

Lighting the Way to a Fast and Profitable Sale

Tips and Advice from a Professional Home Stager



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It's Time to Get Moving...

You have made the decision to sell your home. Now what? You may have questions about who can best help you market your property, or what the appropriate selling price might be. Your questions may be about what actions are most important for you to take to get your property ready for the market.

I am here to help you develop a game plan for getting on the market as quickly and painlessly as possible.

Straight forward, no nonsense advice from a professional home stager will save you time, effort, and frustration as you prepare your home for the marketplace.

I have been providing professional home staging advice since 2005. I have picked up numerous tricks and tips that make the process of preparing a property for the market faster and easier for homeowners. I can help you develop a game-plan for selling your property. You'll be on the market in no time flat.

Selling your home fast, at the best possible price, is the goal.

To make that happen there are a couple things that must take place. You'll need to

- Select the right real estate professional
- Determine a fair asking price, and
- Prepare the property for the market

Selecting the Right Real Estate Professional

This decision is critical. Your home is a major financial asset. You need to know that you can trust the professional that is handling this important emotional, financial and legal transaction for you. You are looking for a professional that:

- Presents you with a comprehensive marketing plan
- Understands your neighborhood/market area
- Responds to your inquiries quickly and completely

- Tells you what you *need to hear*, not *what you want to hear*
- Stays current and understands emerging trends.

If your real estate professional has talked to you about the importance of preparing your property for the market, that is a clear sign that he or she is in touch with a major trend...the importance of staging your property for the marketplace.

Setting the Right Price

From conversations I have had with many real estate professionals over the years pricing the property correctly is the number one factor in getting a property sold quickly. It is absolutely critical that you price the house appropriately for the market right from the start. Why?

There are a couple reasons:

1. Your property will draw the most attention in the first weeks of listing. If the property is priced too high you will not get as many requests for showings as you would have received if the property was priced correctly.
2. Once a property is on the market for awhile, buyers will think you are anxious to sell, and their offer price will reflect that.

If you have selected a real estate professional that you have trust in, trust his or her recommendation for selling price. Even if your home is staged perfectly and in excellent repair if you go in with a price higher than the market will support, you are likely to have your property linger for a long time.

And even worse, it will probably sell for a much lower price than it would have if you had priced it right from the start. Additionally you will have had the inconvenience and stress of being on the market for a long time.

And Now For My Favorite Topic: Preparing the Property for the Marketplace.

Preparing the Property to Sell

This step is of absolute necessity. In any type of market it is a good idea to take the time to make sure that your home is in good repair, and that the home is appealing to all the senses. In a buyer's market it becomes critical.

Maybe you are wondering: Why don't buyers just focus their attention on the physical attributes of the property and look past the decor?

There are a couple of reasons:

First, they don't have to. In a buyer's market you pull up the MLS picture, you don't like what you see, you click your mouse to move on. If the options were more limited, a buyer **might** take a little more time to try to see the forest for the trees.

Second, Americans are accustomed to being marketed to. Why do you think Target takes the time to keep the towels sorted by color and folded nicely on the shelves? They could just cut the top off the cardboard container the towels arrived in, folk lift the box to the home goods isle, and slap a \$12.99 price sticker on the front of the box. The product is not changed by the presentation, but our interpretation of the value of the item is changed dramatically.

Third, Home purchases are not based solely on reason. Often times the decision is based on emotion, or a gut feeling. Buyers are looking for a home that reflects the lifestyle that they seek for themselves. Most of us want prestige, order, calm, and beauty.

Fourth, Most buyers have busy lives. It is no longer the norm for buyers to look for properties that need fixing up. This is for investors, and investors do not pay top dollar. People are looking for move-in ready properties. Neutral, but popular paint colors, updated lighting, everything in good repair.

To hit your goal of selling fast and getting the best price you need to give buyers what they want.

What Your Buyers Want

Great location. There is nothing you can do about the location of your property, **but** you can factor location into your plan. If your property is close to a high school, you might want to stage your property to appeal to families. If it is in a hip urban location you might want your staging to reflect the style that would appeal to a younger buyer. It is important to visualize the characteristics of the buyer that you think might be most interested in your property and set the property up accordingly.

Good repair. Fix anything and everything that is broken. That broken piano window in the living room that you have been living with all these years because you don't know how to fix it....get it figured out. Why? Because prospective buyers don't know what to do about it either, **and** they don't have to figure it out, they will just look at the listing down the street.

You want the property to smell fresh not fake. Don't overdo it on air fresheners. If there is an odor in the property get to the root of the problem. Most people like the smell of lemons. A bowl of lemons that have been pierced with a fork can bring a subtle and appealing smell to the property.

Good lighting. Bright rooms are appealing to buyers. Open the shades, draw back the curtains, and make sure there is adequate artificial lighting available in every room. Three lighting sources placed in a triangular configuration in the room will provide the best balanced lighting in a room. Replacing dated light fixtures is an inexpensive and quick update that can have a major impact on the look of a property. Even the big box hardware stores carry attractive fixtures at very reasonable prices.

Window treatments can quickly date a space. If you have heavy, ornate, or distracting window treatments you will want to either simplify them, remove them completely, or replace them.

De-cluttered. When prospective buyers tour your property you will want to make sure that their attention is on the property not

on your belongings. If you have lots of personal pictures, collections, or just stuff in the space they will get distracted. A second benefit to de-cluttering is that your rooms will seem larger. Bigger is usually better with buyers. Lastly, many people are moving because they have outgrown their current home. You want to show buyers that your home has great storage solutions that will allow them to live in a de-cluttered and organized space.

Quiet. If you live in a noisy area, have the windows closed, the air conditioner on if necessary, and some soft music playing in the background.

Comfortable. You might even want to leave a bowl of individually wrapped candies out to appeal to their taste sense (and make them feel happy as they tour your home!)

Developing a comprehensive game plan for getting the property ready for the market is key to keeping the process on track

If you live in an area where you have access to a professional home stager, I would highly recommend that you make a small investment and have a staging consultation done. It is surprisingly affordable and there is no faster way to get your game plan laid out. If you live in the St. Paul or Minneapolis metro area [I would welcome the opportunity to assist you in getting your property ready for the market.](#)

If you aren't in a location that is served by home staging professionals the system that follows will enable you to develop your own staging plan.

A Picture Is Worth a 1,000 Words...Maybe 2,000 or Even More.

If you do not have the option of having a professional staging consultation done for your property you can use the following strategy to help you to **develop your own staging plan.**

I have found over the years that people really do not see their spaces very objectively when they look at a room live and in person. My

theory is that the room is so familiar to you that your mind takes only a glimpse of the space and moves on to other more important thoughts.

But when you are preparing your property to appeal to buyers **you need to see the details**. Taking a picture of each room will help you see the room in an entirely different way.

When you see your room in a photograph, it is like you are looking at a picture of the room in a magazine. You will be much more aware of each item in the room and much more objective and critical about the space. So get out your camera, and get shooting.

Take pictures of each room and put them up on your computer monitor. Send them to others whose opinions you trust and value. Ask yourself if you are happy with what you see in the pictures. It will amaze you what you see in a picture that you are able to block out when you look at it with your eyes.

Remember, buyers will be seeing your property for the first time in a picture on the MLS, and their impression on-line is very important in the decision to book a showing or not.

Taking Pictures

Stand outside your property and shoot pictures from the curb. Then, stand in the doorway to each and every room in your house and shoot a picture. I always tell clients that each room has its own first impression...and that impression is set as soon as they enter the room.

OK, I have my pictures...what is it again that I am looking for?

Reading the Pictures

What is the first thing that you see? If it isn't the best feature in the room then you are in need of some changes. Maybe the furniture is blocking the view of the fireplace, or there are too many pieces of furniture in front of the gorgeous bay window. Figure out what the best feature of the room is and make it shine.

Are you seeing piles of things that you hadn't noticed before? Sometimes we get use to seeing the pile of newspapers in the

magazine holder and ignore them. It's funny how your eye is drawn like a magnet to clutter and excess when you are viewing the room as a picture rather than in person.

Do you like the amount of color and texture in the room? If not, make some modifications. All white walls are not the standard any longer. The new neutrals are colors from nature including soft grays, gray-blue, brown and sage.

How about the [kitchen counters](#) and the [bath](#)? These rooms sell houses so make sure that you give them extra attention...and that leads me to another topic...

Clean...Clean...Clean

If you take only one piece of advice from this document...take this one. The lowest cost, highest impact thing you can do to help your property sell is to clean it like a boot camp Sergeant is going to inspect it.

Storage space is one of the most sought after things when a buyer is looking for a property. Take the time to make sure yours are edited, organized and ready for the buyers to appreciate

Many people are looking for a new home because they have run out of space in their current home. If they open your closets, cupboards, and storage spaces and see organized contents and room to spare you will be appealing to their hopes and dreams....that is how you score in this game. For tips on how to get this task done as quickly and painlessly as possible you will want to take a minute to [read my post on tackling closet and cabinet clutter](#).

You're almost to the finish line. You have lined up great professional help, you have cleaned, repaired, and designed every room in the house...now what?

Now you want to keep it up. To get the best results you want to be able to say yes to every showing.

To do that you need to keep the property in show condition at all times. I have a [daily checklist](#) on my website, www.homestagingcoaches.com, that you might want to print out and discuss with all the people that are living in the house. Having the tasks assigned, and doing them on a regular basis will have you saying, "Yes, bring them right over", when you get that important call from the real estate office that a buyer wants to schedule a showing.

You will find lots more home staging tips and ideas on my blog.

- [Before and after pictures](#) of properties that have been staged
- [What to do if your property is vacant](#)
- [Staging a master bedroom](#)
- [Organizing closets and cabinets](#)
- [Staging your kitchen](#)
- [Staging your bathroom](#)

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