



# 10 SUREFIRE WAYS TO SELL YOUR HOME FOR MORE MONEY

by David Collier  
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To Sell Your Home for More Money

By

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Some identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to all the homeowners out there who have struggled with the emotional upheaval of getting their property ready to sell.

We realize that family homes come with unique memories of children being born, growing up, graduations, and all of life's little surprises. Selling means leaving all of this behind. This is no simple task, and one that needs help and understanding.

Our book is also dedicated to the amazing Prep'n Sell™ franchisees and their staff, who assist our customers through this stressful period.

Our goal is to show customers the light at the end of the tunnel, even on our first visit. The best part of our business is seeing our clients become friends during the process.

*Your work is incredible! The house sold in just a few days at more than \$90k over asking.  
David P. / Homeowner*

*Without your knowledge, insight, professionalism and patience, we would never been able to get through this.  
Agnes & Dave / Homeowners*

*Installing new fixtures in a powder room, or completing a laundry list of projects, we are always confident your work will be completed on time.  
Eileen S. / Realtor*

*You promised a completed kitchen renovation job by the end of March, and you delivered; even with last minute design changes.  
Jim T. / Homeowner*

*My clients really like the 'One Call' arrangement where everything is taken care of...  
Peter P. / Realtor*

*I desperately needed a total kitchen renovation. It turned out better than I expected. My neighbours next door went with RENOmagic™ too!  
Tim H. / Homeowner*

## 10 Surefire Ways To Sell Your Home for More Money

Achieving Your Dream	1
Nostalgia Doesn't Sell	6
Clean And Fresh	11
The Clutter Cocoon	16
Painting Equals Profits	23
Setting The Stage	28
On the Floor	32
Bathroom Magic	37
The Kitchen Rescue	43
Get Curb Appeal	48

## **Achieving Your Dream**

I'm lucky and I'm living the dream. I love my Prep 'n Sell™ and RENOmagic™ business. Every day we get to help families see more money for the homes they want to sell, or build them the great environments that they have always dreamed of.

Whether prepping a home for resale, or facing a first time 'reno', our experience is that most homeowners find the prospect somewhat overwhelming. Where do you start? How much do you spend? Should you stay or leave? Do you use professionals? What are the best materials? All daunting tasks for a person or couple in transition.

This guide was developed and written to help make the home selling or home 'staying' renovation process easier, help avoid costly pitfalls, and show our clients and friends how to save money, and most importantly, make more money when they sell their home.

In the next few short chapters, we will give you all the ideas you need to impress buyers, create excitement, and turn your home into a high performance asset. These ideas will come in chronological order from the least investment and effort, to ones that are more capital intensive and require further time commitments. Throughout this guide, we will also highlight some 'Toolbox Tips' that we have picked up over the years to

help save you from making a mistake, enhance your property appeal, or quickly make more dollars.

Many people put their home on the market without any improvements whatsoever, assuming that the buyer is not necessarily looking for a dream home - just not a 'wrecker'. This happens a lot with estate sales. Estate homes generally need attention, as an aged property may need to be freshened to meet current standards of acceptance and desirability, but, anxious sellers rarely get the maximum if they rush the sale.

The problem usually starts when all members of the family get involved, and have different ideas about how to market the family home. It can get complicated. Some are interested in fixing it up to maximize the return, and others just want to cash out as soon as possible. Too many people lose tens of thousands, and even six figure payouts due to hasty decisions.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: If cash is tight, this is one time where borrowing funds or using a line of credit or company financing can make a lot of sense.*

A client once called me to take a look at her father's home. She had been living abroad for 10 years, and she returned home to help her 85 year old father into a nursing home.



The family home needed some serious work, and we prepared a proposal for her. The father was reluctant to do anything to change what he'd been used to, so all we were able to do was clear out the contents, clean it up, and deodorize.

When I saw what it eventually sold for, I realized that they could have easily doubled or tripled their investment from the sale with our recommendations.

If there is anything that I have learned over the years working the Prep 'n Sell™ and RENOmagic™ program, it's that the way you live in a house is not the way you sell it. But, if someone can imagine themselves living in the enticing picture that you have created, you are well on the way to having it sold - for good money.

I have also experienced situations where the real estate agent and the vendor have said to me; "We have interest from a builder. He might buy it and fix it up, so we aren't going to do any improvements". Well, that interest had better work out, because the builder / investor market is rarely 30% of the total market. You could be shrinking your potential buyer market by 70 to 80% travelling this path. And, many in the overall market will not buy a home needing any work – even painting.

Some have lived through a renovation before, and now that they are older and have more money, they can be

pickier, and demand a house that is ready to move into. Many buyers will pay quite a bit extra for a home that is 100% complete.

The people that make their living getting you money for your house (everyday) will have lots of advice for you. Listen to the home stagers, real estate agents, and property inspectors; they have lots of experience and real results to share.

But, most of them will also be in the business of collecting fees from homeowners, so their prime motivation may not always be to get you the maximum dollar for your home.

Prep 'n Sell™ looks at projects from the other side of the cash register. Our entire company model is based on holding the property back from listing until it's in maximum profit position.

Prep 'n Sell™ Home Service Consultants are ROI experts, and we know what works to raise a property's desirability and bring the highest return on investment.

In the process of acquiring a listing, real estate agents will come and give you their opinion on your home resale value at no cost. This is standard industry practice.

As you listen to his or her presentation, listen carefully, and understand that their goal is to secure your listing

before leaving. That is their business. To Real Estate Agents, new listings are an opportunity to put up a sign, have a few open houses and start marketing the property, and, the sooner the better.

In a hot market, little effort is required to get buyer interest. In the rush to get your listing and get your home on the market, some realtors may even suggest that buyers will overlook your cracked counter top, old wallpaper and overgrown back yard. What seldom comes up in conversation, is how all this ‘overlooking’ also comes with lower offers.

Just listing the property and doing very little to prepare your home for resale may not work out the best for you and your family. If you invest a bit to get the return you desire, you won’t have future regrets about leaving money on the table and walking away from it forever. Additional home resale dollars may be the cheapest tax free money you will ever make. Turn the page and get started.

## **Nostalgia Doesn't Sell**

It's fun to stroll down Memory Lane. Team Members from Prep 'n Sell™ and RENOmagic™ get to do it every day. We visit properties that haven't changed much from when they were first built and furnished in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s.

Some of the wallpaper, flooring and fixtures are truly one of a kind. We've see lots of rooms that could be used today to film an "I LOVE LUCY" episode, if the 50s series is ever revived. Buyers see these house pictures on online, and not only don't visit the property, they don't even look at all the pictures.

Lots of these type of homes are owned by older baby boomers, and, their even older parents. Many have had no real work or updating in the last twenty years.

These 'last house before the condo move', or family estate sales are coming to market with out-of-style wallpaper, long strand shag carpeting (that usually doesn't match), old wood panel urethane covered doors (with antique handles), and bathrooms that look like they were built in the previous century. Lucy would feel right at home, but most families don't.

Our approach to old outdated home interiors is to preserve what is special, and update the rest. This way

we can create something that buyers get can excited about.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: Remember; it's condition, not age that hurts most resale prospects.*

As mentioned previously, as a shortcut fix, you can market your property 'as is' to a new home builder, or advertise it as a 'house needs work' project to the investor / handyman. They will buy it, fix it up, and then flip it. Yes, you can do that at any time, but we have a better idea for you.

Get Prep 'n Sell™ to help you become the investor / builder. Why wouldn't you want the opportunity to double, triple or get even more on your investment by staying involved and fixing up your own property? We've helped many others, why not you?

Doing a walk-through is an easy way to get an idea of the scope of the project. Most walk-throughs will reveal lots of little things that catch people's eyes and distract from the home showing.

Another simple way to update, is to replace old floor vents that often don't match. Decorative vents are inexpensive and widely available at the big box stores. Door handles have to match. A simple thing like changing old style round brass knobs to currently popular brushed nickel handles can really update the

hallway and bedroom areas after the new paint job is done.

New lighting fixtures change everything. Add dimmers for mood lighting, and you have a simple way to change the ambiance in any room for a few dollars.

When you use bright bulbs, a room lights up instantly. This is crucial as real estate agents will turn the lights on and off in a room for about thirty seconds while they are showing a house. The new lights take over two minutes to brighten, so rooms may look a bit dark with a short on /off duration when agents show the property.

Another item to check is the thermal pane windows, as they may have broken seals. This will be obvious quite quickly, as you will generally see evidence of moisture between the panes.

You have two choices here; to replace just the glass or the entire window. One way to simply tackle the problem, is to call a window contractor, and get him or her to come and drill small holes in the corner of the window to remove the moisture.

But, if you notice white calcification on the inside of the window, then the window is beyond repair. If it works though, this is by far the cheapest route to correct this problem.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: Check and replace the smoke and CO2 detectors. Safety features catch buyer's attention. The home inspector will be checking the serviceable dates of these items too.*

You may have to update some of the simple electrical service as well. Any electrical plugs in the kitchen and bathrooms that are three feet or closer to a water source, will need to be changed to GFI protected receptacles to meet building code.

When you are painting, it is good idea to change the old, faded, and out of date switches, receptacles and switch covers to new white square shaped rocker switches and covers to update and complete your new freshened look.

New taps and toilets are also an easy update that costs very little. If this type of upgrade isn't in the budget, at a minimum, change the interior flappers or valves if they leak or drip.

Some of these types of repairs do not need to be completed prior to your home listing, but these are the kind of tasks you should do occasionally to keep your home in good repair.

One of our female clients told our working crew member that he had to leave by 4:30 pm because she didn't want her husband to know that she was fixing items on the list that he was avoiding! See, our

handyman repairs are even helping to save marriages.  
Didn't I promise you extra value?

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## **Clean and Get Fresh**

How many times have you heard the story about someone cooking fresh bread in the oven, and then leaving it on the kitchen counter just before a buyer's open house to give the room a wonderful homey smell when prospective buyers wandered through? Can't you almost smell it?

That's an old story, but it's still a good directive. To invite smiling buyers, your house needs to smell nice. There is no option.

You don't have to create the impression that your home inspectors just walked into a bakery, but the air had better be 100% inoffensive. Nothing will turn off buyers quicker than offending odours.

Probably one of the biggest challenges we've had as a company is to safely and permanently remove the smell of cigarette smoke from a residence.

Today, the smell of tobacco smoke in a house is big turnoff - even for some that still smoke. If a prospective buyer will not even stay in a hotel room that allows smoking, you can be sure that they won't buy a home that makes them feel like they just inherited an entire hotel floor of smoking rooms.

It's taken us years, but we finally have a way of neutralizing this odour. We use a simple natural process developed by Mother Nature. It's activated Oxygen – or Ozone. This natural purifier ozone approach can completely eliminate old smoke odour. In just 24 hours, our treatment can negate the odours in the carpets, walls, furniture, ceilings, and actually leave the area spring time fresh. We also use it to purify new homes after purchase as well.

Ozone is also used to eliminate odours on surfaces, like kitchen cupboards, walls, and floors. Some properties require the full on treatment. Whether it's a short ozone session or a longer more active one, once the process is over, the smoke smell will be gone.

House pets become members of the family. And as accepted members, we tend to overlook their not-so-good traits, and focus on how much enjoyment they bring to our lives. That makes it easy to get desensitized to their sometimes off-putting behaviors. Often cats will mark their territory by spraying, and often that territory is behind the couch, or behind the plant pot in the corner or front door.

These markings can be very potent. The first step in deodorizing and neutralizing is finding the source. Once found, carpet pad removal along with deodorizing and sealing the sub floor may also be required.

Farm families are usually surprised at the reactions of visiting city dwellers to their farm. The visiting city residents are generally overwhelmed with all the conflicting and unusual smells and scents of the farm animals, feed and manure.

The rural citizens that live there, rarely notice anything. They've become immune. Pet owners can likewise become immune to their pet smells over time, but, like the urban based farm visitors, guests notice them right away. If you have pets, ask a friendly family member if you can 'borrow their nose' for a few hours. They will let you know if something is amiss.

If they smell cat urine, you have a problem. Left unattended over time, it's very difficult to remove. And, in the summer, moisture and high humidity activate these odours even further.

If you can smell it, but are unable to locate the spot, a black light will help. The large pet stores sell an item called The *Stink Finder*<sup>™</sup>. You may have to become a forensic investigator to find the problem area, but find it you must.

Dogs take a different approach to claiming their territory. They want the inside of your house to smell like the great outdoors.

When you see dogs rolling on the ground outside, you know it's because they like the scent in that area. Then, their next move is to come into your house and bring some of that great outdoor smell to your furniture, carpets, beds, and anywhere else that they aren't usually allowed to sleep on.

Most times, a good and thorough vacuum, carpet clean / deodorize, and area spray deodorizer will work to neutralize this situation. Prep 'n Sell™ has developed our own marketed deodorizer product, and it works well for this problem too.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: Buy your renovation furnace filters in bulk. You'll need to keep changing them after your cleaning and deodorizing work is done (so you don't keep recirculating old odours) and intermittently while construction is taking place. Clogged filters also restrict inflow.*

It's been said; if you greeted your spouse the same friendly way that you greet your pet when you arrive home, there would be far less divorces. There might be some truth in that statement.

I visited a potential client at his multi-million dollar home, and the owner introduced me to his 60 lb. bulldog. I glanced around the room and noticed that

someone had chewed off the corners of both built-in wall units, and the sides of the oak staircase.

He also left other visible marks and signs of his personality throughout the rest of his kingdom. The owner confessed to me that he was having a hard time staying on top of the cleaning. He didn't have to convince me.

If a child had created this environment, someone would have been in big trouble. But, let's face it, aren't bulldogs cute?

After deodorizing the upper floors, we go underground. Basements do get damp, so they need a dehumidifier to help disperse and eliminate the moisture in the air. If it's a continual problem, invest in one to keep the musty odors at bay, and keep the downstairs dry and odour free like the upstairs rooms. It will be a good investment.

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## **The Clutter Cocoon**

Not too long ago, when people purchased a piece of furniture, or other household goods, they expected them to last for a generation or more. They also likely eventually passed most of these goods over to someone that also enjoyed them, and they got even more years of use.

Today, the focus is on obtaining lower acquisitions costs. This means that most furniture and other household goods purchased in North America must be imported from around the globe.

Many of these products today are built to standards way below what they were even a generation ago. When a unit breaks down, or a new furniture drawer slide is needed, the item is simply replaced. Welcome to the disposable society.

Our new disposable society is a result of two dramatic changes in modern living that have developed slowly over the last fifty years.

One is that houses / living spaces are continually expanding and getting bigger, and the other is the impact of lower product costs (due to globalization) for the average consumer.

Since homes are now much bigger, this creates lots of room for owners to keep consuming and collecting items.

People with any size home are finding that they have virtually no room left to fill up. In conversation with a furnace repairman, I asked him if the basement areas he sees when working, are as full as the ones I run into, and he replied that most are like 'war zones' with little or no room for him to move in. And, that is on top of a garage that is likely filled as well.

The effects of globalization contribute to this filling, as imported household products are now substantially cheaper to purchase for the average home owner. Everyone is buying more for less, and speeding up this clutter problem.

But, home buyers don't like other people's clutter. Messy environments distract buyers from the functionality of the property, and cover up the interesting features of your home.

It's hard enough to have buyer prospects remember pertinent details when all they see are visual roadblocks all around them. People entering your home should be able to walk around freely. In our experience, areas almost always needing immediate clutter attention are basements, and garages.

In Joshua Becker's blog (becoming minimalist), he provides some very interesting research that shows just how 'cluttered up' and unmanageable North American homes have become.

Although the statistics listed here are from south of the border, you can be pretty confident that the Canadian numbers would be a close reflection of the American results:

- There are 300,000 items in the average American home ([LA Times](#)).
- The average size of the American home has nearly tripled in size over the past fifty years ([NPR](#)).
- 25% of people with two-car garages don't have any room to park any cars inside them, and 32% have room for only one vehicle. ([U.S. Department of Energy](#)).
- The Nation has upwards of 50,000 storage facilities. Currently, there is 7.3 square feet of



self-storage space for every man, woman and child in the country. Thus, it is physically possible that every American could stand—all at the same time—under the total canopy of self-storage roofing ([SSA](#)).

That's a lot of junk in the average home. Decluttering is not an exercise that can be put off indefinitely. While it's not easy to start the declutter process, once underway, magical things happen.

Selling, giving away, or disposing of items you may have had for years and years is hard physical, and even emotional, work. Especially if the items are furniture.

A furniture recover and remanufacturing craftsman told me that his refurbish customers generally have unusual relationships with some of their furniture pieces. He's had experiences recovering and refinishing some customer sets numerous times, as his clients just can't seem to part with these strange inanimate pseudo family members.

They can't get rid of this old stuff. And, not all of this furniture is of great quality or even worth rejuvenating. Let's face it; downsizing is tough.

But, when you must start downsizing, here is a strategy that makes it easier:

First, take a picture of the rooms (or areas) that need de-clutter work. You might need these images later. Then, designate three collection areas for items that need to be removed from the premises. Place these items into the three pile areas under handwritten signs that state:

1. I can't part with this
2. Someone else could use this better
3. This has to go for sure

The new #1 pile is made up of what you want to take with you to your new home, but also what you don't immediately need every day. Pack these items up, and store them neatly in the now cleared garage, basement or storage rental unit.

Portable Storage bins can also be dropped at your house, and when full, taken to your new home. This will stop you from moving things two, three, and four times in the move process. A little organization here will pay big dividends in the future.

The #2 pile is made up of what would you like to donate or give away. The Salvation Army, local woman's shelter, furniture bank, or Value Village will likely take most of what you have in this pile.

Some items (like computer equipment) can even generate a tax receipt for you when you donate. Want to

decrease this pile size? It is amazing what will disappear when you stick it on the front lawn with a FREE sign attached to it.

Pile #3, is basically junk. Taking all this material to the dump on countless runs wastes time and tries patience. It's much easier to get a Bin. Prepare to be amazed at how high this pile might get.

Also, show family members the three piles and get input from them on what should be deleted. I know people who have saved furniture pieces for decades - to hand down to someone - only to find that they don't want it; at all.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: If you are having a problem deciding what goes into what pile, email your photos to your friends and family and ask them what they would keep and what they would get rid of.*

Remember; if you haven't used it for a year or so, do you really need it? And after two years, it really should be goodbye for good.

One lady that we helped downsize spent some time listing off to my team members all of the hundreds of items that she had thrown out. They were slightly perplexed about why she wanted to do this, but I knew what was motivating her. I understood that telling

someone all about it, and going through it again in her mind was her way of finding closure.

She was paying us by the hour, but she didn't care. This form of recognizing what she had been going through, had just as much value to her as the actual work we were doing on her home.

In the end, like virtually all of our clients, she felt an immense feeling of freedom and jubilation at being unshackled from what was no longer necessary or needed. And, her home looked like a different property altogether once it emerged from that clutter cocoon.

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## **Painting Equals Profits**

Painting every wall is one of the quickest ways to transform the look of your home, and one of the least expensive. That's a true statement, but if you do it the wrong way, you may even make the situation worse.

Yes, painting the interior is an excellent decision, but painting without proper prepping and cleaning will give you mediocre to worse results. Before you paint, clean with a mixture of TSP and water. Use on baseboards, doors, light switches and window casings.

Whatever you do, don't paint over wallpaper. This has to be removed, and when you do so, it may require wall patching. If the wall was not 'sized' previous to the installation, you may have some work ahead of you to remove it cleanly.

Regardless of the preparation in place before installation, remove all paper carefully. Repairing walls to painting condition is a meticulous process,

and, if not done with care, all imperfections will be revealed.

I remember a customer who had all the loud colors of the 80s on his walls, and he was anxious to repaint - in the same loud colours. Remember, we are repainting for the buyer, correct? Any paint store can easily

recommend the colours of year, or shades that families are buying.

Don't make the mistake of painting the walls and ceilings to hide odours, because it won't happen. We get lots of calls requesting the removal the odour after prospective clients have painted, and unfortunately we have to give them bad news. If you don't thoroughly clean and deodorize first, the odours might take a holiday, but they will be back in permanent residence shortly after.

When the wall paint has faded, or has streaks or stains, you need to use a 'block out' paint (or a high hiding primer) or what you are covering will bleed through your new paint. It will also be obvious where you stopped and started the paint process.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: Don't try to save money by not painting trim and doors when you paint your walls. The old paint is really noticeable against the new work.*

You need to use a good primer over oil base paints, or your new paint will not stick. Buy good quality paint to have superior results and save time.

Poor quality paint actually takes more time to apply, and takes more strokes. Cheap paint products end up being no bargain.

The recipe to a clean, quick and great drywall paint finish is simple; fill all holes, sand and prime, use cover sheets, use quality materials, make sure your edges are straight.

Older wall materials like lath and plaster require a slightly different approach. Due to inconsistencies common on most lath walls, we recommend using a flat paint so the imperfections don't stand out like when you use an eggshell finish.

Do you have a stippled ceiling? This type of finish adds interest to a home, but is usually applied because it is a cheaper way to complete a room. Imperfections in drywall joints are very noticeable when they are not seamed, but the stippling process covers up a minefield of problems.

That is, unless you paint over it, because if painted, you will likely never be able to remove it if you want a smooth texture free ceiling overhead. Plus these ceilings are impossible to repair when damaged from leaks. If you have to make a repair, you will probably see it.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: Paint takes about 30 days to cure, so if you are cleaning walls that were accidentally marked after they were painted, take care, as you can easily rub off your new paint job.*

If you decide you want to paint a textured ceiling, you have to use an oil based paint. This type of ceiling will require a lot of paint, as textured surfaces are really absorbent.

For a smooth look, some people will scrape the ceiling of the texture material, plaster, sand, finish coat, prime and then repaint the ceiling. This will be a lot of work, but it looks great. But, it's far easier to spot repair and then paint the ceiling.

A previous customer wanted us to touch up some spots on a wall using the original paint she'd purchased. We asked; "are you sure you want that?" She said she was sure, so we did as she asked, and then showed her the results. The wall had a spotted and tie dyed look to it. Here's why; painted walls fade over time from the sun, and paint in a can loses its luster as it ages. Add the two together and you end up with a few different tones.

She was taken aback, we had a chuckle together, and then we did it the right way for her. And, the right way is to paint from corner to corner to eliminate the speckled and mismatched look completely.



If you want to paint the exterior, watch the temperature. Don't paint when the weather goes below 10 degrees Celsius. Once again, you need to do the proper preparation work as the outside elements cause considerable surface damage.

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## **Setting the Stage**

Our Prep 'n Sell™ style staging consultation is about more than where the pictures get hung. It also includes information on Downsizing, Reorganizing, Depersonalizing, Neutralizing, and Brightening, as well picking out accessories and furniture that can turn an average home into a show home.

Staging can transform even the most uninteresting room into a stylized and inviting space. Dollar for dollar, few home sale preparations can match the return on investment that professional staging will bring.

Remember, there is a difference between decorating a room to look nicer, and staging a room to showcase the area's best features. A professional stager will know all the techniques for enhancing a room's size or highlighting its best features.

The Prep 'n Sell™ experts know how to direct our stagers. Our experience has helped us figure out what to do, and what not to do.

We have a pretty good idea what colours buyers prefer, how to re-organize and enhance, how much to spend on decorating, and all the little known tricks to get your home on the road to becoming an 'Offer Magnet'.

Another benefit of using a stager's service is that they have a large inventory of homewares and goods that can be quickly placed in the home for sale. This saves time, money and effort that is usually spent looking for lamps, accessories, and that special furniture piece that really stands out.

Here are some of the common staging moves that almost all homes need. First, most rooms have way too much furniture in them. Walk through a builder's open house in a new home showcase, and you will discover that they have outfitted the place with basic furniture and no more.

For example; bedrooms should have a bed, dresser and mirror, two night stands and possibly a highboy. In many client's bedrooms, we also find hope chests, bookcases, wardrobes, desks, sewing machines and even filing cabinets that have to be moved to bring the room back to basic furniture.

Once again, the way you live in your home is not the way you sell it. Some of these extra pieces can be moved to different rooms, but most of it will end up in temporary storage.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: Take a queen size bed out of a small bedroom and put in a single bed. Instantly the room gets bigger.*

Most people can remember the first picture they hung on the wall of their new home. That is usually a fond memory. For some, it was so fond, that they kept hanging, and hanging, and hanging until all the walls in their home were completely covered.

Others own the same big collection of wall hangings, but leave them leaning against the wall (on the floor) with plans to actually affix them at some point. The walls are bare, but at least they have an idea what they might look like. Both of these situations are quickly remedied by our staging crew using a wall hanging plan. The plan will guide what images should go together, what walls are used, and how pictures are arranged to create interest and balance.

Depersonalization is the description we have given to “taking the home out of the house”. Some ask us why the family pictures and specific family mementoes need to be removed. The bridge to getting customers to imagining your home as theirs, must be built foot by foot.

Everyone has family pictures, and we leave some room on your walls, mantle and tables for the prospective buyers to imagine their own pictures residing there. Your family pictures need to be packed up, and lovingly find new places to shine in your new home.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: Builders almost always use eggshell white, off white or light taupe colours when offering a new home for sale. Everyone loves neutral.*

Many homes are nicely styled, but slightly over the top in wall textures and colours. Stripes, special paint effects and murals, get dated in a few years and need to be painted over.

Bold greens, reds, and blues always look impressive in the decorating ads, but seldom work in real life. Part of our task is to neutralize these loud areas, and bring the room back into a natural and balanced harmony.

As the Company President, I've made countless presentations to Real Estate agents on; "Tips and Techniques to Prepare Your Home for Sale". Prep 'n Sell™ was also certified by RECO to provide a continual training course for Real Estate Agents.

Agents regularly commented to me that staging a home was one of the easiest ways to bring out positive comments and buying interest from prospective buyers. It pays.

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## **On the Floor**

Flooring styles and preferences have changed a lot over the years. Thirty years ago, home owners enjoyed beautiful herringbone pattern hardwood floors, and then that style went out of fashion, and we started installing carpet on top of them because all of a sudden, carpet was ‘classy’.

We say that flooring is like the canvas that you paint the room on top of. To end well, you have to start well.

Some homes now have two or three different carpet colors and styles that were installed over the years. Others have ceramic floors, vinyl, and old outdated flooring mixtures throughout.

Your floors are part of a buyer’s impression picture, and a considerable expense if they have to be replaced or refinished. If you decide to change an existing floor, be careful making a snap decision, and then starting without first performing an investigation. There may be more than one or two materials underneath the existing one.

In these cases, it’s a big job to pull everything up to the subfloor, and then sometimes discovering a new subfloor is required once you get there. This can add to the new floor expense, but it may have to be done before a new floor is installed.

If you are changing your existing vinyl or ceramic floor material to solid wood flooring, you must start with the proper subfloor. A Potlach™ or particle board subfloor is not acceptable if you are going to use a nail down installation method for your strip flooring. It is acceptable if you are gluing it down though.

If you hear old, thin, and well tread 3/8” wood flooring squeak, it could be approaching the end of its service days. If you see nails, it means the floor material has been sanded too many times. If you see the splits between the wood strips; that means the groove edge holding it together has broken off.

Filling it with compound won't solve the problem. It will just 'pop out' again. The best course of action here, is to lift up and replace the wood floor covering.

If the hardwood is in good condition, but the colour has faded or streaked, then sanding and refinishing produces great results. Darker finishes also cover up older wood imperfections.

When it's time for replacement though, installing new pre-finished flooring is straight forward and simple for an experienced tradesperson. The big question is; do you choose an engineered type or solid strips?

While both types look nice, and generally perform exceeding well, there are some important differences to

be aware of. Solid wood flooring is just that - solid. It's one continuous piece of material.

Engineered flooring is made up of opposing layers of material that prevent it from warping or moving. Both products can even look the same once they are installed, but they are both unique.

First, moisture affects both floor substrates differently. The solid flooring will be more susceptible to changes in temperature, and can react quite dramatically by shrinking, or expanding to where you don't want it to go.

This means that you should avoid solid strip flooring in basements and bathrooms and laundry rooms.

A laminate floor is another popular upgrade. This type of material sits on an underlay membrane and 'floats'. The floating property makes it easy to install over other intact floor surfaces.

If you have dogs in your family, laminate flooring should be your first choice, as their dog nails scratch and natural wood can get marked up very easily.

Vinyl is making a big comeback as well. Advances in digital printing allow manufacturers to print wood, marble or any other material onto the sheeting and the results are more than impressive.



Thin vinyl flooring, sheet, or individual tiles can be installed right on top other flooring, ‘loose laid’ or glued down.

Dave’s Toolbox TIP: If you live in a condo, your new flooring has to be approved by the board, with a specific sound reduction STC## / IIC ## rating. Get this approval before proceeding.

If you haven’t been shopping for ceramic tile in a while, you will be impressed when you see what’s available today. The first thing you will notice is how big the tiles have grown. Big is in. 12” x 12” tiles are still available, but larger 12” x 24” tiles have overtaken them in popularity.

Another new advancement is in the tile finishes. Like the newer vinyl sheet product, ceramic and porcelain tiles are all now covered with digital screen prints that mimic marble, wood and concrete so closely, you will be hard pressed to tell the difference without a magnifying glass.

Regardless of the flooring you eventually choose to improve, if you replace any coverings, you will need to install new baseboard, ¼ round, or shoe molding at the perimeter.

While doing so, you need to be careful that you keep floor levels as even as possible, because if you start to raise the levels, you will need transition strips where one room joins another.

Recently, an agent brought us in to a project home to give him some ideas on what could be done to a very ‘loud’ ceramic floor in a front hallway and kitchen of one of his listings.

His client did not have much of a budget for new floors, so we filled the grout lines with a special floor compound and laid a new vinyl floor right over it.

The job came out flawlessly. We added a new quarter round border, painted, and for a small investment he had a bright and inviting entrance to welcome prospects.

Approached correctly, you just may be able to save floor replacement dollars and put them aside for other Prep ’n Sell™ home preparation work.

## **Bathroom Magic**

Bathrooms sell homes. Buyers take a close look at them, so attention here pays off. A bathroom comes in all shapes, sizes, and layouts, and due to the numerous skills and finishes needed to renovate or upgrade them, costs can add up quickly.

In many of the homes that we visit, some wonderful renovations have already taken place. Then, we open the door to a bathroom, and we are overwhelmed with a potpourri of antique porcelain.

While we still run into powder blue, baby pink, and green avocado fixtures on our calls, they are not all that common anymore, and generally confined to old homes built in the 60s and 70s.

But, here are some issues that are common almost everywhere:

- Loose tiles in the shower
- Loose floor tiles
- Mildew in the grout lines
- Water damage around bathtub
- Water damage around baseboards
- Mold on the ceiling
- Calcified and slow taps
- Leaking taps

- Towel holder loose, or coming off
- Toilet paper holder coming off
- Old six litre style toilets with leaky flapper

These are all simple fixes, but many clients have lived with these annoyances for so long, they've become invisible. A bigger problem is leaking fixtures. These can't be ignored, or soon you will have mold, stains and areas needing replacement work. If your tub leaks, or is sitting there in an out of fashion colour, you can easily glaze it white. This is a cheaper alternative to replacement.

When you pull the tub out, remove the wall (which most likely has mold on it). Replace it with waterproof drywall. This way, your new tile can be easily installed on a nice flat surface.

Inspect the shower fixture. Is it plugged? With the drywall removed, it's easy to replace. Don't use 'off brand' replacement fixtures. Choose a quality name brand type where the new cartridges can be easily found and replaced. While the wall is open, check for leaks. If everything looks good, you can reseal the wall confident that it doesn't have to be opened again.

This green 'mold free' drywall material is great for use in bathroom areas, but not behind the tiles in showers and tubs. This is where you need waterproof wallboard only.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: Never delete an existing bathtub from a home. Any family with children still at home will want one. Homes with 'walk in' showers only, are harder to sell.*

The vanity can be changed or refaced and painted, and a new counter top added. When you update your fixtures, go for a modern brand name not a 'big box' brand. You'll get some nice styling. This is also the time to update the handle set as well.

Regardless of the changes you make to fixtures and cabinets in your bathroom, it will always remain the same size, correct? What if you could make it bigger? Would buyers be more interested? We think so, and we've uncovered a few techniques (with thanks to the loop.ca) that can really add to a feeling of more space.

Here are 10 easy room expansion methods we like:

1. Go White

We're talking fixtures, paint, accessories (everything in the room) - and then for dramatic effect, use a soft tone colour on the floor.

2. Complimentary Tones

Paint your walls the same tone family as your floors. If your floors are dark, chose a companion colour from the

same family, but from the lightest shade on the colour strip.

### 3. Bigger Windows & Open Blinds

Enlarging a window area really opens up a room, but just raising the blinds and letting lots of light in works too. Make sure you have lots of candle power in the light fixture as well.

### 4. More Mirrors

A wrap-around mirror works here, as does a full wall-to-wall mirror over the vanity. This might be the least expensive way to really create the illusion of more space.

### 5. Floating Furniture

Mounting a legless vanity to the wall not only creates space under the cabinet, it also gives the impression of a bigger room. Once accomplished, resist the urge to use this new found space as a storage area again.

### 6. Open Shelving

Delete the wall cabinets and install a vanity cabinet with open shelves on one or both sides.

### 7. Use a Smaller Cabinet

Do you really need all that vanity space? If you have a wall-to-wall unit, check to see how much is just junk storage, and how much space is really needed on a daily basis.

### 8. Use Clear Glass

It's amazing how much larger things look when you see through them. Frosted and opaque glass do a good job of creating privacy, but these privacy areas also divert a person's gaze. Your buyers want to see the total area available.

### 9. Big Tiles

Small tiles look great, but close off a room quickly. Bigger tiles have the opposite effect. Remember; go with a light shade here as well.

### 10. Recessed Cabinets

If possible, recess a bathroom upper cabinet into the wall. This will provide an unobstructed sight line in the room.

10 proven ways to increase a bathroom's size. How's that for a bit of Real Magic?

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: Some manufacturers offer Free Lifetime replacements on taps and fixture mechanical parts. When you buy their brand, you can be confident that the parts will probably be available. And, the price will be right for everyone – free.*

What is the sound you don't hear? It should be your bathroom exhaust fan.

Change the fan if it doesn't work, or sounds like a jet taking off. One easy way to check to see if it's working at capacity, is to lay a piece of toilet tissue over the intake. It should draw air well enough to suspend the tissue.

After installing a new high volume quiet fan, you will notice an immediate difference from the older models. Once, when installing a fan in a bathroom of a client, the client came in and said; "I can't wait to hear how quiet it is. Can you turn it on?" I said; "it's on..." The new ones are that quiet.

Once installed, check to see that the fan air is exhausted properly. If any of it ends up in your attic, it will end up on the insulation, and this is the start of an enticing buffet for mold.

In summation, just like the old and well-worn kitchen, if the bathroom, or bathrooms, are a big 'turn off' for the buyers, they will not hesitate to discount their offer \$10 - \$15,000 with an eye to putting that money into their new bathroom renovation. Focus on enriching these spaces, and serious purchasers will enrich their offers.



## **The Kitchen Rescue**

Updated kitchens sell homes, - just ask any realtor. When potential buyers check out your home, you can be sure that they are looking really closely at one of the rooms they will spend the majority of their time in.

Just think how much time serious cooks (male and female) devote to preparing meals and snacks for friends and family. Kitchens get a lot of use and styles change over time. Add these two facts together, and before you are ready to sell, your kitchen will probably need a facelift.

Start by looking at the cabinets. If they can be rejuvenated instead of replaced, you will save a lot of money. New or refinished doors can totally transform the look of a kitchen, and they will open and close effortlessly with modern European style hinges.

Changing the hardware is also an inexpensive way to give a needed 'punch' to the room as well.

For a quick fix you can paint the doors with Cabinet Coat™, a special product designed for kitchen environments. Remember to clean with a TSP diluted mixture first.

Clean the cabinet fronts, sides and both sides of the doors. All surface areas have picked up cooking residue and dirt.

If the doors and drawer fronts are too far gone, consider a reface job. Refacing brings your kitchen up to modern standards at a fraction of the cost of new cabinets. Only consider this option if the boxes are still in good shape, and the layout works well. If the layout isn't that great, and the cabinets need a lot of work, a partial replacement plan is the next step up.

Areas that take the most neglect in a kitchen are counter surfaces. Laminate counter tops get marked, the edges come off, and they can really fade with consistent use and abuse.

New laminate counter surfaces now have hidden edges and look so good, they can be mistaken for more expensive stone materials.

Hard stone or man-made quartz are still more popular counter materials, and are a more common replacement than laminate substrates, but both options can improve your look.

A new counter is a must for any kitchen renovation. Add a new 'under mount' style sink, and new taps to finish off the mini project.

One popular - and inexpensive - kitchen upgrade is to redesign your counter area and add an extended counter surface so you can have a small eating space. Add three chairs, and you have added a quick breakfast spot.

This really transforms and modernizes the space, plus it means you can have a smaller kitchen table, and that makes the space appear larger as well.

A new back splash can really modernize the room, too. Most home stagers and paint store personnel are also undercover decorators, and can freely give you an idea of what goes with what, so you end up with a designed look.

Everyone loves under cabinet mounted ambient lighting, and with inexpensive LED lights, it's very easy to do. LED lighting makes a dramatic difference in any kitchen.

If you want pot lights, or other overhead lighting, you may need to run additional electrical lines. But, this expense is well worth it, as most kitchens get quite dark once the sun goes down.

Buyers generally like to receive the major appliances with their home purchase, but if what you have is old, or low quality, they may not want them. If you have a stainless steel fridge and stove, they should match the others appliances in the room. Don't mix the finishes.

Our approach in any kitchen rebuild or replacement, is to get everything off the counters. Microwaves take up a lot of room, and we recommend installing a new box above the stove, putting a vent in, and relocating the microwave oven.

*Dave's Toolbox TIP: If the kitchen is too far gone, then a new one maybe required. If so, don't make the mistake of building a million dollar kitchen in a half million dollar home. Buyers will love you – but not enough to line your pockets with the balance.*

Before you even consider putting a new kitchen in, take a good look at the kitchen area flooring. Does it still look good? Once you start putting new boxes down, it will be too late to improve it.

If you decide to replace the flooring, you may choose to go with hardwood. Let me caution you here. The kitchen is a high traffic area, where spills and accidents are just waiting to happen. When they do, the hardwood is very unforgiving.

When clients are looking at different homes to buy, they generally compare the kitchens. If your kitchen needs a lot of work, and they still like the house overall, they might ask for a \$20,000 or \$30,000 reduction, depending on the price point of the property.

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Sometimes investing an extra \$5,000 to \$8,000 in updates is enough to entice buyers away from your home selling competition.

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## **Get Curb Appeal**

How does your home look to a possible purchaser? Go outside and get into your car. Drive around the block, and stop across the street in front of your house. Take a good look at it. How is the paint condition? What condition are the evestroughs, the roof, chimney, landscaping, porch, and railings in?

How do the shrubs, grass, driveway, garage door and garage look overall? Your home needs to look super inviting to attract buyer interest. Curb Appeal is a major component in getting people through the front door. It starts online when your home is first looked at.

Decks and porches are an important extension of a house. If they have railings, are they up to code? Outdoor living spaces are big selling features in a home sale – present them in the best light.

If your deck, porch or walkway is moss covered green or dirty grey, pressure washing is the simple answer to restoring its original condition. If some boards are split or rotted out, replace them before you pressure wash.

Dave's Toolbox TIP: You may be able to turn over pressure treated or cedar boards if they aren't damaged too badly, and get a second life with them.

Inspect the painted surfaces around the doors, windows and trim at the front entrance. This is where the prospects will get their first impression. If it's aged, weathered, and uncared for, people generally expect that the inside was maintained the same way.

Look in the garage. Is it clean and organized? If not, put up shelves to get things off the ground and out of the way.

Trees should be pruned and neat looking with all the weeds pulled between the patio stones. If time allows, plant flowers, repair sod areas, add mulch, and water everything well.

Now, go inside and check the basement. If it's damp or showing signs of water seeping in, it must be fixed at once. Any wall cracks should receive the expanding epoxy treatment.

Downspouts should not be allowed to run down beside your house. They should be directed away from the house into gardens and grass.

If your house foot print is 1,000 sq. ft. then your

evestrough piping conveniently brings all in the water in the downspouts to your foundation. But, weeping tiles and walls can only take so much water. Many water problems in your basement can be corrected by simply directly water away from your house.

Did you know that most insurance claims twenty years ago were for fire and floods, but today more than 50% are water related?

One of our customers had a flood caused by sudden downpour. We'd installed a back water preventer in his basement three years earlier, due to a previous flood, so this was very unusual. They called us because they had water in the basement again. I was concerned, so I went over right away.

The water was clean. It wasn't from the sewer. I brought my top plumber in, and we scoped out the drain to try and source the problem. The back water valve was working.

We deduced that two of three downspouts were going right into his foundation. They should have been running away from the house. We redirected them, and the problem was solved.

Before the 'House For Sale' sign goes on the property, do a final clean, and vacation the pets to your good friends or family. The majority of people find animals a



distraction when looking at properties, and some are even nervous enough to avoid entering. Some people are allergic to them as well.

Now, don't misunderstand me here, because I have a 90 lb. lovable Labrador named Clifford that would show any burglar where the valuables are hidden, be excited that they were visiting, and then lick them on the way out the door with my goodies in their hands.

He would act that way with anyone that comes into my house, including a complete stranger that might want to buy it. The majority of buyers can be turned off by this action, so when I plan on selling, Clifford won't be the greeter.

The less personal items in your house when it is on the market, the less you have to tidy up before a showing. If you have twenty pairs of shoes, make do with two or three pairs until the house is sold.

Make your home look open and inviting, by keeping needed items to the minimum. For the next short while, imagine that you are living in a model home, and keep the home in that condition.

No piles, or closets full of clothes, shoes, or children's toys in the way with just the right amount of furniture in each room.

When the house sells, and you have a firm and committed deal in place, then you can bring it all back, and go back to where you were. Don't be surprised if you discover that you could have lived easily without all the stored goods.

Sometimes our Prep 'n Sell™ and RENOMagic™ Franchisees meet clients when they are at their most stressed. After our magic, we get hugs and high fives from singles, or couples that tell us that they feel like the whole world has just been lifted off their shoulders.

As stated previously, upgrading your personal home, and reaping the extra dollars on resale will be the cheapest tax free money you can make.

At Prep 'n Sell™, our "One call does it all" helps take the needless stress out of your project, and provide your family with a pleasurable experience.

I hope this guide has been informative, and has helped you through this sometimes trying process. Good luck with your sale or renovation and, use these proven techniques to have a rewarding and profitable home selling experience. Once again, why leave money on the table for some else?

# 10 SUREFIRE WAYS

## TO SELL YOUR HOME FOR MORE MONEY

By David Collier

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STOP LEAVING MONEY ON THE TABLE FOR OTHERS!

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You owe it to yourself and your family to secure the absolute highest amount you can on the sale of your family home. Remember; it's all tax free.



### Learn from an Expert

As the founder and developer of the Prep 'n Sell™ and RENOmagic™ franchise systems, I've been involved in renovations, rebuilds, refurbs, teardowns, spruce ups, and stagings. I've worked with real state agents, brokers, stagers, tradespeople, do-it-yourselfers, distraught homeowners and just about everyone else involved in the marketing and selling of the family abode.

We can help!

### David Collier

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