

A Realtor's Guide to *Selling Your Own Home*



Written by



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Love Where You Live...

If you are planning to try to sell your own home without a real estate professional, this book is definitely a must-read.

You will learn about the steps you need to know when placing your home on the market, along with the risks involved in the complexities of the real estate sale.

You will also realize a few of the strategies that a qualified real estate professional uses to align your home in a thriving market and set it above the competition.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Jackson is a great Realtor® who firmly believes that you should *'Love Where You Live!'*.

She is an agent with United Real Estate Experts in Chattanooga and is licensed in both Tennessee and Georgia.

Susan works hard for her clients to successfully sell, purchase or invest in real estate.

In addition, she is committed to forging strong relationships that extend far past your closing.

Her experience uniquely combines top-notch real estate services with marketing and digital strategies to insure maximum results for you.

As part of living her life in a spirit of contribution, as well as her love for people and animals, she serves her community by committing time and financial support to various humanitarian and pet rescue organizations throughout Chattanooga and North Georgia.



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FOREWORD

WHY IS A REALTOR™ WRITING A GUIDE FOR 'FOR SALE BY OWNERS' ?

Several years ago, I married my husband, David, and we set out to find a home together for our blended family.

The first house we discovered sat upon a mountain ridge in north Georgia. I called the real estate agent listed on the For Sale sign, and to my surprise, she was blatantly irritated that I was calling about her listing. She quickly informed me that she didn't have time to show the home, and I needed to find another agent that could show it. She never offered to refer us to someone else at her office. As a matter of fact, she acted like it was unimportant if we viewed this home or not. Her horrible attitude deterred us from touring her listing for sale.

We may have lost out on a dream home, but who *REALLY* lost out? **The poor homeowners who listed this home with her!**

The next agent we contacted met us at a cute older home. We liked it. However, we had just started our search and wanted to compare other homes to make the 'perfect' final decision. As we left the showing, the agent pleasantly said '*goodbye and good luck*', hopped into her car and drove away. She neither engaged us further, nor offered to pull other listings that met our criteria.

“Is this for real? Is the market so good that these people don’t need clients, or have they been in the business so long that real estate agents just don’t care anymore?”

Over two month’s of trying to find a home, I contacted SEVEN, I REPEAT, SEVEN agents and had the same type of ‘I don’t care’ experience—no communication, no excitement, no energy to form a great client relationship.

I looked at my husband and said, *“Wow! The real estate business must be doing great. Just think - if I studied real estate, with all the customer service, marketing and client care experience I have to offer, I could really help so many people and disrupt the current real estate world. Some of these agents need a wake-up call!”*

To top off our profoundly disappointing home-buying experience, I found a beautiful dream home. It had been on the market for 222 days! At the same time, we had also been looking at a ‘runner-up’ home.

Mr. Dream Home Agent explained that I really shouldn’t purchase the dream home, ‘because it had a gravel driveway.’

“The second home, he said, “was much better suited for us.”

Then, quite by accident, he dropped the reason for this — he had another buyer looking for a wrap-around porch who would love to have MY dream home! *Yes, well, I’d like to have it, too!*

Later that same day, I called to tell this agent that we wanted to make an offer on the dream home. Within an hour of our e-signed offer, he called back to say the owners had already accepted an offer, so we needed to go with the second home.

“Really? This home had been on the market for 222 days, and suddenly it has an accepted offer?” In my naivety, I thought, ‘well, agents don’t tell ginormous fibs. It must really have an accepted offer - just not my offer!’ Disappointed, we focused on the runner-up home and made an offer that was accepted.

Everything progressed smoothly through the mortgage approval to closing. However, we had questions for the Seller about how to work some of the home systems - sprinklers, electric fence, etc.

We scheduled our final walk-thru the Friday before closing the following week. We insisted on meeting the Seller at the home during the walk-thru to address our questions, because I know that no seller wants to return to their sold home after closing. Our ‘Buyers Agent’ pushed back. He did not want us to meet with the Seller prior to closing—it was against his agency’s policy.

I’m thinking, ‘What? Seriously? It’s against your company’s policy? Forget that...’ For me, ‘no’ was not an option. We needed to understand how these systems worked, so I insisted that he arrange for this to happen. Begrudgingly, our agent agreed to set up the meeting at the home.

When we arrived for the meeting and walk-thru, we were told by our agent that we had just missed the Seller who had driven off with a carload of boxes that he was moving into his new home. ‘We were 15 minutes early to this meeting, and he just left? hmmm.’ We completed the walk-thru. However, I knew something was amiss in all of this.

At the closing table, I looked at the Seller and asked him, point blank, “Did you know about our scheduled meeting yesterday?”

The Seller looked puzzled and stated that our agent had never informed him of a meeting with us, nor had he been to the home to move anything, yesterday! On top of that, the Seller added that he had sent this agent photos of some major repairs that had been made, which our agent never bothered to mention nor pass on to us.

To this day, I believe this agent probably sold the dream home to his other client, so he'd have two sales. I can't prove that, but what an everlasting legacy to leave in your clients' minds regarding your service and, more importantly, your trust and integrity level as a person!

**The point to me telling you this story is that
I truly understand why people
have lost trust in real estate professionals.**

THIS is the very reason I became a REALTOR®!

Here's the caveat to my story - in life, we meet good people, and we meet not-so-good people. The real estate profession is no different than any other profession. There are definitely great Realtors®, and others who aren't so great.

Since becoming an agent, I have met many really, really great real estate professionals who are very dedicated, and who understand the importance of being a great fiduciary for their clients.

How do you know who you're speaking with? Remember this: a great agent helps you, protects you, guides you,

communicates with you, negotiates for you, and is a strong resource for you long after closing.

So do I practice what I preach? Am I a good Realtor®?
— *Absolutely!* - **SUSAN JACKSON IS A GREAT REALTOR®!**

I got into this career for one giant purpose - to help people and to help you!

So to answer the question: I am writing this book, so that you can successfully sell your home, get the most for your home, yet also warn you of the risks, pitfalls, and chances you are taking by doing this yourself rather than employing a great real estate professional who acts as a true fiduciary on your behalf.

One last thing before we get into the book. I would like to ask you to reflect on ‘why’ you are taking the risk of doing this yourself.

I believe the most common reason is to save the commission.

I’m sure you may have heard the proverbial saying ‘*I’m not paying a commission to some agent who just sticks a For Sale sign in the yard!*’

You know what? I totally agree with that reasoning. Who wouldn’t agree?

However, let me ask you this: would you represent yourself in a lawsuit without the help of a **qualified** attorney? Would you hire a **qualified** electrician to fix an electrical problem in your home? The key word is ‘**qualified**’.

Great real estate professionals

- ❖ understand the **real estate laws** of your state;
- ❖ we are required to take and pay for **continuing education** each year, so that we have the most up to date information;
- ❖ we pay to make sure you have all of the **correct legal forms**,
- ❖ we pay for access to the **Multiple Listing Service (MLS)** in your area to ensure your home is hitting your target market,
- ❖ we pay for the **real estate technologies** to help you sell your home,
- ❖ we pay for **marketing materials** and **photography/video for your home**,
- ❖ we pay for technologies to **keep your home and family safe during showings**,
- ❖ we pay for the **open houses** and **advertising**,

- ❖ we are available to **schedule showings**
- ❖ we offer **resources for financing, inspections, repairs, title companies**—any services related to selling your home....plus, there is even more that we do which we will cover in this book, because selling a home, and getting its top value, is far more than sticking the sign in the front yard.

So let's get started...

CHAPTER 1: HOME PREP

“OUR HOUSE IS A VERY, VERY, VERY FINE HOUSE. WITH TWO CATS IN THE YARD. LIFE USED TO BE SO HARD. NOW EVERYTHING IS EASY ...”.

-CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG

Before you place your sign in the yard, you need to prepare your home in order to prepare it for the market.

Move-in ready sells your home!

The first question that I ask clients to be honest about is this:

‘Is your home ready for the competitive market, and would you buy it in its current condition?’

STEP 1: CURB APPEAL

Be prepared to take an honest assessment of your house. Grab a pen and a notebook, take a walk to the street and turn facing your home. Take a fresh look. Put your Buyer eyes on.

The goal is to create the mental ‘drive-by’ impression of how your home is going to entice a Buyer to gain enough interest to want to see the inside.

You're going after the **Buyer's FIRST impression**— it means **everything** to selling your home. A good impression makes that buyer **attracted** to your home. It also creates the **desire** in their minds to move forward with viewing the inside of your home.

Don't forget, your home is in front of potential buyers for a brief moment as they drive by and see that it's for sale.

Now imagine, your child has left their bike at the front porch. The Buyer's eye is drawn immediately to the *imperfection*. Now instead of the home gleaming, they are focused on the bike. Obviously, this is not the intention.

It's easy to criticize, right? We all know that **human nature is drawn to the negative**, because **the positive is 'expected'**. Our human nature **expects** perfection, so, by nature, we first tend to focus on anything negative and out of place.

Give Buyers as little negativity as possible by working thoroughly through this exercise. Really think and plan how to best present the 'curb appeal' of your home.

Don't forget the sides and backyard features.

Your home is your 'product'. It needs to look great.

Several things to note:

- is your landscaping tight?
- lawn in good condition?
- mailbox clean?
- Does your driveway, front porch or other areas need power-washing?
- How's the roof looking?
- Can extra things such as trash cans, bikes, toys, hoses, etc. be properly stored in your garage for right now?
- Do pet deposits need to be cleaned up?
- Are there landscaping items in need of repair such as sprinkler systems, weeds pulled, trees trimmed, broken pavers, in need of fresh mulch, etc.?
- Look for areas where the grass is super green, especially in the Fall or Winter when the majority of your lawn is in hibernation. These areas could be leaks or broken sprinkler pipes that need to be fixed.

Now, let's move to your front door.

- Is the porch area cluttered or is it minimized, neat and inviting?
- Do columns need cleaning?
- Steps need sweeping or power-washing?
- What about your back porch and yard?
- Do you have a few bushes that have seen their better days and need to be removed or replaced?
- Maybe some grass plugs are needed in that bare area of the lawn.
- If you have a pool, make sure it is inviting or covered for winter.
- A flowering plant maybe? One, just one. No tropical forests on the front or back porch. Less is more.

STEP 2: INTERIOR CHECKLIST

SPECIAL NOTE: Before you even start this step, I suggest you take a tour of several new home models, as well as, the competitions' homes that are for sale in their area to get a feel for your competition.

Home models provide you with the professional look that you'll need in order to prepare the interior of your home to meet the 'move-in ready' look and feel buyers expect.

Other homes for sale in your area also allow you to possess a better understanding of how your competition is presenting their home.

Take pictures and note the emotions and pleasantries to your senses of touch, smell, sight, and hearing - maybe even tasting if they have treats!

Now open the front door—what is the first thing you see? If it's your trophies and sports memorabilia, kids' toys, dirty laundry, dishes in the sink, or you name it in the unmentionables, **that's not good**. If you see a house full of furniture, **that's not good, either**.

As you know, we tend to *collect things* that we find pleasure in or to which we have a memorable attachment. It's time for the collections to get ready for your eminent move.

At this point, home owners often say, *'Yes, I get that, but I do still live here!'*

To which my reply is, *"Yes, but you are trying NOT to live here any longer, right? When you search for your next home,*

you're going to want to 'see the home' and imagine your things in it. Not have it cluttered with the current owners' belongings."

Remember, when you're selling, it is all about the buyer. Likewise, when you're buying, it's all about you.

Clutter instantly makes rooms appear smaller than what they actually are and mentally infers there isn't enough storage space in the home. Most buyers will give the cluttered room a one second glance, then move on, because they can't see past the 'things' to see the actual room.

Minimize 'stuff' by boxing them up for your impending sale and move. Store the boxes in an out of sight location like an attic, out-building or temporary storage facility.

Removing the 'collections' allows Buyers to see 'their new home.' It frees them up to imagine *their* life things in these areas. The goal is removing the '*I live here*' effect wherever possible and changing it to the '**you want to live here**' effect.

So let's grab our notebook and pen, again, and make an indoor checklist:

- Clean floors, walls, windows and doors?
- Is your paint dark, peeling, flaking or color out of date?

Consider repainting. It really helps to go look at new home models to see what paint colors are in style and how to decorate for that move-in ready look.

- Dust furniture
- Take down temporary shelving. It's a good idea to remove anything from the walls that aren't permanently attached or aren't being sold with the home.

- Children's toys stored away
- Patch holes
- Paint
- Replace damaged home items like damaged door stops and stripping, damaged grout, cracked tiling, etc.

- Remove scuff marks

- Box up 'things' for the move
- Determine a great out of the way place to store boxes and excess furniture.
- Are there any items that you no longer enjoy and are taking up space? It may be time to start a garage sale area or special place for thrift store donations.
- Check every square inch of your home - remember: **adjust, remove, throw out or store.**
- Change air filters - maybe include a scent to provide a fresh smell
- Which leads to another very important addition to the checklist: **smell. If you or a member of your family smokes or has pets, odds are your home has an odor.** Maybe a strong odor. Research ways to remove these smells and select the one best suited for your home and lifestyle. Sometimes, it takes professionals to come in and clean and sanitize.

Remember: Our goal is to identify problem areas, so you can make the home its best. Minimize your footprint, so buyers can envision theirs. *Tidy is Mighty!* MOVE IN READY is what sells!

Helpful Tip: Ask a relative or friend who doesn't live in your home to come by and help you honestly identify needs. Sometimes, we become blind to things that others see or smell, right away. Have them return to inspect improvements, once you've completed your repairs.

STEP 3: STAGING YOUR HOME TO SELL

When selling a home, 'move-in-ready' sets you up for success. Remember the notes and pictures you took from the home tour? Review those pictures. You will note strategically placed furniture. They use a variety of textures, muted colors except for one or two specific items that offer vibrant colors such as a well-placed chair, object, pillow. No clutter. Keep it **very simple** and **clean**, warm and inviting. You may see one decorator piece, two at most, per room - primarily used to give it color.

As an agent, I see enough well-staged homes that I can often help with staging using my clients own furniture. However, you can also find professional stagers who may be able to use some of your own furniture pieces.

Staging vs. empty for Vacant Homes

If your home is vacant, you may just leave it in its naked glory. Vacant homes are shells. It's not that this is bad, but it isn't a natural 'home' feeling. Sometimes, it comes across as very sterile.

In this instance, you may want to employ a staging professional to properly stage each room of your home for a classy, warm, move-in ready look. A good stager knows how to make a home modern, clean-looking, cozy and inviting.

The best outcome is for Buyers to walk in and claim, 'THIS IS MY HOME!' That's the ultimate goal, right? ***And your ultimate goal IS their ultimate goal!***

In the Marketing chapter of this book, you will see pictures of how influential a properly staged home can be.

CHAPTER 2: SETTING THE PRICE

“THE PRICE OF ANYTHING IS THE AMOUNT OF LIFE YOU EXCHANGE FOR IT.”

-HENRY DAVID THOREAU



First, don't rely on technology to set the price of your home. Rarely do online calculator systems, or websites giving you estimated values, provide a truly accurate reflection. **You must thoroughly know what your market will bear to get the most profit.**

Take a Google search for Zillow's CEO home pricing turmoil. He used

Zillow pricing and lost money, because the system under priced his home!

A professional real estate agent completes a **Competitive Marketing Analysis (CMA)** to determine what a home is worth.

This part is super important— obviously, you want to sell your home for the most profit possible, right? However, **if you price your home too high, it will sit on the market for days and days, maybe months, sometimes even a year or longer.** (Remember the dream home I wanted to purchase that had been on the market for 222 days? That's a seller's worst nightmare. That home had dropped over \$50,000 in price since it was first listed. It wasn't that they lost \$50,000. You can't lose what you don't have. It was because it was originally priced way too high for the market.)

When a home sits on the market for too long, a potential buyer will think the obvious question:

'what's wrong with it?'

You can't cheat the system, either. Online real estate sites provide the history of '*days on the market*' that follows your home as soon as you list it. Even if you take it off the market to try and restart the '*Days on Market*', it shows every step you take under the *History* sections, including *Days on the Market* and *Price Cuts*. I once saw a listing on *Zillow* where the owner went back in and increased the price, because he had underpriced his home the first time he placed it online. If you were a buyer, and saw the mistake in the *history*, you'd recognize that this guy would probably take that lower amount!

Remember: **Technology equals transparency.**

Ultimately, if you price your home too high, it will sit on the market, which leads to your the frustration of dealing with buyers' lowball offers.

According to Zillow, on average only 11% of for sale by owners will successfully sell their homes.

This is a big reason why: Setting the **correct** price point is a huge part of a real estate agent's job. The heart and success of our business is possessing a thorough understanding of the home market, and what it will bear.

You need to consider if it's really worth the risk in doing it yourself and **gaining the extra days on the market** versus hiring a great real estate agent to get your home sold - usually making you more money on the sale of your home! The commission, therefore, is irrelevant if you are making more money than selling it on your own!

One last thing: real estate websites use algorithms to calculate home values. This leads to inaccurate pricing. I recently prepared a listing appointment and saw that one site had it valued for \$60,000 more than a neighboring home right next door! Plus, the neighbor's home offered more square feet and an extra bedroom. This value was blatantly incorrect. Rarely, and I mean rarely, are they accurate.

To prepare a proper CMA, you need to access your County records for homes that recently sold (preferably in the past 3 to 6 months) in your immediate area.

Select those recent sales closest to your street that are most comparable to your home in square feet, number of bedrooms, number of baths, and other home specifications. Make special note of extras such as pools, out-buildings, etc. Each of these differences will either 'add to' or 'deduct from' the value of your home. The goal is to truly compare apples

to apples, not apples to oranges. You also need to understand what constitutes a bedroom vs. a bonus room or finished basement space vs. non-finished basement space, and make sure you properly measure your home.

Thoroughly research your competition, so you know what you're up against with other homes listed for sale within your area or subdivision. Just because your neighbor down the street is listing his home at \$X.XX per sq. ft., doesn't mean it is priced correctly. Decide if you are priced competitively, but take into account that some of these homes may be overpriced. Also, look at the number of days they have been on the market. That is the barometer. It's great when your neighbor is selling his home for \$75,000 more than he paid for it, but is it still for sale? If so, it's probably a pricing issue.

This exercise can sometimes be a hard thing to do, because we always want the most for our homes. Just remember, if it's priced too high, it will sit on the market. You don't want that! The more days it accumulates, the more buyers will ask 'what's wrong with it', and the lower your offers will become.

CHAPTER 3: MARKETING YOUR HOME

“BUILD IT AND HE WILL COME.”

-FIELD OF DREAMS



When marketing your home, remember this acronym AIDA. AIDA is the cycle customers go through to acquire a product. As a great agent, I market a home by preparing for these stages when listing a home:

A - Attract

I - Inspire

D - Desire

A - Acquire.

ATTRACTION

As we talked about earlier, Buyers use the internet to explore homes.

So, how is your home going to appear online to attract a buyer's attention? The answer starts with **good, professional photography**. Unless you are a professional photographer, this is not an area to skimp, I promise.

Professional photographers possess the proper camera, lenses, creative eye and lighting knowledge to effectively **SHOWCASE** your home.

Note: Did you know that great agents generally pay for their client's home photos. It shouldn't cost the homeowner a dime.

Examine this for yourself: Search for a consumable product, online - in this instance, let's say you are looking for a vacation destination. There are 30 pictures from companies wanting you to visit their hotel. Within a literal split second, you move quickly to the best photographed product - because it draws your '*perfect item*' eye. You're not going to select a badly displayed hotel room that looks dark and uninviting.

You select the good photo that looks like a great destination to see if it's competitively priced.

In that quick moment, you made the decision to click on the photo, thereby costing a competitor a sale. **Don't let that competitor be you! Go all out on photos!**

To see this for yourself, go a site like *Zillow* and pull up another's FSBO listing. Check out their photos - normally they are shot in '*we still live in this house*' mode - complete with all the clutter you can stand to view in low lighting.

Now, go back and check out the photos created professionally on a similar home. Is it worth the couple of hundred dollars to really display a great representation of your home? Yes! Great photos can not only get your buyers hyped up to see your home, but they super-charge the *desire* phase of the acquisition process.

Here are a couple of examples from some FSBO homes I found on a listing site:



Have I stated that first impressions are everything? Would you even bother to go to see these homes?

When I list a home, I work with the photographer during the shoot and use my marketing and design skills to create great impressions that Buyers love.

Plus, I pay for my clients' home photography sessions, ***so it doesn't cost my client a dime!***

See for yourself. Here are several examples to compare with the previous photos that were taken by a **professional photographer**. Also, note the extreme difference between these staged homes vs. the non-staged homes that we looked at a few moments ago. Notice the 'architectural eye' and lighting that was used in these shots. This home was built in the 1920's. The other was much newer.



These examples highlight the

differences between someone who understands lighting, perspective, architectural highlights and someone who is taking



photos on the fly. **You can see why a professional**

photographer is essential. Your competition is out there - how will you rank?



Remember:
You only have a split second to make a first impression, online. Here's the breakdown:
No impression on the buyer = no click for more info = no buyer visit = more days on the market = lower home value perception = lower offers - if you even get any, which equates to:
You, Losing Money!



INSPIRE

Now that you've captured the buyer's attention through professionally photographed home images, we need to add crafted, creative wording into nice marketing materials and signs. Why? Because we want to **inspire the buyer** to make an intentional trip to your home.

Grab that notebook and pen. Take a few moments to answer these basic questions:

Why do you enjoy your home?

How is the location?

Is it close to schools?

Are your neighbors friendly?

Do you have local events?

What makes your home particularly special?

What are your favorite features and why?

This is where you'll need to become a wordsmith and describe your home and neighborhood in such a way that inspires the buyer to move forward to experience your home for themselves.

Create imagery in your descriptions, such as

"This 1920's, redesigned home features a gorgeous redwood, multi-level deck created to host outdoor parties for family and friends. A beautiful outdoor fireplace captivates your guests and the bubbling hot tub is gearing up for great conversations after a long day at work."

Include action sentences that define next steps, such as, *'this one-of-a-kind home is **totally move-in ready and won't last long in today's market- make plans to see it today! Call***

123-456-7890 to schedule your tour. Bring your offer, because you won't want to leave!

Move your Home to the Online World

We talked that buyers typically begin their search online. You need to be prepared for each site's online forms. Make sure you have uploaded professional photos, your creative great descriptions of the home's special areas and calls to action. Real estate related sites include *Trulia, Zillow, Realtor.com* to name a few. You may even want to set up a *Facebook* or *Instagram* page, or other social media site for your home, along with a webpage built specifically for your house.

Make sure you have all the detailed, pertinent facts and legal documents, such as the proper disclosures, ready to make this task easier, along with those great photos that really show off the work you've put into your home.

Remember, it's all about that first impression, so your photos have to be pristine and your words have to create interest and desire to take the next step - which is to visit your home!

Don't forget to include the proper directions and map to your home and any special showing instructions that you want buyers to know.

A couple of side notes:

Multiple Listing Service

As a great agent, I not only get you listed across the internet with your own social media and website, I also access the MLS or Multiple Listing Service. There are some

things that FSBOs can't access on their own, so I wanted to clarify. The MLS opens up the ability for me, as an agent, to market to *thousands* of other agents and their clients across the country and around the world who may be relocating to Tennessee or Georgia. The MLS is really an invaluable resource when selling your home.

Hey! Don't Forget the Sign in the Yard!

Okay. Your home is looking as good, or better, than the day you bought it. You have all your internet sites populated correctly. You just need to get that sign in the yard.

As stated before, many people joke that sticking a sign in the yard is the only thing a licensed Realtor® does. We haven't made it through the home listing process, and you can already see that 'great' licensed agents do far more than place a sign in the yard, right?

Let's get a fantastic sign to get the ball rolling. Purchase or create a sign that is easily visible from the road and contains the following basic info: (Remember, you'll only have a few seconds to grab their attention as they drive by. **Keep it Simple.**)

Call today to schedule a tour!

123-456-7890

Please, please, please don't stick a handwritten sign in the yard!

Instead, have a few signs professionally created. There are quite a few companies locally and online that print vinyl,

plastic and metal signs and have accompanying frames that allow you to properly install these signs on your lawn. It can be relatively expensive, but I purchase branded signs all the time to really help my clients' homes stand out and identify the important facts about the home. You need to do the same.

If you live on a busy street, you may want to purchase two or three signs placed in the right spots, so cars traveling from every angle can clearly read about your home. Don't forget to place the directional signs at the beginning of a subdivision or other busy roadway.

In addition, you need to invest in an **informational box** and print out a **one page flyer** for people to take when they drive by. The flyers need to include the best photos and creative descriptions of the home, along with contact info and scheduling instructions—all the things that you have already put together when you placed your home online.

Here are just a couple of signs NOT to do.



DESIRE

You've made it thru all of these steps, and your phone starts to ring... of course, it's while you're at work, driving in the car, eating lunch, helping with homework, fixing supper, heading out of town, or going to bed.

What is your plan to schedule and show? Balancing the buyer's schedule with yours can be a great challenge. By now, you are used to challenges. Can you afford to leave work when someone calls and needs to see your home *now*, because they are waiting in front of your home? That's the life of a Realtor®. You have to be there, in front of your buyer **when he or she is ready to buy, and on their timing**. Otherwise, they keep going with their search, and you may have just lost a sale.

Special Safety Note:

What is your plan to know who is entering your home - even when you are there? How will you know if they are there under false pretenses that mean harm to you and your family?

As a great real estate agent listing your home, I possess the tools needed to assure you, and me, that I know **who is entering your home**.

I personally employ a **scheduling service** who electronically alerts me of visits only accessible by other real estate agents.

I use **lockboxes** that are only accessible by other licensed real estate agents. Most of these lockboxes are electronically recording and notifying me of the agents' name and visit

times and dates. In very rural areas that lack internet service, I may use a **combo box** that houses your key for showing, but it can only be accessed through an agent registering their visit with me, personally, or thru the professional scheduling service that I employ.

In addition, prior to showing homes to Buyers, great agents make sure the Buyers are pre-qualified for a mortgage within your the price range of your home.

However, that is the drawback of selling your home yourself, because you don't always have that guarantee. With a pre-approval, you KNOW who is coming into your home.

If you have mortgage connections, you can refer Buyers to obtain a pre-approval letter prior to showing your home.

Anyone selling a FSBO opens themselves up to *lookie-lous - nose people with no intention of buying your home*, **thieves casing your home**, and other people perhaps meaning harm. Please take precautions to make sure your possessions, pets and family stay safe. It's easy for thieves to take advantage of FSBO homes, so always be alert!

Another advantage of a great agent is that our showing system doesn't require you to be home during showings. No rushing to get back to the house because of spur-of-the-moment inquiries. That is on your Realtor®, not you. Our job is to get your home sold, while you take care of the rest of your life's challenges.



YOUR HOME HAS ENTERED THE MARKET NOW IT'S TIME TO PLAN YOUR FIRST OPEN HOUSE

One of the first things I plan as a great agent is a major **Open House within the first week of a home going on the market**. You see, buyers who are actively seeking a home have usually already visited many of the houses that are for sale in your market. Your home is new, so you have to take advantage of timing a 'new to the market', and use an Open House aimed to create excitement that this is *THE* home for them, AND it's going to go FAST!

Materials I use:

- **Invitations & Envelopes**

You will want to invite your neighbors and local businesses to the first Open House. Why? Because they may have friends and relatives who are looking to purchase a home near them or employees looking for a closer home to work. *(I have received offers during the first Open House by inviting nearby residents who want their loved ones or friends to live close by.)*

- **Property Website**
- A takeaway home sheet or **brochure** that highlights home details and area info (like your takeaway from the Info Box)
 - **Mortgage information** (get out and meet local mortgage representatives to find out what programs they offer - they may have something for *your* next home.)
 - **Sign in sheet.** You want to know who's entering your home. **Include areas for feedback.** They may have seen a drawback that you did not.
 - **Property Disclosures**
 - **Information on working with Buyer's Agents-** are you willing to negotiate a commission with a buyer's agent to bring their clients to your home - should their clients decide to make an accepted offer?
 - **Proper State and Legal Forms for Purchasing** the home. You may need to contact a lawyer for more information regarding disclosures and applicable state forms. It's vital to have these ready for any offers that come through that day - especially if your buyer is not represented by a real estate agent. *(For note: if buyers ARE represented by a great agent, you better find you one too and quick! Knowledge is power, and there are a lot of great agents in the market who are artists at negotiating a deal. If you aren't officially trained as a licensed real estate professional, I'm telling you, you need to find someone who is!)*
 - **Food and drinks** for your guests. Some people serve cookies and soft drinks. From experience, forego the chocolate chips, cola products or anything that can stain your walls and carpet.

- **Giveaways and incentives** - maybe a cash giveaway contest for buyers viewing your home, or an incentive: make an offer today and we will pay \$2,000 towards your closing costs, if accepted.
- **Schools & Shopping Info** for your area
- **Directional Signs.** Place directional sign from major intersections to each street in between the intersection and your home. Make it a guided path to their dream home.
- **Balloons.** Balloons help get your directional signs noticed.
- **Thank you notes** for people attending.
- Followup with everyone attending to see if you can provide any additional information on your home.

Market your Open House at least seven days prior to the actual event. Create neighborhood invitations, and you might even have a 30 minute neighborhood-specific open house before the public is scheduled to arrive.

Make a checklist of all your to-dos.

Have fun with this special day!

Make sure your home is presented in a great light with smells of home - maybe cook cinnamon buns in the oven or cookies, of course.

Make it feel like their walking into their new home.

Once the Open House is over, relax a few minutes, then plan your next one the following week after this one. Try a variety of days - like maybe a wine tasting Tuesday or a Saturday evening event. Never be afraid to think outside the box.

CHAPTER 4: WAHOO! AN OFFER HAS ARRIVED!

“BUYERS DECIDE IN THE FIRST 8 SECONDS OF SEEING A HOME IF THEY’RE INTERESTED IN BUYING IT. GET OUT OF YOUR CAR, WALK IN THEIR SHOES, AND SEE WHAT THEY SEE WITHIN THE FIRST 8 SECONDS.”

-BARBARA CORCORAN



The buyers that came to your open house, yesterday, called and want to make an offer. What do you do?

At this point, if you are dead set on not using a licensed real estate agent to guide you through the complexities of the sale and negotiate on your behalf, then you definitely want to hire a lawyer and enlist the help of a title company to make sure everything regarding the sale is legal.

I don't have to tell you that there are many people in the world who will sue if they find out that something was done incorrectly or misrepresented. You definitely don't want to take those kind of risks by going this part alone.

A few questions to ask the professionals:

What forms do I need to complete the sale?

What should I disclose?

When is the sale legally accepted and by what means?

What are the terms and conditions of the sale?

How is it that I still have to pay a 3% buyer's agent
commission?

What is the inspection period?

Do I need to see the inspection report or will that make
me liable for disclosure issues?

What is the resolution period?

Do I have to repair or replace everything item on the list?

How do you handle earnest money?

Did you properly disclose things about the home using the
correct forms, per your state?

What, if anything do you need to disclose?

Are you legally covered?

Does the buyer have a pre-approval letter?

What are conditions of the sale?

What happens to the earnest money if the deal falls thru?

What recourse do I have against the buyer?

What recourse does the buyer have against me?

Who pays for what at closing?

How do I get my funds?

Research and you will have many more questions that need to be addressed to secure you from unanticipated risks and undesirable consequences.

A great realtor will also negotiate and outline your responsibilities, as the seller, during the inspection and resolution periods and through closing. In addition, I work with a reputable title company who confirms that the title is clear and ready for the buyer to fulfill their purchasing obligations.

Financially, there are closing costs and fees that both the Buyer and Seller are each responsible for paying at closing.

IN SUMMARY

I hope this book has helped to outline just a few of the important processes you'll need to understand in order to effectively sell your own home and allow you to move on to your own new home. When selling your own home, yourself, please consult with your state on forms you will need to make sure you are compliant.

FSBO sales have been steadily declining since 2004 - in part, because there are so many legalities that you will be responsible for when selling your home, yourself. It really is a huge risk.

If you make a wise decision to hire a great agent, the professional you choose should explain all the steps outlined in this book - plus anymore that are required to make a successful home sale for you and your family. You need to make sure they are a good fit for your needs and really understand the benefits that they bring to the table. Choose someone who will be available to you long after the sale.

If you are interested, I would love the opportunity to speak with you about listing your home and helping you find a new house to call home!

Have any questions? Call me, 904.568.4246 or 423.226.1545. Let me help guide you thru these complexities. Let's get your house sold for the greatest amount, so you can go to the next chapter that life holds for *you!*

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