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 Richard Armstrong  
 The Makeover Group

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To maximise your return when selling your home, it is important to know what to do your house, how much to spend and what does make the difference to buyers.



Property presentation (presenting a property for sale) is a relatively new phenomenon in Australia, meaning some vendors can find it to be a hit-and-miss exercise.

Cleaning, tidying and de-cluttering are all common sense, but there are often more profitable decisions to be made about landscaping, painting, repairs and hiring furniture that can be daunting without the right information and advice.

Because of this lack of information, vendors often feel safer choosing the option with the least risk, following real estate myths that well-intentioned people offer about property presentation.

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**Myth 1: Just do the barest minimum to get your property ready for sale**

I appreciate that many vendors want to minimise the cost of readying their property for sale, but I'd argue a smarter strategy is to focus on items that will give the best return.

To illustrate, imagine a tired rental property that's in need of some TLC – overgrown front garden, mildly damaged walls and stained carpets.

If the vendor were to spend \$400 tidying the garden and giving the house a good clean it might add \$5000 (yes, it really does make that much difference) meaning they'd make a profit of \$4500 (\$5000 minus \$500) on their efforts.

However, if that same vendor were to spend \$9000 on painting, carpeting, cleaning and furniture hire in all the right colours and styles they could easily add \$30,000. That is a profit of \$21,000 (\$30,000 minus \$9000).

Comparing a return of \$4500 with \$21,000 might seem far-fetched but I see it happen week after week. As long as you make the right enhancements, you can add to your sale price significantly.

**Myth 2: Don't bother putting too much effort into getting your property ready for sale, people will change it once they buy it anyway**

If you do your homework you can give the buyers almost exactly what they want. That is, the way you present your property should be based on what people from specific buyer groups want.

First home buyers, families, empty nesters and single adults all have identifiable property needs. If you make sure your property satisfies the needs of at least one of these groups you are tailoring your 'product' to suit the market. That means buyers will have to do very little when they first move in – something worth several extra bids at auction.

**Property presentation – it's all in the detail**

After living in your home for many years, you may have gotten used to that cracked window, or the wonky floorboard that squeaks near the front door. When it comes to opening your house for an inspection, however, the little things will be noticed by potential buyers, and they will likely reduce their offering price accordingly.

Invite your agent or a good friend around to cast a critical eye over your home. Follow this list and your home will be ready to pass muster.

**Cleanliness is king**

Making your home presentable for sale is more than just decluttering the living areas and giving the benches a good wipe-down. A proper spring clean is required to attract buyers – after all, they want to picture themselves living in the house, and who wants to live in a dirty home?

Crumbs in the cutlery drawer, water stains in the cupboard under the sink and gunk down the side of the fridge are often overlooked in the kitchen. Make sure you remember to get the cobwebs in the cornices and the dead flies on the windowsills throughout the house. Take a good scrubbing brush and either a chemical spray or some vinegar and bicarb soda to the grout in your bathroom tiles.

All surfaces should be sparkling, but remember to clean far enough in advance that your potential buyers don't walk into an overpowering smell of chlorine bleach on inspection day.

**Depersonalise your space**

While your range of funny fridge magnets, and pin board for school reports and gym timetables might be essential to your daily life, they prevent buyers from visualising themselves living in your house. Depersonalising and neutralising the space is an important factor in getting buyers to fall in love with the house, see themselves living there, and bidding accordingly.

Rooms should have only one or two pieces of inoffensive art. Canvas prints from nature are good, life-size pregnant nudes are not. Clutter on benches and in bookshelves needs to go, but don't just toss it in a cupboard. An open for inspection implies that your whole house is up for review, and a cupboard full of junk makes it appear as though there's a shortage of organised storage space.

**Get your green thumb into gear**

Many parts of Australia may be subject to water restrictions, but that's no excuse for dying plants, bare patches on the lawn, and dusty doormats. If you cannot use the garden hose, then make sure everything gets thoroughly swept – including outside window frames, the top of the barbecue and the letterbox. Mow, edge and rake lawns to create a

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including outside window frames, the top of the barbecue and the letterbox. Mow, edge and rake lawns to create a polished finish, prune trees and shrubs, and look at replacing plants that are lacklustre. A little bit of hard work will see your home sparkle, and be more attractive to potential buyers.

Richard Armstrong is a director of [The Makeover Group](#) and author of [Sell your home for more – an expert's guide to property presentation](#).

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