

What makes a home sell?

Edgar's guide to presentation, promotion, price and negotiation

Natgroup CEO Edgar Natolo shares the lessons behind preparing a property, understanding buyer behaviour and choosing an agent who will negotiate for you.

When a property has been listed for weeks without the expected offers, it is easy to blame the market.

For Edgar Natolo, CEO and founder of Natgroup, the first step is to examine three things: presentation, promotion and price.

Edgar began his real estate career in 1991 and founded Natgroup in 1997. With decades of experience across the Gold Coast, Logan and Brisbane, he has worked through property booms, quieter markets and changing buyer expectations.

"For me, it's always the three Ps," he says. "The price gets affected by the first two."

Drawing on thousands of property sales by Edgar and his team, along with 42 renovations completed with Brett, his approach combines practical preparation, close attention to buyer behaviour and careful negotiation.

His view is that the fundamentals remain relevant whether homes are selling quickly or buyers are taking their time. Sellers need to present their property well, reach the right audience and understand how their price compares with the alternatives.

Then they need to pay attention to what happens next.

A campaign produces information every day: online views, calls, emails, inspections, comments and offers. An agent's job is to interpret those signals, explain them to the owner and act when something needs to change.

Presentation: remove the work buyers imagine

A property that needs attention can appeal to an experienced renovator. For another buyer, the same home can represent months of inconvenience.

Some buyers lack the time or knowledge to organise improvements. Others simply want a home they can move into without managing a project.

That hesitation affects what they are prepared to pay.

Buyers may mentally deduct the repair costs, then allow more for uncertainty and the effort of finding trades, arranging appointments and managing the work.

Edgar and Brett are professional renovators and have renovated 42 properties together. Edgar also project manages cosmetic renovations for clients preparing to sell or lease.

That experience shapes his approach to presentation. He looks for the work that will make a meaningful difference to how a property feels when someone walks through it.

From a tired rental to a home ready to move into

One recent project involved a property that had been rented for many years.

The walls had a creamy yellow colour. Vents and switch covers had yellowed. Older floating floorboards were scratched and dated. Fans, fittings and maintenance issues gave buyers plenty to notice.

The refresh included repainting the walls in Dulux Casper White, replacing yellowed fittings, laying fresh carpet and installing modern white fans with remote controls.

An oversized old intercom system was removed. Grout and silicone were repaired, along with water damage around vanities. Door handles were updated to chrome.

In the garage, tired cupboards were removed, cracks and joints were repaired, and the patchy concrete floor was painted. Ceiling movement cracks were addressed, with an expansion joint installed where needed.

Outside, tiles and grout were repaired. Cracks in a concrete fence were filled, rendered and painted. The timber deck by the pool and the pontoon also received attention.

Individually, many of those jobs were relatively modest. Together, they changed the impression of the home.

Before the work, a buyer would have needed to coordinate painters, plasterers, flooring installers, electricians, tilers and other trades. Afterwards, they could picture moving in.

"It's not really that big a cost compared to the impression that it now gives," Edgar says.

He believes well-chosen improvements can help a property sell more quickly and support a stronger price. The decision still needs to account for the property, the cost of the work and the likely buyer.

The practical question is: what will a buyer notice, and which issues are worth addressing before the first inspection?

Promotion: give buyers a reason to inspect

Good presentation needs a campaign that shows it clearly.

Photography, drone footage, videos, floorplans, upgraded online listings, brochures, social advertising, direct mail, SMS and database contact all offer ways to reach buyers.

Edgar says the choice of tools should follow the property and its audience. Spending money alone does not establish whether a campaign is effective.

He has seen listings held back by dark photographs, unhelpful angles, missing images and rooms that appear smaller than they are. Missing floorplans and measurements can leave buyers uncertain about whether a home will suit them.

The description matters too.

A generic list of bedrooms, bathrooms and parking spaces can overlook the reasons someone would choose that particular home.

"The features are one thing," Edgar says. "But the feeling of living in the area or that street or that house, that's what you're really selling."

The campaign should help buyers understand the layout, the surroundings and the practical benefits of living there. It should explain what makes the property worth investigating while accurately representing what they will find at the inspection.

Edgar also looks at where the home is being promoted. Are the relevant buyers seeing it? Are enquiries being followed up? Is the agent actively looking for suitable buyers in their database?

The objective is to uncover as much serious interest as possible and give competition a chance to develop.

Price: even an outstanding home has a market limit

Presentation and promotion influence a result, but price remains decisive.

Edgar recalls a lesson he learned early: even an exceptional home can remain unsold if the price is beyond what the market will pay.

Buyers compare properties. They consider what else is available, what has sold and what they can afford. A beautifully renovated home can command a premium, but that premium still needs to make sense against its alternatives.

Some sellers begin with an ambitious asking price to test the response. Edgar says the mistake is failing to adjust when consistent feedback arrives.

An owner might say there have been too few inspections to learn anything.

"No buyers coming through is feedback," he says.

It is a reason to examine the presentation, promotion and price together.

He describes pricing as positioning the home within the active buyer pool. If the relevant buyers are searching between \$750,000 and \$800,000, an asking range of \$850,000 to \$900,000 may put the property outside their search.

The distinction, in Edgar's words, is between being "on the market" and being "in the market": listed for sale, or positioned where active buyers are prepared to consider it.

The asking strategy should be supported by evidence and reviewed as the campaign develops. Owners need to understand what the agent recommends, why they recommend it and what response the change is intended to produce.

Follow the buyer journey: views, enquiries, inspections and offers

A property campaign has several stages. Edgar believes each one helps identify where buyers are losing interest.

He reviews activity regularly, with a deliberate reassessment at least every fortnight.

The question is how far buyers progress and what stops them from taking the next step.

When the views are low

If few people are opening the listing, begin with visibility and appeal.

Is the campaign reaching the right audience? Does the lead photograph attract attention? Is the headline useful? Is the price positioning placing the home in relevant searches?

Low views give the agent a starting point for investigation. The property may need a different lead image, clearer positioning or a change in how it reaches buyers.

When views do not become enquiries

A listing can attract attention without generating calls or emails.

Edgar looks closely at the price and the information buyers receive once they open it. The home may appear interesting but fail to look competitive against other options.

There could also be unanswered questions. A missing floorplan, unclear description or incomplete information may leave someone uncertain about whether to proceed.

Strong views are encouraging, but they do not prove every part of the campaign is working. The agent needs to understand why attention is stopping there.

When enquiries do not become inspections

Calls and emails show interest. The next question is whether that interest becomes attendance.

What are buyers asking? What concerns arise during the conversation? Are inspection arrangements practical? Is follow-up happening promptly?

The agent should be able to explain why interested people are choosing to visit or deciding against it.

When inspections do not become offers

If buyers attend but do not proceed, Edgar looks for a disconnect between the online impression and the property they experience.

A room might feel smaller than expected. Maintenance may be more noticeable. The layout, noise or a nearby feature may affect their interest.

Some objections can be addressed directly. Others are characteristics the buyer needs to weigh against the price.

If several people mention an untidy garden, improve it. If an unpopular feature wall repeatedly attracts criticism, consider repainting it. If buyers consistently see too much work, assess which

repairs would remove the largest concerns.

"As soon as you get two or three of the same responses, fix it," Edgar says of recurring, practical issues.

A single comment may reflect personal taste. Repeated comments deserve investigation.

When offers fall below expectations

Genuine offers show buyers have progressed through the campaign and considered purchasing.

If several informed buyers arrive at similar figures below the owner's expectations, the agent and seller need to examine that gap.

Comparable sales, competing listings, buyer conditions and the quality of negotiation all matter. An isolated low offer does not establish value, but a consistent pattern provides evidence.

Edgar wants owners to receive an explanation of that pattern and a recommendation about what to do next.

Why the first serious offer deserves attention

A buyer who makes an offer soon after a listing launches may have been searching for months.

They have seen competing homes, compared prices and perhaps missed other opportunities. They are early in this property's campaign but well advanced in their own buying journey.

"They're ready," Edgar says. "They want to get it done."

That buyer may recognise the right home immediately and be prepared to make a credible offer because they already understand their options.

Someone else may still be beginning their search. They are testing suburbs, making lower offers and seeing what owners will accept. They feel little urgency because they expect to inspect more homes next weekend.

Edgar has seen buyers change their approach after several offers are rejected. As they learn the market, their expectations become more realistic. When another suitable listing appears, they may be ready to act decisively.

For sellers, understanding that difference can help explain why an early buyer may put forward a stronger offer than someone who arrives later.

Waiting can change the decision

The first offer is not automatically the best. Price, finance, conditions, settlement timing and the buyer's ability to complete all need consideration.

But a serious early offer deserves careful assessment and negotiation.

Edgar has seen owners reject a strong proposal, then face lower offers as interest fades or the market changes. The original figure can become an emotional reference point.

The owner keeps waiting for it to return. Subsequent offers are rejected because they fall short of what was once available.

Meanwhile, the alternatives may be changing.

An owner can end up comparing today's offers with an opportunity that has already passed, instead of assessing the buyers and conditions in front of them.

The useful question is what the offer represents against today's evidence, whether it can be improved, and what the seller risks by waiting.

Understanding that decision requires an agent who can explain both the market and the negotiation.

Choosing an agent: ask what they say when an offer arrives

Sellers often compare agents by asking how many homes they have sold in the suburb, how many transactions they completed in the past year or how prominent their profile is.

Edgar believes another question can reveal much more about how an agent will represent an owner:

"If a buyer makes an offer on my property, tell me your script. What exactly would you say?"

He wants the seller to hear the conversation.

Can the agent explain how they would respond to a low offer? Can they support their assessment of value? Will they explore whether the buyer can improve?

Those answers can show more about the service an owner will receive than a sales total alone.

Look beyond sales volume and profile

One agent may have sold 15 homes in a suburb. Another may have sold four or five.

Those figures do not explain how effectively either agent negotiated, how much attention the owners received or whether stronger outcomes were available.

Edgar suggests asking both agents to demonstrate how they would handle the same buyer conversation. The difference in their answers may reveal more than the difference in their sales totals.

Paid profile upgrades and prominent advertising can make an agent more visible. Sellers still need to understand what happens once that visibility produces an enquiry.

An agent who takes fewer listings may have more time for each client. Their fees may reflect that level of attention. A smaller workload or higher commission does not establish the quality of service by itself, but it gives the owner something practical to investigate.

What matters is whether the agent can explain and demonstrate the work they will do.

What motivates your agent?

Edgar encourages sellers to consider what motivates the person representing them: the money earned from completing a sale, or a love of the process and helping people achieve a result.

Both agents earn a commission. The difference, he believes, becomes apparent in how they work for it.

An agent who enjoys the process takes an interest in preparing the property, understanding buyers, following up feedback and working through a difficult negotiation. Their satisfaction comes from helping the owner achieve the strongest result available.

For sellers, that motivation should be visible in the agent's actions: the attention they give the campaign, the advice they can explain and the effort they put into the next conversation with a buyer.

Experience, pressure and the care an owner receives

Edgar is concerned about owners becoming another transaction in an agent's personal income target.

If an agent needs a certain number of sales to reach their goals, he says, sellers should understand how that pressure could influence the advice they receive.

Someone new to real estate may bring energy and enthusiasm while still developing the experience needed to handle a difficult negotiation. An agent depending heavily on their next commission may also feel pressure to secure an agreement quickly.

Edgar's concern is whether the agent has the judgement, training and support to represent the owner well.

Age alone does not answer that question. A younger agent can be well trained and supported, while an established agent still needs to demonstrate a sound approach.

For Edgar, the test remains practical: explain what you will say when the buyer makes an offer.

"Your first hurdle will be me"

Edgar has trained agents and spoken at real estate and business conferences. He uses a hypothetical \$800,000 offer to explain the kind of conversation he believes sellers should expect.

If comparable evidence supports a higher value, he wants to explore the buyer's position before treating that opening figure as their limit.

The conversation might sound like this:

Buyer: "I'd like to offer \$800,000."

Agent: "Look, that is on the low side. Your first hurdle will actually be me, because I've told the owner I believe the property is worth more, and the evidence supports that."

"When the owner asks me what I think of your offer, I'll have to be honest and say I consider it low. What would your next offer be?"

Buyer: "Perhaps \$815,000."

Agent: "Can we make \$815,000 your starting offer, then? That gives us a stronger position to discuss with the owner."

In that example, a conversation has improved the buyer's opening position by \$15,000.

The owner may never have heard that exchange, but the agent has already worked to improve their position.

The figures illustrate the method. The result depends on the buyer, the property and the evidence. Offers must still be communicated promptly and accurately to the owner, who decides whether to accept, reject or counter.

Keep the owner neutral so the negotiation can continue

Making himself the first hurdle has another purpose: Edgar wants to prevent a disagreement about price from becoming personal between buyer and seller.

Consider a different exchange. The buyer offers \$800,000. The agent takes it to the owner, who asks for \$820,000. The agent returns to the buyer and simply says, "The owner wants \$820,000."

That can unintentionally make the owner the problem.

The buyer may start thinking the owner is greedy, difficult or unrealistic. Frustration shifts towards the person selling the property, and the buyer may become less willing to negotiate because they feel they are giving in to someone unreasonable.

Edgar prefers to take responsibility for the resistance himself:

"I'm your first hurdle here, because I know the value of this property. I've advised the owner that it is worth more, and I would have to tell them honestly that your offer is on the low side.

"What can we do to bring your offer closer to a level I could recommend?"

The buyer has someone to negotiate with and a reason to reconsider the figure. The owner remains in a neutral position.

The discussion stays focused on the value the agent can support. It gives the conversation room to continue without buyer and seller becoming upset with each other.

Edgar believes an agent should manage the relationship as carefully as the numbers. Passing figures between the parties is only one part of the role; the agent also needs to explain value, explore flexibility and keep communication constructive.

Ask every prospective agent the same question

Edgar suggests giving each agent a consistent scenario:

"A buyer offers below the price you have advised me my home is worth. Tell me exactly what you would say to that buyer."

Then follow it with:

"If the buyer says, 'That's my offer - otherwise I'll walk away,' what would you say next?"

Listen for how they would assess the offer, discuss the evidence, explore the buyer's flexibility and explain their advice to you.

Sometimes the buyer has reached their limit. Sometimes there is room to improve. The agent needs to investigate that distinction.

For Edgar, an agent who has sold four or five homes in a suburb may demonstrate a negotiating approach that gives an owner more confidence than an agent who has sold 15. The sales figures deserve consideration, but they cannot answer the question on their own.

The owner needs to know who will put in the work when the result depends on the next conversation.

A campaign owners can understand

For Edgar, preparation, marketing, feedback and negotiation belong to the same process.

An agent should explain how many people are seeing the property, how many enquire, who attends and what happens afterwards. Repeated objections should lead to a practical discussion. Serious offers should receive careful assessment.

Sellers should be able to understand the recommendations they receive and the evidence behind them.

The three Ps provide the foundation. Following the buyer journey shows where attention is needed. Thoughtful negotiation then gives the owner the best opportunity to turn that interest into an agreement.