

SELLING YOUR HOME

EXPERTS REVEAL

3 BIG THINGS FOR A QUICK SALE TOP PRICE



Selling a home is a stressful exercise at the best of times. Whatever your reason for selling, you want to get the best price you possibly can, and you want the sale to happen quickly so you can move on. We've asked some industry experts to reveal their top three things to help you achieve your goals of a fast sale and good price. This is what they advise.

SALES AGENT



Matt Debreczeni of Ray White Menai Real Estate in Sydney's Sutherland Shire has sold more than 160 homes in the past three years and that gives him a good idea of what prospective buyers are looking for. Matt was happy to offer a number of tips to follow to ensure you achieve the maximum possible sale price for your property in a relatively short period.

There's no shortage of ways to present your property in its best light and maximise your selling price. And choosing the person to put in control of its marketing and eventual sale is just as important as the appearance of the property.

1 THE PRESENTATION OF YOUR HOME

First impressions are important, but you don't have to spend a great deal of time or money to make sure your home looks its best. A fresh coat of paint, well-tended gardens, minor repairs, professional cleaning and de-cluttering will make a big difference to the buyers' first impression.

It's about making the home as appealing as possible by taking the guess-work out of its potential. Properties are often dressed up when available to be shown, it just gives the viewer an appreciation of the lifestyle it offers rather than empty rooms left to be filled by imagination. Professional styling is one way to achieve this and can be particularly beneficial for vacant properties to make them appear more homely and functional. And that doesn't just mean a clean and tidy interior; it means ensuring the exterior is as presentable and attractive as you can make it, because many people will check a property out for the first time with a drive-by before deciding whether to inspect it on open days.

2 CHOOSE A GOOD AGENT

Buying or selling property is as much a matter of the heart as the head. The value of the property is both and it's the agent's job to provide a realistic indication of the value of a property.

A good agent has both experience and



energy. They should have a strong local and regional buyer database and they'll ensure they have a healthy level of communication with the owner to update them on buyer interest, numbers of people at inspections and the movement of any negotiations.

They should exhaust every avenue on your behalf to get the best price. Generally, you will get this feeling from them in your initial meetings.

The agent should advise the best time of year to sell your property as well as the best method of sale: private treaty, auction and public tender are the most frequently used options.

Each has its advantages for certain properties and in certain markets. The agent will recommend a sales method they feel is most conducive to achieving the highest possible price for your property.

3 ADVERTISING

When it comes to advertising your property to potential buyers, the aim is to expose it to as many as possible and create competition and,

as a result, increase the sale price.

The three conventional marketing methods of advertising are direct mail, newspaper and online. But advertising dollars are often wasted. If you don't properly advertise your property and it doesn't sell, not only have you wasted the money you've spent but you might also have to meet ongoing mortgage and interest payments.

How much you spend on advertising depends on a number of factors, including the price you expect, your property's location and who your prospective buyers are.

I'd also recommend having a building and pest inspection prior to listing your property. It allows you to find any problems and fix them where necessary. A clear report is a big plus when selling and making it available to prospective buyers is always a good idea that will make interested parties more confident in making further enquiries.

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EXTERIOR

Maintenance specialist **Ian Boyd** is a Sydney-based home maintenance expert who knows the value of street appeal when it comes to selling a home. Here he offers practical advice on three important ways to keep your home's exterior well-maintained and help you get a quick sale and great price.

Don't underestimate the importance of a home that looks well maintained. Prospective owners aren't interested in buying trouble and if the property looks neglected they're likely to hesitate. A home that looks spick and span and in good repair from the outside will make prospective buyers keen to inspect.

1 WATER BLASTING

High-pressure water cleaning removes years of grimy build-up from driveways and paths and gets the concrete looking like new again. Nothing makes a house look shabbier than dirty exterior brickwork and cladding but water blasting is the quick and easy solution.

Garage floors, patios, decks and pool surrounds are among the many areas that will benefit from high-pressure cleaning and make your house more presentable to prospective buyers.

TIP

Experience tells for this job; it can also be a bit messy and using the equipment takes practice, so it's worth paying to get an expert in to be sure of the best results.



2 GENERAL REPAIRS

Walk around your home and look at it with a critical eye checking windows and frames, fences, steps, decks, gates, the letterbox and gutters. Make sure everything's in working



order and good repair with no cracks, loose bits or missing screws – and be sure to clean the gutters. Prospective buyers will be impressed if everything looks shipshape. You can probably do most of these small repairs yourself, but for anything that's a bit challenging, call an expert straightaway rather than waste time and money on a clumsy job.

3 REFRESH PAINTWORK

Unless the exterior is in a very poor state, painting the whole outside of the house is probably not warranted, but spend a little time and effort smartening up the trims and

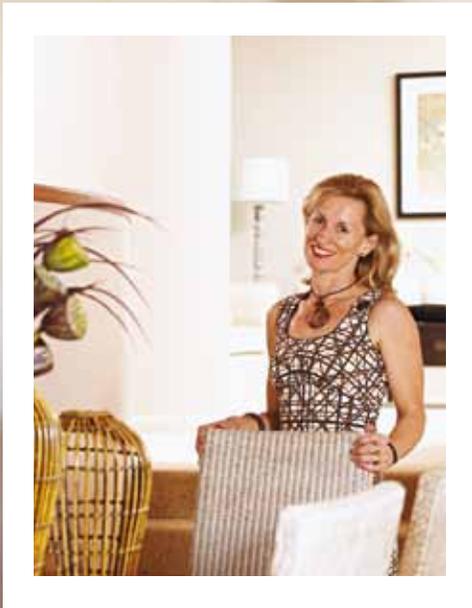
timberwork. A freshly painted front door and letterbox make a great first impression, and while you're at it touch-up faded, flaking, chipped paint on window frames, fences, gates, veranda posts and other trims. Garage doors are often overlooked so keep them in mind as well. You may want to match them to the trim of the rest of the house or give them a special finish.



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INTERIOR

Karen Muller of Real Living Interiors is an interior stylist and colour designer. A fair proportion of her business is made up of pre-sales styling for everyday people wishing to get quick results and a top price.



Decorating a home for long-term residence is an entirely different proposition to styling a home for sale. When styling for sale the focus turns away from the home owners' preferences and becomes about the potential buyer. The home needs to be depersonalised and styled in such a way that it appeals to the largest possible audience. The target market needs to be considered as does the way the agent will market the property.

As the vendor you need to look around with fresh eyes and be critical of your interiors, think how you can make your home appealing to others, and how to 'neutralise' it, remembering the classic phrase 'first impressions count!'

1 BE SUBJECTIVE

It's not easy to be objective with your own home; it may have looked the same for years and you may not see how you can improve it. Try taking a step back. Go room by room with pen and paper and list what you think needs to be done to make each room as appealing as possible. If you're struggling, try taking pictures of the rooms from different angles then ask yourself what is jarring within the space, how can you make the room look bigger and neutralise the space as much as possible.

Answer the following questions:

- Are there too many personal items in, on, under and around surfaces? 85 per cent of people who sell need to declutter almost every room before it goes on the market.
- Are the walls in good condition or are there cracks and chips in need of a touch of paint? Are there stickers or unfashionable or peeling wallpaper? Make your home appear appealing and well-maintained.
- Are the rooms filled with mismatched decor or crammed with furniture that makes the spaces look small and unappealing? Or are they empty, appearing cold and making it difficult to visualise the use of space? Correct furnishings within a room are powerful tools in creating property appeal.
- Do artworks and soft furnishings complement or confuse the room? Simple decor creates appeal while mismatched belongings create a sense of unease.
- Are windows, flyscreens, skylights and curtains in good condition and clean? It would be better to remove old tired curtains and ripped flyscreens altogether.
- Are bathrooms and kitchens tired, out date or in need of a spruce up? Are the areas shiny and clean with clear surfaces such as benches and shelves? Bathrooms and kitchens play a major part in your home's net worth.
- Are there personal items such as photos, certificates and other tell-tale signs of who your family are? Remove them so potential owners can visualise themselves living in your home.
- Can internal doors be swung fully open, are windows in full view or are there obstructions in the way? Simply rearranging furniture can double the room size.

2 HAVE A REALISTIC BUDGET AND TIMEFRAME

Are you feeling totally overwhelmed or can you break the to-do list down into manageable chunks?

Preparing your home for sale doesn't always imply large amounts of money need to be spent for maximum gain. In preparing your home for sale remember, less is always more!

The amount of work you do and the money you spend in house preparations needs to be relevant to your budget, the time you have to invest and where your agent believes you will get the best return on your investment.

To avoid unnecessary stress set yourself realistic timeframes to spruce-up your home internally.

Your home needs to be prepared for your agent's photographs about one to two weeks before the first open house. Be mindful therefore that styling should be completed before this. Hired furniture needs to be in place two weeks prior to the photos. If you intend to paint over feature walls or strip off wallpaper, it too should be done well in advance of the first open house. Remember one to two weeks prior to your first inspection day is your deadline to have everything looking spick and span.



Karen Muller, Real Living Interiors
Interior Stylist and Colour Designer.
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Even if you are still just thinking about selling, start the declutter process. It can never be too early to start. When you're ready for your marketing campaign you will be one step ahead of the preparation process.

3 IF OVERWHELMED, CALL IN THE EXPERTS

If you are time poor, feeling overwhelmed, or simply need some styling tips specific to your home, seeking professional advice is a small price to pay in the long run.

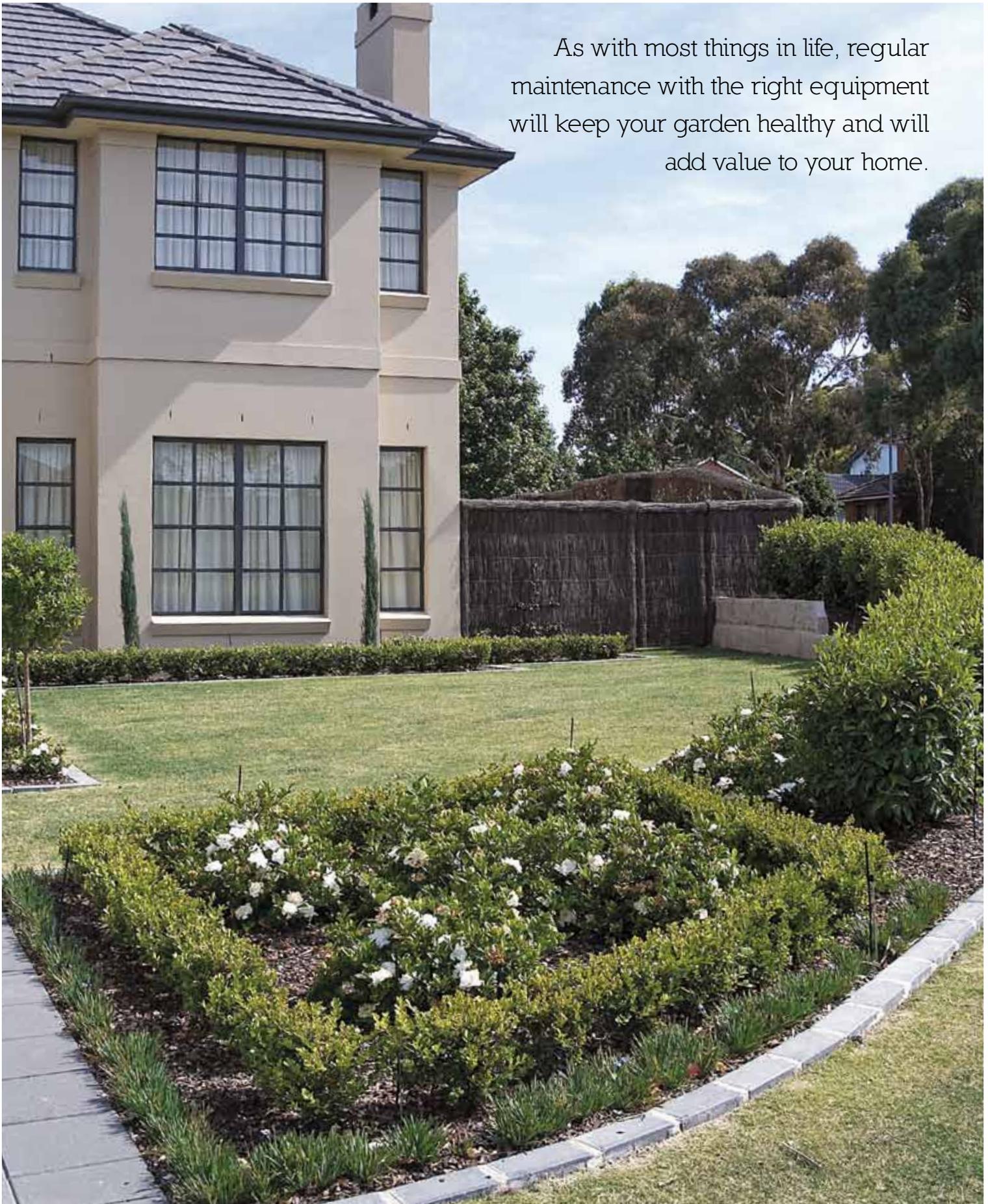
Styling suggestions should be practical and pertinent. For example, it is pointless suggesting furniture hire that you will be responsible for if you have a cat that claws any furniture in its path. It's equally crazy for a young family to prepack every toy in the house. A stylist will offer suggestions to make your home as appealing as possible mindful of the target market and who is living in the house.

Your agents are the lynchpins in securing a home sale. Their core competencies are in selling but many offer generic home-tidying ideas that can assist you. Stylists' core competencies are in design. They will take the guess-work out of styling, avoid costly mistakes and provide peace of mind, all while maximising the appeal of your home. As a team, the two professions can have enormous impact on a positive result.

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GARDEN

As with most things in life, regular maintenance with the right equipment will keep your garden healthy and will add value to your home.





Stephen Clark is General Manager – Product Marketing of Husqvarna Australia, part of the worldwide Husqvarna Group, a company renowned for garden maintenance products. With famous brands such as Husqvarna, Gardena, McCulloch and Flymo, they'll help your garden have a big impact on your property's value.

The front garden is the first thing potential buyers see on approaching a home, and the backyard is always eagerly inspected for space and usability. Just like inside renovations, the more effort and time put into improving these areas, the more return a homeowner will receive when it comes time to sell.

The great Aussie backyard has always been home to the great Aussie barbecue, and Australians are increasingly aware that it's also home to a hidden fortune, if used and presented correctly.

1 A WELL-MAINTAINED LAWN

Almost everyone agrees that the single most important aspect of a garden on the value of a house is a well-maintained lawn. The old adage 'you only get one chance to make a good first impression' holds true for houses as well. The key to a well-maintained lawn is not



Flymo hover mower take the effort out.

only the grass itself but also the edges and condition of the lawn. Precise, straight edges trimmed neatly as well as a nicely mowed surface combine to give that 'wow' effect.

Regular mowing and edging are the way to achieve the best result. An overgrown lawn cut back at the last minute will reveal itself to buyers. Cutting long and regularly is the best option for a lush green lawn. Mulching the grass when mowing to return nutrients to the soil is another way to improve the look of the grass, making it greener and healthier for that all important open house.

Petrol lawn mowers with four cutting blades and mulching capability are a good choice, or, for smaller lawns a hover mower, which floats on a cushion of air, could be an option. For

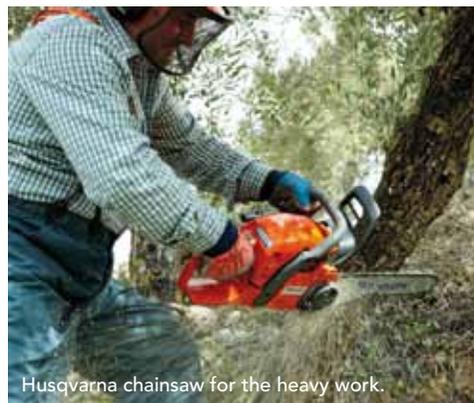


Husqvarna automower does all the work.

those with a larger budget and less free time a robotic lawnmowing option might be worth considering. Husqvarna has a new model which will cut a small amount of grass around your lawn continuously day or night for a precise finish without you having to lift a finger.

2 DECORATIVE TREES

Healthy, well-positioned trees add appeal and value to a home. Avoid trees that will grow too large and lift paths, or even worse, foundations. Likewise, it's important to position trees so they don't interfere with roof gutters, pools, wires or other fixtures around the home. Like a lawn, trees need to be maintained. Regular pruning and trimming can keep a tree under control and will add value to your property. You can do this yourself



Husqvarna chainsaw for the heavy work.

on smaller trees with hand-pruning pole saws and loppers, or even a chainsaw if you are experienced enough to trim larger branches.

3 WELL-KEPT HEDGES AND SHRUBS



Gardena hedge-trimmers are easy to use.

Balance is critical in any garden. If you have a lush, green lawn and beautiful trees there is no point having unkempt hedges or shrubs. Regular pruning of new growth is the best way to maintain and shape small bushes into a decorative feature. This can be done by hand with good-quality clippers or, if you have a number of hedges and shrubs a powered hedge trimmer in petrol or electric might be the way to go. Powered hedge trimmers have long blades that cut quickly and effectively while still allowing you to shape where required.

About Husqvarna Group

The Husqvarna Group is the world's largest producer of outdoor power products including chainsaws, trimmers, lawnmowers and garden tractors. Husqvarna product offering covers a wide spectrum of applications for consumers and professional users within Forestry, Lawn and Garden, and Construction.
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