

10 Mistakes That Can Ruin Your Open House



Yes, it's true, it's a seller's market out there, but you can still ruin your chance at finding a willing buyer while mortgage rates remain low or landing the price you want if you mess up your open house.

Here are 10 open-house mistakes to avoid:

No. 1: Hovering

As a seller, your job is to get out of the way. Let your agent and their team interact with the buyers. Nothing scares off buyers faster than getting cornered by a desperate seller, says Elizabeth Weintraub, a Realtor with Lyon Real Estate in Sacramento, California. "Buyers don't like it when they are hovered over. Give the buyer some information and let them look through the home on their own."

No. 2: Half-baked staging

If you are going to professionally stage your home, stage the whole house, or at least one entire floor. Nothing is more jarring than two elegantly appointed rooms followed by an empty dining room or den, says Maureen Reddy, a professional stager and owner of DaVinci Designer Gallery in Winthrop, Massachusetts.

"Nothing done halfway is ever any good," she says. And unless your agent is a professionally trained stager or interior designer, hire someone who knows what they are doing to handle this sensitive job. Don't let your agent start bringing in his or her furniture for the open house -- it happens more than you would think and it can backfire badly, Reddy says.

No. 3: Rookie agent on duty

Your agent may not be the one to actually show your house. But make sure you are confident your Realtor has a capable and well-trained team, Weintraub says. While you don't want the agent at your open house to bombard potential buyers with information, you want to make sure whoever is there is available to answer any and all questions and is not more concerned with texting or reading a book.

No. 4: Music

You don't need music to sell a house. "At best it is distracting," says Rona Fischman, owner of 4 Buyers Real Estate in Somerville, Massachusetts. "At worst, buyers will get suspicious that there is more road

noise, or mechanical noise or neighbor noise that you are covering up.

No. 5: Failure to provide marketing materials

All buyers who walk through your house should be able to pick up an info packet to take with them, says Weintraub. There's no excuse for running out of copies. Otherwise it's out of sight, out of mind.

No. 6: Smells

Forget heavy air fresheners. Like other attempts to spice up the atmosphere, at best it's a distraction and at worst it may raise questions about what you are hiding.

And yes, while pristine cleaning is paramount, the night before your open house is not the time to plaster your abode with industrial cleaners. The stench of bleach -- and the immediate questions it will raise in a buyer's mind -- will do more damage to your chances than that tiny patch of mold in the corner of the shower.

Skip the cookies baking in the oven as well. Maybe it worked in the 90s, but buyers figured that one out a long time ago, says Fischman.

"You only get one opportunity to make a first impression and if the impression is an overwhelming smell, you lose," she says. "Whether it cookies or disinfectant, if it is noticeable -- and not merely background -- buyers will notice."

No. 7: Leaving jewelry, valuables about

From gawkers to serious buyers, quite a crowd will tramp through your house. Don't tempt anyone's honesty. Besides losing something precious, you could also poison the deal with needless suspicion when something goes missing and everyone is suddenly is a suspect, Fischman says.

No. 8: Pets

Letting your beloved pets hang around on open house day could prove costly. Not only should you put your dog or cat in a kennel for the open house, you need to remove all signs of your beloved animal friends. That means litter boxes as well -- a number one turnoff for sellers.

No. 9: The wrong temperature

This one's simple: Your house should be warm but not hot in the winter and cool but not cold in the summer. Don't blow it by playing games with the thermostat.

No. 10: Bad photos

If the online photos of your house are dim, blurry, taken at odd angles or of odd rooms, don't be surprised if no one shows up. Bad photos prevent potential buyers from ever showing up in the first place.

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