

Home Staging Can Help You 'Get It Sold'

We all know about the importance of first impressions. We also know that you only get one chance to make one. In fact, most people form their first impression of a home within 30 seconds of entering the space. That is pretty quick. This is precisely why Home Staging is so important when selling your home and why if you are not taking steps to improve your homes appeal, inside and out, you may be at a real disadvantage in the current real estate market.

Whether you hire a professional resale decorator to advise you on what steps you should take to optimize the marketability of your home, or you decide to tackle the process yourself is up to you. The following are some 'tried and true' tactics that can help make your home sell faster and quite often help to bring in higher offers.

In a March 2005 *Royal LePage press release*, it was stated that according to a poll conducted by Maritz Research "54% of Canadians think that \$2000 or more is the appropriate amount to spend on preparing a house for sale, with a surprising 25% willing to pay over \$5000."
(Mansfield Communications Inc.)

The good news is that by using the right techniques, and seeking some professional advice, preparing your home for sale can be much more affordable than that. The purpose of home staging is to increase interest in a property, thereby increasing the number of offers and effectively raising the purchase price bringing you 'top dollar' for your home. You will probably have to spend some money and some time implementing home staging techniques, but what you spend is not as important as how you spend it.

When potential buyers step into your home, they want to be able to see themselves and their own family living there. This is the most important thing to remember when 'prepping' your home for sale. Here are a few ideas about how you can increase the appeal of your home in the market.

One of the biggest mistakes made by homeowners when they prepare their house for sale is neglecting to properly edit their personal items and photographs from view. If your home looks too much like 'your home' it will not appeal to buyers that want to see it as 'their home'. So, you must take the time to tuck away those precious memories while showing your home to others. Don't worry, you can put them back just as soon as the 'viewers' leave.

Another big part of the first impression is how a home smells. Take note of this, especially if you have smokers and or pets in your family. I am not suggesting that you burn a scented candle in every room or spray air freshener all over the house, as this could actually work against you, especially if the people looking at your home suffer from allergies or are sensitive to too much fragrance. Besides, unattended burning candles could easily cause a fire, and that won't do anything to help sell your home.

Instead, try opening all the windows to air things out for a few hours before a showing, and place fresh potpourri in bowls around the house. You may also want to use the old 'bakery' trick and bake a batch of cookies just before your visitors arrive and leave them out on the stove, this sweet smell will evoke the 'homey' feeling in anyone, and the bonus is you get fresh baked cookies to eat later.

Space is important to buyers. If your home does not have particularly large rooms, and suffers from too much furniture and too many accessories, I suggest that you place only the best pieces you own strategically to form functional conversation areas. Take the extra, bulky pieces and put them into temporary storage or in a friend or neighbor's garage. Doing this will open up the rooms and make the home seem bigger and less cluttered. You want to aim for a clean, minimalist look as much as possible. This also helps potential buyers to picture their own items and furniture in the space.

Keep it clean. No one likes a dirty floor, just as no one likes to look through dirty windows or see lots of dust coating everything.

When you prepare your house for viewing, take the time to clean the floors and the windows, run the vacuum, dust the furniture, wipe down counters and the stovetop, do the dishes and clean out your cat's litter box. Don't forget to scrub the tub and toilet bowl (these are places that buyers will always check). It seems pretty obvious, but many homeowners neglect to take these measures and this usually results in reluctant buyers.

Take it outside. Don't forget about curb appeal. No matter how nice the inside of your home is, the first thing your potential buyers see is the outside. Check the yard for clutter and remove any unsightly tarps, yard waste or children's toys. If the grass needs cut, or the flowerbeds weeded, you'll want to attend to these things too. If you need an injection of colour in your garden, go get some cheap and cheerful seasonal flowers at the local nursery and place them where interest is lacking.

Walk around the perimeter of the house and check for loose siding, dented downspouts or leaky garden hoses and replace or fix any obvious problems. If you have a deck or porch, use it to your advantage. Place a patio set or pair of chairs topped with comfy throw pillows in these places (but make sure they are all in good condition). You can also place some potted plants or flowers in these areas. Doing this will enhance the value of these outdoor features and increases the perceived living space.

Hang a seasonal wreath or swag on the entry door. This is a very affordable way of 'dressing up' your house and a universal symbols of 'home'. Doing this will go a long way in increasing the appeal of your home to potential buyers.

These are just a few of the things that can be done to prepare your home for a quick and profitable sale. It is by no means an exhaustive list. If you want more information on home staging and steps that can be taken to help your home compete in today's competitive market, you can do research on the internet, through your agent or private listing service, or by consulting a reputable resale decorating professional in your area.

Your home is most likely your biggest financial investment in life. Home staging is definitely one of the best ways to help your home 'sell' faster, and for a higher price putting you in a better position for purchasing your next home. If you are not using home staging techniques when marketing your property, you could quite possibly be losing money that is very literally 'on your doorstep'.

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