



FOR SALE BY OWNER

The Ultimate Guide to Selling Your Home On Your Own

...while avoiding all the common pitfalls



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INTRODUCTION

It probably seems a little weird that I want to help you sell your home on your own, being that I'm a real estate agent. You're probably thinking there's gotta be a catch...

I do some things on my own, and don't hire a professional (when I can), in order to save some money. Sometimes I do it as good or better than someone I could've hired. Sometimes I struggle and get it done OK enough. And sometimes, I get into the middle of it and end up hiring someone anyway.

I want to help you give this the best try possible.

And, if you give it your best shot, and you still don't have any luck, sure, I hope it leads to doing business with you. But, I want to have earned that opportunity and give you a preview that I really know my trade.

But for now, I wish you luck on selling your home on your own! And I truly hope this guide gives you some in-between-the-lines insight.

If you have any questions during the course of trying to sell your house on your own, or about the information in this guide, please feel free to reach out to me!

You can find all my contact information on the last page.



PREPARING YOUR HOME

Check your property with a critical eye. Buyers will look for faults which could cost them money to remedy.

Clean up, fix up and paint. You have only one chance to make a good first impression, so lavish time, money and energy on curb appeal.

Rearrange the furniture to create the most open space. If you have too much furniture, remove some and store it. Six very important words: No clutter, no clutter, no clutter!

Open the shades and turn on the lights. Check the thermostat to make sure that the house is at a comfortable temperature.

Remove everything off the kitchen and bathroom counters to make them look bigger.

If the shower is glass, remove products during the showings.

Make sure the front of the home and porch look great. While the buyer is waiting for you to open the door they will spend extra time on the front porch.

Make sure Fact Sheets / Flyers are available and easily accessible

Keep children and pets out of the way during showings.



PRICING YOUR HOME

When pricing your home don't use online websites to set the value of your home. You will want to understand your local real estate market and your homes value. You also need to understand what current buyers find value in, which may be different than what you see value in. A few questions to start with....

Is the local market rising, falling or staying even?

Is my opinion of value based on actual neighborhood sale prices?

How many homes in the area are competing against mine right now?

How does mine compare?

Are my homes upgrades what current buyers are looking for?

Have any neighborhood homes been on the market too long? If YES, Why?

Is my home consistent with larger or smaller homes in the surrounding area?

Are my financial needs influencing my asking price?

Is my original purchase price influencing my asking price?

Am I willing to price it right and stand firm?

Are the benefits of moving important enough to price my home at market value?



WRITING EFFECTIVE ADS

It is important to capture a buyers attention. You will want to give enough information to excite the buyer but not too much allowing the buyer to reach out for more information.

1. List all of the best features of your home and pick the top 5.
2. Use an attention-getting opening statement about the home. Let the buyer picture their life living in your home.
3. Less is more. Include some facts about the house (bedrooms, baths, price, etc.) but keep it brief.
4. Use words that appeal to all of the senses.
5. Focus your copy on the items on your top 5 list.
6. Avoid exaggerating the features of your home that you like best, as they may not be the features the buyer likes best.
7. Include your name, phone number, email address and web site.
8. Use photos to show the best feature of the house and the standard front shot.
9. End with a call to action: "For a private showing, call 555-1234 today."
10. According to the Newspaper Association of America, here are the top things a buyer wants to know about a property:
 - Location
 - Price
 - Type or style
 - Square footage
 - Bedrooms
 - Bathrooms
 - Lot size
 - Amenities
 - Garage size
 - Phone number



ANSWERING INQUIRIES

- 1 To generate more inquiries, don't put everything about your property in the ad. This gives the reader a reason to call and find out more.
- 2 Remember your objective in handling inquiries is to cause the caller to want to see the house. You can't sell a house over the phone.
- 3 If you are running an ad in the paper, make sure you are available to handle inquiries during peak response times, especially evening and weekends. Always put your phone number on your yard sign, so that drive-by shoppers know how to contact you for showings. If you are running an ad on the Internet, respond to email inquiries with an invitation to call for a showing appointment.
- 4 Always thank the person for calling about your house. It's a polite and friendly way to start a conversation. Trade names and confirm their phone number so you can keep a record for follow up.
- 5 The caller will usually ask you questions about your house right at the beginning of the call. Always give a direct answer to a direct question and then, to keep the conversation going, ask a probing question of your own.
Example:
Q: How many bedrooms does your house have?
A: We have three bedrooms. How many were you looking for?
- 6 Before agreeing to an appointment for a showing, always ask the caller, "Have you been prequalified by a lender in my price range?" This will avoid getting tied up in a contract with a buyer who cannot afford your home.
- 7 Ask the caller if they have to sell their present home first in order to buy yours. Studies show that 7 out of 10 buyers are really lookers who cannot buy until their home is sold, and their home isn't even on the market yet. Set the asking price comparable to similar homes in your area which have sold recently.



IS THE BUYER QUALIFIED?

So, what do we mean by “qualified”?

You really want to make sure that the people you are showing your home to are qualified to even buy your home. Otherwise, what’s the point in even letting them come see your home?

So, you should make sure to ask anybody who wants to come see your home if they have been “pre-approved” for a mortgage through a reputable lender already. Ask them to send that to you before showing them the house.

Any good real estate agent would never take an unqualified buyer out to see homes. If a buyer is upset or resistant about asking for a pre-qualification... you may want to question their motives.

Expect people to say something along the lines of, “I’m sure I can afford it. I’ll get pre-approved once I see your house...if I even like it. What’s the point of doing it before I know if I even want to buy it?”

Some buyers won't have a lender or a pre-approval and they won't know how to do that. You want to have the name of a mortgage lender they may want to call to get approved. If you don't have someone you trust a local real estate agent will help you with this.

-Also don't forget to ask for proof of funds.



DEALING WITH OTHER AGENTS

This is going to aggravate you, but the majority of calls you will get about your house will be from real estate agents trying to convince you to list your house with them.

- Some will say they “might” have a buyer for your house and want to come see it.
- Some will be giving scary “statistics” about how few owners sell their home
- Some will show how you will lose money when doing so.
- Some will call you non-stop and claim this is proof they are persistent.

(That does not mean they are the best agent to hire, . it means they are persistent)

Your best approach is to screen your calls and return calls to people who left messages — if, and only if, they’re actually a buyer.

It can be difficult to know if an agent really has a buyer or not. Once you have confirmed there is an actual buyer..... If you want the buyer to see your house, you will most likely need to agree to pay the buyer’s agent a commission. You could just say no and hope the buyer comes to you directly. But, most buyers are extremely uncomfortable buying a home without the help of their agent.

Be cautious. Now you are dealing with a professional on the other end. Are you knowledgeable and skilled enough to represent yourself? Maybe you should hire your own agent to assist you.

If you are going this route, would it maybe make sense to hire an agent to represent you and put you on the formal real estate market and open it up to all buyers represented by buyer’s agents? Perhaps being on the open market will bring you more qualified buyers or even a bidding war.



SAFETY - SAFETY - SAFETY

When your home is for sale it is really important to keep yourself and your home safe. This is one of the only times that you will be allowing strangers into your home. Criminals often contact homeowners selling their home themselves and pretend to be a buyer.

Make sure you walk through your home and hide any all valuable belongings

Make sure you remove all prescription medication from the bathroom incase the buyer needs to use the restroom during the home showing. You cannot follow buyers into the bathroom.

When you schedule a showing appointment make sure you always have an escape plan incase of emergency. Unlock the front and back door and always keep you back to one of the exits.

Always allow the buyer to walk into a room first so you can stand in the doorway, again keeping your back to an exit.

When showing a second story, have the buyer walk up first and you follow behind. This will allow you to keep your back to the exits.

I'm hoping you can see the common theme of protecting yourself. Being a real estate agent for over 20 years I have unfortunately been in some scary situations. It is important that you take your safety very seriously, we have special training on how to vet perspective buyers and how to stay safe during showings.



CONTRACTS AND PAPERWORK

When you sell your home there is a lot of paperwork and disclosures that must be given to the buyer. Although forms are added and changed every few months here is a list of some of the current important forms that you don't want to forget:

RPA - Residential Purchase Agreement

TDS - Transfer Disclosure Statement

SPQ - Seller Property Questionnaire

AS - Sellers Affidavit of Non-Foreign Status (a separate form for each adult on title)

SBSA - Statewide Buyer and Seller Advisory

RGM - Radon Gas and Mold Notice and Release Agreement

DBD - Megan's Law Data Base Disclosure

CMD - Carbon Monoxide Detector Notice

WHSD - Water Heater & Smoke Detector Statement of Compliance

BIE - Buyer's Inspection Elections

SPT - Notice of Your Supplemental Property Tax Bill

MCA - Market Conditions Advisory

Also... don't forget local city disclosures

any HOA documents, CC&R's, budget and minutes

Preliminary title documents

*not all documents are listed



AVOID LEGAL PITFALLS

Providing the buyers with all the transaction forms is the first step to avoiding a lawsuit when selling your home. Be sure to fill out all forms fully and disclose EVERYTHING you know about the property.

Most people know better than to discriminate nowadays. However, many people aren't entirely aware of the fact that they may be doing something discriminatory when it comes to selling a house. There are a tremendous amount of rules, regulations, laws, and acts a homeowner needs to abide by when selling their home. The Fair Housing Act prohibits sellers from discriminating against race, religion, national origin, sex, family status or disability. (visit HUD.gov and search fair housing)

Most homeowners are super proud of their house, so the natural tendency is to gush about how great their house but be careful of what you say.... Crazy as it might sound, using the word "family" in your advertising or description of could be taken as discriminatory. For instance, you can't say, "Located in a great family neighborhood!" Or, "Perfect for your large family." That's just one example. You are not allowed to say "walking distance to the park" because some people can't walk.

Follow all contract timelines and deadlines to keep things on track and avoid cancellation.

Use a title company that you trust to provide title and escrow insurance and to handle the third party transaction.

Both buyer and seller must sign and understand what is in and is not included in the sale.

Invest in a home warranty.

Document all communication in writing with the date and time noted.

Save all documents from the sale.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You should be prepared to negotiate throughout the process....

- The buyer who wants the best deal possible
- The buyer's agent who solely represents the best interest of the buyer
- The home inspection companies, which work for the buyer and will almost always find some problems with the house
- The appraiser will question the value of the home

92% of buyers search online for a home. Most real estate agents have an internet strategy to promote the sale of your home online. Make sure you spend some to promote your online presence EVERYWHERE.

Know where your buyer is moving from. Your buyer may be someone from across town or it can be someone moving from the city (San Francisco or Silicon Valley) Don't forget to cast a big net and showcase your home on all sale and social media sites in several different areas.

Leveraging Realtors to find more buyers. 87% of all home buyers use a real estate agent to purchase a home. It is important to target REALTORS who have buyers and offer them incentive to show your home.

Buyers may expect to pay less. Many homeowners believe that they will save the real estate commission by selling the home on their own. Most buyers look at For Sale By Owner homes expecting to buy the home at a discounted rate because the seller is saving money not using a Realtor. Studies have shown that a home sold by a Realtor sales for **13% more** than a home sold by the homeowner.

-Selling your home on your own will save you money on the commission.

However, sellers net more money and save a lot of time and stress by selling with The Cross Group.

We 100% respect your choice to sell your home yourself. If you happen to need help along the way, please know you have a friend in the business.



DO YOU NEED A REALTORS ADVICE?

If you do decide to use a Realtor or if you have questions
for a local real estate agent,
we can help!

OPTION 1: YOU ARE LOCATED IN MY AREA.....

Your Northern California real estate specialists

Kari Cross

Your Favorite Family Team - The Cross Group

925-584-1640

kcross@crossgrouphomes.com

OPTION 2: LOCATED IN A DIFFERENT CITY OR STATE....

Let us connect you with one of your preferred relocation specialists in your area

925-584-1640



THE CROSS GROUP AT CORCORAN ICON PROPERTIES

The Cross Group at Corcoran Icon Properties is your mother daughter team with decades of experience in the local market and a belief that hard work, integrity, and communication are the keys to best servicing our buyers and sellers. Our expertise has helped our clients successfully buy and sell homes throughout the Bay Area. Impeccable service and unmatched dedication to our customers consistently earns us their lifelong trust.

We are a family team with an exceptional support staff dedicated to helping you achieve your real estate needs. When you are buying or selling one of your greatest assets, it's important to have more than one set of hands working for you!

Elyssa, Hailey and Kari Cross - Your Favorite Family Team!



THE CROSS GROUP

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KARI CROSS, AUTHOR

I wanted to give my clients more reassurance during the real estate process. Buying and selling a home is a huge decision and can be extremely stressful. I have published a book to help my clients understand the real estate process and answer common questions. The book assists my clients before, during and after the sale.



Contact Kari Cross for more information on how you can get a FREE copy

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