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Simple Seller Mistakes Can Alienate Buyers

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The current low inventory of homes for sale may mean sellers have more attention from those on the lookout to buy, but – believe it or not – many sellers diminish their chances of locking in great offers when they make one of these mistakes:

Offering restricted showing times

When sellers restrict their availability, even agents of motivated buyers can become impatient and will book their clients for other available properties. They may give up entirely on trying to coordinate a convenient appointment if it requires too much effort.

Although sellers shouldn't always be expected to drop everything suddenly for every opportunity, when qualified agents contact them (through appropriate channels and reasonable windows of opportunity), sellers should do their best to facilitate a meeting. Sellers who feel they "are in no hurry to sell" must still answer to general marketplace beliefs: Every day the house remains on the market without an offer builds a perception that there may be something undesirable about it, so moving fast can make a huge difference.

Insisting that viewers remove shoes/wear booties

Sellers who have renewed flooring or with white interiors may think a home's polished look – and value – will be preserved with a "no shoe" policy for showings. In fact, anyone who has been through airport security understands how awkward it is to bare feet in public... and it's not a feeling that sits well when buyers prepare to make an offer.

Booties may seem like a better option, but even those that are designed with

traction are incredibly slippery, rarely fit around shoes properly, pose a trip hazard and have actually caused serious injury on occasion. Booties also lose their purpose when buyers walk from the inside to the back yard and back.

Sellers who require these measures for home tours may be perplexed as to why their house isn't selling quickly. Bare-foot or bootie clad buyers just plain aren't as comfortable as unencumbered buyers; it only stands to reason that they may be hindered in imagining the home as theirs while wearing surgical shoe covers.

Staying on the premises during showings

It's true that making one's home vacant for viewers can be a challenge, especially during a time of frequent showings and open houses. Some sellers may be tempted to stay on-site – citing priorities such as a work deadline, child's nap or school schedule, or physical inconvenience. Regardless of their reasons, a seller's presence detracts from a potential homebuyer's experience. As difficult as it may be, sellers can also benefit if their agent suggests a pet take a vacation from the selling process.

A buyer needs to investigate details: peek into a closet to get a sense of its space, open and close a door to examine its access, feeling comfortable with every movement. Instead, a decent buyer's social etiquette takes over with a seller on hand and that can leave an incomplete examination by the potential homebuyer, and possibly an unpleasant memory when reflecting on the tour.

Failing to clean & deodorize thoroughly

Finally, a home that would otherwise be the perfect residence for a new owner may not be at all appealing if it smells of the family pet, cigarettes or is simply

untidy. Especially when it comes to pet odors, sellers can be understandably clueless, so it's important for a seller to listen to their agent, who is truly their advocate in the selling process. Walking through a home that isn't fresh makes a bad impression that can carry over to the buying decision, even when other elements in the process seem perfect.

Displaying collections & valuables

Family photos covering a wall, a collection of antiques or children's artwork or any items of considerable value can be distracting to buyers seeking a sense of what the space would be like with their own belongings. Collections and valuables make it difficult for newcomers to focus on how that space could be used differently, clouding their judgment about whether or not to place an offer.

Even the most valuable collection of rare books, treasured by a homeowner, can look like a dusty, overstuffed shelf to a newcomer. The point of home showing is to allow potential homebuyers to envision the space as their own, so empty walls, shelves, floors and storage nooks devoid of personal paraphernalia and valuables are a much better bet for sellers hoping to sway buyers.

Sellers cannot rely on a low supply to sell their properties for them and should be willing to follow their agent's suggestions. Putting some effort in prior to each showing can avoid not falling into these common traps.

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