

When real estate markets transition from seller's to buyer's markets, agents tend to put a lot more money and work into selling listings. However, I believe that employing strong marketing techniques is just smart business, regardless. In seller's markets, good marketing can bring higher prices and, in buyer's markets, it could mean the difference between sold or expired. Good marketing might not *sell* your house, but it will *make the phone ring*. Because if buyers don't call, you won't sell.

1. Photograph the Front

Most home buyers begin a home search online, so good photos are essential. Listings without a photo or with only an exterior shot are often passed over and ignored. Buyers are visual. Follow these tips and your house photo will look ten times better than the competition's:

- Crop out sidewalks and streets.
- Remove vehicles from driveway / front of home.
- Shoot up-close & angled photos.
- Avoid shade on the house.
- Clear away vegetation blocking front door or path to door.

2. Exterior Photographs

If you own a condo or townhome without a yard, then take pictures of the clubhouse, pool, spa or tennis courts. If you have a yard, however, buyers will want to see it.

- Emphasize space and shoot long.
- Mow the lawn & trim bushes.
- Remove evidence of pets.
- Put away children's toys.
- Avoid shooting into the sun.

3. Interior Photographs

Take photographs of every room. Even if you suspect the room won't photograph well, shoot it anyway because the photo quality just might astonish you and be useable.

- Open drapes & blinds
- Turn on lights.
- Focus on interesting details like the condition of a wood floor or a fireplace mantle.
- Remove trash cans & close toilet lids in bathrooms.
- Use floral arrangements in kitchens & dining rooms.
- Avoid shooting into mirrors because your image will reflect.

4. Virtual Tours

Virtual tours aren't just to showcase million-dollar homes anymore. Every home should have a virtual tour, even if it's only two spins. Buyers love, love, love virtual tours.

- A good virtual tour will grab a buyer by the hand and lead her from room to room, showing a 360-degree view.

- Depending on the tour company, you can add sound, music or an exciting, professionally written description that scrolls with the movement of the tour.
- Virtual tours can also include individual photos available for download or to print.

5. Signage

Signage encourages home shoppers to immediately call you or your agent. It's free advertising! If your home is a corner lot, put up two signs.

- Some homeowner associations prohibit real estate signs.
- Some HOAs allow only window signs.
- Try talking to a neighbor whose home is located at the corner of a busy street, asking for permission to put a sign in that yard with an arrow pointing toward yours.
- Agent signs should include the phone number of the closest office (if the brokerage operates multiple offices) and the agent's cell or voice mail number.

6. Print Advertising

Print advertising reaches buyers who read newspapers. Online ads reach the rest. If your neighbors say, "Everywhere I look, I see your home advertised," you're doing a good job. Puts ads in:

- Major newspapers. Find out which days pull the most readers. Typically it's Sunday but some newspapers also publish "picture classifieds" on other days.
- Local newspapers. You can probably run a larger ad for less money that will more closely target those looking in your area.
- Real estate publications. Check on press date; can you wait?
- Every Web site you can find. Most online listings are free.

7. Direct Mail

If you're an unrepresented seller, you can buy mailing lists from list brokers. If you are represented by an agent, ask about a direct mail program. I prefer oversized four-color postcards because they are inexpensive to mail and eye-catching. Here are three places to mail:

- Neighbors. Everybody has friends and relatives who might want to move near them.
- Agents who represent buyers in your neighborhood.
- Buyers who live in other areas and often relocate to your neighborhood.

8. Open Houses

Not every home is suitable for an open house due to location or other factors, and sometimes the only way to determine that is to try it. If nobody comes, that's probably a good indication. However, if your home is located near a high traffic area where buyers often swarm, then it's a good candidate.

- Place open house signs throughout the area directing buyers.
- Advertise in the newspaper.

- Advertise open house times online.
- Invite the neighbors; they're going to come anyway.