

HOUSECALLS

Gabe's April 2017 Stuart Florida Real Estate HouseCalls



Robots as pack mules

If you carry equipment to do home repairs, remodeling or gardening, you'll soon be able to have a robotic pack mule.

Fast Forward Piaggio, the company that wowed post-war Europe with its speedy Vesta motorcycle, is producing a cargo robot.

The round 24-inch robot is a bit like a land drone, according to the company. Named Gita (Gee-ta), it can roll while hauling 40 pounds of equip-

ment. It follows a human who can teach it to remember routes. It can even remember how to get back home by itself.

Search 'gita robot' for videos.

The company hopes it will be of use to wheelchair users or anyone that must carry heavy loads.

Although introduced in February this year, it is not entirely clear whether the robot can actually be purchased or

Some homes will sell as-is

Paint and polish to get the best price

You have to think like a buyer to get the best price on your house.

Buyers want dreams on a budget; usefulness that looks like extravagance; beauty without trouble.

In short, buyers want it all.

Sellers can make their property the canvas on which buyers paint their dreams but you have to think like the buyer.

First, clean up and paintup. These are easy DIY jobs and it won't cost much compared to getting the sale price you want and selling quickly.

Everything must be super clean because no one pays for a cleaning project. Corners, cabinets, ceilings, drawers, windows. Detail your house.

Then paint. Choose a neutral color throughout. Do a minimum of two coats so there will be no bleed through.

Get rid of the wallpaper. According to TheBalance.com, it is not that buyers don't like wallpaper, it's that they don't like your wallpaper. You are making your house into their dream, not yours.

Paint wood paneling or replace with dry wall.

Now, look for the obvious turn-offs.

Clutter is first: Pack up and store every collection or dust catcher. That includes closets. Leave the closets half full and tidy. Leave the shed close to empty. Remove family pictures.



Empty and clean kitchen drawers and storage areas. Don't forget the refrigerator.

Now, review the big ticket items: Roof, home heating and cooling; wiring; and floors. Problems with any of these items can seriously affect the sale price. In an area with low supply of homes for sale, you still might sell, but the sale price will take a hit with a bad roof.

This is where your listing agent can be of great help. He or she can give you an idea of how your home compares to similar properties in the area and whether fixing higher priced items will be worth it. You might not have to replace the kitchen counter, but if your roof leaks, you might have to fix it before the sale.

The As-Is sale

The alternative to fixing big ticket items is an as-is sale. You will depend on your listing agent to tell you the disclosures the state requires here. But don't expect your full sale price. A \$20,000 roof replacement will come off the purchase price and lenders will be very careful making such a mortgage.

On the other hand, an as-is listing also means bargain hunters will be jumping on your listing. Of course they want bargains and you are sure to forfeit parts of your asking price in service to the sale.

Ask the Expert



I've found a great as-is home that is actually in pretty good shape. The problem is it needs the roof replaced. Is it possible to get a loan that will cover the new roof?

There is a loan that certainly would cover a new roof.

The Federal Housing Administration offers a loan called the 203(k) that allows you to include your renovation costs in your mortgage. So, you borrow the price of your home and the estimated cost of repairs. You then must pay a down payment that is based on the full amount.

To qualify for this loan you need a credit score of 640 or higher and a maximum debt-to-income ratio of 43 percent. That includes the new monthly payment you'll be making. The loan also has to be at or below the maximum limit for FHA loans in your area. This varies but can be up to \$417,500.

If you are looking at just repairing the roof, you might qualify for a streamlined 203(k) loan. These loans cap the cost of repairs at \$35,000.

If you want to make more complicated repairs to structure or even room additions, a regu-

401k Loan for a Down Payment on a House

Home ownership has not been an insurmountable financial hurdle for the 63.5 percent of Americans that own their homes according to US Census data, but coming up with a down payment is still challenging

One way to do it: Take a loan for a 401(k).

What is a 401k Loan?

According to the IRS, a person can take a loan out against a qualifying account for a handful of reasons, down payments on a home being one of them.

The rule of thumb is \$10,000 or 50 percent of the vested balance, whichever is greater. These loans cap at \$50,000 which is often enough to cover a down payment for a modest home.

According to personal finance blog Family Financier, taking out a 401k loan

could make sense for people with low credit scores who would be forced to pay unusually high interest rates on their mortgages.

For the average consumer, with a good credit score, a healthy 401(k), but no down payment, financial advisors usually recommend saving separately for a down payment. A 401(k) loan is usually a loser idea. Even if your 401(k) loan lowered your monthly mortgage payment, this would be offset by the payments you would have to make to your 401(k) for 15 years.

In addition, you would lose thousands of dollars in interest. In some scenarios you would lose more money in interest than you borrowed from your 401(k) during the 15-year repayment.



lar 203(k) loan might be for you. It won't cover fancy items like a swimming pool, though.

Like all FHA loans, these require you to pay mortgage insurance for 11 years or even the entire length of the loan. That means higher payments than a conventional loan. You'll get a higher interest rate and be hit with some extra fees.

These are also not quick deals. The paperwork takes time and you will be required to detail the work that needs to be done. Your best bet for this kind of loan is to have reasonable repairs that can be started within 30 days of your loan closing and finished within six months.



Easter Island

Digital assistants and kids: Small problems

You may love your Amazon Echo for ordering household goods and answering questions, but what is going on when it farts repeatedly?

What's going on is that some kid in your house has installed the Alexa skill "4AFart" which plays flatulence on command. No matter who is around. Or what is going on. Imagine.

Of course, the kids think it is hilarious.

The kids also will find impertinent questions to the Echo (Alexa) hilarious.

The great jelly bean caper

On Amazon's Website a mother who called herself Heidzgo answered a question about the Echo's ordering capabilities. It seems she had to disable that feature:

"We disabled ordering after my 3 year old asked, "Alexa, do you have jelly beans at your house?" She did and she sent us a \$17 bag of them! He also nearly ordered a new vacuum, but luckily didn't complete the purchase. Amazon was very cooperative about returning the jelly beans and refunding us the \$, but we disabled Echo ordering to be sure it didn't happen again."

They will also love it when they discover they can order the latest expensive toys.

While parents can turn off ordering, this also lessens the value of even having Alexa. Parents can require a PIN number for ordering but as children get older this PIN number may not stay secret. Parents can also try repeatedly changing the PIN number.

A whole new etiquette has to develop around this technology. Kids have to learn that ordering things off Alexa is as much stealing and taking cash out of mom's purse.

More subtle problems can and will crop up. Such as interrupting an adult music stream with kids songs. Or explicit rap songs.

When everyone can access the universe, everyone also has to have some manners about it.

On the other hand, according to Rebecca Hanover's mommy-proof blog, Alexa has a way with kids. Most of the time little kids wouldn't dream of leaving a toy to come to the dinner table when you ask them to. BUT if you ask Alexa to set a two minute timer, the kids obey.

There is the entertainment value. Even little kids can request their favorite songs while mom does something else.

Almost all little kids, that is. Kids with problem L sounds will have to improve. And, miraculously, they do.

**A man who wants to lead
the orchestra must turn
his back on the crowd.**

Max Lucado



Kids started this U.S. Easter tradition

In the 1800s, the rolling lawns of the U.S. Capitol were an irresistible target for kids on Easter Monday.

One of the few days off for kids and adults, Easter Monday also included lots of leftover hard-boiled eggs.

Naturally, the Capitol soon became the site of egg rolls, in which children would compete to see whose egg could roll farther without breaking. It became quite the thing. In fact, around 1876, 10,000 kids showed up to egg roll. According to history.com, the spectacle was so noisy that no business could be done in the House and Senate chambers. By the end of the day, the lawns were in ruin. Outraged Congressmen immediately wrote legislation protecting the Capitol turf. President Ulysses S. Grant signed the bill two weeks later.

A showdown was avoided the next year when rain discouraged the annual invasion of egg rollers.

Police discouraged the children the following year but, to the rescue, came President Rutherford B. Hayes who, on April 22, 1878, welcomed players to the White House backyard, the first official White House Easter Egg Roll.

In those more innocent years, families picnicked on the lawns while the kids rolled eggs, leaving behind dead grass, trash, broken egg shells, and many hidden and -- increasingly smelly -- eggs.

Cut to 1937 when the annual crowd grew to 50,000 people, inadequately accommodated on the South Lawn. Only WWII stopped the event and the increasingly enthusiastic crowds.

When the Roll resumed after post-war rationing ended, it began to assume its modern, and much more controlled, form with an egg roll for little kids and various activities.

Today, the White House holds a lottery to distribute 35,000 tickets for the Egg Roll. If you win one, get ready for hours of lines and a fairly short experience on the White House lawn, but a very memorable family photo.







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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 April Fool
2	3	4	5	6	7 World Health	8
9 Palm Sunday 	10	11 Passover-Start(12	13	14	15
	17	18 Passover-End	19	20	21	22 
	24	25	26	27	28 Arbor Day	29
30	 NATIONAL CANCER CONTROL MONTH 					

Martin County February 2016 Single Family Homes Report

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