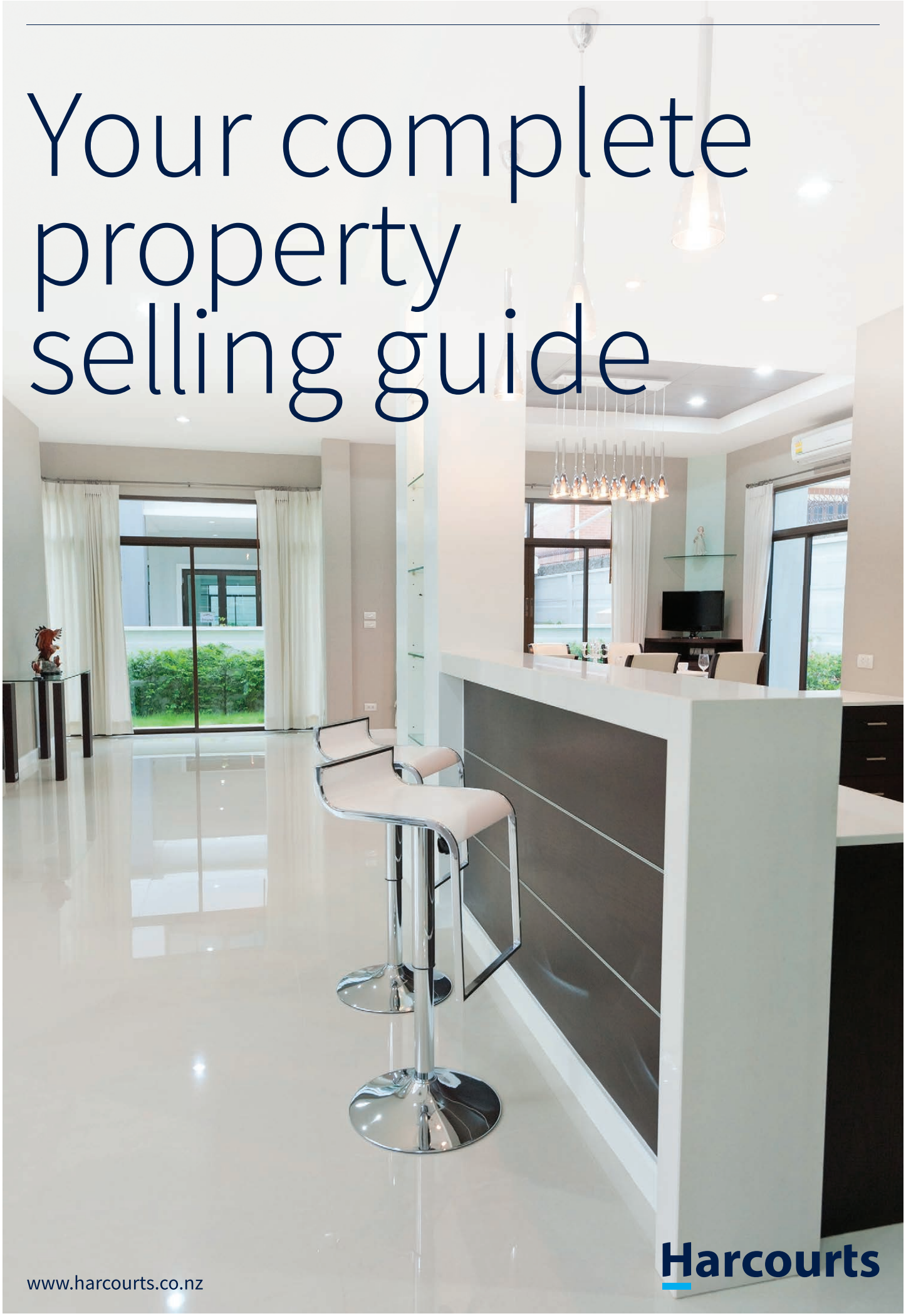
# Your complete property selling guide



www.harcourts.co.nz

Harcourts



This guide is intended for general information purposes only. The content does not take your personal circumstances into account. You should obtain independent legal and financial advice before undertaking any transaction involving real estate.

Harcourts uses reasonable endeavours to ensure the information in this guide is current and accurate. To the extent permitted by law, Harcourts makes no representations or warranties as to the accuracy, reliability, completeness or currency of the information within this guide, and the use of this guide is at your own risk. None of Landmark, its employees and any authors of this guide can be held liable for any inaccuracies, errors or omissions in this guide.

All information and material contained in this guide is copyrighted and owned by Harcourts International Limited. Except as permitted by applicable local laws, no part of this guide may in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or any other means be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or be broadcast or transmitted without the prior permission of Harcourts.

© 2015 Harcourts International Limited.

# Contents.

Selling your home can be a time consuming and stressful process. There's a lot to consider – should you buy or sell first? When is the best time to sell? How do you choose a sales consultant? What's the best way to market and sell your property? And those are only a few of the major considerations!

We want to make sure that you're well informed of the whole selling process and know what to expect every step of the way. The Harcourts Sellers Guide will cover the various processes you need to know from start to finish.


**4** When is the best time to sell?

**6** How to choose a sales consultant

**8** Marketing your property

**10** Preparing your home for sale

**12** Pricing your home for sale

**14** The best way to sell your home

**16** Technology

**18** Accepting an offer

**19** Completing the sale

**22** Harcourts Complete

# When is the best time to sell property?

There are a few factors that play a part when it comes to listing your property that won't have much to do with the time of the year. Things like personal circumstances and market conditions are going to play the biggest role in choosing when to market your property. However, if the market is right and it is time for you to sell, then it makes sense to opt for the time of year best suited to attracting buyers. Here, we take a look at the benefits of listing your property at different times of the year.

"There are merits to listing your home at several different times of the year."

## Selling in warmer months

Traditionally, spring has long been considered the best time of year to sell a property. Your garden and outdoor area will probably look their best in spring, and temperatures mean more people will be out and about and likely to look into an open home. This being said, in New Zealand, we see a lot of properties enter the market heading into autumn, with March, April and May usually attracting a large number of new listings and auctions. Whilst this means there's also a lot of buyer activity, if you're wanting to set your property apart from the crowd you might consider listing your property earlier in the year.

Listing a property around February means you'll get the jump on listings that tend to come onto the market from March onwards, and it also means you'll start to attract buyers after a long holiday period. This may target buyers who have had time off over the Christmas and New Year period and have had time to reflect on their next big move for the coming year, including buying a new property.

## Selling in cooler months

Whilst not the traditional time of year most sales consultants will tell you to list your property, winter could still be the right time of year to list your home for sale. One advantage to listing your home during the cooler months is the relative lack of competition, with other sellers holding off until the spring period. With fewer homes on the market, your property has a much better chance of standing out.

The location of your home may also play a part. If your property is within an area which snows, or is nestled at the foot of a mountain range that looks particularly beautiful in winter, you can use the season to capitalise on views and winter activities. It's also an opportunity to show how warm, comfortable and inviting your home can be in winter. Make the most of features like fire places and wood stoves, light candles, and use plush cushions and warm throws throughout living areas.

## Selling over the school holidays

There's lots of commentary on whether or not listing your property for sale during a school holiday period is a good idea. One school of thought is that this is a great time of year, with people able to view open homes and even attend auctions held mid-week. Another suggests this isn't the best time of year, with people often travelling away from home, or switching off during their downtime.

There's no real indication that school holidays have a huge impact on the success of sales.

In New Zealand, Harcourts sales figures over the past several years indicate that sales volumes tend to peak in March, most likely as market sparks back into life again after the summer holiday period. April and May are also traditionally strong months, on average across the whole country. There can also be peaks in early spring and often in November as more people try to buy or sell before Christmas.

There are merits to listing your home at several different times of the year, so ask your Harcourts sales consultant which time of year they would recommend for your home and location, as they'll be able to draw on their market insights and knowledge and make an informed suggestion for your situation.

# Why choose a Harcourts sales consultant.

When it comes to selling one of your most valuable assets, your home, it makes sense to take the time to choose a qualified and knowledgeable sales consultant who has the right tools and strategies at their disposal.

When speaking with Harcourts sales consultants, don't be afraid to ask the right questions to make sure you trust your Harcourts sales consultant and that you are confident they have the experience to sell your home quickly and for the best price.

## The following are a few things to consider

# Harcourts sales consultants are qualified.

To sell real estate in New Zealand, you need to be qualified and hold the proper valid licence issued by the Real Estate Agents Authority.

At Harcourts our sales consultants are qualified and licenced and undergo continuous professional development.

# Harcourts sales consultants are experienced.

Harcourts sales consultants don't just know all there is to know about selling real estate, they also know about your local market, average house and unit prices, what kinds of homes and even features are popular with buyers, important negotiation strategies, and how to effectively market your home.

That's why it's vital to sit down with your Harcourts sales consultant and ask detailed questions about your market, how much homes have sold for in the area, and what they'll be doing to market your property.

Your Harcourts sales consultant will be able to take you through all of this in great detail and answer any questions you might have.

# Harcourts sales consultants put people first.

It's about people. Successfully buying and selling real estate is so often about understanding human needs and aspirations. That's why Harcourts sales consultants not only receive in-depth professional training (the benchmark for the industry) but are also committed to creating meaningful and genuine personal relationships.

The huge volume of referrals and repeat business generated is proof this method works. A complete consultative approach is what makes the Harcourts way of doing things so seamless.

Alongside the trust, honesty and integrity of Harcourts' personal hallmarks, an intimate knowledge of local markets and current property trends help to establish our sales consultant's credentials. Combined with a solid work ethic and well-developed negotiation skills these qualities ensure that the Harcourts sales consultant leads the field.

# Your Harcourts sales consultant can help you to achieve the right result.

Achieving the quick sale of your property for the right price can depend on more than your Harcourts sales consultant alone. A sales consultant needs the right tools at their disposal and the support to use them effectively.

At Harcourts our sales consultants have a full range of marketing, research and technological tools available to them at all times. Working within a highly motivated team environment, the business, customer support and online services that they can draw upon are truly impressive.

It's this network that helps produce the best results. That's what helps us to achieve over 60,000 written sales every year - that's one property sold by Harcourts every 11 minutes, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.*

**Figures provided are based on data collected between 1st January 2015 to 31st December 2015 by Harcourts International Limited.*

# Our Promise

For us, all of this forms part of what we call Our Promise. Research has demonstrated that our clients expect an exceptional level of personal and professional service from Harcourts and their chosen sales consultant.

Our Promise is our way of being held accountable, and your way of assessing our performance every step of the way.

Consider it a total commitment to working together to make the whole experience easier, less stressful and far more rewarding.

Here's how we make that happen:

- Written marketing plan and calendar
- Post inspection feedback
- Regular written marketing report
- Marketing review meetings
- All offers presented in writing

# Marketing your property.

## Written marketing plan

Following initial consultation and property inspection, we will present a comprehensive marketing strategy specifically tailored for you, your property and the current market conditions. A fully-detailed marketing action plan calendar will be prepared which clearly identifies where and when all scheduled promotional activities and regular client contact will take place. Because we believe that our relationship is a partnership, your input is invaluable at this key stage.

## Post-inspection feedback

Following each visit by an individual prospective buyer and, of course, immediately after all inspections, your Harcourts sales consultant will keep you completely up-to-date on how your property was perceived, pertinent comments, price-relevant issues and prospective 'hot prospects'. Just like us, you need to know exactly what's going on at all times.

## Weekly written marketing report

This is an important tool for assessing market reaction to your property and also to identify those prospective buyers who are showing the most interest. Based on this regular information, your Harcourts sales consultant will make on-going recommendations which will maximise the effectiveness of your targeted marketing efforts.

## Marketing review meeting

It is during the initial few weeks after your property is first introduced to the market and has gained a high profile and maximum level of interest that it is most valuable to review the marketing progress to date. A frank and open discussion between you and your Harcourts sales consultant can often identify new opportunities and strategies which can build upon the original marketing plan.

## All offers presented in writing

Because it is your property, it is solely your decision whether to accept or decline a specific offer. For your consideration Harcourts sales consultant will formally present every offer received in writing so that you are better able to make an informed judgement. Obviously Harcourts sales consultant is only too happy to discuss each offer with you, but will always leave the final choice up to you without exerting any undue influence whatsoever.




OUR PROMISE
YOUR EXCLUSIVE SERVICE PLAN
Our commitment to delivering an exceptional level of service
Harcourts

# Preparing your home for sale.

Why choose to hold open homes when selling?

Open homes are one of the most effective ways of marketing a property and attracting interest from a wide variety of buyers. Some of the advantages are:

- You have plenty of time to ensure your property is tidy and ready for inspections
- You can control the viewing times
- Open homes can create plenty of activity, even in a slow market
- Interest and activity can trigger urgency with buyers
- Your Harcourts sales consultant's time is put to best and most effective use. They will have the opportunity to talk to numerous people about your property
- Comments from open home visitors can provide feedback on price, presentation, sales appeal, etc.

"Look at your home from a prospective buyer's perspective."

# Top tips for attracting potential buyers and higher offers

## De-clutter

The first tip is the simplest. It's obviously a must to clean and tidy your home before an inspection, but it's crucial to also get rid of clutter that could stand in the way of a prospective buyer picturing themselves within the home. That means getting rid of personal nick knacks and photographs, unnecessary furniture or furniture within a room not designed for that purpose, for example a bed within a space traditionally used as a living area. Even if it means putting belongings and furniture into storage until the property sells, the investment will be worth it.

## Repair

Make any aesthetic repairs well before inspection. Things as small as a chip in paint in an interior wall could detract from the overall feel for the home, so get these things up-to-date before your open home. You could also invest in updating features like tired curtains, older fixtures and fittings, or laying new turf if you have a patchy lawn.

## Style

Once clutter free, consider using a home stylist or home staging service. The results can be dramatic. Home stylists will take a look at your space, and then loan you the furniture which is the size and style best suited for your home, which will make a space look bigger, comfortable and liveable. Again, this will help potential buyers to see themselves living in the space.

## Photograph

Before even getting to your first home inspection, consider using a professional photographer to take quality, well-lit pictures of your home. After going to the trouble of updating, de-cluttering and staging your property, the last thing you want to do is turn people away before they've even inspected your home. Professional photos are taken with professional equipment, they can make spaces look bigger, well-lit and showcase them in the best possible way. Plus you benefit from the experience of someone who knows exactly how to take a photo that appeals. This way, you attract buyers looking online, scanning through ads, and looking through the paper. It's about piquing interest to attract buyers to inspect in the first place.

Your property may not need all of the above, so it's really about taking a look at your home objectively from a prospective buyer's perspective and assessing what needs to be done. What would distract you if you were inspecting the property? What would you want to replace or update if you were thinking of making an offer? If you were to say to yourself "this place is great, but…", how would you finish that sentence?

Once you've made a list of the possible things your property needs, you can employ the top four tips above to make your home a stand-out to the sea of prospective buyers out there.

# Pricing your home for sale.

The price of your home must be right. Too low and you lose money. Too high and you lose buyers. That's where the intimate local market knowledge and expertise from your Harcourts sales consultant comes in. Coupled with Harcourts' advanced information technologies this knowledge proves invaluable.

## The price of success

The most difficult task for most sellers is determining the value of their home. Many different elements can combine to create unrealistic expectations - be it uninformed and optimistic opinion, the cost of improvements a seller hopes to recover or the final amount needed to realise future plans. The best method is to study the current real estate market facts and figures. Your Harcourts sales consultant will show you comparisons of other similar homes in your area - those which have sold, those which have yet to sell and those which will represent your competition. Quite simply, the current property market determines the value of your home.

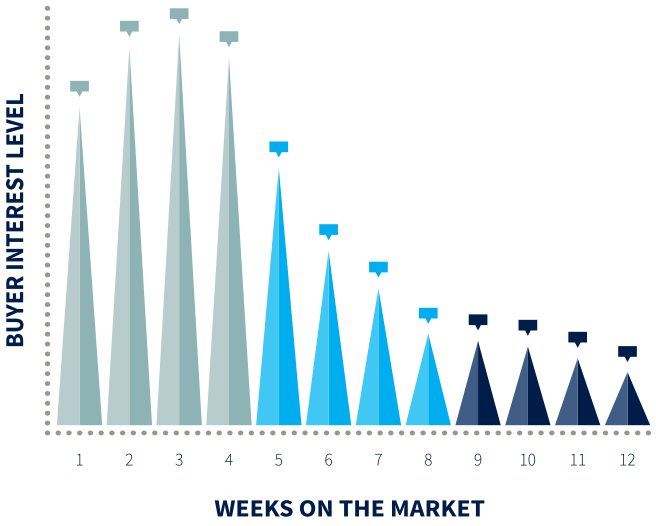
Buyers will see your home for what it is and, while they may still look, if the price is too high, they'll pass on your property for one elsewhere. This is backed by research clearly showing that properties that sell quickest also sell closest to their initial asking price.

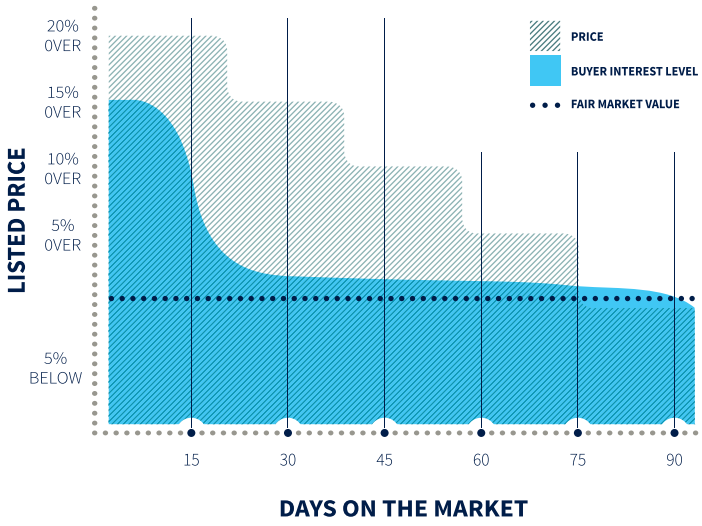
# Time limits

Buyer interest is greatest for your property within the second and third week of its entrance into the market. After this, interest falls away quite dramatically. To maximise this window of opportunity your Harcourts sales consultant will design a marketing programme that peaks during this prime period. Your property will have the highest profile for this vital time. If you have decided to market your property with a price remember that it must be valued correctly right from the outset to benefit from this initial surge of interest.

# A realistic return

It's a fact that over-priced properties take longer to sell and do not attract the optimum number of prospective buyers, particularly during the prime selling period. The longer properties sit on the market the lower price they achieve. After three or more months this can often be 20% to 25% less. To ensure this doesn't happen, your Harcourts sales consultant has all the relevant information necessary to help you price your property correctly for the best return.



# The best way to sell your home.

With market conditions constantly changing and no two properties ever the same there's never one 'tried and true' method of selling. The type of property you wish to sell and the timeframe in which you want to do it ultimately determines the most appropriate and effective marketing strategy.

Harcourts sales consultants are top achievers, no matter what it takes. And, while the result should always be what's best for you, that outcome can be achieved in a number of different ways.

"The best option is listing exclusively with one company."

## Sole Listing

By exclusively signing with Harcourts your home is immediately entered into our extensive international database, gaining exposure to over 5,200 Harcourts sales consultants in over 790 offices internationally.

It is also featured on our website. Exclusive listing avoids the frustrations and lack of action so often experienced when dealing with a number of different real estate companies. It sidesteps the conflicting agendas and different procedures and maintains a strong brand grounding for your property. Most importantly, listing your home with Harcourts ensures your home is backed with the best possible resources come sale time.

## Auction

The advantages of the auction are numerous. You set the terms, conditions and deadline. You agree on an undisclosed minimum reserve price, with no pressure to sell if the property fetches a lower than expected bid. There's also the very real possibility of acquiring a higher price – especially if keen buyer interest promotes competition. You'll also attract only genuinely interested, cash-in-hand buyers with no subject-to-sale or subject-to-finance uncertainty.

There is even the opportunity to accept offers prior to auction day. A positive statistical sales rate together with property being on the market for such a short time have many regarding auctions as the most successful 'non-price' method of selling. Auction marketing motivates genuine buyers to act. It's also the least disruptive and intrusive method because you only need open your home at times which suit you best.

## Tender

This method of marketing creates a high profile for your property and establishes a competitive environment without having to list a price. You also set the terms, conditions and deadline. Prospective buyers become emotionally involved before they consider price and have only one opportunity to put forward their most competitive bid. You have the opportunity to accept, decline or continue negotiations with any interested party. It's your choice. You're in control. Increased enquiries and inspections are often generated by this sales strategy. All tender details remain undisclosed and absolutely confidential.

## General listing

Getting many people from different real estate companies working for you may sound great but in reality it can be confusing and frustrating. The lack of co-ordination, cohesion and focus is often more disruptive than advantageous as personality and ego conflicts can add to the stress and sense of dislocation sellers sometimes experience.

For the maximum amount of time, effort and resources spent on your property the best option is listing exclusively with one company. You'll then have your appointed Harcourts sales consultant assume total responsibility for the successful sale of your home.

## Private Treaty

Private Treaty is where you sell your home privately. You will then negotiate the terms directly with prospective buyers. Private Treaty allows for greater flexibility for both you and the buyer as certain conditions can be negotiated into the contract at your request or the request of the prospective buyer, such as subject to building and pest inspections, or finance.

# Technology.

With successful real estate businesses based around establishing excellent personal and professional relationships, strong paths of communication are a necessity. Due to the highest level of technological support, we have the ability to access vital information and communicate this to prospective purchasers. It's this capability that keeps Harcourts on the cutting edge of technology-based support.

## Information at your fingertips

The Harcourts website receives hundreds of thousands of unique visitors every month. These aren't just domestic enquiries – there are also a large number of international hits.

The number of people who log on in search of property is only getting larger. The majority of these prospective buyers shop at their leisure and have definite ideas about exactly where they want to live, what kind of home they want and what they can afford to buy.

The information provided on the Harcourts website is comprehensive, to say the least. It offers a detailed property search with virtual and video property tours. And that's just the start.

## The highest visibility – from the moment you list

List your property with Harcourts and it will be entered into our own listing system, Harcourts One. Harcourts One spans every single office in our group and enables buyers and sellers to be matched far more effectively.

Of course your home will also be automatically listed on our website. The comprehensive detail of each listing enables potential national and international buyers an ease of access that's unparalleled.

With just a few clicks of the mouse a virtual tour of your property affords these buyers the opportunity to visit without ever leaving their computer.

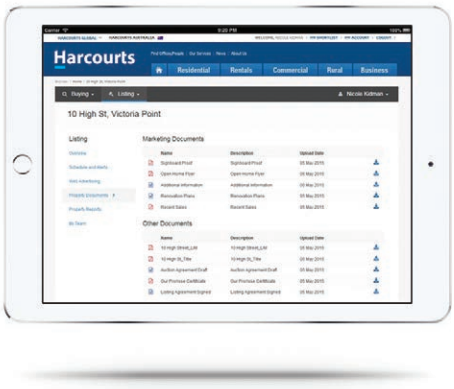
## A buyer-seller matching system that can't be beaten

Harcourts also offers the services of your own personal account online. This is an intelligent, reliable system that automates the process of matching buyers with properties that meet their criteria. And it's all done fast, automatically and confidentially online.

## Mobile technology – your Client Login

The Harcourts Client Login service is a portal for exclusive Harcourts clients to use to keep up-to-date with everything that is happening with your property. The Harcourts Client Login gives each client a unique login for every one of the properties you are listing for sale or lease, enabling you to access a range of data, documents and statistics on each.

The tool will house the marketing plan and calendar, marketing reports and feedback about a property. In addition to this all of the documents relating to the property will be held here, and you will be able to see how your property is performing on the various real estate portals where your property is marketed.





# Accepting an offer.

At Harcourts, our commitment to you is to bring you each offer formally in writing. We will do this by providing potential buyers with a contract, and will give both you and the potential buyer the opportunity to add conditions when negotiating the sale of your property.

## Common conditions of sale are:

- Finance
- A builder's report
- Sale of another property
- Solicitor's approval of the contract
- Specialist inspection or approval
- Due Diligence Investigation of the property and title

Your Harcourts sales consultant will have the buyer sign a standard approved contract with their offer and any conditions of sale either you or the buyer has requested. Once this process has been completed your Harcourts sales consultant will check whether any other interested parties are putting in an offer. This system ensures it remains fair to all parties in a multiple offer situation.

As the seller, you can then accept the offer, reject it or counter sign it. Counter signing usually occurs when you are not satisfied with the price offered and/or conditions included and wish to subsequently alter them. The contract will then be brought back to the buyer for their consideration.

If accepted, the buyer will initial your alterations and the property is under offer subject to any conditions that the contract may contain. Alternatively the buyer also has the right to counter sign. Your Harcourts sales consultant will continue negotiations between you and the buyer until you are both in agreement.

## After an offer is accepted

Once an offer has been accepted and all parties have signed the contract, the buyer will be asked to pay a deposit. This usually equates to 10% of the purchase price.

Once paid, this deposit is held in a trust account until the contract becomes unconditional in all respects. It is then paid to you. If the contract does not become unconditional the deposit will be repaid to the buyer.

# Completing the sale.

Settlement generally takes place between you and the buyer and your legal/financial representatives. Officially, it's where ownership passes from you to the buyer, and the balance of the sale price is paid to you or your financial institution.

As the seller, you would have set the settlement date within the contract of sale. Settlement usually occurs 30-90 days after the contract has been signed, depending on what has been agreed upon.

The buyer is entitled to inspect the property at a reasonable time the week prior to settlement, and as the seller, on settlement you must hand the property over in the same condition in which it was inspected.

On the day of settlement your solicitor or conveyancer will exchange the following with the buyers solicitor:

- Monies
- Transfer documentation
- Keys to the property

Once settlement has been completed, your solicitor will register your discharge of mortgage and transfer and the buyer's solicitor will register the necessary documentation e.g. transfer, mortgage with Land Information NZ.

Possession of the property usually takes place on the settlement day once settlement has been completed, although you and the buyer can agree for these dates to be different.

The next steps are to ensure you're well prepared for the move to your new home.

For more information about selling a property visit: www.reaa.govt.nz/forbuyersandsellers


“When preparing to move there are always so many things to organise and remember. Often it’s the little things that make all the difference.”
Complete
by Harcourts



# Harcourts Complete.

Once the sale is complete, it's now time to settle into your new home! When preparing to move there are always so many things to organise and remember. Often it's the little things that make all the difference.

Use our handy checklist to help make the whole process smooth and stress-free!

Wouldn't it be great if someone could organise for the transfer and connection of your power, water and other utilities for you? Well now they can. Through our range of Harcourts Complete services we can organise the connection of all of your utilities and pay TV, and the disconnection of these services from your old home, taking the hassle out of moving.

Harcourts is committed to providing a complete experience for you. Whether you're buying, selling, renting or if we are managing your property you have access to our Harcourts Complete service. This service is free and provides all the relevant real estate services that you will require before, during or after your transaction. We can take care of a wide range of services including arranging your connections, home loans and insurance. Harcourts Complete also provides relevant real estate information that assists with moving and will also keep you up to date with what is happening in your local market.

Complete
by Harcourts

## Remember to cancel

- ☐ Newspaper and/or milk delivery
- ☐ Telephone, internet and cable TV
- ☐ Gas, water and electricity (arrange a final meter reading)

## Organise for moving day

- ☐ Obtain supply of boxes (the supermarket can be one supplier)
- ☐ Get packaging tape and heavy marker pens
- ☐ Arrange for furniture removal (get quote, confirm time)
- ☐ Arrange care of your children on moving day
- ☐ Make suitable arrangements for any pets
- ☐ Arrange transit insurance and contents and fire insurance for your new home
- ☐ Organise shifting times with the buyer of your old property and the seller of your new one

## Notify your change of address to

- ☐ Bank, credit card and charge card companies
- ☐ Post office for redirection of mail
- ☐ Elections registrar
- ☐ Registrar of motor vehicles and drivers license
- ☐ Tax department
- ☐ Insurance companies
- ☐ Hire purchase or finance companies
- ☐ Investment companies
- ☐ Local council
- ☐ Clubs and organisations
- ☐ Police (if you own and store firearms)
- ☐ Friends and relatives
- ☐ Magazine subscriptions
- ☐ Doctor, dentist, accountant, lawyer

## Don't forget

- ☐ Clean the stove and defrost the fridge/freezer
- ☐ Tidy the yard
- ☐ Ensure that the chattels that have been sold with the property aren't accidentally packed
- ☐ Disconnect all appliances
- ☐ Disconnect the TV aerial
- ☐ Return any borrowed items
- ☐ Throw out items that you don't intend taking with you
- ☐ List valuable items for special care when moving
- ☐ Advise removal company of dangerous goods being moved (i.e. ammunition, petrol, spirits, chemicals)
- ☐ Securely pack all jewellery, money, special documents and papers (i.e. legal, tax, insurance etc)
- ☐ Set aside items you will need on the day of the move so you can take them with you (i.e. food, drinks, cleaning products)
- ☐ Pack each room leaving the boxes stacked and labelled with the room they are to be moved to. It is a good idea to write on each box a list of its general content
- ☐ Clearly label boxes containing breakables as 'fragile' and identify these items to the removal people
- ☐ Pot and pack away the plants and cuttings you're taking
- ☐ Explain your packing procedure to the removal people and be at your new home when they arrive

## Don't...

- ☐ Put breakables or liquid filled containers in drawers
- ☐ Overload drawers and make furniture too heavy to move (too much weight can damage furniture)
- ☐ Move netting, barbed wire, timber, wood, coal etc without special arrangements being made
- ☐ Store perishable goods where they might be overlooked

## Make arrangements to

- ☐ See your solicitor or conveyancer to sign transfer documents / mortgage discharge documents
- ☐ Enrol children in new school
- ☐ Coordinate the forwarding of any files from the children's previous school to their new one

## Organise for your new home

- ☐ Contact Harcourts Complete to connect your gas, electricity and telephone. Ask your Harcourts sales consultant for details
- ☐ Newspaper delivery
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Internet and cable TV connection
- ☐ Gas, electricity and water

## The week before moving

- ☐ Remind and confirm dates, times and locations for furniture removal company
- ☐ Confirm moving in/moving out details and key exchange with your Harcourts sales consultant
- ☐ Say goodbye to neighbours

## One last check

- ☐ Nothing left behind?
- ☐ No clothes at the dry cleaners?
- ☐ No gear stored away from your property?
- ☐ Electricity, gas and telephone disconnected?
- ☐ Water turned off and no taps left running?
- ☐ Windows and doors latched?
- ☐ Keys with solicitor (if appropriate)?

## After it's all over

- ☐ Have spare keys cut for your new home
- ☐ Make an insurance claim if any damage has occurred during the move
- ☐ Teach children how to get to their new school
- ☐ Enjoy your new home and keep in touch. We'd love to hear how you're going

# Your complete property selling guide

www.harcourts.co.nz

Harcourts