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Five Ways to Wow Buyers

by Phoebe Chongchua

These days, tax credits and high housing inventory make it a buyers' market. If you're a seller, don't despair. There are a variety of renovations that can help make your home stand out. Many buyers look at numerous homes when shopping for a house; so enhancing your home to make it more memorable is vital and increases the chances of a successful sale.

Clearing clutter, taking down personal photos, applying a fresh coat of paint, making minor repairs, and keeping a pleasant aroma are all basic techniques to make your home more appealing. But there are a few other creative enhancements that you can do to wow buyers without emptying your wallet. The results not only attract more attention, but also paint a picture of a well-cared-for home.

While not everyone has the same taste in housing, typically buyers are attracted to larger kitchens, extra storage space, light and bright rooms, and open floor plans. Special finishing touches on a home can be the needed incentive to generate an offer.

Kathy Gerstenberg has owned her home for nearly 20 years. Over the decades she's made many improvements but now she's considering selling and wants to make sure she gets top dollar in a down market. So, she's examining her home the way a buyer would.

"We live in a tract home and I know there are many homes for sale; we don't want ours to be seen as the same 'cookie-cutter' model as the others," says Gerstenberg.

With that in mind, Gerstenberg has carefully made enhancements that make her home more comfortable and aesthetically pleasing. "I wanted to do improvements that would catch a buyer's eye and also make it enjoyable for our family," says Gerstenberg.

As she scouts the market for her next home there are various aspects of a potential home that she notices right away. "I love crown molding and finished doors and windows," says Gerstenberg. She adds, "So many times builders just don't complete the look of a home but when you frame a door or window and add some crown molding to a room it gives it a finished look."

Industry experts agree; Americans are expected to spend \$217 billion on remodeling in 2009. Here are five areas where homeowners may spend some of their remodeling money to add the "wow" factor to your home.

1. Go green. Energy efficient products and household goods are attractive to buyers. Renovations or replacements that help make the house more energy efficient are popular. Things such as better insulation, replacing old windows, caulking, and adding skylights can increase value.
2. Crown molding and wider baseboards. Some homeowners are shy to experiment with this, especially if they live in a small home, but it can be very attractive in any size home. Wider baseboard. The

measly baseboard that builders often use in tract homes doesn't draw attention. Adding a wider baseboard and a fresh coat of paint makes the room come to life. Also, framing windows and doors helps complete the look of a room.

3. Textured paint. Faux finishes, accented walls, or even just a little fresh paint on them makes a lasting impression. Choose colors and textures wisely. Don't get carried away with a color you love (e.g. purple walls—I've seen it in a home for sale). Remember, that you want your home to appeal to the masses. You can always paint your new home purple—and then change it when it comes time to sell it!

4. Improved flooring. Wood, tile, and new carpet can be a showstopper. But if the flooring is chipped, torn, or dirty, you'll get the opposite reaction from buyers. They'll think your home hasn't been cared for properly which could result in a lower offer -- or no sale at all.

5. Add a deck. Adding a deck can add value to your home. It's a nice feature in a yard and many buyers are happy to purchase a home that already has a deck so that they don't have to take on that home improvement project.

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