



Seven Low-Cost, High-Impact Staging Tips

By Martha Webb
Author and Producer of *Dress Your House for Success*

Whole-house makeovers? A travelling carpentry crew? Although it may be hard to tell from its portrayal in the media, the fundamentals of staging are far from lavish or expensive. Working with sellers in a challenging housing market and downturned economy requires creativity and getting back to the basics.

A Procter & Gamble survey revealed that over 70% of a buyer's impressions of the interior of a property can be controlled. The basics – clutter, cleanliness, and odors – represent 35% of a buyer's overall impression and cost little or no money to address. Start with the most important step: Uncluttering. Tell your sellers the goal is to show the true spaciousness of the house and that can mean removing some items

to spark a buyer's imagination. It's easy for sellers to get overwhelmed, so take control and make a checklist of everything to be accomplished and provide resources to ease the work.

Here are seven easy, low-cost activities that can help your sellers compete in today's tough market.

1. Tackle the Closets, Drawers and Cupboards.

Take everything out and sort it into three categories – what is needed before the move, what can be stored, and what can be given away. The goal is to remove about half of the contents. Before returning items, clean or paint so buyers see fresh, organized spaces with room for their things.

Tip: Do one room at a time to avoid total chaos.

2. Sweat the Small Stuff.

Collections are meaningful to sellers and emotionally difficult to remove. Remind sellers that collections often tempt people to touch and that packing and storing now will keep their treasures safe. Bring a set of moving boxes, packing paper, tape and labels to help your sellers get started.





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WITH **Martha Webb**
September 21, 2009

Tuition: \$149, Time: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Created by Martha Webb, author and producer of *Dress Your House for Success*, this course will give you new skill sets to help you successfully market any listing, including:

- Scripts and statistics to address difficult issues like clutter, cleanliness, odors, and pets
- No- and low-cost techniques with big impact for the least amount of time, work and money
- The psychology of color and buyer appeal
- Market Analysis PriceGraph (a graphic CMA) to help sellers “visualize” the best pricing strategy
- and much more @ www.ChicagoREALTOR.com/Education.

3. Get kids in the game.

Purchase a set of office storage boxes and give each child a box or two to decorate and then fill with their favorite things to take to their new house. Add a set of markers or stickers to turn uncluttering into a work of art.

4. Pull Buyers’ Eyes Through the Room.

Stand at the entrance to each room and identify what draws the eye. Take a photo to make your plan. Use color, weight and light to initially pull buyers’ eyes through the room. In this living room, the tall lamp on the left drew the eye to about half of the room. We moved the lamp, added another in the corner, then removed an end table, moved the sectional into the room, and angled the bookcase. Cost: \$0; impact: spaciousness.

5. Clean-to-Sell and Scent-Free

Explain to sellers that clean-to-sell is different than how we live in a house and sparkling clean tells buyers it’s been well cared for. Acknowledge the extra time required to maintain a house in showing condition and help your sellers out – arrange a discount with cleaning professionals who can jump-start the process. Make it easy to keep the house in showing condition by giving sellers a gift bag with disposable/biodegradable cleaning wipes for glass, counters, bathrooms and dusting. A scent-free home opens it to all buyers. Febreze, an odor neutralizer, will remove the odors from cooking, smoking and pets.

6. Keep Pets Safe.

Tell sellers almost 40% of buyers do not own pets – and that can narrow the market. If they are allergic, they can’t go in; if they are afraid, they won’t. If your sellers are like most pet owners, they feel that their pet is a part of the family. Moving is as stressful on a pet as it is on a child, but you can’t talk to a pet to soothe their worries. The best way to keep pets calm is to remove them during showings. Arrange a discount at a pet daycare, or hire neighbor kids to pet sit. If no money is available, ask sellers if they have a friend or neighbor to watch their pet during showings.



Before



After

7. Turn off some lights.

Contrary to conventional advice, turning on every light in a house may not show a room in its best light. Overhead lights can cause a glare, harsh shadows and a bare-bulb feeling. Use horizontal lighting (light from table and floor lamps and windows) to set a warm and cozy mood. Bring timers to extend a warm invitation to evening drive-bys whether sellers are home or not. **CR**



Martha Webb is the author and producer of “Dress Your House for Success.” Her home selling and buying concepts have been featured across the country including Good Morning America, CNN, and The New York Times. She created the Certified Home Marketing Specialist (CHMS) course to help agents manage staging in their business. Her scripts and dialog help agents address difficult issues and create a plan to upstage the competition. Martha will present CHMS at the Chicago Association of Realtors on September 21, 2009. Visit ChicagoREALTOR.com/Education for a class schedule and to register.