

Moving Hard-to-Sell Homes with Staging

by Ralph Roberts

When the market slumps or you get stuck with a hard-to-sell property, you may have to ramp up your efforts -- market a little more heavily, spend more time on the phones, pound the pavement, and generate enthusiasm at showings and open houses.

Believe It!

Increase Your Market Share.



Real estate is still a lucrative career for many agents.
Call 1-800-985-1637 or
[CLICK NOW](#) to

- Find out how to work a slow market
- Get your FREE 2008 Agent Business Plan NOW

Another strategy is to simply try to make the house look nicer than the rest of the homes in the neighborhood. Unfortunately, when you are dealing with sellers, they are often reluctant to take on much of the work to beautify their homes. When you offer the awkward advice that they need to remove the clutter, clear out their closets and other storage areas, and make their home spotless, many sellers simply think that you expect them to do your job.

One way to get around this situation is to team up with a staging specialist. [Brandon Fairbanks](#) of Montecino & Associates Real Estate recently partnered with a home staging specialist in his area to announce free home staging consultations for sellers: a \$250 value.

Teaming up with a home stager offers two important benefits. First, if the home is a mess, it saves you from having to break the bad news to the homeowners. The Accredited Staging Professional (ASP) can inspect the home and provide the homeowners with a complete list of what they need to do. Secondly, assuming the homeowners follow the free advice (or hire the ASP to deal with it), you have a much easier job selling the home.

When Montecino & Associates Real Estate signs a listing contract with a seller, one of the first things they do is send in the expert, Teri Lucas, an Accredited Staging Professional, to inspect the premises. Teri enters the home and takes notes as she views the home from the perspective of a prospective buyer. She then prepares a detailed written report that she presents to the seller. This report can be 12 to 20 pages of ideas and suggestions that, if followed, can make the home sell for more money and in less time than if it were not properly prepared for sale.

What sorts of suggestions does an ASP usually make? Here are some tips for properly staging a home:

- Remove the clutter and clear out the closets to make the home appear more spacious and orderly.
- Remove family photos, religious symbols, or any other items that may prevent a visitor from envisioning themselves living in the home.
- Furnish the home, but don't overdo it. A vacant home looks spacious but has no emotional appeal. Add furnishings, so visitors can envision themselves living in the home.
- Bring the outside in. Open the windows if it is nice outside. Bring in fresh flowers and greenery. Steer clear of scented candles, incense, and artificial air fresheners—they can turn off prospective buyers.
- Do a thorough cleaning and dusting to make the home look immaculately clean.

It is a proven fact that staged homes sell faster and for more money. One of Teri's clients had her home on the market for over a year with another agent. After Teri gave her a written consultation and the seller followed all of the suggestions in the report, the home was in escrow four weeks later with a full price offer!

As a real estate agent, you do not have to be a home staging specialist to offer this service to your clients. You can find certified home stagers at the following websites:

- Home Stagers at www1.stagedhomes.com
- International Association of Home Staging Professionals at www.iahsp.com

Simply contact a specialist and work out a deal in which you put the home stager in touch with every seller you contract with and pay the stager a nominal fee (typically about \$75) to provide the free consultation. If the homeowners do not want to do the work, they can then hire the staging professional to do it, and if the homeowners don't want to pay for it, you may consider paying a portion or all of the staging fees. The important thing is that you get the staging professional inside the home to offer a recommendation. You can then decide how to proceed from there.

Don't let a lackluster housing market get you down. Fight back by offering your clients the tools and resources they need to make their properties more competitive!

Published: May 1, 2008