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (AKA 'Title X') states that if you are selling a home built before 1978 you must comply with the following procedures:

- Give an EPA-approved information pamphlet on identifying and controlling lead-based paint hazards.
- Disclose any known information concerning lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards. The seller must also disclose informa-

tion such as the location of the lead-based paint and the condition of the painted surfaces.

- Provide any records and reports on lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards which are available to the seller.
- Include an attachment to the sales contract which includes a Lead Warning Statement and confirms that the seller or landlord has complied with all notification requirements. Sellers and home buyers must sign and date the attachment.
- Sellers must provide home buyers a ten day period to conduct a paint inspection or risk assessment for lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards.
- These requirements are very important to meet not just for the safety of your buyers but also the safety of your finances.

Title X requirements the buyer can sue you for triple the amount of damages suffered from the exposure. To make sure you won't have to triple pay, be sure to triple check that you have done all you can to disclose any potential hazard materials in your home. For more information visit the EPA website here:
www.epa.gov/lead.

When In Doubt, Disclose

The best way to ensure there will be no repercussions of liability from lack of disclosure is to just sing like a canary. There is no such thing as *"to much information"* when it comes to transparency with your buyer.

They have the right to know everything about the home they are buying and it is both morally and ethically your responsibility to tell all.

However, **just because you've disclosed a problem doesn't mean the problem is yours.** The buyer may negotiate the potential

costs of renovations into the deal. For example, if the cost to get the pipes fixed is appraised at five grand, you can take that value off of the sales price and the buyer will use the money saved to get the work done themselves.

Some eager buyers may even look the other way on the minor issue that will not affect their quality of living in order to get a deal done as soon as possible. Both you and the prospective buyer will have a healthier and more productive negotiation when all the cards are laid out on the table.

How to Disclose

Once you've figured all that must be disclosed to your prospective home buyer you need to figure out the right way to divulge the information. There are specific forms in many states the will feature prompting questions and fill-ins that make for an easy to complete and understand report of all the problems with your home.

These forms also feature a page that you must sign and date to authentic all your disclosures. The buyer also has to sign and date this form so that it officially shows that everyone is on the same page.

Keep in mind that even if you state does not mandate a form, in order to protect yourself in the future it's very important to get a receipt or legally approved document that when signed by the buyer officially confirms that they have agreed with and have knowledge of all the relevant disclosures.

In the end it's all about having an on-the-record candor that helps to ensure you make a successful sale that both you and the buyer feel good about and nothing comes back to haunt you in the future.

What others think about David . . .

“What a blessing to have a realtor who is also an attorney” J.D., Windermere

“ . . . I was ready to sell my home for \$32,000 less before I met David. What a lifesaver” G.N., St. Augustine

“Knowledge of real estate and law were top notch. But his care and honesty were number 1 with me” J.W., Kissimmee

“No other realtor explained the legal aspects before. Priceless!” F.B., Kissimmee

“David has worked with 3 different members of my family over the years and I continue to recommend him to all my other family and friends” V.R., Lake Mary



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David is the author of “How To Sell Your Home For More Money” and “The ABCs Of Buying Your Home”.

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