

REALTOR

THE BUSINESS TOOL FOR REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS

This article was published on: **04/01/2007**

BLANCHE EVANS

Into focus

Better Property Photos in a Snap

Use listing photos to attract — not distract — buyers. Otherwise, you might find your snapshots on a blog of real estate's worst photos.

BY BLANCHE EVANS



Real estate professionals are paid to market sellers' homes, but far too many are failing to take advantage of one of the most basic marketing tools available — photographs. In fact, many pros are doing sellers a disservice by taking shoddy pictures of the property and posting them online.

A Canadian real estate practitioner is trying to tackle this troubling issue with humor on his [blog](#). "If a picture is worth a thousand words, what are you saying about your seller's home?" Norm Fisher asks.

Fisher created a virtual tour, complete with dead-pan commentary, of the worst home pictures he's seen on the Web. These photos do anything but help sell the home, from blurry photos taken of messy bedrooms to bathroom shots featuring empty toilet-paper rolls. "I'm about to add the latest — a cat licking its paws on top of the kitchen counter," Fisher says.

Although Fisher's gallery of gaffes aims to convince sellers to list with him, it also serves as a lesson to all real estate practitioners: Learn how to use a camera!

"It's been a pet peeve of mine for years," says self-taught photographer Fisher about bad property photos. "So many agents and sellers don't seem able to recognize that these homes are being marketed so poorly."

Make It Picture Perfect

To ensure that your photos don't end up in Fisher's hall of shame, follow some of his pointers:

1. Prepare the scene. If you have to move the TV remote and clean up the newspapers, do it. And, please, put the toilet seat down before you take a picture of a bathroom.

- 2. Let there be light.** Turn on all the lights and open window coverings to let natural light in for better exposures. But don't point the camera at a light source. It'll ruin your photograph.
- 3. Know thy camera.** Learn your camera's instruction manual so you know how to use your camera properly. Then you'll know what camera settings you should be using and how to prevent blurry or dark photos.
- 4. Remove and clean.** Remove clutter and excess furniture — this includes people in your photo. For example, Fisher just recently found an MLS photo of a living room with an old man sleeping in a recliner.
- 5. Learn photo-editing software.** Crop photos to focus on the property's selling points.
- 6. Click away.** Take many photos. Fisher will spend about two hours taking property photos for a listing and he'll even return a second time for one or two retakes, if needed. The more photos you take, the more to choose from.
- 7. Arm yourself with the right equipment.** A point-and-shoot digital camera won't capture a 9 by 9 room — you'll need a wide angle lens to get more out of the scene. A few years ago, Fisher bought a digital single lens reflex camera and added lenses and flashes to his camera. He eventually added a super wide angle lens and high quality flash.

“It's a long-term learning process,” Fisher says. “I wouldn't call myself a photographer, but I've learned to compose a shot and look through the viewfinder and see what's there.”

So next time you point-and-shoot: Make sure you know exactly what's in your frame. Otherwise, you may find your photos displayed in Fisher's “[Unbelievably Bad Real Estate Photography Hall of Fame](#).”

For tips on buying a digital camera, read REALTOR® Magazine Online's [TechWatch](#) or [Buyer's Guide](#) columns on the topic.

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07/02/2008 03:30 PM