



Styling a home for sale is not a new concept, but it is a practice that has gained steam with our more challenging market. I see many home sellers confuse styling with decorating and consequently resisting the process and the recommendations of the styling professional. But the reality is that the moment you commit to marketing your home for sale, you need to commit to transforming your home into a place that potential buyers can easily picture as *their* home. This means that you need to be prepared to emotionally detach.

Let your home speak to buyers.

Your home speaks to you, but what is it saying to your potential buyer? Most sellers we encounter tend to take the home styling process personally, and this is precisely the point. Our homes are personal, yet how we live is not how we sell. Our homes represent who we are; they are life-sized memory books of our travels, they trumpet our likes, our dislikes and our beliefs. They showcase our stuff -- all that stuff we have accumulated over time that speaks to us. The goal of styling is to make the home speak to everyone else, in a compelling and positive way.

You are proud of your Hummel collection. Each piece acquired over time has a special meaning, but to your buyer, it is a collection of your things, which serves only to draw his attention away from the main event. Likewise the personal photos, the too-tall centerpiece, the overstuffed china cabinet and the bookcase filled with National Geographic magazines dating back to the Palaeozoic Era -- these are all treasures to be sure, but they serve only to side-track a buyer from the task at hand.

Buyers tend to label the homes they see, as do agents. So, you can either be the “house with the beautiful arched doorways” or the “house with the Elvis throw rug and a bunch of office furniture where the dining room should be.” Both evoke emotional reactions,

but unless the buyer is one who spends his annual vacations at Graceland, you will be far better served by eliminating distractions.

Clutter may suggest your home doesn't measure up.

Most of us, if honest, will admit that our daily lives involve a certain amount of clutter. The little stack of mail and car keys and loose change next to the telephone, the "junk drawer" which has been busy propagating the species while no one was looking, and a bathroom with enough toiletries on display to groom the entire population of North America are all examples.

Clutter is just another perpetrator of distraction. More importantly, though, your clutter may be sending a message that you don't have enough space. My kitchen counter houses a toaster, salt and peppershakers and a few cookbooks. What's on yours? If it's filled with "stuff, it might suggest that you lack the cabinet space to properly store these everyday items. And, if you're hoping that this other person will buy your home, you need to clean it up!

Don't shoot the Stylist

The primary goal of styling is not to transform your home into the eighth wonder of the world. For most of us, this simply isn't realistic. I will work with what you have, rearranging and reallocating all of your belongings, in order to present the property in its best light. Sometimes this means reallocating some of those belongings to the garage.

Too often the tendency is take the process personally, but you shouldn't. This process is not a do-it-yourself sport, and only a third party specialist can bring the neutrality and objectivity needed to accomplish the goal. You may interpret the message that your favorite painting would look much better above the fireplace -- in your neighbor's house - - as an indictment on your style and tastes. OK, maybe it is, but most likely it is not. Rather, it is probably the stylist's attempt to ensure that your appointments don't upstage the home itself. That's my job.

It's not an inconvenience. Your daily routine will not be upset. So make sure you hire a professional. It can take a few hours or can be complete in a day or two. It's worth the small investment compared to how much more money you will command for your home. And...it will sell more quickly!

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