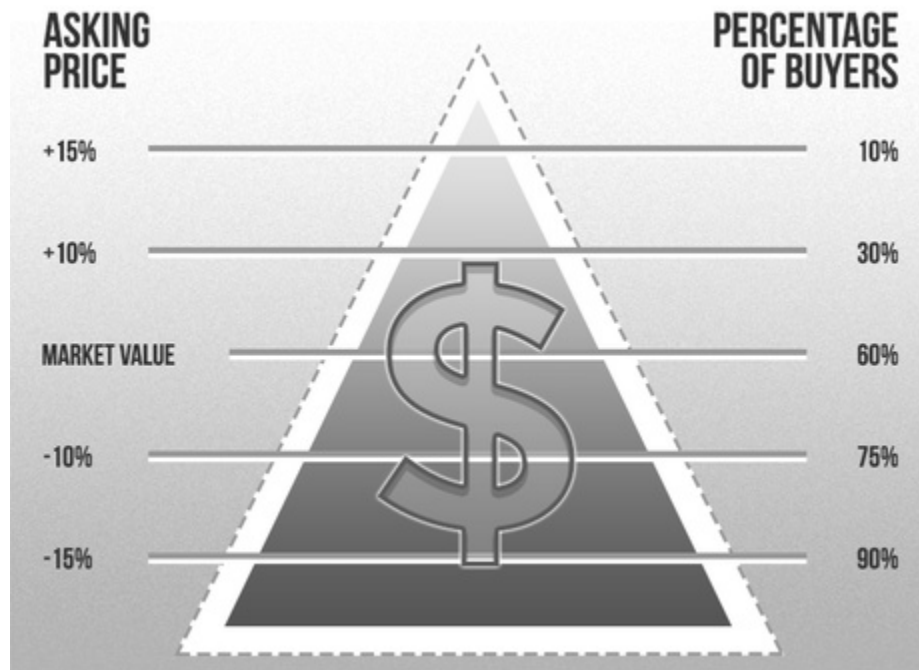


Pricing a home for sale is as much art as science, but there are a few truisms that never change.

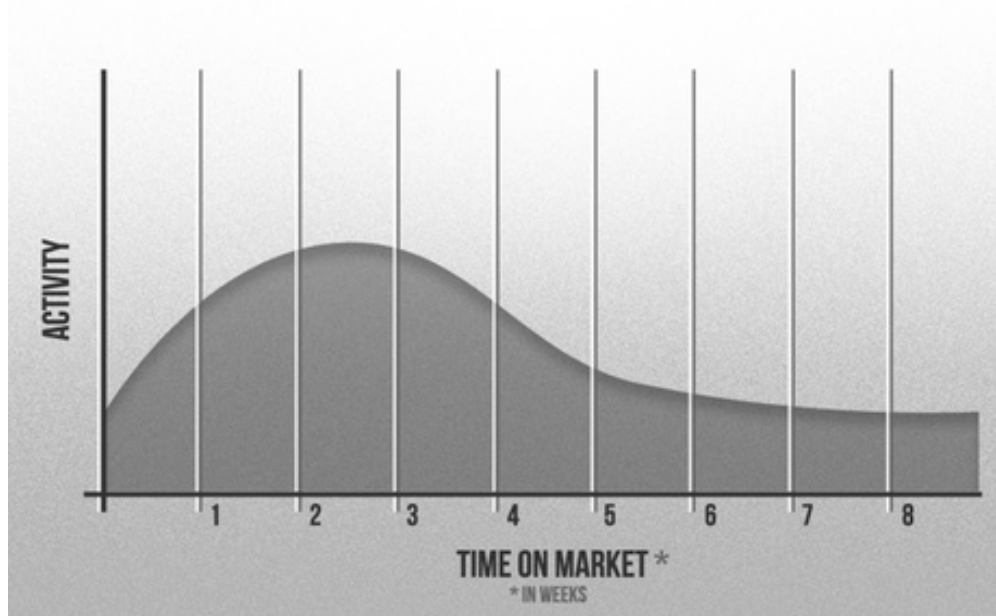
- Fair market value attracts buyers, overpricing never does.
- The first two weeks of marketing are crucial.
- The market never lies, but it can change its mind.



Fair market value is what a willing buyer and a willing seller agree by contract is a fair price for the home. Values can be impacted by a wide range of reasons but the two largest are location and condition. Generally, fair market value can be determined by comparables - other similar homes that have sold or are currently for sale in the same area.

Sellers often view their homes as special which tempts them to put a higher price on the home, believing they can always come down later, but that's a serious mistake.

Overpricing prevents the very buyers who are eligible to buy the home from ever seeing it. Most buyers shop by price range, and look for the best value in that range.



Your best chance of selling your home is in the first two weeks of marketing. Your home is fresh and exciting to buyers and to their agents.

With a sign in the yard, a description in the local Multiple Listing Service, distribution across the Internet, open houses, broker's caravan, ads, and email blasts to your listing agent's buyers, your home will get the greatest flurry of attention and interest in the first two weeks.

If you don't get many showings or offers, you've probably overpriced your home, and it's not comparing well to the competition. Since you can't change the location, you'll have to improve the home's condition or lower the price.

Consult with your agent and ask for feedback. Perhaps you can do a little more to spruce up your home's curb appeal, or perhaps stage the interior to better advantage.

The market can always change its mind and give your home another chance, but by then you've lost precious time and perhaps allowed a stigma to cloud your home's value.

Intelligent pricing isn't about getting the most for your home – it's about getting your home sold quickly at fair market value.

Plenty of sellers have visited online home valuation sites such as Zillow, Trulia, eAppraisal, and others only to be shocked at the value of their homes.

Most sellers are pleased when the values appear higher than they expected, but many online valuations come in far lower.

Online Valuations

Estimating a home's market value is far from an exact science. What these sites attempt to do is provide greater transparency to homebuyers and sellers by making data derived from public records, more...public. They publish what you paid for your home and how much you pay in taxes. Many have satellite views so accurate they can spot your cat laying on the front porch.

How do they do it? Home valuation sites contract with major title companies such as First American to obtain county tax roll data. All property is registered with the county for property taxing purposes. They also find ways to become members of local multiple listing services, which are either subsidiaries of real estate associations or owned by local real estate brokers. That way, they have access to listing data.

Between tax roll data and listing data, home valuation sites apply their own secret sauce, or algorithm to come up with "zestimates" or approximate values of what homes are worth.

Sometimes the results are spot on, but they can also be terribly inaccurate. First, transaction data has to be recorded with the county, which could take weeks. But, what alters the algorithm most is that properties not currently on the market are included in the data. The algorithms can't possibly show whether or not a home has been updated, how well it's maintained, or esoteric values such as curb appeal and views.

For that reason, online valuations should be used only as one of many tools to estimate a home's value.

Ask your real estate professional for their expert analysis

Ask your real estate professional for a comparative market analysis, or CMA. He or she can show you the most recent listings and sold comparables, accurate to within hours or a few days at most.