

10 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL OPEN HOUSE

1. Don't be a chatterbox. Greet your visitors, give them your card and a property brochure, and allow them peace and quiet while they tour the home.
2. Be honest about the home's features and improvements. A seven-year-old roof isn't "new," although the owner may describe it as such. Many owners think any improvement they paid for themselves is "new," even if it was made more than a decade ago.
3. Don't drop vague hints about offers having been received for the home if that's not the case. When the truth later comes out, the buyers may feel manipulated and back out of the whole transaction.
4. Make copies of presale home and termite inspection reports available to prospective buyers along with estimates of the costs for any needed repairs or fumigation.
5. If your state requires a disclosure form, have it completed ahead of time, and make copies available to prospective buyers.
6. Display photographs of popular neighborhood amenities (e.g., local parks and recreation center).
7. Have comparable sales data available.
8. Give visitors property information sheets with important facts about the home and the community. Examples include a flyer highlighting the home's features, summaries of room size, lot size, taxes, and assessments; and a map showing the location of schools, hospitals, public transportation, libraries, supermarkets and other services and retailers.
9. Ask visitors for immediate feedback about the home.
10. Use a guest book to collect visitors' names, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. Follow-up with a telephone call or e-mail after the event.

Keep It Legal: Some calling activities of real estate professionals need to comply with the requirements of the new National Do-Not-Call Registry after Oct. 1, 2003. If you are unsure about how the new rules will impact your telemarketing activities, it is recommended that you consult with your attorney before taking any action.

TIP: Schedule several back-to-back open houses on a given day. Schedule some weekdays. Customers who frequently transfer may consider house hunting work and may prefer to do it during the week. —*Real estate columnist Danielle Kennedy, International Speakers Bureau, Dallas*

TIP: Don't forget to turn off the lights, close the drapes, remove the guest book and brochures, and lock up before you leave.

OPEN HOUSES STAGING TIPS

- Ask the sellers to clear out their closets and their clutter. Encourage them to hold a yard sale or donate unwanted household goods to charity.
- Encourage the sellers to pack up extra toys, linens, small kitchen appliances, and the like and store them offsite or in the garage.
- Be sure the trees are trimmed, the shrubs are pruned, and the lawn is mowed and watered regularly. Turn on the sprinklers for five minutes 30 minutes before the open house. It makes the lawn and driveway sparkle.
- Ask the sellers to refrain from cooking anything that leaves a distinctive odor (fish, garlic, cabbage) and from introducing any other unappealing odors into the home.
- Ask the sellers to have a professional service clean the home, including the carpets and the windows.
- Set the dining room table with attractive linens, dishes, and stemware.
- Ask the sellers' permission to serve cookies and coffee; people will linger longer. But be sure to clean up any mess after the open house.
- Arrange fresh flowers throughout the home and have a fire in the fireplace in fall and winter.
- Add extra lamps in dark rooms or dark corners, and turn on the lights when you show the home to prospective buyers.
- Remove stacks of magazines, ashtrays, sports trophies, family photographs, and other distractions. —Barb Schwarz, in “How to Stage Your Listings So They Sell Quickly,” *The Real Estate Professional*, July/August 1998)

—Some of the tips in this section were adapted from “HomeStaging: The Key to Successful Selling,” by Matthew Vossier and Liz Talbot, *National Relocation & Real Estate*, Vol. 13, No. 6