

If you're planning to sell your boat, here's how to prepare, market and sell your boat successfully.

Whether you're selling a fishing boat, ski boat, cruiser, powerboat or just your everyday pontoon, there are some basic things you need to do to be successful in selling your boat.

This article breaks it down into 6 basic steps. If you take this approach you'll sell your boat faster, easier and get more for it.

Step 1 – Cleaning There's nothing more beneficial in making a boat saleable than getting it cleaned up really well. This starts from the trailer to the cover and everything in between. Wash and clean the trailer thoroughly. Scrub and polish the hull. Boat dealers and boating centers carry gel coat cleaners and polishes that can remove the scale and residue build up on the hull and restore its color and luster. Clean the carpets, the cup holders the storage areas under the seats. Clean the outboard or out drive thoroughly.

Clean the windows. You should also wax the hull and polish all railings – stainless or wood. Clean all amenities thoroughly – especially the head, galley and sleeping area, if required.

Step 2 – Maintenance and Repairs Make sure that everything is functional on the boat including lights, horn, radio, instruments, depth finders, fish finders, GPS, bilge bumps, fans, blowers, etc. Ideally the boat should be fully functional when it's sold. No one wants to get stuck on the water due to a malfunction or failure. Your boat will sell much faster if everything is in good working order. The trailer should be well maintained and in good working order including the winch, jack, lights and brakes, if equipped. Tires should be good condition and inflated properly. All wiring and lights should be functional and good order. If the trailer is missing paint or rusty it's a good idea to give it fresh coat of paint.

Step 3 - Records Pull together all the receipts related to the boat including the purchase receipts when you bought it, the owners manual and all maintenance and repair receipts. Having a good record of all repairs and maintenance especially winterizing, summarizing and repairs tells the buyer that the boat was taken care of very well. And it can have a huge impact in selling a boat quickly. When a potential buyer comes to take a look at the boat, the thing he's thinking about in the back of his mind is how many things have been broke on the boat and what's my chances of them breaking again. You should explain in reasonable detail the things that had to be fixed and how the boat was maintained. This can go along way in establishing trust between the potential buyer and yourself. The potential buyer will appreciate the information and honesty and it can help a great deal in closing the sale.

Step 4 – Pricing You probably have an idea of what you think your boat is worth or at least what you think it should be worth. Well, that maybe or may not be the appropriate sales price for your boat. You should do some research in order to determine what the appropriate selling price should be. Check the local newspaper classifieds, your local used boat dealers and the Internet boat classified to find prices for similar boats. You're likely to see a range of prices depending on the model, features, and condition of the boats. Based on those and your urgency to sell the boat, you can set your sales price accordingly. You should set it a little higher than your target price to give you room to negotiate the price down a bit. Buyers are always looking to get a bit of a price break on a boat they're considering to buy. You should allow for some room to negotiate.

Step 5 – Advertising / Marketing You have a lot of choices on how you'd like to advertise your boat. You can use the newspaper classifieds, however those run by the day or week and can get costly. You can park the boat near the street with a sign and hope that someone driving by will see it and hopefully buy it. Another option is to use Internet classified ads to market your boat and there's a wide variety of sites that offer on line classified ads. Some sites are free, but have limited exposure. Others charge a lot for listing your boat with several pictures and then there's sites like ours [BoatFisher](#) that charge a nominal fee and allow the ad to run until the boat sells. It's up to you to choose the level of expense you're comfortable with in marketing and advertising your boat. I recommend doing a combination of the above. For example; placing your boat near the street with a sign allows potential buyers to stop and take a quick look. They can write down the phone number and call to make an appointment to review the boat more thoroughly. You should also plan to advertise on an online classified ad site or through the newspapers. I like the online classifieds simply because they're easy to use and they're viewable to everyone everywhere. Newspaper ads are generally limited to a specific area or town. Another advantage to internet ads is you can print your color photo ad, make copies and post them in your local stores and bulletin boards.

Step 6 - Selling and Negotiating There's some very important basic rules to follow when you're trying to sell a boat. Potential buyers will try to contact you either by phone or email. You have answer the phone when it rings. If you ignore it, the interested party will quickly move to the next available boat that fit's their requirements and there's a lot of boats on the market. Similarly with email, it's important to check for inquiries at least once a day if not more. Quick responses to inquiries can bring a buyer to view your boat and he or she could be the one.

When you do get an interested buyer it's important to be open and sincere about why you're selling it, how long you've owned and how it's performed for you. This builds a relationship and trust between you and the potential buyer. This is critical in getting someone comfortable enough to make an offer.

When the buyer does make an offer do not reject the offer if it is lower than your set price. You should counter their offer about ½ way between your selling price and their offer price. The buyer may accept or counter again. If it's close to your original target price you should probably accept the offer. If the buyer asks what's the lowest you'll go, and a lot of people ask that, a good answer is, " I just listed it or I'm starting to get a lot of calls, so I'll take. (Use your original target)." The buyer is likely to accept it. The art of negotiating and locking in the sale is psychological thing and it's very important. It's called getting a win-win result in a purchasing transaction. Most buyers will either offer you a lower offer or many times will flat out ask what's the lowest you'll take for it. This is your chance to make a friend and make the sale.

We'll that about covers it. A few last comments on the monetary transaction. If the buyer offers you a deposit, make sure you write out a receipt – 2 copies, one for you and one for the buyer. It's a good idea to have these prepared before meeting potential buyers. You should prepare deposit receipts that provide a blank for the amount and set a time limit for holding the boat after which the deposit is forfeited. Also prepare sale receipts in advance that specify the key items below:

- Ø Boat is being purchased in "As Is" condition
- Ø No written or verbal warranty or guarantees apply (unless mfg. Warranty is still in effect)
- Ø As of this day and time, legal ownership, responsibility and liability is transferred to said purchaser
- Ø Purchaser is buying said boat for and accepts all responsibility and liability for said item
- Ø Make sure both purchaser and seller sign it and date it.
- Ø Write down the buyers drivers license # on your receipt
- Ø Specify Date, Time, Seller Name, Buyer Name (blank), Boat Description

Last note about bank checks – lately some people are using laser printers to print false checks. It's becoming a fairly big problem. If the buyer is paying by check you should go to the issuing bank to make sure it clears. The bank will be able to tell you if more time is needed for the check to be cleared. Do not let the buyer take the boat until the check is confirmed and cleared by a bank. If the buyer is reluctant or resists in going to the bank, you should insist on cash.

About the Author

To list your boat on line fast, easy and cheap just go to <http://www.BoatFisher.com>. List your boat for only \$9.95 until it Sells!. You can also find information and resources on boat covers, boat trailers at: <http://www.BoatFisher.com/boatResources>.

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