



**JUST AFTER “LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION” is
“PRESENTATION, PRESENTATION, PRESENTATION” By M. Anthony Carr**

I went out with some friends this week to look at some houses. They're moving up from a condo to a single-family home and they're very excited. As we caravanned from home to home, it was obviously clear that some owners in this market sincerely believe they can offer up a can of worms as caviar. During a real estate course I took years ago, the trainer used a fantastic example of how human nature dictates the selection process. She produced two \$1 bills. One was fresh from the bank. You almost had to check to make sure you didn't have a second one pasted to the back it was so new. The second bill looked as if it had been gone through Desert Storm, been laundered several times and was nearly disintegrated.

She went to someone in the front row and asked, “Which one do you want?” The obvious answer was the clean, crisp, freshly printed bill. Why? The value of both was the same. They both are legal tender in any American retail outlet around the country and several countries around the world. But -- the clean one always got selected. Thus, when we walked into a \$370,000 single-family home and found mounds of clothing in the living room, left over dishes on the table along with opened cans of soup and pots with soup in them on the stove -- the luster of the home on the market dulled quickly. Interestingly, this was not an anomaly in the marketplace. Another home priced at \$449,000 was in about the same condition. The REALTOR® had not called the homeowners to let them know my friends were coming by; the For Sale sign had dropped into the grass; there was no flier about the property inside the house; the bathrooms were scum covered; no staging of the home had been carried out whatsoever. There was even a bottle of beer strategically placed on the floor, next to the closet in the master bedroom. We were amazed. The lots were a quarter acre or less on both homes. How could they demand the money they were asking and not prepare the home for sale?

Then there were the properties my friends put on their A list -- clean and newer looking inside; new or near new appliances; cleaned by either a very astute owner or a cleaning company; pre-listing inspection; plenty of bonus add-ons, such as bonus room, media room, large lot (half acre). All in the same price as the above two properties.

The requirements to get top dollar have and always will be the same:

- 1. Clean the house. Thoroughly -- before you put it on the market. If it's not clean, don't even consider putting it on the market. You will lose a contract just because of dust and scum. If you don't like to clean there are house keeping companies that clean houses.*
- 2. Paint the interior. Paint is cheap, but cleans up any dwelling place.*
- 3. De-clutter. Get rid of everything you don't need to live on a day-by-day basis. You don't need your seasonal decorations. The kids can do without half their toys. You can probably live without a third of your furniture. Get it into storage or a friend's house. Throw away NOW what you would when you move. Space adds value.*
- 4. Have handouts. With more properties on the market, you need to make sure your house is memorable -- with a good marketing plan that includes a flier the buyers can take with them.*
- 5. Price right. Look at all the parameters of your house, not just the bedroom and bath count. One of the houses above is sitting on a half-acre lot with a 1-car garage and built in the same year as it's counterpart listed for about the same amount of money, but which has only half as much land and no garage -- not even a carport -- but they're in the same area. (This is mostly the Realtor's job, but a stubborn seller may cause an over-priced listing.)*

When placing your house on the market, keep in mind it's more involved and requires more work than selling a used car. We're not talking a difference of a couple hundred dollars on price here. Missing the mark on price and condition could cost you tens of thousands of dollars.