

How to Sell a Cruising Catamaran

By Brent Vaughan

Every year I help prepare and market dozens of pre-loved (and some pre-abused) cruising catamarans – over the past decade I have helped shape the resale market for the Seawind brand which, even in today's volatile and soft market, continues to achieve strong resale prices above industry averages. Fortunately for me this has been greatly assisted by having a brilliant product to sell that is ideal for the Australian climate, however there are some simple things that can be done to achieve the best resale for any cruising catamaran and I'm going to share a few hints with you to make sure you have the best chance of recovering back as much of your floating asset as possible...

The Three Ps that Prevent a sale

I was once told by a very savvy real-estate agent who was selling my property at the time, that there are three things that can prevent a house from selling including Price, Presentation and Promotion. The same applies to selling a catamaran...why? Because unlike powerboats or sports sailers, cruising cats often become people's homes but perhaps with even higher stakes because they will often fund the boat with their hard earned pocket money, rather than just taking out the obligatory mortgage to put a roof over the family's head. Let's take a look...

Price:

This is crucial for obvious reasons...it's a fine line between holding out for a big payout and choking activity because the price is too high. The price needs to be reflective of the market because ultimately it is the market that will dictate the price of the boat...not the owner, the broker or financial advisor at the pub or sailing club. Hey, you can put what ever price you want on the boat, don't get me wrong...it may just never sell!

So how do you work out what buying mood the 'market' is in?...well there is much more to determining the right price than just browsing the classifieds. The economy can play a big role as boats are luxury products. But so can the time of year you are selling in. Used boat buyers are often motivated by a critical time line...whether it is preparing the boat for a cruise to the islands on the trade on trade winds or just entertaining guests for the summer holidays...but there is certainly a seasonal rush of interest of cashed up buyers leading into summer, with the vision of relaxing on the water during those hot summer days...so, launching your boat into the used boat market in time for this rush will help achieve a stronger sale price, simply because demand is up slightly.

Also having a good handle on the resale that other comparable boats of the same brands and competing brands will achieve is important. Watching various classifieds website can give you the pumped up version, but ultimately

the sale prices are usually a little less after some tough negotiating from both sides. A switched on broker who is selling boats day in day out and talking to the market should have his / her finger on the pulse and give you a realistic valuation. The market also usually pick the middle ground when it comes to options, so if you have all the trimmings don't expect you will get your money back on all of these goodies, because a future buyer may not value the same things you do...equally, if you have a very basic boat, don't underestimate what you might achieve if the boat is looking great and presented well. That leads me to my next point, presentation...

Presentation:

I'm amazed sometimes to find boats that are actually very sound cruising boats that have incredible potential and priced well, but won't make it past the first inspection because they have neglected the cosmetics of the boat. I can't stress how important this is.

A common scenario (without being sexist, this is actually very common) would be that a gentleman who, impressed by a boat's spec and price, brings his wife (often referred to as the financial controller – in a positive way) to inspect their new potential floating beach house – but the minute she steps onboard and sees a torn bimini cover, faded cushions, musty smell in the galley and a nasty odour in the head, the game is over before it has even begun. As she screws up her face you can see the hope fade from his eyes – but then it's onto the next boat. Investing in new bimini covers, clears, ropes, new cushions and getting a professional detail inside and out with a buff and polish will do wonders, as will a clean of antifoul. Not only will it greatly widen the market that are attracted to the boat, but you will save literally tens of thousands of dollars when an offer is made and a final price negotiated.

If you choose to lift the boat out to clean and get a new coat of antifouling, you might also consider paying for a independent marine survey...we recommend to all purchasers that they get a survey report and if you already have one on hand, not only will this speed up settlement and reduce further hassle of slipping the boat again, but it will also eliminate any further negotiating that might occur from unknown surprises that result from the survey report that went previously unnoticed and you didn't have an opportunity to fix prior to selling. If you are on a tight budget, these can be on sold to the customer.

Promotion:

How your boat is promoted will often dictate not only the price you fetch, but also the speed in which the boat is sold. There are umpteen different classified websites and publications to choose from, but their individual reach to your target market is probably quite limited. But advertising is just one element of the full marketing mix that professional sales organizations use...consider some other elements such as boat shows, database marketing & direct marketing, personal sales and social media.

This is where using a larger sized brokerage firm can pay real dividends – Multihull Central for example advertise with many classified websites and publications simultaneously, attend at least half a dozen boat shows per year around Australia alone, have seven experienced sales staff around the country who can tap into an enormous database of around 40,000 contacts built up over 20 years by Seawind Catamarans and Corsair Marine. Qualified customers also get direct email updates on used boat listings and other information. But most importantly, our sales staff spend many hours a day talking with customers wanting to buy boats – I'm not talking about speed boats, motor cruisers or yachts – I'm talk about customers interested in buying catamarans and trimarans. Then when they get a strong lead the sales staff arrange inspections, survey reports, sea trials, deal with unwanted comments about your boat and talk up the positive features. So you can persist with a DIY approach, but you will probably be disappointed by the number of calls you get, unless you are willing to give your boat away.

Having a full time sales professional that is educated on multihulls and has the full armory of a multifaceted marketing program will not only fetch stronger resale, but will do it quicker...The best example of this was when we had two customers who were friends with two almost identical boats they bought new...when it came to sell, they both put their boats on the market in a similar time of the year...both boats presented very well. One listed with our brokerage and the other gave it a go himself. Within a few weeks we had sold our listed boat sold for near its purchase price. The second lingered on the market for months and months, until he eventually let us list the boat. We then had it sold within weeks – but unfortunately, as his boat had been on the market so long and he needed to sell, he achieved 10% less resale then his friend.

So there are a few starter points to get the best price for your cat on the used boat market. If you would like to learn more about a marketing program for your boat or get a free valuation, please call 1300 852 620 or Contact Us.