

Setting the Stage: The Art of Home Staging

Those who doubt the power of staging need only speak to Trina Macchi of Hallmark Sotheby's International Realty in Hopkinton, Mass., to grasp how critical it is to the process of selling a home.

One of Trina's most successful cases is a home she took over from a competitor, who had it listed for 275 days. After completely restaging it, she took new photos and put it back on the market at the same price. Within one week she had three offers, one which the sellers accepted. An interior designer for 20 years before getting her real estate license, Trina is able to blend the skill set developed in her previous career to help her sell homes.

"This house was in great condition but the

layout was all wrong," she explained. "It worked for the seller but not for anyone else. I convinced the sellers to invest in restaging. We opened doorways, converted the family room back into a dining room and put things back the way they should have been. We then took new pictures, had an open house and the seller was blown away by the speed at which we were able to sell the home."

According to Trina, staging and good photography are critical because it is difficult for

people to visualize. "Photography is extremely crucial," she said. **"The first showing is on the internet now. If buyers don't like how it looks online, they aren't going to even consider walking in the door. Our brand requirements on this are there for a reason. Good photography helps eliminate those who can tell from the pictures that the home isn't going to work for them, saving time and effort for all."**

BEFORE



AFTER



Here are Trina's top tips for successful staging:

DECLUTTER: Clean closets give the impression there is more space. Remove family photos and knick knacks so prospective buyers can better picture themselves in the home. If a house doesn't look neat or organized, it sends a subtle message that the home is not large enough or has poor storage, which might not be true.

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW: Remove old or out-dated carpeting and replace with a neutral color. Also update bedding to be more generic and modern. The goal is to make the home look like it could belong to anyone.

A CLEAR VIEW: Clean all windows! Dirty windows make a buyer feel as though the whole house is dirty. Keeping window space open so people can see the views is critical. It also is better to remove old window treatments and leave the windows without them than to keep outdated treatments up.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER: Flowers by the front door go a long way to make people feel welcome. The front door should be freshly painted and steps need to be well-maintained.

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: After staging the home to sell, take pictures that accurately present the home as it is. If a home looks bad in pictures, people will assume it is worse in person. By the same token, you don't want to represent the home in a grand way that does not reflect what it really is.