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News To Move You Forward

Brought to you by Jill Scheppler, Bob McManus, Nicole Ellis & Angie Domine

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Make Summer Vacations Affordable Again

Planning a summer vacation can be great fun—until you start adding up the expenses of everything you'd like to do. Air travel often comes with sticker shock. Gassing the car feels tantamount to paying the mortgage. Many hotels are prohibitively expensive.

But don't let travel costs interfere with a memorable vacation. There are many alternatives, and some of them are quite affordable—like packing cereal or breakfast bars to eliminate expensive restaurant breakfasts. In *SmarterTravel*, Ed Hewitt offers other good ideas, like setting up a dedicated bank account and depositing funds regularly. Hewitt reminds us that when deposits are consistent, even small amounts add up. He also recommends getting rid of stuff you don't need and putting the profits into your travel fund immediately. A garage sale, eBay, or Craigslist might just be your ticket to travel. *Forbes* offers additional excellent suggestions. The list below summarizes the wisdom revealed in Ginger Dean's column.

1. Apply for a rewards credit card—and use it to save.
2. If you're flying, pack only carry-ons to avoid checked-luggage fees.
3. Plan and prepay for excursions.
4. Book travel and accommodations separately to discover more deals.
5. Choose the second-best thing.

Of course, everything can still add up to more than you'd like to spend (or more dollars than you have in your account). If the budget is impossible to beat, why not discover your own city's secret delights and plan a stay-cation? It just might be the best summer vacation ever.

Are You Selling Your Home? Get My Free Guide



First impressions count. So if your home isn't looking its best, you could fail to get the best price for it.

Put that problem right by requesting the free report "Great Ideas for Quick, Easy Fixes That Will Help Your Home Sell."

Just call me at 715-387-1122 and I'll send it right out to you.

Want to Sell Your Home Faster? Try These Tips

When you're getting ready to list your house, the goal isn't just to sell—it's to sell quickly! The longer your house is on the market, the less likely it is to fetch top dollar.

Want to sell your house as quickly as possible? These tips are essential.

Hire a real estate agent and follow their advice

Some sellers are tempted to go it alone. But for a quick sale that maximizes profit, go with a real estate agent—and listen to their suggestions. Their market knowledge is invaluable when it comes to pricing and marketing your home.

Boost your curb appeal

Give your front door a fresh coat of paint (punchy red, blue, or yellow is a nice way to switch it up), add hanging baskets and planters to your front stoop, and resod your lawn. A home that looks well cared for is more inviting to prospective buyers.

Stage it

If you really want to sell fast and you have the budget required, allow a professional stager to come and work their magic. Can't swing the cost? Borrow some of their tricks: Get rid of all personal items, use mirrors to create the illusion of light and space, add throw pillows and blankets to seating, and put fresh flowers or small potted plants in each room.

Be flexible

Selling fast means maximizing the number of buyers coming to see your house, so be willing to vacate at a moment's notice. Work with your agent to create as many viewing times as possible.

News To Move You Forward

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Learn the Language of Lighting to Enhance Your Living Space

A beautifully lit home is warm and welcoming. A distinctive glow can set the scene, enhance a room, highlight a detail, or make a workspace downright workable. But lighting has a language all its own.

Do you know the lingo? Flush, recessed, pendant, starbursts, pots ... the list goes on. Where should you begin?

In a recent *houselogic* article, columnist Emily Dunham writes, "... lighting can be a bear to understand. The world has its own language (know what lumens and Kelvins are?), and increasing costs can make decisions intimidating." Dunham notes that LED lights can cost as much as \$35, and Apple sells a new number that goes for about \$65.

But with careful planning, you can light up your life and go easy on the budget. Here's a quick lighting language lesson to get started.

Kelvin is a scale of measurement for the "color" a light produces.

Wattage tells you how much electricity a bulb consumes.

Lumens are the amount of light or brightness you get from a bulb.

The next important lesson is lighting layers. Since every room has different lighting requirements, it's important to think in these three layers: ambient, task and accent.

Ambient is the general lighting in a room, often coming from overhead. Task lighting illuminates an area where a particular task is completed. Accent lighting highlights something to which you want to draw attention.

Think of the activities you do in each room and consider the options. For example, in the kitchen, you'll want to avoid overhead lights that create shadows on the counters. Instead, choose side lights or under-the-cabinet lights to illuminate the tasks at hand.

The size of your room also dictates the lighting you need. It's wise to use at least two types of lighting to create the ideal effect.

Now that you know the basics, go shed some light!

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

Ask the Agent: Do I Need to Stage My Home?

Home staging prepares a private residence to make it appealing to the greatest number of potential buyers. The goal is to help the home sell as quickly as possible at the best possible price. With this in mind, it is often a good idea to stage your home. A professional stager will recommend what items should be removed and what décor and furnishings should be added. Staging removes distracting clutter or personal items and creates a clean, inviting atmosphere. The stager's finishing touches will help create a space that buyers can envision as their own. If your home is vacant, it may be particularly difficult for buyers to see it as livable space. The empty rooms can come across as cold and uninviting. Staging it with rented items can give your home greater appeal. If you are considering putting your home on the market, your real estate professional can advise you on whether staging would be appropriate for your property.

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