**Preparing your house to sell - the ins and outs of effective styling**

Once you have made the decision to sell your home the next question is naturally - *how can I get the highest price?* It goes without saying that a good agent will play a huge part in getting you the best result but did you know that effective home styling or “home staging” will also play a significant role? In fact, some agents claim that every dollar they spend on stying they get back five times in sales price. That’s at least five great reasons why you should be embracing this phenomenon!

There are a number of professional interior designers who specialise in staging houses for sale however below are some simple and straightforward tips you can implement yourself to make that lasting impression.

1. People can and will judge and book by its cover.

When potential buyers arrive at your house first impressions could mean the difference between and offer or not. Ensure your hedges are trimmed, garden beds weeded, minor repairs are fixed and the driveway is clear from any dirt or clutter. This is your houses’ moment to declare how wonderful it is so don’t underestimate how powerful this first impression can be.

1. De-personalise and de-clutter.

Yes your home is a showcase for your life and all the trinkets, photos, books and knickknacks mean the world to you….but they don’t mean anything to potential buyers! You need to be able to disassociate yourself with your home and remove any personal items so that people can walk in and conjure up visions of themselves living in this space.

1. It’s what inside that counts.

Don’t forget buyers are essentially shopping so they will open and close cupboards and doors as they see fit. Before inspections make sure you go through every drawer and cupboard and reorganise and again de-clutter. Good storage is usually up there on every buyer’s wish list so remove any unnecessary items to reveal the extent of the space. If you look in to your cupboard and think you’re being a little obsessive compulsive – then it probably means you’re on the right track!

1. Don’t give them a list of repairs.

You want buyers to leave your property imagining moving in straight away not making a mental list of all the things that require fixing! So before you arrange inspections go through your property with a fine tooth comb. Look for chipped paint and floorboards, broken handles and fixtures and any other issues you have been telling yourself over the years you would get to! Now is the time.

1. How does the space work?

You want all furniture and items within the house to demonstrate how a space can work. Often that means removing excess furniture. Your focus should be to maximise space and light and give every room a purpose. Take the thinking out of it for the buyer.

1. Everyone’s gotta eat…and shower.

Kitchen’s and Bathrooms really can sell a house so pay particular attention to these two areas. In your kitchen remove everything from benches and…you know it…declutter. Help connect your buyer with this room though sight and smell. It’s time to get your bake on!

In your bathroom, invest in some new towels and mats and maybe some quality candles and soaps to make the space inviting (keep the toilet lid shut so as not to make it too inviting!). Don’t underestimate the power of what new handles or paint can do for dated bathrooms.

1. Clean, clean, clean

Never has been a better time for some old fashioned elbow-grease. Before inspections your house should look immaculate. From front to back, windows to floors and ceiling and walls, everything must be spotless.

Home staging is increasingly becoming an integral part of the sales process. Speak to your Agent about any further ideas to get your home ready for market – it could just be the difference between selling and sold!

 Case Study: As the Marketing Director of North Shore Agency McConnell Bourn, Samantha Bourne knows a thing or two about real estate styling. Having started in real estate in 2000, Samantha has seen first-hand how property styling has evolved and how important it is to the bottom line when selling your home. Samantha says: “Back in the day agents would tell you to put a loaf of bread in the oven to achieve that homely feel and give the house a tidy up.” She adds “In today’s market this simply wouldn’t do. Our buyers are sophisticated, savvy and want to walk in to a home that they feel has been well looked after.”

According to Samantha, buyers are usually on the lookout for things they can discount the property price with so it’s imperative that eliminate these issues.

Below are Samantha’s top five tips as to where you should spend your time and money on effective styling:

Tip 1: Consider a paint job to freshen up the house. Choosing a neutral paint palette that appeals to a broader market is key

Tip 2: Declutter your home and remove any styling items that may alienate some buyers. Buyers are more likely to connect with your home if homewares and furniture are relatively neutral

Tip3: Gardens - an unkept yards may offer the buyer leverage to discount the price – cut back and tidy up all outdoor areas

Tip 4: Awaken the senses with candles and open up doors and windows to create a new cross breeze if you can

Tip 5: Promote alfresco areas and living space – you can sell extra living areas

**Include some before and after images of property reno and styling.**