

Broadest appeal will sell your home

Interior decorating expert reveals 10 common mistakes made when preparing a house for the market

Sourced from: The Vancouver Sun, Written by: Mairi MacLean

Date: January 4, 2008

As real estate prices soar, many homeowners are probably thinking of selling their homes and moving on, either to another home or another part of the country. All professional home sellers can tell you that presentation is of supreme importance when selling a home.

Here, from interior decorator and home staging expert Gabrielle Campbell, are 10 common mistakes sellers make when preparing their house for sale. Her new book on how to sell your home (The Easy Sell System), written with Greg Tonn, will be published this month.

- Just because you love it does not mean everyone else will. Ensure your property appeals to the broadest buying public, which means neutralize. If the colour palette or decorating style is too far out, people will be put off by the “personality” of the home, and it will be difficult for them to visualize themselves and their own belongings in the house.
- Closets and pantries are crowded and cluttered. Edit each storage space of excess or seasonal items to make sure the viewers can see the space. Crammed spaces give viewers the perception that there is not enough storage space and that the house is bursting at the seams.
- The furnishings are too big or there are too many for the space. Edit, edit, edit. The corners of the room need to be seen, so remove extra or oversized plants, fans, gym equipment, chairs and tables. During one staging job, the homeowner wanted to leave an excessively large coffee table in a living room, and demonstrated how cool this table was by folding it out into a dining table. So we asked him, “What’s for sale? The house or the table?” he substituted the table for a smaller one.
- “Clean” means different things to different people. It may be common sense to some, but the best way to maintain the value of your single largest investment is to follow a regular cleaning schedule. When your house is on the market, it has to be clean and ready for showing every minute of the day.
- You love your pet so everyone else will, right? Wrong. Someone potential buyers are really averse to animals of any kind, and that means that any evidence of pets will deter them from the property. If you have pets, vacuum

daily to keep the hair under control and crate them or remove them from the property while it is being shown.

- Don't hide damage to flooring, counter tops, walls or other permanent fixtures. Reveal, never conceal, problem areas, and be sure to reflect any deficiencies and necessary repairs in the list price.
- Don't forget about safety and security. Strangers are coming into your house. Gun collections and the kitchen knife block present a major safety hazard. Pack away these and precious items like jewelry while the house is on the market.
- Don't designate a space above grade as a storage room. Potential buyers want to know exactly how many bedrooms are available, and using a room above grade for storage will affect their perception of the house. Use the basement for storage.
- Don't leave dated or worn fixtures for the next owner to replace. The best way to increase equity in your house is to implement periodic upgrades. The simplest and least costly upgrades include light fixtures, taps and faucets, door and cabinet hardware, and drapery and window treatments.
- Don't rush to put the house on the market before it is presentable. Selling a property requires strategic thinking. First, identify the competition, then make your house look better than others on the market. Care and attention to the details will impress potential buyers and, if the house is "move-in ready," that means less work for them and possibly a better offer for you.