

Open house or not?

A couple of years ago, I had clients who were moving out of state. I had just listed their house in Knoxville and asked them when they wanted to have an open house. You see, I like to hold my listings open early in the listing period to give the house as much exposure to potential buyers as possible.

My sellers were surprised, however, that I would even suggest an open house right off the bat. Why? Because where they are from, open houses are reserved for those homes that have been on the market a while and need a marketing boost, or for homes that don't seem to get many private showings. In other words, the phrase "open house," was reserved for troublesome sales.

They agreed to let me hold their home open the very next Sunday. By that evening, I was negotiating an offer made by buyers who had attended the open house that day. I wasn't surprised, but the sellers were.



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Homework

This same scenario has played out multiple times over the last few years for me, so I love open houses and look forward to showing off my sellers' homes every Sunday. As an added bonus for me personally, it is two hours of my week when I get to be in a perfectly clean home that I didn't have to put in order myself. Ahhh...

Imagine my surprise when another seller of mine said that when they sold their home in another state several years before, their agent at the time told them open houses didn't work so she wasn't going to have one. So they didn't have open houses. I call that a "closed house," because someone who may be hesitant to call a real estate agent directly or who may be just casually looking might be the very buyer the

seller hopes to attract. It also gives buyers the chance to look at a house without too much sales pressure.

No, I have not always had success at open houses. I have held both expensive and inexpensive homes open and struck out completely, with no one in attendance except the neighbors. I have held homes open in the pouring rain to record attendance. I've also held homes open on beautiful days and left without a single signature on the sign-in book. You never know, but I think it's worth a try.

Some sellers insist on open houses, and they should if their home is in condition to be shown. If the listing agent isn't available to hold the sellers' house open on a particular day, the seller should ask if another agent from the company is available. Many agents are willing to host open houses for other agents.

What about those properties for sale that are not in the best showing condition or that may be fairly far off the beaten path? Admittedly, some homes are not conducive to

being held open, and that's coming from an open-house fan. If the home is in an area where you can't expect a lot of people to pass the open-house sign and decide to drop in, if the home is in need of repairs or cleaning, or if it is a hardship for the owners to leave for a couple of hours during the open-house time, then it can be marketed in other ways, including the Internet, newspapers, magazines and through the Multiple Listing Service.

So talk to your agent about whether or not an open house is in the marketing plan. If you feel your house would make a good open house, ask your agent to give it a shot. Your buyer may be out there just waiting to find an open-house sign in your yard.

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