

Do this... Don't do that

Occasionally an agent might call and then fail to keep the appointment. Time might have run out, or the buyer might have asked to bypass your home. Nevertheless, an agent who makes an appointment will show your home if possible. Some agents might not advise you of a change in plans. If you find no-shows becoming a pattern, make it a point to ask the name and phone number when an agent calls for an appointment. With this information your listing agent can follow up to determine the problem. Sometimes there is an underlying problem: Your "curb appeal" could be deficient. The solution could be as simple as trimming the bushes or painting the trim. At times the problem is not fixable (for example, having another home or a major highway in your yard) and therefore it must be handled by a price reduction. But such obvious factors should have been accounted for in your market value analysis.

Always maintain the temperature of your home at a comfortable level, whether you are there or not. If you are at home for a showing, open the shades and blinds, turn on all lights, and turn off your dishwasher before your guests arrive. Meet the agent and prospective buyer at the door with a smile, introduce yourself as the owner, invite them to look around, offer to answer any questions they might have at the conclusion of their visit... then hide. Never offer an apology for any aspect of your home; it would only highlight deficiencies.

And now a word about beans: Don't spill them. Do not discuss compromising information with anyone other than your listing agent. If a buyer has questions about your home, answer directly and accurately. But questions about the price (other than the asking price), closing date, terms, or other details of the transaction *must* be referred to your listing agent. Plan in advance, with the help of your agent, exactly how you will handle the inevitable question: Why are you moving? A polite but vague response probably will be innocuous. Never mention that you are moving because of a job transfer, divorce, foreclosure, et cetera. You must never convey to a buyer that you are in a hurry to sell. To do so invites the use of "pressure tactics."

Be careful not to discuss irrelevant topics such as sports, religion, politics, or the possible sale of the grandfather's clock or other furniture. There is no way to know which of these topics might cost you a contract. So be polite, brief, and stay focused on the goal. Also, keep any remaining pets, as well as pet remains, out of the way whenever your home is to be shown.

Never, ever tag along during a showing. The buyer will feel inhibited and will not make the comments that the agent needs to hear. Positive comments help the agent recognize and pursue serious buying interest. Negative comments need to be addressed promptly and resolved on the spot. If

comments go unspoken, the agent will miss the best opportunity to sell your home. Besides, you truly can not help: Most agents readily will find the pantry as well as the linen closet. Many agents will even be able to figure out, on their own, which is which.

If you happen to be at home and notice that a prospective buyer shows unusual interest, asks several questions, or spends a long time, give your listing agent a call as soon as the visitors depart. These can be buying signs and prompt follow-up is required. In addition, if a buyer has returned for a second visit, or if you find two business cards from the same agent, advise your listing agent at once: Your home is probably on the buyer's "short list."

Occasionally an agent will appear without an appointment. Often, this happens because an alert buyer has "discovered" that your home is for sale by seeing the sign. It could be exactly what the buyer has told the agent they do not want or it might be way out of their intended price range. Nevertheless, try your best to accommodate them. What have you got to lose? If an agent does appear without an appointment, ask to see a business card *and* a lockbox smartcard as identification. See a sample [here](#).

For personal safety reasons, refuse entry to any individual who appears without an agent. There are no exceptions to this rule. Write down his or her name and phone number, and provide your listing agent's business card explaining that your agent will call to schedule an appointment for them.

Your agent might arrange a "brokers' open-house" on an appropriate Tuesday so that local agents can see your home. The number of visitors can vary from a few to over one hundred. The attendance is not totally within control, but then again, it is not critical anyway: These events rarely produce a buyer. Agents' comments on your price are generally worthless compared with the rigorous home value analysis that your agent has done already.

An open-house might be held periodically. Here again, results vary unpredictably, but six groups of visitors for an open-house is respectable. Plan to be out of the home for all open-house events. You do need to realize that an open-house will not be an effective means of locating a buyer. It usually takes well over 100 open-houses to sell a home that way. That's an open-house every weekend for two years! Not great odds. Serious, focused buyers are conducting efficient home searches on the web; and through an agent who can provide full MLS information, *and* can show homes at times other than 1PM to 4PM on Sunday. Few homes sell because of an open-house, but having one will not hinder your effort to find a buyer. There is no magic in selling a home, only recognition of, and attention to, the important details.

*This series is excerpted from David Rathgeber's SELLING YOUR HOME in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area
Copyright © David Rathgeber. All rights reserved.*

Read David's SELLING YOUR HOME... book, free online at www.davidr.net - (no registration required)