

A Star is Born

Even if your listings never attract a movie star, you can inject some show business pizzazz into your staging that can get the deal done.

As any stager will tell you, every property—regardless of its size or asking price—can benefit from de-cluttering and depersonalizing. Cleaning and de-cluttering are the do-it-yourself activities with the biggest potential return at resale, adding possibly \$2000 or more to the sales price.

Buyers like to snoop. So put away personal photos and items, including medicines and toiletries. Also, keep kitchen and bathroom drawers tidy and not overstuffed in case anyone sneaks a peek.

Setting scenes within a home help define how spaces are used. For example, display a chess game or playing cards. In an area that may be used for exercise, put out water bottles and towels on a table. Show what each room is about and how it can be used, and then sell it. You're not just selling a home; you're selling a lifestyle that you want them to fit into.

Use super-sized centerpieces to make a bigger statement, such as a large vase of lilacs on the kitchen counter or the dining room table. Also, push spaces to their max, if you can fit twelve seats in the dining room, don't just put in eight seats. Go as big as you can with your furnishings to show how much a space can accommodate, but stay mindful of the scale of the room.

The trend in staging is a modern, minimalist style with light, neutral color palettes, and a splash of color added through accessories.

Make sure the home will touch buyers' five senses. Imagine that a buyer enters your listing. It's the fourth she's looked at, she's tired and grumpy and undergoing sensory overload. You want to present a space that will surprise her and encourage her to relax and soak in the setting. Here are ideas to provide a 'high definition' effect to your listings:

- **SIGHT;** Display fresh flowers throughout the house on kitchen and bathroom countertops and side tables. Or add color pops by displaying seasonal fruits in the kitchen, living, and dining rooms—like a large bowl filled with red apples, pomegranates, strawberries, or lemons.
- **SOUND;** Play soft classical music in the background.
- **TASTE;** Put ready-to-bake cookies in the oven shortly before a showing and set them on a pretty plate in the kitchen for prospective buyers. Brew some coffee and tea. The refreshments encourage buyers more incentives to sit down and stay awhile.
- **SMELL;** Skip the chemical air fresheners. The flowers and baked goods will provide a welcoming scent. Another idea is to slice four apples in half, sprinkle them with brown sugar and bake them at 375 degrees for 30 minutes.
- **FEEL;** Use linens with a "rich, substantive feel" in bedrooms, textured accent pillows, and white fluffy towels—which all convey the touch of luxury.

Creating such an inviting space should elicit rave reviews from home shoppers—and just might entice them to stick around through the closing credits.