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Staging Your Home for a Quick Sale, at the Best Price

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Home buyers don't want to move into "your" home, so prepare a blank canvas with many possibilities.

If you're thinking of selling, you'll want to make your home welcoming to prospective buyers. Almost everything that makes your home uniquely "yours" is going to tell them it's not for them.

Many sellers believe that if the home looks "lived in" it will feel like "home," and that will automatically resonate with buyers. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. It feels like home alright; your home.

When a staging professional comes in, the goal is to make your home appealing to the highest number of potential buyers, so the home sells in less time and for more money. Most staging artists prefer to work with an empty space, so they can start with a blank canvas. When staging a home that's lived in, and already furnished, there are several steps they will employ.

Here are some of the staging tactics you can utilize to make your home more appealing to buyers.

Define the rooms

When house hunters look at your home, they have specific needs and are looking for certain types of rooms to cover all the bases. They'll be looking for spaces to serve as bedrooms, offices, games/recreation and family areas, hobby rooms, a den and perhaps a home theatre, to name a few. If they see rooms that are used for several purposes, it can be confusing.

A room that's used part-time as the dining room, a sewing area and home office space tells the prospective buyer that you didn't have enough space in the home, so you had to make do by using a space for several purposes at once. They won't want to find themselves in the same situation, and will likely keep looking for a home with clearly defined rooms, and generous space for everything to fit in neatly.

De-personalize

Many experienced real estate agents will refer to the place you're selling as a "house" and the one you're considering purchasing as a "home." They're trying to remove the emotional connection you have with the current property. When it comes time to negotiate it's important for the real estate to be anonymous.

But there's another important reason to begin de-personalizing as soon as the decision has been made to sell. You'll notice that staging professionals don't put up family pictures or quirky pieces of artwork. In fact, they'll recommend these personal items be boxed up and stored until the property sells. People can't see the possibilities your home offers to them, when everywhere they look they see your stamp of ownership.

Home buyers can also become distracted by your life, and the interesting collections and knick-knacks in it, so they lose sight of the reason they're there.

The walls and flooring in staged homes usually have neutral colours and the furnishings are designed to define each living space of a room, without overwhelming the space. Every piece works with the rest of the room, and is designed to appeal to most people that will view the property.

Put away the family photos, the sports trophies, knick-knacks, collectibles and souvenirs. The same goes for unusual furnishings. If you have rooms that have been painted in loud colours, you should consider re-painting in a neutral tone. This is one time you do not want to flaunt your individuality.

De-clutter

The number one reason buyers give for moving to a new home is they're running out of space where they are. If your rooms are filled with stuff, chances are your place will appear to have less space than the one they're currently in. Buyers need to see the space they're getting.

The best real estate photographer won't be able to make a cluttered home appear spacious. You have to become absolutely ruthless with clutter, pack things up and store them out of sight. Not only is your property more likely to sell with less stuff, but you're getting a jump on packing for your new place. You are also emotionally beginning the move, making it much easier when the time comes.

Don't be afraid to ask for guidance. If you need some help in deciding what needs to go, be sure to ask a real estate or staging professional, or a professional organizer.

Sort things into three categories: things moving with you, things to donate, and things to toss. As an alternative to giving items to charity, you might consider holding a garage sale.

Get your personal spaces in order

Clutter likes to hide in corners, so you need to look beyond what the eye can see. Home buyers will look into everything. They will open the dishwasher, fridge, oven, washer, dryer, cabinets, closets, and they'll even look under beds. If you're thinking of clearing the clutter from the main living areas into the closets, think again. Piles of boxes in closets and the garage will not make your property appear spacious. That's what storage rental units are for.

One of the things home buyers look forward to most is the sense of order that usually follows the move into a new place. There's plenty of space and everything is neatly stored in a designated place. The place looks and smells clean. That hope is quickly dashed if they find dirty dishes in the dishwasher, smelly socks in the hamper in the closet, kids toys strewn across the room and teenage posters on the wall.

When they open a bedroom closet, they should see clothes neatly hung, all facing the same way, and shoes organized. Be sure to clean the floors in the closets. If they open a cabinet, shelves should be wiped clean, and dishes should all be tidy, with cup handles facing the same way. The food items in the pantry should be arranged with labels facing forward. Bathroom towels should be hung neatly, in descending order. The sink, tub and toilet should be spotless, and there should be a fresh bar of soap in the soap dish. One or two vases of fresh cut flowers should be strategically placed in rooms, to invite buyers to walk in.

The takeaway

If the agent ushers the home buyers in, and they experience the same "wow" factor they get when the bellhop opens the doors to an executive luxury suite, providing the price is on point, the home is staged for a quick sale.

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