

## Home Staging and Hiring a Stager

Home staging is about illusions. It's how David Copperfield would sell a house. It's magical. It's beyond decorating and cleaning. It's about perfecting the art of creating moods. Staging makes your house look bigger, brighter, cleaner, warmer, more loving and, best of all, it makes home buyers want to buy it. Instantly!

Contrary to what you might think, it's about more than preparing the house for sale. Staging is what you do after you've cleaned, decluttered, painted, made minor repairs; it's all about dressing the house for sale.

It's about adding the small details: the lipstick, mascara and, for simplicity, a stunning, single strand of Tahitian pearls.

Over the years, I have seen home staging payoff big time for many of my sellers. Not all sellers are receptive at first, but when we try it their way and the home doesn't sell because it's missing that "oomph," home staging always seems to turn it around. You can do large scale home staging or small scale, but the important thing is you really should engage some aspect of home staging to sell for top dollar and quickly!

### What is a Professional Home Stager?

Professional stagers are highly skilled artists. They can take a blank canvas and paint a sensuous portrait without ever lifting a paint brush. Stagers possess the skills of a top-level designer and they create dramatic scenery that appeals to all five senses.

Here are some of their secrets:

- Arrange sparse pieces of furniture in an appealing grouping known as a vignette
- Showcase a generous usage of soft fabrics such as silk, lambswool, satin
- Display unusual knickknacks in units of 1, 3 or 5
- Drape window coverings with simple lines
- Add unique elements to shelving, bookcases and fireplace mantels, which draw attention to predetermined areas

### **What Accessories Does a Home Stager Use?**

Stagers bring in a vast array of items to spruce up the house. Here is a small sampling of items professional stagers often use to dress each room. How they are utilized is limited only by the creativity and vision of the stager.

- Mirrors
- Plants
- Silk Flowers
- Floor & Table Lamps,
- Area and Throw Rugs
- Small Love Seats
- Ottomans
- Afghans
- Pillows
- Inflatable Queen-Size Beds
- Baskets
- Plastic Tables & Chairs

### **Professional Home Staging Tricks and Tips**

An artist for 35 years, Dawna Johnson, is an Accredited Staging Professional Master (ASP) and owner of Sacramento Staging Solutions. She says the idea behind staging is to allow rooms to show themselves. "If your home is vacant, it's soulless," Dawna warns. "Without staging, it will probably remain on the market for many months." She calls the kitchen the "heart of the home," and offers this practical advice for making that space sparkle:

- Apply orange oil to cabinets that appear dry, which will renew their original luster
- Put out large bowls of fruit such as polished apples, bright oranges, luscious grapes
- Arrange colorful and fun cookbooks on the counters

Dawna believes in bringing the outdoors inside through the use of greenery and plants; in creating clean, crisp spaces and arranging furniture with plenty of room to walk around.

She says bathrooms are essential to dress well. "Bathrooms should look open, airy and delightful," says Dawna. One of her favorite tricks is to add baskets filled with spa treatments such as:



- Towels, tied with ribbons
- Scented soaps
- Creamy lotions
- Moisturizing & Facial jars

The back-yard needs staging, too. For patios and decks, Dawna brings in plants and potted flowers, and adds additional color by setting the picnic table with bright, plastic dinner plates.

### **How Much Does Home Staging Cost?**

Prices vary depending on where you live and the local demand for professional home staging. Coastal areas and large metropolitan cities where home staging has been prevalent for years command higher prices. Some real estate agents help sellers Stage® the home themselves. Most listing agents agree, however, that vacant homes show better with staging and will encourage sellers to hire a professional stager.

Fees range from \$500 to \$5,000 or more, depending on square footage and the number of rooms staged.

### **How to Find and Hire a Home Stager**

Real estate agents are often your best source of information because they tend to develop long on-going business relationships with the best stagers in town. Like with any business, you've got good stagers and so-so stagers.

- Don't be afraid to ask a Realtor for a referral to a top-notch home stager.
- Do organic searches in any major search engine by entering the words: home stager + your town. Or try home staging + your town. Or even staging a home + your town.
- Look for home stagers on Yelp.com
- Go to Google-Plus and search for home stagers and home staging.
- Look at the website of the most popular home stagers and pay close attention to the way the photographs make you feel. If you find yourself gravitating toward a certain style, pick that stager.