

**50 Powerful Things
YOU Can Do
To Get Your House
Sold!**



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A FULL SERVICE MARKETING PLAN FOR SELLING YOUR HOME

Introduction:

Congratulations! You've made the monumental decision to sell your home. But How? Well, marketing your home to the widest possible audience is certainly critical. That's why Crawford Realty lists your property not only in MLS for agents to see, but in three for-sale-by-owner websites so that buyers NOT working with an agent can find you, too. But it's important to understand this: Agents will not sell your home, so don't expect them to. You are hiring an agent as an expert who can advise you on ALL the marketing techniques available, and to give you access to marketing vehicles like MLS that you can't otherwise use. So who is going to sell your home? YOU and YOUR HOME are! When timing and exposure come together for you, then you and your home MUST be ready to sell. You wouldn't take a used car in to trade it without cleaning it up would you? Certainly not if you wanted to get top dollar for it. So view your home selling process the same way. You don't sell a home the way you live in it...and it's not always easy to be ready at a moment's notice. But it will be well worth it to spend a little extra time, money and effort now to be prepared to sell and maximize the selling price you get while minimizing the time your home spends on the market. Crawford agents are residential real estate sales experts. We can advise you how to best market your home. The 50 ideas below are just some of the must-do's you'll need in order to be ready to WOW your eventual buyer. Get started today!

1. Ask a Mortgage Broker to design flyers with different payment amounts and options for your buyers. Put these flyers out with your own flyers on your marketing table and/or on the back of your flyer in your info tube.

If you elect to pay closing costs for the buyer, make a sign rider and put it on your yard sign. Also add the statement to your flyer.

***Side Note: Don't forget to get pre-qualified for your next mortgage

2. Call a qualified residential home inspector if you are questioning any of the following issues: polybutylene piping, LP siding, synthetic stucco or even hardcoat stucco. They can give you a letter of opinion for around \$150.00, which you can display on your marketing table.
3. Conduct your own pre-inspection checklist (see end of this article) and/or get your home fully inspected by a qualified residential home inspector. Make the repairs needed and then put the report on your marketing table.

4. Make a point of watching “Designed To Sell” and “Buy Me” on HGTV for great ideas on how to invest a little and sell your home for a lot more money as a result.
5. Call a professional decorator or, better yet, a certified staging professional, to have your home “staged.” Stagers use your own furniture and accessories to optimize the buyer’s emotions. Stagers charge about \$150 for an initial consultation, survey of your furniture and accessories, and making a plan with immediate action. They will also give you advice on repainting all dirty walls, baseboards and non-traditional colors in your home to the hottest neutral colors.
6. Create curb appeal with color. Use flowers, pots, and wrought iron planters that hang on your brick. Use flags, lanterns, decorative animals etc... to enhance the “Oh isn’t that cute” factor in your home. Paint your mailbox and edge the driveway and walks. Lay down some sod or sprinkle grass seed in bare areas so the lawn will look lush and green.

***Side Note: This is a testimonial from a recent client, Harold Colegrove, who hired a professional decorator to help him with his curb appeal and updating of his home. Harold’s neighborhood was made up of 1970’s homes. The homes were mainly lived in by long term residents but many of those residents had now rented their homes.

“I used the money that I saved on the listing side to hire a decorator and improve my curb appeal. It worked! I sold my house for the highest price in the neighborhood, had 3 offers in 8 days and closed in 30!”

7. Create emotion in your home by making your home clean and fresh. Smells are important, but don’t overdo. If you have pets, get an air purifier.
8. Clean your baseboards, windows (inside and out,) blinds, ceiling fan blades, mirrors and front door area. Use a Mr. Clean’ Magic sponge to clean painted walls. Clean glass shower enclosures and bathroom tile, caulking, etc. Re-caulk if you cannot bleach the stains or mildew out of the mortar.
9. Clean kitchen appliances (stove, oven, refrigerator, sinks, and dishwasher) thoroughly, inside and out, and keep them spotless while the home is for sale. Clean vent hoods and filters. Don’t cook fish or other unpleasant smelling foods such as cabbage inside during the listing period.

10. Clean out and organize pantry, counter drawers, cabinets and under-counter storage. Make them ½ full (like clothes closets) to give the appearance of more space.
11. Replace old doorknobs, air intake vents, switch plates, kitchen and bathroom faucets and old kitchen cabinet handles.
12. You already know real estate is “location, location, location.” But it’s also “exposure, exposure, exposure.” Hold your own Open Houses every day of the week when you’re there. Just put an Open House sign out and add your directional signs. Wal-Mart has balloons in a box that you can add to your signs. Keep an Open House log.
13. Offer an allowance for any worn carpet, or any flooring or painting that you don’t want to replace or redo by posting a sign in the home. Don’t state how much you are paying.
14. Offer 4% to a buyer’s agent. This should put you at the top of agents’ show lists when they pull up properties to show their clients. This will allow you to rule out agent apathy as a reason for why you’re not getting traffic.
15. Make a list of the ages of the kids in your neighborhood. Put on your marketing table.
16. Pull a report on your school system for your marketing table. You can find it at www.alsde.edu/html/home.asp.
17. Write a letter to the prospective buyer telling them about the neighborhood, neighborhood events and clubs, why you are moving and your feelings about your home. Put it on your marketing table.
18. Get a letter from the neighbors on both sides of you expressing their views of your neighborhood. Put it on your marketing table.
19. Draw a map to the nearest grocery store, schools and parks. Put it on your marketing table.
20. Put a 12-month breakdown of each of your utility bills and the names and numbers of the providers on your marketing table.
21. Make CDs with pictures of your home for your potential buyers. Put on your marketing table.

22. Consider offering a 1-year homeowner's warranty to your buyer. Cost is only \$409, and gives buyer assurance that repairs to home and appliances are paid for the entire first year after the sale.
23. Advertise your home on FREE For Sale By Owner websites.
24. You may want to add yourself to the Do Not Call List to avoid a ton of agent calls trying to list your home.
25. Advertise your home on ebay.com.
26. Advertise your home in local, neighborhood papers.
27. Have good pictures made of your home. Crawford Realty of Alabama can take the pictures for you for only \$50.00 at the time the listing is written. If you have a digital camera, you can take 25-30 shots of the interiors and exterior and e-mail them to Crawford Realty and we will upload them onto the MLS and other websites free of charge.
28. ***Side Note: We have found that the method of evaluating traffic in a home has changed. Most buyers use the Internet to view interior and exterior photos before they decide what they would like to see in person. Good photos are a MUST!
29. Offer your home as Lease Purchase, which we can add to your listing. We recommend that you require 5% down which is non-refundable if the buyer does not purchase. Lease Purchases tend to bring the seller not only a high price, but also a good cash flow for the 6 months to 1 year that the home is leased.
30. Consider an auction on your home. Visit online auction services, which specialize in home auctions or buy the book, How to Sell Your Home in 5 Days. It is sold on Amazon.com.
31. Have your home professionally appraised and advertise appropriately. In other words, if your home is listed for \$5,000 below appraisal, you can advertise this. Of course, if your home does not appraise for a high price, simply don't advertise the appraisal.
32. If you have outside accent lighting, make sure that you put it on every night. If you have a formal living room where you keep your drapes open at night, put on the lights and leave on until you go to bed. Many buyers drive through neighborhoods at night.

33. Add small lamps to your kitchen and bathrooms.
34. Make your closet ½ full and neat. You may have to get a storage unit.
35. Seal your garage floor, or paint it with epoxy paint.
36. Add fresh flowers to the inside of your home.
37. Leave refreshments for your buyers.
38. Ask buyers to take off their shoes upon entering the house. Post a sign in the entryway. It presents the idea that you are a pristine housekeeper.
39. Don't have big dogs in the house and don't leave items around that make people think that big dogs are in the house.
40. Change litter boxes everyday. Some people mistake the litter box smell for animal urine on the carpet.
41. Take smelly shoes out of closets. Put air fresheners in each closet.
42. Remove some family pictures, but keep in mind that most people want to believe that you are very happy in your home. The feel of a home is just as important as the appearance of the home.
43. Keep your flyers stocked and give buyers an easy way to reach you. Cell phone number, work number and home number.
44. De-clutter! You may have to get a storage unit. It will be worth the hassle. Read survey below.
45. Do not smoke in the house! And, if you smoke outside, remove the ashtray.
46. If you really want opinions on your home, consider what some other clients do. Get a nanny cam to capture their impressions.
47. Add note cards to the areas where you have upgrades that might be overlooked.
48. Consider using one of the attorneys in the Crawford Realty Vendors Network as your closing attorney. They can get a power of attorney for one of you so that you can close at a convenient time for your buyer. Then, one of you will be able to be home with the movers.

49. Set up any dining areas with place setting as if you are having a party at your home that night.

Set up any basement area tables with games.

Set up screen porches and deck tables with party decorations including place settings. Use paper lanterns.

50. Check the **Crawford Realty of Alabama Inc. Vendor Network** for the names of individuals and companies who can help you get your home ready to sell as quickly and as inexpensively as possible.

***Side Note: Pristine homes, which are homes that shine with pride, usually sell quicker and for 2 to 3% higher than other homes. It is very difficult to find pristine homes. Most homes are dirty.

WHILE IT'S A TOUGH DECISION TO SPEND MONEY ON A HOME THAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO LEAVE, REALIZE THAT A COUPLE OF THOUSAND SPENT IN SPIFFING UP AND DOING MINOR REPAIRS NOW CAN GET YOUR HOME SOLD QUICKER AND FOR MORE MONEY THAN DOING NOTHING. KEEP YOUR HOME READY TO SHOW WHILE IT'S LISTED: REMEMBER THAT YOU DON'T SELL A HOME THE WAY YOU LIVE IN IT. A LITTLE SACRIFICE IN LIFESTYLE NOW WILL GET YOU THE RETURN YOU WANT WHEN YOU SELL!

PRE-INSPECTION CHECKLIST

(Many of these things can be done at little or no cost to you, and doing them will make your home more attractive to buyers. Doing them beforehand will expedite your sales contract and minimize work that the buyer's inspector might discover and request repairs on.)

- Remove grade or mulch from contact with siding, at least 6"+ clearance.
- Clean out dirty gutters or debris from roof. Make sure gutters are secured to house.
- Consider having blackish mildew stains bleached off of your roof shingles.
- Pressure wash any greenish mold off of stucco or siding and pressure wash wood patios or decks and then apply waterproof sealer.
- Divert all water away from the house, i.e.: downspouts, sump pumps, condensation drains, etc. Grade should slope away from structure. Clean out basement entry drains.
- Trim trees, roots and bushes back from the foundation, roof, siding and chimney.
- Paint all weathered exterior wood & caulk around the trim, chimney, windows, doors.
- Seal asphalt in driveways, if cracked.
- Verify fireplace has chimney cap and is properly sealed.
- Clean or replace HVAC filters. Clean dirty air returns and plenum.
- Test all smoke detectors to ensure they are in safe working condition.
- Update attic ventilation if none is present.
- Have the chimney, fireplace or wood stove cleaned, and provide buyer with a cleaning record.
- Seal masonry walls in the basement.
- Don't do quick cheap repairs. You will raise questions from the buyer and inspector.
- Ensure that all doors and windows are in proper operating condition, including repairing or replacing any cracked windowpanes or foggy glass in double-pane windows.
- Ensure that all plumbing fixtures are in proper working condition. Check for and fix any leaks. Re-caulk around fixtures if necessary.
- Test every electrical outlet in the house to be sure that all work.
- Install GFI receptacles near all water sources and test all existing GFI receptacles.
- Check sump pump for proper operation.
- Replace any burned out light bulbs.
- Remove rotting wood and/or firewood, at least 12" clearance from contact with house.

- Get a termite letter. Have the house treated to eliminate spiders, roaches, vermin, etc.
- Ensure that proper grading is followed under deck, and that under-deck area is debris-free.
- Check all appliances, i.e.; hot water heater, to ensure in good working order.
- Check that all exterior wall penetrations are sealed and air-and moisture-proof.
- Check to ensure that the crawl space is dry and install a proper vapor barrier if necessary.
- Check that bath vents and fans are properly vented and in working condition.
- Remove paints, solvents, gas and similar materials from crawl space, basement, attic, porch, etc.
- If windows are at or below grade, install window wells and covers.
- Have clear access to attic, crawl space, heating system, garage and other areas that will need to be inspected.
- Make sure all fences are in good repair.
- Make sure garage doors and openers are in good working condition.
- If house is vacant, make sure that all utilities are turned on.

We recently took a survey from buyer's agents on several topics. Here are their responses.

Why did your last client choose the home they bought?

Big, fenced yard; personality of the home; not much yard work; front porch wrapped around the house; located near interstate; neighborhood appeal; layout; decorating choice of colors and flooring; location; layout of home; size of lot and location in subdivision; open floor plan; kitchen; backed up golf course; location to work; floor plan and upgrades from builder; level backyard with privacy

What were the biggest turnoffs when you went to homes?

Clutter; pet smells; loose pets; wallpaper; neighborhood; didn't want to have to do a ton of work to the house; a dark home; dated homes; ugly exterior; colors of paint too strong; home in bad repair; country colors and too much wallpaper; the house seemed too dark; small outdated kitchens; outside maintenance to be done; cheap kitchen; floor plan too choppy; sloped backyards; cheap colors and wallpaper

How long did you work with your clients?

3 weekends; 2 weekends; 1 weekend; 2 months; 1 month; 2 months; 6 months; 2 months; 3 months; 1 month; 2 months; 6 weeks; 2 months; 2 weeks; 1 month; 4 weeks;

Did you or your client know the comps for the neighborhood before you went to it with your client?

Yes, I pulled comps prior to looking; Yes, I pulled comps; Yes, we both did; No; No; No; Yes; Not Always; Vaguely; No; No; No; No; No;

Does the effort put forth from a client to have all the lights on make a difference?

Yes; Yes; Absolutely; Yes, mainly in areas that get or are dark like the basement, garage, room with no windows; Yes; Yes, it psychologically affects buyers in a positive way, and makes the seller more involved in the process; Yes, especially if older home or heavily wooded; Yes, lighting is very important

Does music make a difference? If yes, what kind?

Soft, light, jazz music; Yes, soft elevator music or Jazz Flavors; Yes, very low classical or classical guitar, non-controversial; Yes, soft classical music – not too

loud; generally no; Sometimes, it depends on the house and the area; No; Yes, sets the mood

Do your clients make comments about the yards?

Mainly about size, but they do notice if the yard needs a lot of work; Yes; Yes, especially if it is really great or really bad; Yes, often size, look of plantings, amount of work it will or won't take to maintain; Yes, is it kept up, do these sellers really care about the house; Yes, especially those with large dogs or children who have trashed the yard; Yes, but usually if unusually good or bad; Yes, a pristine yard makes a huge difference

Do your clients make comments about a dirty home?

Yes, they leave more quickly; Yes! Yes! Yes, many people have a hard time "seeing what the house is" if it is dirty; Yes, some will make allowances for children; Oh yeah; Yes, turn off; A dirty home would make me wonder or assume that there must be other things relating to the home that don't get taken care of;

Do your clients make comments about a cluttered home?

Yes; Yes; It takes away from the appeal of the home; Definitely – dirt and clutter are the two biggest turnoffs; Yes, it can be overwhelming; Yes, they can mask stained carpeting and detract from a client's ability to mentally visualize their furnishings in it; Yes, they want to leave without seeing the home's bones; Yes;

If your client is not interested in the house, how long do you stay?

Just a few minutes; 1 to 2 minutes; If the homeowners are not there we leave immediately, otherwise as soon as graceful; 1 to 2 minutes; Generally 5 minutes or less, sometimes we don't even go in, even if they have seen the pictures; 1 minute; Less than a minute; Not long;

If your clients are interested in the house, how long do you stay?

30 minutes; Sometimes up to 30 minutes; 30 to 45 minutes; Sometimes as much as an hour; 15 to 20 minutes; As long as necessary; As long as 1 ½ hours, but usually 30 minutes; 15 to 30 minutes;

What do you think makes a house sell?

Clean, clutter free appearance; Price, shows and smells; Whatever makes the buyer fall in love with it, but generally location, condition and price; It is the right house for that client; Neutral colors, clean, neat, organized with attention to detail; Great yard, clean and crisp interior, good decorating and updating; Price, location, upkeep, neighborhood and how much work is going to have to be done to make it the perfect house; If it is homey looking and comfortable then you don't want to leave;

What percentage of your clients searches the internet for a home?

90; 100; 100; 85-95; 100; 100; 100; Most

Do any of your clients make comments about why they overlooked a home on the internet? If so, why?

No, because I explain how the MLS works compared to Realtor.com; I had one because she thought the house looked plain, I had shown it to another client and knew it was perfect for them, I asked her to look at the interior pictures and she loved it; No pictures or not enough pictures or not enough info about the house; The pictures made the room look small and unappealing, etc... They weren't sure about the area; Yes no pictures; No pictures or bad pictures are a turnoff;

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