



SELLING FOR TOP DOLLAR

Dekora, Canada's leading home staging company, illustrates the appeal of a clean, uncluttered living room, above, which will add a positive influence when would-be buyers walk through.

In a challenging market, it often takes that something extra to persuade buyers to choose your house over the one next door, or down the street. It's all in the presentation.

□ Until recently, all a home seller had to do to attract a buyer was find a good realtor and list the home on the MLS. Then, almost overnight it seemed, a buyer's market brought about the need to work a little harder to sell a property.

Dekora, Canada's leading home staging company, has plenty of advice for those wanting to sell their homes. Here are some of the top things buyers will notice, along with tips from Dekora:

Curb appeal: Buyers usually drive by a home before deciding whether to request a showing or attend an open house. You want them to fall in love with your home from the street. Trim hedges, cut lawn, remove debris, power wash where needed, weed flowerbeds, plant fresh flowers.

Colour and light: Neutralize strong colours for the broadest appeal. Open blinds and draperies and ensure sufficient lighting throughout the home.

Cleanliness: Think "hotel" clean and this includes the exterior areas such as walkways and patios that might need power washing. Also, pay particular attention to odours and ensure your home smells fresh. Clean in areas you may not expect buyers to see, such as under sinks and in cupboards.

Clutter: Few things deter buyers more than a cluttered home. Ensure prospective buyers view your home and not your excess stuff.

Maintenance: Squeaky doors, chipped or smudged paint, broken fixtures and fittings should all be fixed.

Lighting: Turn on all lights, open blinds and drapes.

De-personalize: Taking "yourself" out of the house makes rooms for others to come in. Excessive personal items like photos, collections, personal awards, religious items can potentially make it difficult for buyers to see past your life and may deter a sale.



Pets and children: Send the pets and kids to the park and put the toys, litter box and kibble dishes away.

FIVE SIGNS YOU NEED A PROFESSIONAL HOME STAGER

You want to sell your home: Staged homes sell 49 per cent faster and sell for seven to 11 per cent more than non-staged homes (National Association of Realtors).

Offers: Your home is not attracting offers. Staging can help turn lookers into buyers by making properties more attractive, memorable and desirable to home buyers.

Price: Your realtor is recommending a price reduction. An investment in staging your home may minimize the need for price reductions.

Vacant: You are attempting to sell a vacant property. Buyers are lost in empty rooms and need furnishings to define spaces and showcase a lifestyle they are seeking.

Competition: The more competitive the market the more your home needs to stand out and staging can make all the difference. Avoid simply putting your home on the market without first considering its presentation. Staging is an investment in your most valuable asset.

TOP FIVE REASONS HOMES DON'T SELL

Nationwide research shows that there are five main reasons homes don't sell in a timely fashion.

Price: Work closely with your realtor to set a realistic price. Overpriced homes often sit on the market.

Condition: Most people want something they can just move into without work and hassles. Homes in poor condition or disrepair are often difficult to sell.

Presentation: The best presented home is the one that will more likely sell. Competition can be stiff and if a home is not well presented buyers may look elsewhere. Seek the advice of a professional stager.

Location: An undesirable location can make selling a challenge so focus on things you can control like price, condition and presentation.

Listing agent: Work with a reputable agent and check references. □

Staged homes, such as the one above by Dekora, sell 49 per cent faster and for seven to 11 per cent more than non-staged homes, according to the National Association of Realtors.

Dekora designers may be seen working their magic in The Stagers on HGTV Canada's Design Tuesdays at 7 and 11 p.m., starting July 22. They may be reached through the website www.dekora.com, phone 1-888-GO-DEKORA.