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Real Estate

Showing and Selling a Condo

Owners and Directors Working Together



Whether it is downsizing, upsizing, transferring to another city for work, etc., a seller's main goal when putting their property on the market is to achieve the best possible price in the shortest amount of time.

The typical home selling process includes choosing a professional real estate agent who will work to get your property sold by helping to get the property market-ready, determine its optimal pricing strategy, maximize exposure with a comprehensive marketing plan, negotiate offers, and manage the entire selling process through to closing and beyond.

When selling a freehold property, the seller has free reign and full control of the property from top to bottom, inside and out. In the wonderful world of condos, a seller can only work to get their own unit market-ready, and not the building as a whole. They rely on the board of directors and management team to ensure the building is always putting its best foot forward. As such, I encourage you to think about how you as a board member can create a better experience for sellers and potential buyers alike. How do your day-to-day decisions in managing your property affect the process of showing and selling homes? How do these decisions affect perceived property value?

Given the current pandemic, many steps of a real estate transaction are being completed virtually (e-signature of documents, use of virtual tours, videos, no open houses, etc.), but I've yet to come across a situation with a client or a colleague where the process

was absolutely 100% virtual. While Open Houses are currently banned across the province, limited showings are still happening. When someone is making one of the largest purchases of their life, they are going to want to see the property, or at least have their agent see the property, in person. Virtual tours help buyers preview the property, and only when it's a contender, will an in-person showing occur. This helps limit the traffic in and out of properties (and when these showings occur, agents and clients have PPE & hand sanitizer). Sellers can also do their part by leaving the lights on in the unit and leaving all interior doors open to limit the number of surfaces one has to touch while on a showing, along with not being in the property during the showing.

Even with this new way of working, and limited showings, when buying and selling condos pre-, mid-, and post-COVID 19, here are a few areas to consider.

Maximizing 'Street to Suite' Appeal

Curb appeal forms a buyer's first impression and today's buyers are very discriminating. From the moment they pull up to the property, they are already forming an opinion.

I like to call curb appeal of a condo the 'Street to Suite' experience. This includes all areas that you would encounter when touring a property starting from the exterior landscaping, exterior paint/brick, balconies, doors, parking lot/garage, common areas, building amenities, etc. all the way up to the front door of the unit that is for sale.

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The nicer the curb appeal, the more optimistic the buyer will be once they've entered the unit, and the higher the perceived value will be. Also, the greater the appeal, the larger the pool of potential buyers inclined to purchase may be. Here's the truth; You can spend thousands of dollars on fancy in-suite renovations, but if potential buyers aren't impressed with what they see on the outside or on their way to the suite, they will be less likely to check out or favour the unit. You cannot neglect the importance of your property's curb appeal.

Any sign of worn carpets, chipped paint, peeling wallpaper, tattered furniture or broken amenity equipment is a red flag to a prospective buyer. They want bragging rights and want to showcase one of their biggest investments of their lives to their family and friends. They want everyone to be 'wowed' at first glance and have pride in their home rather than being embarrassed to host guests.

Unfortunately, a seemingly neglected and poorly maintained property also raises questions about how well the rest of the structure has been maintained, along with what kind of financial position a property is in. People tend to remember the negative things about a property – the goal is to reduce the number of distractions so that people can focus on the great features it has to offer.

Regardless of the age of a property, it's important to work with your management team to keep it looking good, smelling good, and feeling good to build confidence in a buyer's decision to call it their new home.

A Welcoming Atmosphere

Your concierge and security staff are usually the first point of contact we have at showings when we sign in. This is usually a quick interaction, but don't underestimate the power of those 30 seconds spent dealing with the person behind the desk. Is that individual friendly and helpful, are they curt and rude, aloof or disengaged? It's this first impression that will remain in the buyer's mind.

Buyers, like most people, would rather deal with pleasant and helpful staff. The last thing they want to come home to after a hard day's work is an unfriendly face greeting them at the door or greeting their guests that way. Also, if they are watching their smartphone rather than keeping an eye on visitors, security cameras and safety patrol, a buyer may second guess wanting to purchase in that building as overall safety and security come into question.

The Power of Words

Be mindful that you can say the same thing in many ways. While the overall information is the same, the feeling and sentiment communicated through tone and word choice can change vastly. Consider this scenario: while in the elevator, a buyer reads a notice in all caps that states: 'NO SMOKING DRUGS IN STAIRWAYS.'

Let's try that again with a different spin, shall we? What if the notice said: 'Dear Residents. This is a Smoke-Free building. Smoking, of any kind, is prohibited anywhere on the property, including in your unit, on balconies or in any common areas. Thank you for not smoking. Have a wonderful day.'

How does the first version compare to the second? I think you would agree that the second version conveys the same message of no smoking, but in a much less abrupt and pleasant way, and removes the question of safety and security. The first version comes across as extremely rude and direct, not to mention makes the property look like there is significant illegal activity and not a safe place to live, even if that's not the case.

It's important to remember that all residents should be treated with respect and not just residents who will see these notices. Do your best to ensure that all notices and communication that goes out sends the right message in the right way.

Be A Show-Off!

Have you worked hard to build a stellar sense of community? Have you recently completed upgrades to the building? Are there activities, groups, and a general vibe and culture of the building that you've developed and are proud of? While real estate feature sheets and websites do a good job providing general information, you live and breath the culture every day. Toot your own horn by providing take-aways on all the great benefits your property has to offer. These can include providing a copy of the monthly newsletter, activity calendar, and information sheet on recent projects and any other information about the building that helps differentiate it from others. These can be left at the concierge desk and have them handed out to the prospective buyer when they sign in.

This works particularly well when a buyer has some trepidation over the monthly maintenance fee cost – they tend to be more accepting of a higher maintenance fee when they can see all the tangible and intangible benefits a property has to offer. Sell that lifestyle and show 'em what you got! Also, once they do become a resident, perhaps the financial review at the next AGMs would run smoother as they know all the great things your board has accomplished and continues to work on.

A Seamless Tour

A common occurrence on showings is getting lost or turned around in properties due to a lack of wayfinding signage. When there is no directional signage outlining which units are on which side of the hall, I often crack the joke to my clients that we have a 50/50 chance of going the right way when getting off an elevator and that I would never survive on the TV game show, The Amazing Race.


In a condo, particularly in a larger complex that has a variety of amenities located in different parts of the property, wayfinding signage is extremely important as when used effectively, can decrease frustration, stress and anxiety about being able to find your way around. Consider buyers who have lived in a small home their whole lives and are now moving into a condo. Or the guest who comes over to visit and ends up lost in the underground, can't find their car, and has no cell service. How long before they start to panic?

Wayfinding signage guides people through parking garages, interior signage helps with navigating throughout the building,

and adding directional signage to each floor is integral to helping ensure all visitors, whether they be guests of a resident, or an agent showing a unit, find their way around with ease.

Looking Through a Different Lens

When providing a seller with a consultation on getting a property market-ready, there's always something I point out that the seller has never noticed. It can be something as simple as an outlet cover that was somewhat painted over, or something more significant like a water mark in the ceiling from an old leak that has since been fixed. I don't think that it's a case of not noticing it, but more of it becoming a part of the backdrop without them realizing. I find that it's always harder to notice things in your own property as you're immersed in it and see it day in and day out. Once a property is completely market ready; the thing I most frequent hear from a seller is 'Why did I wait until putting it up on the market to tackle all the little projects I was always meaning to get to?'

I encourage and challenge you to take a 'Street to Suite' tour, using the eyes of a buyer to see what small details have become part of your daily backdrop. I would also suggest that you invite an outsider's perspective – someone who has never been to the property to help you in your assessment. You may find tremendous opportunities to make the showing and selling process easier, which will in turn increase your property's marketability. This will achieve your goal of obtaining the best possible price in the shortest amount of time. Good luck! 



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