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**Tips for a Successful Open House**

**By Bob Lippy**

You're having the jitters. Your open house is tomorrow. And first impressions count!

Help your Tampa Bay Florida real estate agent make it a smashing open house. Help him clinch that sale. The rule of thumb is to prepare well in advance, and not 24 hours before. Twenty-four hours will not be sufficient time for the nitty-gritty that will make or break a public showing. You remember how it was during school. If we crammed, we most likely failed the exam the next day. But when we studied weeks in advance, we felt we knew the subject matter by heart. The same principle applies to open houses. The harder and longer you prepare, the better the results will be. It may even put a few extra thousand dollars in your pocket!

The fact that your house is located in Tampa Bay or in Pinellas County is already half the battle won, because these locations have a lot to offer people looking for a place to live in Florida. Think of the commercial and cultural diversity and other attractions that Tampa Bay and Pinellas County are famous for.

Make a Lasting First Impression - most real estate agents agree: a clean house is the # 1 priority. The word "clean", however, does not only mean a house that has been tidied up a few hours earlier, a walkway that was swept and hosed over, or windows that were cleared of dust and dirt. "Clean" means a lot more than that.

Studies have shown that dwellings painted in neutral colors convey a more pleasant and warmer welcome to visitors; they are able to visualize better about how their own personal effects can blend with the colors. Imagine having a wall that's painted fire engine red or bedrooms that look more like an artist's mural because too many psychedelic colors are flooding the eye. Re-painting your house may become a must, but do it a few weeks before, that way the fumes don't linger.

The clutter, please - if you don't want your potential buyers to trip just as they're entering the house, eliminate unnecessary furniture and house accessories to allow for more breathing room. If visitors can't move about freely because there are obstructions along the way, chances are they're likely to go somewhere else.

Buyers will want to see the size of the closets, so eliminate the clutter. Leave the clothes and shoes

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neatly hung, but remove your grandmother's old sewing machine. Remember, closets that look like storage rooms are unattractive. Don't make your guests feel that there are real skeletons in the closet!

Be considerate - while dogs and other pets are adorable creatures, they have no place in an open house. One or two of your buyers might not be animal lovers or are allergic to animal hair. Some buyers also know of the damage and dirt these creatures leave on their tracks, so keep them out of the house (leave them with your mother-in-law if she agrees to baby sit them) until the open house is over.

Speaking of your mother-in-law who loves to cook exotic dishes that spew out strange smells, postpone the cooking until the prospective buyers have left. She'll need to be out of the house and so

do you. Leave your real estate agent to do what he does best. Potential buyers feel more comfortable when you are not there initially -- they are not ready to meet you yet!

And oh yes, how about some nice, delicate flowers that don't give off a strong smell? This simple gesture will do wonders to liven up your home. Choose different pastel colors to serve as a contrast to the neutral background.

Bob Lippy is a licensed broker associate with Remax Realtec in Palm Harbor, Florida. He has many years of experience in selling

Tampa Bay Florida Real Estate

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## **Open Houses – Is The Realtor Really Working For You?**

### **By Sintilia Miecevole**

As soon as their home is listed, most home sellers ask their realtor almost right away, "When are you going to hold an open house?" We need to know just how much credibility there really is in open houses for the home seller, so I hope you find the following information helpful.

Most open houses take place over the weekend when the general public is more able to preview homes. I have learned that about 95% of the people that come an open house either know a realtor or

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have one within their family they will use. That leaves 5% that are not working with a realtor. Of that 5%, out of curiosity, some are neighbors interested in the asking price so they can use it and other information for a comparison to their own home. The remaining small percentage end up driving by the area, notice the open house signs your agent strategically placed at each corner and walk into your house. These are strangers, possibly unqualified to purchase your house, and not only that, but your house may not be the right fit or style they are looking for anyway. Then there are those people just passing the time of day.

That being said, those that become disinterested in your house now become a prospective buyer of another house that your realtor would be happy to show them. So, now are you surprised that an open house usually benefits the realtor more than the home seller? I'm not saying an open house is necessarily useless. There have been lots of cases a home sells as a direct result of an open house. The percentage of homes sold as a direct result of open houses is minimal to say the least.

Your realtor's time is very expensive. You are paying your realtor a nice hourly wage via a commission to market and sell your home. Do you feel that nice hourly wage should be spent baking cookies and permeating the house for a possible buyer or spent wisely on mass marketing media, networking and other more effective marketing strategies? I'm sure you can answer that one.

I have to admit I would be very upset if there was an open house at my house and my realtor was discussing other houses for sale with other potential clients. After all, I pay that realtor a good commission to sell my house in a timely manner.

The thing to remember is to stay focused on the priorities of selling your home. What is required to sell your house? That's the real question because you must remember this is now no longer your "home." It is a house to be marketed, so put away all your family pictures and too personal things that will cloud the potential buyers eye to see their possessions in the house. Ask your realtor and then do it. If it means cleaning out the house or painting, do it. Do whatever it takes and your house will sell in a timely manner.

Sintilia Miecevole is the administrator of

<http://www.realtorv.com>

which has information and resources

including realtors, finding a realtor, real estate and more. Be sure to visit

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