

90 Days Before You Sell

What seasoned vendors quietly do in the three months before a campaign goes live, to obtain the result their property deserves.

BY NAT GORDON

Property Consumer Advocate, PROPOHOLIC

Welcome

Why 90 days, and not next weekend.

Most homes are sold in a hurry. The decision is made, the agent is appointed within a fortnight, the photos are taken almost immediately, and the campaign goes to market before anyone has stopped to ask whether the strategy is right, the agent is the right fit, or the home is actually ready to be seen.

After 30 years in real estate and construction, 20 of those running an agency, we have watched the difference between a fast sale and a strong sale come down to one thing more often than any other: the quiet work done in the three months before a property hits the portals.

This guide is a calm, practical guide for that work. It is part of the toolkit we use with our own clients who are looking to sell. At any stage, if you need extra guidance from us, please reach out; we are here for every stage of your property lifecycle, at no extra cost.

We have organised it into three phases: Strategy, Preparation, and Campaign. Each phase answers a different question, in a different sequence, with a different mindset.

"The headline price is set by the market. The result you actually walk away with is set by the work you do in the months before the market sees it."

- Nat Gordon



How to use this guide

Three phases. One sale.

Each phase is a chapter. Inside each chapter you will find a checklist you can work through at your own pace. Print the checklists, tick them off, and you will arrive at your first open home with the home presenting well, the strategy clear, and the agent matched to the property rather than the other way around.



PHASE ONE

Strategy

Days 90 to 61

Decide what you are selling, who is most likely to buy it, and what the right campaign looks like. Research and shortlist agents based on evidence, not the highest appraisal in the room.

PHASE TWO

Preparation

Days 60 to 31

Considered improvements, sensible repairs, optimised presentation. The point is not to renovate; it is to remove every reason a buyer can find to discount the price.

PHASE THREE

Campaign

Days 30 to 0

Final styling, photography, marketing copy and the open-home rhythm. The home is now a product, and the market receives one, well-executed first impression.

PHASE ONE

Strategy

Days 90 to 61

The work nobody can see, that decides almost everything that comes next.

DAYS 90 TO 61 / STRATEGIC PHASE

Set the strategy before you talk to a single agent.

The strategic phase is about clarity. What does the market reward in your suburb right now. Who is most likely to walk through your front door. What is the result you are actually trying to achieve, beyond the headline number.

Get this right, and the rest of the campaign almost runs itself. Get this wrong, and no amount of styling or marketing spend will fix reduced buyer demand, and ultimately a lower sale price.

STRATEGIC GROUNDWORK

- Define your sale: timing, target price, must-have terms, and the trade-offs you will accept.
- Pull recent comparable sales for your suburb (last six months, similar property profile).
- Identify the most likely buyer: family upgrader, downsizer, investor, first-home buyer.
- Decide whether to sell first then buy, or buy first then sell, and price each path.
- Confirm finance position with a broker if a bridge or simultaneous settlement is on the table.
- Brief a solicitor or conveyancer early so the contract is ready to go when needed.



DAYS 90 TO 61 / STRATEGIC PHASE

Choose the agent on evidence, not on appraisal.

An agent's appraisal is simply a sales pitch. Vendors frequently make decisions on the agent based on who quotes the highest price, which is generally a mistake. The price your property will achieve is shaped by selecting the best agent for your property, your buyer pool and how well your campaign is structured and executed, not the number quoted by the agent.

Treat agent selection as a tender process. Three agents, the same brief, written-down answers. Then compare what they recommend, not just what they predict.

AGENT SELECTION

- Shortlist three agents who have sold comparable properties in your suburb in the last twelve months.
- Ask each agent for their last ten sales: list price, sale price, days on market, and sale method.
- Have each agent walk through your home and email a written campaign recommendation.
- Compare their pricing logic, not their numbers. The agent with the best logic usually has the best result.
- Check their commission, marketing spend, conjunctural terms, and exit clause carefully.
- Read the agency agreement before you sign. Look for the term, the cooling-off, and the marketing schedule.
- Ask each agent how they handle low-ball offers and what their negotiation script looks like.

WHAT TO INSIST ON IN THE WRITTEN BRIEF

- Pricing strategy: is your suburb responding to price-guided campaigns, expressions of interest, or auction.
- Marketing schedule: when do photos run, when is the listing live, when are inspections held.
- Buyer match: who is the agent talking to right now who could buy your property.
- The honest list of what would lift the price, and what would not.

PHASE TWO

Preparation

Days 60 to 31

Considered updates that remove every reason a buyer can find to discount the price.

DAYS 60 TO 31 / PREPARATION PHASE

Spend on the things buyers cannot un-see.

Buyers cannot un-see a tired kitchen, a stained carpet, a scuffed wall, or a garden that has been left to its own devices. Most of these are inexpensive to fix and disproportionately expensive to leave alone.

We do not recommend full renovations as a campaign tactic. We recommend smart, surgical works that lift the home out of the comparison set just enough that buyers reach for the upper end of the price range, not the lower.

INTERIOR WORKS

- Create a condition report for your home. Mark scuffs, chips, tired paint, sticking doors, dripping taps.
- Re-paint where rooms are tired. Soft Warm Whites such as Dulux Natural White or Snowy Mountains Quarter lift photos and read well to a wide audience.
- Replace dated light fittings with simple, contemporary fixtures. Warm-white globes, never cool blue.
- Re-grout, re-silicon, and detail every wet area. Bathrooms decide more sales than people realise.
- Steam-clean carpets and consider replacing if the wear is obvious in photos.
- Sand and re-seal timber floors if they show heavy traffic patterns.
- Check that your home is compliant. Items such as smoke alarms and pool fencing are required for a smooth sale.



DAYS 60 TO 31 / PREPARATION PHASE

The exterior carries more weight than people think.

A buyer makes their first decision before they reach the front door. The kerb tells them whether the home has been loved or left, whether the campaign is a serious one, and whether the inside is worth their time.

IF YOU LIVE IN A HOUSE

- Wash the windows and clear the gutters.
- Pressure-wash driveways, paths and fencing.
- Mow, edge, weed and refresh garden beds.
- Add seasonal plants near the entrance.
- Move bins out of sight on photo and inspection days.
- Repaint or sand the front gate if it is chipped.
- Fit fresh exterior globes and leave them on for evening drive-bys.
- Empty the letterbox so the home looks lived in.

IF YOU LIVE IN AN APARTMENT

- Polish every glass surface, balustrade and window.
- Sweep the entry path or common hallway.
- Ask strata to arrange for common gardens to be tended.
- Declutter the foyer and lobby first impression.
- Add a few potted plants to the balcony.
- Tidy the outdoor table; remove clutter.
- Keep the balcony free of laundry during the campaign.
- Open every blind to let the light in.

KEY ROOMS THAT MOVE THE NEEDLE

- Kitchen: clear every counter, swap dated handles, replace pendants, fresh herbs in a vase.
- Bathroom: spotless surfaces, colour-coded luxurious towels, decanted toiletries, a small vase of flowers.
- Main bedroom: pared-back layout, hotel-style linen, create a calm mood by turning on bedside lamps.
- Living room: lead with the hero feature (view, fireplace, light), edit furniture for clear walk-throughs.
- Outdoor area: stage it as a living room. Use outdoor lounges with an area rug and potted plants.



PHASE THREE

Campaign

Days 30 to 0

The home is a product now. The market gets one first impression. Make it count.

DAYS 30 TO 0 / CAMPAIGN PHASE

Photography sets the ceiling.

Almost every buyer sees your home on a phone before they see it in person. The photos are the campaign. If they are mediocre, the inspection traffic is mediocre, and the price guide drifts down quickly.

Treat photo day with the same care you would a wedding. Stylist on site, dedicated cleaner the day before, fresh flowers and a calm house. Consider the time the lighting is best in your home and have a contingency for dreary weather.

PHOTO DAY

- Brief and book a property stylist (or sign off on the agent's stylist of choice).
- Confirm photography date and the agent's preferred shot list.
- Order fresh florals; choose neutrals that read well in photographs.
- Hide every cable, remote, charger, and pet bowl on the morning.
- Open every blind and curtain; turn on every lamp.
- Have one person responsible for staging each room before the camera arrives.
- Schedule the shoot to match natural light. North-facing rooms shoot best mid-morning.



DAYS 30 TO 0 / CAMPAIGN PHASE

Inspections are theatre. Rehearse them.

Open homes and private inspections look casual. They are not. They are the most important hour blocks of the entire campaign. Every detail counts, every time.

INSPECTION DAY

- Half an hour before: open every blind, turn on every light, put fresh towels and flowers in place.
- Set the temperature comfortably. Cool in summer, warm in winter, never stuffy.
- Brew coffee or place a candle with a warm scent. No artificial deodorisers.
- Take your pets out of the house for the inspections, and ensure there are no lingering odours. Clear bowls, beds and toys away.
- Clear the bench tops. Hide the rubbish bin. Empty the dishwasher.
- Wipe down bathroom mirrors and taps. Roll fresh towels.
- Leave music low and instrumental, or no music at all.
- Lock away anything personal: bills, jewellery, family photos that distract from the home.
- Be elsewhere during the inspection. Buyers will not speak honestly in front of you.

MID-CAMPAIGN CHECK-IN

- Obtain a written feedback summary from the agent within twenty-four hours of every inspection.
- Track inquiry numbers, inspection numbers, repeat inspections and contract requests.
- Reset price expectations honestly week by week. Listen to market feedback.



Before you sign anything

Seven questions to ask any agent.

Ask all three of your shortlisted agents the same questions, in writing if possible. The answers tell you more than any appraisal figure ever will.

What were your last ten sales in this suburb?

01 Look at list-to-sale ratio and days on market. Recent and local matters more than record-breaking.

What is your honest range for this property, in this market, this month?

02 A range gives you a better, achievable price. A single high number is a sales pitch.

Which buyers in your current database might buy this property?

03 A working agent has names. A pitching agent has a postcode and a hope.

What does your written marketing schedule look like, week by week?

04 It should include photography, copy, portal launch, social, print and inspection details.

How will you handle a low-ball offer in week one?

05 Their answer tells you how they will negotiate at week five, when it counts.

Which conjunctional or referral arrangements apply to this listing?

06 Some agents share the listing across networks. That is fine, but you need to know.

What is the termination clause if it is not working?

07 Read the agreement. Term, cooling-off and termination terms protect you, not them.



Why work with us

Independent. Experienced. Always on your side.

PROPOHOLIC is a property consumer advocacy. We are not a real estate agency, we do not list properties, and we do not earn a commission on the sale. We are paid a flat fee by agents for assisting them with the listing and the campaign, which is built into their standard fee structure. Our only job is to help you make better decisions in a process where almost everyone else around you is paid to influence the outcome.

We sit beside vendors at the start of the 90 day window and stay through to settlement. We help you shortlist agents on evidence, decide which improvements are worth the spend, brief the stylist, sense-check the marketing schedule, and read between the lines of the feedback you receive once the home is on the market.

- + Agent selection done properly. We run a tender process across local agents, compare their logic, and help you negotiate the agreement.
- + Honest advice on what to spend, and what to leave alone. Thirty years in real estate and construction means we can usually tell on a walk-through, what will earn its money back and what will not.
- + A second pair of eyes on the campaign. We read the feedback, watch the inquiry numbers, and tell you when to hold the price and when to move.
- + Complimentary services available. We can also help on the buying side, the styling, the renovation, and the move. One holistic relationship, not five suppliers.

"We can assist at any stage of the process, even if you have already spoken to agents, or engaged an agent for your sale."

- Nat Gordon

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Talk to us before you list.

We work with a small number of vendor clients at a time so we can give each campaign the attention it deserves. If you are inside the 90 day window, or thinking about being, an early conversation is the most valuable step you can take.

Reach us through propoholic.com, or email us. We do not charge you for this service, and treat your situation with the utmost respect and privacy.

WEBSITE propoholic.com

EMAIL info@propoholic.com

FOUNDER Nat Gordon, Property Consumer Advocate

SERVICES Selling. Buying. Decorating. Moving. Renovating.

- The team at PROPOHOLIC

About this guide

This playbook has been written by Nat Gordon for PROPOHOLIC. It draws on thirty years in real estate and construction, and on the work we do every week with vendors Australia-Wide.

Disclaimer

The information in this guide is general in nature. It is not personal financial, legal, or property advice, and it does not take into account your individual circumstances. Property markets, regulations, and tax treatments change. Before acting on anything in this guide, please speak with appropriately licensed professionals who can advise on your specific situation. PROPOHOLIC, its directors, employees and associates accept no liability for any action taken on the basis of the information in this guide.

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