

## Ready, set, sold: 10 tips highlighting homeowner participation

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As a homeowner, you play a critical role in the timely sale of your property. Here are 10 tips to help sellers move their homes quickly and with as few setbacks as possible:

**1 Do your homework before hiring a realtor:** Not all agents are created equal. Interview at least 3 agents, and come prepared with a list of questions you plan to ask. What is their track record? How do they market listings? Do they have a team to help show your home or does the responsibility fall on one particular agent? Due diligence is key to finding a representative prepared to work hard and who will be available to answer your questions along the way.

**2 Do your paperwork early:** Have listing paperwork and disclosures completed at least one-week before your house officially goes on the market. This way your agent can have photos complete, flyers ready, Internet ads up and running, etc. on the very first day your listing hits the market. Also be sure to get a copy of your home's MLS listing from your agent so you can avoid a costly error. It's entirely possible a bedroom was missed, or something was overlooked. Work as a team to make sure your home's listing is accurate...and that the description is inspiring!

**3 Pre-inspect the home:** Even before you list your home, hire professionals to inspect the home including the roof, pool, and other structural elements, as well as for termites and other important buyer considerations. Make ALL repairs before you list the house on the market. Today's buyer is discriminating and has many choices - don't give them a reason to have concerns.

A complete list of the completed inspections and repairs should be made available to serious buyers, which will go a long way in expediting the process at large.

**4 Stage the home:** Plant fresh flowers, wash the windows and screens, put on a coat of new paint, lay new carpet, add furnishings and décor items, eliminate clutter and remove personal photographs from around the house. It's time to show off your beautiful home and make someone else feel completely at home in it. First impressions are critical, so ensure the junk is packed in boxes, and all boxes are put in storage vs. the garage so the prospective buyer can properly evaluate and appreciate that part of the house, too. Clean out the closets, so they look bigger.

**5 Set the price:** Remember you need to "Price to Sell," not "Price to Own." Remember your goals and why you are moving in the first place. With this in mind, price the home at or below market value, not based what you need, want or were hoping to get. An appraisal can help you discern what number best hits that target.

**6 Roll out the red carpet:** At all times your home should be ready to be shown. From the first day your listing hits the market, your beds should always be made, dishes done, socks put in the hamper, toiletries and medications put away, etc. Be ready for a prospective buyer to walk through at all times.

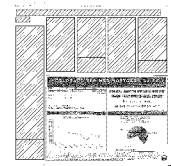
**7 Showtime:** If you know when prospective buyers are going to show up, turn on ALL the lights, open the blinds, light a nice smelling candle, and turn on some mellow music on low volume. In short, set

the mood. Appealing to all the senses will leave potential buyers with a good feeling and impression about your home. And, don't hang around. Walk the dog or just take a walk around the block so the buyers may tour the home unencumbered.

**8 Feedback:** Your agent should be giving you feedback from each and every showing either he or she makes, or made by other agents. If someone mentions pet odors or other such problems, handle it ASAP. If someone seems to be interested, don't delay as time is your enemy. Strike while the iron's hot and try to make a deal.

**9 Think outside the box:** Consider a "Reverse Offer." Consider that one buyer who has been back for a second or possible 3rd look, but hasn't pulled the trigger. Make them an offer! Yes you, as the seller, should put something in writing and submit it to the buyer's agent. This will create an opportunity for the buyer's agent to sit down with his or her client and potentially help close the deal.

**10 4-week checkpoint:** Still for sale? Time to take a hard look at the price. Your greatest number of showings will happen within the first 3-4 weeks of a listing hitting the market. This is because there is already a pool of qualified buyers waiting for new homes to come on the market that might match their criteria. So, if you've had no bites by week 4, it's time to increase your exposure by making a price adjustment. Repeat again every four weeks, or sooner depending on how urgent or motivated your situation is. ■



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# The Gazette

Date: Saturday, January 10, 2009  
Location: COLORADO SPRINGS, CO  
Circulation (DMA): 108,623 (94)  
Type (Frequency): Newspaper (S&S)  
Page: F9  
Keyword: The Jenson Group

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