

Are show-houses still a thing?

 By Paul Stevens

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The current lockdown period offers an excellent opportunity if you want to sell your home: at last you can get to all that DIY before it goes on show. But wait - are show-houses still a thing?



Image source: Gallo/Getty

Property viewings are vital – buyers want to get a sense of the space and its potential. Show-houses have traditionally been an open-invitation platform for such viewings. I do not think that show-houses are redundant but the way they are hosted has to change.

Mixed success

Competitor agencies are testing new ways of working, with mixed success. Viewings by appointment and by show-houses are being led by sellers themselves in some cases. My feeling is that owners are seldom completely objective and viewers are seldom completely honest when dealing with owners so, yes, agent-led viewings are still critical.

In terms of new trends we're seeing, pre-screening of viewers and viewings by invitation only are possible alternatives to the norm, but it's really in the digital arena where technology has driven change.



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Preliminary screening

Property websites provide a valuable, time-saving platform for sellers, buyers and agents alike. They allow for preliminary screening of properties and are used by buyers to shortlist the properties that they want to view. With that in mind, I believe that the portals are a critical part of the property marketing toolkit. Think of what people do there as step one and physical

viewings as step two.

Drone footage and 3D walkthroughs are fantastic additions to the way we market houses. They cannot replace what one gets from a physical viewing of a property but they bring the buyer closer to a sense of what a property is like. The final decision to buy, and how much one is prepared to pay, is driven by emotion. This cannot be fully invoked through a screen.



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Added transparency

Technology has almost certainly reduced the number of wasted viewings. With a 3D walk-through, whether in video format or the even more submersive use of 3D virtual tours, buyers get a much better understanding of what a property offers. I particularly enjoy the added transparency: photographs can be taken creatively to accentuate features and distort realities. It's more difficult to do that with drone footage or 3D walk-throughs. A more honest presentation of a property perpetuates trust, and that needs to be constantly nurtured in our industry.

The extent of such additional services may have financial implications for the seller and these should be discussed in detail when a mandate is signed between seller and agent. Clearly negotiate not only the commission payable but the role-players in the property sale. There may be home-stagers, photographers, assistants who conduct viewings and more. Sellers should know who will be accessing their property and who will be paying for their services.



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Home-staging services

Some agents offer home-staging services which help to present the property in the best possible light. And your agent will always offer verbal and written recommendations, which may be as simple as some decluttering and a good clean, or may include advice on minor repairs and maintenance that needs to be done.

Putting your house on show does not necessarily ensure that it will sell, though sometimes with multiple buyers in a show-house at one time, there may be an element of competition that can lead to healthy offers and positive negotiations. Time-

on-market and the condition / features of a property are what affect property prices the most.

If properties are priced to sell and agents are accurately matching buyers with available properties, show-houses may not even be needed, but every buyer will want time in your home. That is where they make their decision and that is not going to change.

A show-house is a good way to cast a wide net for prospective buyers, but what is imperative for a quicker sale is an agent with a strong network who knows what their buyers are looking for and can accurately match them to the right property.

ABOUT PAUL STEVENS

Since 2013, Paul Stevens has been the CEO of Just Property Group Holding (Pty) Ltd which controls an international group of property franchises specialising in residential sales, rentals and management. He joined as a franchisee in 2003 and now, as CEO, drives the strategic direction of the Just Property brand with his charismatic optimism. He is also actively involved in the evolution of the South African property landscape, working closely with high-level industry stakeholders.

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