

Help: My House isn't Selling!

"It's usually one of three problems, "Price, promotion or presentation."

1. Price: Price too High

Houses priced too high are not going to sell in any market. "People get caught up in the frenzy of the marketplace thinking that if everything else selling for a million dollars, there's should sell at a million too," said Heidi Cole "It's easy to overestimate what your house is worth in these hotter markets."

A good real estate agent can give you a realistic range for what you can expect. But, that does you no good if you insist on going higher. Before you set your heart on a price, take a look at where similar houses have actually been selling (not just what sellers are asking)

2. Promotion: You think the house will sell itself

In this market, you reason, selling your house should be as easy as posting a 'For Sale' sign and waiting for the phone to ring. You

could be waiting a long time. Even in the best markets, you need to make sure your house gets exposed to the right buyers. In some markets more than half of all buyers are coming from out of state. These days, the online listing is as important as the sign. "Years ago people would show up you get in the car and start driving around," said Beutler, "Now they start their search looking at properties on the Web."

The more pictures you have of your house, the better.

3. Presentation: Staging

Buyers might be rational about price, location and layout, but the decision to make an offer or keep looking is often emotional.

"People want a house to feel like a haven," said Fazzini, who "stages" houses. Doing so, she said, can fetch an extra \$15,000 to \$20,000 on a \$300,000 to \$400,000 house. Landscape the yard, clean the windows, touch up paint and take care of anything that buyers might add to their "to

do" list. Then put away hoses, cleaning products and items that remind buyers that houses require maintenance. Close your eyes, walk in your front door and think about how your house smells. Unpleasant smells make a lasting impression on buyers, say agents. Deal with the source of the stink, don't cover it up with overpowering candles or air fresheners.

Clutter is a problem buyers have trouble looking past. Remove excess furniture, pack up knickknacks, clear off kitchen and bathroom counters, and putting away family pictures. "Walk through a model home and use that as your model."

Fresh paint – in warm earth tones rather than stark white – new linens on the beds and in the bathrooms make the difference between a house that sits and a house that sells -- "There have been times when staging has backfired," said Fazzini. "People like it so much they don't want to move."

By Sarah Max, CNN/Money