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Ask a Stager: What are the dos and don’ts of pre-sale prep?

Nina Doiron | May 03, 2024 | 0 comments

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Welcome to Ask A Stager*, your regular staging advice column designed exclusively for real estate professionals. Whether you're grappling with how to enhance the visual appeal of your listings or seeking innovative strategies to captivate your target audience, you've come to the right place.* Ask A Stager *offers you the opportunity to pose any and all staging-related questions and receive expert advice, for free.*

No query is too big or small — if it's about elevating the look of your real estate, we want to hear it and we want to help! Email your questions to ninadoiron@isodesign.ca

As a real estate agent, understanding home staging can significantly impact your success in helping to sell clients properties quickly and for top dollar. However, navigating the dos and don'ts of home staging requires an eye for design principles and attention to detail.

For today's frequently asked question, I will provide a comprehensive guide to the dos and don'ts of home staging to help you maximize the potential of every property you represent.

Do

1. Start with curb appeal

The exterior of a home sets the first impression for potential buyers. Invest in landscaping, clean the driveway and ensure the front door is welcoming with a fresh coat of paint.

For the winter months, add a bit of freshness using potted evergreen plants at the front entrance. For the early spring season, rake the yard to remove any dead plant/grass debris and consider hardy and frost-resistant plants.



Photo credit: Reel Sparrow

2. Prioritize deep cleaning

A clean home is essential for staging success. Ensure every surface is spotless, including floors, countertops, windows and bathrooms. Don't forget the vents throughout the house — these are notorious dust collectors.

Consider hiring professional cleaners for a thorough deep clean which should also include the interior of appliances. A dirty house is often seen as a poorly maintained home and invites further suspicion about other deficiencies in the home.

3. Depersonalize and declutter

As a rule, it's critical that you help buyers envision themselves living in the home by advising sellers to remove personal items and clutter. Clear countertops, minimize family photos and streamline furniture to create a spacious and inviting atmosphere.

According to the Real Estate Staging Association (RESA), the vast majority of people cannot envision a home's potential when it's cluttered. When selling, less is more.

4. Focus on neutral decor

Opt for neutral color palettes and modern decor to appeal to a broader range of buyers. Neutral tones create a blank canvas that allows potential buyers to envision their own style in the space.

Neutral tones can create a calming ambiance and don't have to be bland. Pops of colour can be added using artwork and accents. Think about calming accent colours such as blues, sage green and soft buttery yellow.



5. Highlight key features

Showcase the unique selling points of the home, such as architectural features, fireplaces or stunning views.

Use strategic placement of furniture and artwork to draw attention to these features and enhance their appeal. In this instance, a picture is worth a thousand words and well-placed furniture and artwork will do the talking without you having to explain the unique features of the home. At the same time, well-placed staging can help to detract from things you wish not to draw attention to.

6. Maximize natural light

Open curtains, clean windows and let natural light flood into the home. Bright, well-lit spaces feel more inviting and spacious, making them more appealing to potential buyers.

If a room is dark, be sure to add table and floor lamps to brighten it up. Some older homes may not have a ceiling fixture. In this instance, consider adding recessed lighting if the budget allows. Avoid using fluorescent lights as these tend to be harsh and uninviting.

7. Invest in professional staging

Consider partnering with a professional home staging company to elevate the presentation of your listings. Professional stagers have the knowledge, expertise and resources to transform properties into irresistible spaces that command top dollar, freeing up your time to focus on building your real estate business.

There are many different forms of professional staging for all budget types. Let your stager know your budget and they can design a custom package to fit your needs.

Don’t

1. Overlook odours

Unpleasant odors can instantly turn off potential buyers. Address any lingering smells, such as from pets or cooking, to ensure a fresh and inviting atmosphere.

Strong lingering odours, like those from smoking, may require an ozone generator that can quickly and effectively remove unwanted scents from the home. Carpets and rugs will retain odour, especially in homes with pets. In this instance, consider professional steam cleaning.

2. Neglect repairs



Address any visible repairs or maintenance issues before staging the home. Cracked tiles, leaky faucets or chipped paint can detract from the overall appeal and raise concerns about other hidden issues for buyers.

Today's buyers want move-in-ready homes. If the home comes with a long list of repairs and maintenance issues, buyers will be asking for a pricing concession or removing the home from their consideration list altogether.

3. Crowd spaces with furniture

Avoid overcrowding rooms with too much furniture. Opt for minimalistic staging that allows for easy traffic flow and showcases the functionality of each space. This may mean having to remove overstuffed furniture and replacing it with contemporary pieces with clean lines. Avoid placing furniture that will block the natural flow of traffic.

Reassure clients that the more effort they put into preparing their home for sale, the better it will resonate with potential buyers and the sooner they can return to normalcy.

4. Ignore the exterior

While staging the interior is crucial, don't neglect the exterior of the home.

A well-maintained yard, patio or deck can significantly enhance the overall appeal of the property. This is especially true after the winter months with dust, dirt and sand. Encourage clients to invest in a power washer to quickly clean siding, windows and decking.

5. Rely solely on virtual staging

While virtual staging can be an affordable tool, it should not replace physical staging altogether. Virtual staging cannot offer the tactile experience and emotional connection that physical staging provides.

Consider how potential buyers will feel when they walk into a space unlike what they saw online. It may cause more questions than provide answers, especially for buyers who have difficulty visualizing a space.

6. Forget to update outdated decor



Things that will scream outdated are light fixtures, bathroom and kitchen hardware and fixtures. Replace these outdated fixtures, furnishings and decor items to give the home a fresh and modern look.

Dated decor can make the home feel stale and unappealing to buyers, not to mention add to the list of things they will need to fix and replace, which only increases their costs. By making the home move-in ready, it will have a greater chance of sales success.

7. Skip the final walkthrough



Photo credit: WV Media

Before showcasing the staged home to potential buyers, conduct a final walkthrough to ensure everything is in place and presentation-ready. Pay attention to every detail including styling beds, fluffing cushions, lowering the toilet seat and putting away anything unsightly such as toilet brushes and trash cans.

Make all necessary adjustments before the photographer arrives to ensure perfect photos are taken and shared online. According to RESA, 90 per cent of homebuyers searched for properties online during their process. So, be sure that the photos you have of the property are worthy of booking an in-person visit.

Mastering the dos and don’ts of the pre-sale prep is essential if you’re looking to achieve greater success in today’s competitive real estate market. By following these guidelines and making the necessary investment in updates and professional staging, you can maximize the appeal of your listings and attract more buyers.

With careful attention to detail and a focus on creating inviting spaces, you’ll set yourself apart as a top-notch agent committed to delivering exceptional results

for your clients. Word of your dedication will travel and lead to new business opportunities.

Got home staging questions for a future column? Submit them to ninadoiron@isodesign.ca

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Nina Doiron

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