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Selling Your House This Summer? Get Your Ducks in a Row With This Checklist

“In the summertime, when the weather is high, you can stretch right up and touch the sky.” (Mungo Jerry)

Summer’s here with its blue skies, happy holidaymakers from around the country and the world, and, as always, an upsurge in demand for houses. If you’re going to capitalise on this seasonal upswing, start planning your sales strategy now with our simple, practical Seller’s Checklist below.

Follow these 10 steps for a successful sale:

1. Ask yourself “What’s my goal and how will I get there?”

The first step is to outline your strategy, starting with your end goal. Of course, all sellers want to get the best price and to get paid out as quickly as possible, but brainstorm the specifics. What price do you actually want to achieve? Define your perfect buyers (a critical and much-overlooked step) and think about how you’ll find them. Which estate agent should you employ? And so on...

It pays to bring us in from the start. Not only can we help you find the right agent for the job, but we’ll also tell you what prices are being achieved in your area and share our thoughts on how to avoid the over-pricing trap – a common mistake which can taint a property for months, or even years.

We’ll also outline the whole sales and transfer process for you from a legal perspective, highlighting both the potential pitfalls to watch out for, and the many ways in which you can help make the whole process as smooth, quick and hassle-free as possible.

2. Give notice to your bondholder

If you have a home loan, remember that some banks will charge an early settlement penalty unless you give them 90 days’ written notice.

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3. Prepare a cashflow projection

Get your finances ready to cover all your selling costs, including:

- Compliance certificates and any repair work needed to get them issued.
- Bond cancellation fees (if you have a home loan).
- Final municipal accounts (rates, refuse, sewerage, and water) and, if your property is in a sectional title scheme or Homeowners Association complex, outstanding levies.
- CGT: Plan for possible Capital Gains Tax on your profit (subject of course to exemption thresholds).
- Estate agent's commission is normally paid out by the conveyancer on transfer – but don't lose sight of it when you're dreaming about how to spend the proceeds!

4. Spruce up your property

Pretend you're a house hunter seeing your property for the first time:

- What's its "kerb appeal"? How about its "front door appeal"? First impressions can make or break a sale, so ask yourself "what will potential buyers see when they first drive up to my property, park, and walk through the garden into my house?" Imagine being greeted by a neat, tidy, colourful garden with a sparkling pool, bright and airy rooms with homely wafts of fresh air and brewing coffee – get this bit right and you could seal the deal in the first few minutes of a viewing.
- Declutter and tidy up, both inside and out, particularly on viewing and show days – the hassle is well worth it.
- To give your property that all-important feeling of being well maintained, find and fix small issues like leaky taps, peeling paint, dark musty corners, scruffy gardens, murky swimming pools and the like. Deep clean if there's any risk of doggy smells or stained carpeting spoiling that positive first impression.
- And last but not least, we come to a deal breaker of note. Many a sale has been lost purely because of old, unwelcoming bathrooms or kitchens. Spruce them up now: repaint, retile or renovate completely, if necessary.

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5. Start getting your paperwork together

To speed up the transfer process when you do sell, and in case potential buyers ask to see them before offering, make a start now on putting these basics together:

- Your original title deed (or a copy from your bank if the original is held as security for a bond). If the original has been lost, we'll be able to get an early start on obtaining a replacement for you.
- Your ID (and your spouse's, if you own the property jointly or are married in community of property).
- Approved building plans and any compliance certificates you already have.
- A recent municipal rates account showing you're up to date.

6. Make sure your property is compliant

Find out what compliance certificates you will need early so you have time to fix any issues:

- Electrical compliance certificate.
- Plumbing/water installation compliance certificate (required in Cape Town – check whether your local authority has any similar provision).
- Gas compliance certificate if you have a gas installation.
- Electric fence certificate (if applicable).
- Beetle clearance certificate where needed.

7. Complete the disclosure form

You'll need to sign a mandatory disclosure form in which you must list all defects or issues you know about, such as damp, leaks, structural issues, boundary disputes, unapproved alterations and the like.

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8. Don't sign blind

Most importantly, when you do get an acceptable offer, don't sign anything until we've checked it all out for you. The terms and conditions in the sale agreement (often titled "offer to purchase") become binding as soon as you sign. There's no going back and many a seller has regretted "signing blind". Even "standard" clauses may come back to bite you because every sale's different, and every seller has their own areas of risk.

9. Nominate the conveyancer

It's your right as seller to choose the conveyancer, so don't let anyone convince you otherwise.

10. Communication is key!

Remain in constant touch with your agent, with us, and with the buyer. Quick responses to requests for documents or signatures can save days or even weeks in the transfer timeline.

In closing...

Selling a property doesn't have to be stressful. Work through this checklist step by step and keep us constantly in the loop to avoid delays, disputes and unwelcome surprises.