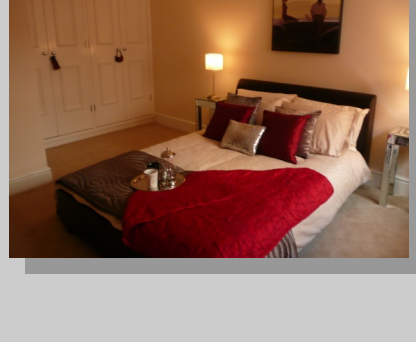


COLLETTE'S TOP TEN TIPS TO MOVE BEFORE CHRISTMAS!



At this time of the year most vendors have one goal in common, to move before Christmas. The idea of being settled into a new home to host the friends and family gathering proves irresistible to many. The competition amongst vendors and expectation of buyers is still very high despite the current climate.

Imagine that you have found your ideal next rung up the property ladder, the only thing left is to secure a quick sale on your existing home. The difficulty often lies in the fact that you are focussing on the next house and mentally you are already working out the decorating scheme! Don't forget that for potential buyers looking around your home this is their next step up the ladder, this has to fit their picture of a 'dream home' too.

I have been in the property business for a number of years now, and although home staging has undoubtedly become more acceptable, there are still many people who do not buy in to the concept. It is not rocket science, it simply means that when you market what is probably your best financial asset for sale, you ensure that it looks at its best. This simple fact will ensure that it sells faster and achieve its optimum selling price, therefore enabling you to take the next step in your life.

Estate agents generally fall into two categories on this subject, those that agree with home staging, and feel that it is easier to market and sell well presented properties, and those that feel it will sell eventually anyway so why bother, as long as the price is right, and that usually means a reduction from the original market valuation. The danger with the attitude of the latter is that you may not have the time to wait for that sale. It may cost you the loss of your next 'dream home', you may not want to accept a drop in sale price because once an agent has given you a valuation you have used this figure to calculate the purchase of the next property.

It is a fact that many buyers will eliminate a property before even crossing the threshold; this suggests that if they are familiar with the location that the decision is made by the outside appearance of the house. While I totally agree that the initial impression of a home is made on the kerb, we cannot rule out the huge impact of the internet. It is so easy to log on and browse through the details of all the properties for sale in the region, and you must admit quite entertaining, or is this just me?! Therefore, the photos are a crucial part of the marketing process, and can make the decision to view or not to view. It never ceases to amaze me how poor some of these photos are; badly set up, badly lit, taken from the worst angle, and clutter still in evidence!

So with these points in mind here are my top tips to help you sell your home:

KERB APPEAL

Ensure that the garden is free of rubbish and bins. Paint the front door in a positive colour, red always works in winter. If you live in a period home use the appropriate paint shades. Place welcoming tubs of seasonal flowers by the front door, to save time buy these ready made from the local garden centre. Clean the windows, and ensure that all the paintwork is in good condition.

HALL ENTRANCE

If you are lucky enough to have a hall entrance, make it the entrance that sets the tone for the rest of the house. Move all the coats and smelly trainers to another location, or invest in a storage trunk. Ensure that this room is bright and airy, with mirrors to enhance depth and light. Use table lamps to create a warm welcoming glow.

SPRING CLEAN

OK so it's autumn, but really give the house a good and thorough clean through from top to bottom. Have all the carpets cleaned and all the upholstery. Ensure that all surfaces are sparkling, and regularly open the windows for fresh air, which is much nicer than overpowering scented 'air fresheners'.

MEND IT

It may sound obvious but we all live with quirky handles and doors that don't open on the first push, even dripping taps. Do a list and get all these minor DIY tasks done, if you don't it may mean that your potential buyers think that this is hiding some bigger uglier problem, which will give them leverage to renegotiate the price.

NEUTRALISE

Remember not everyone may have the same tastes in decor as you, so the object is to appeal to the broadest market. Many people do not possess the ability to see beyond the current decor. However, contrary to popular belief this does not mean paint your entire house magnolia, which is quite a vile colour. Go for one of the neutral palettes that the paint companies conveniently group together in their catalogues. Use accent colours on feature walls and soft furnishings to avoid a bland cold look.

DE-CLUTTER & EDIT

Start to pack the minute that you decide to sell, this will not only help you with the stress and organisation in the long run, but will also help you on the de-cluttering process. Remember clutter is a space filler, and you are selling space. Also edit down on the family portraits, buyers want to envisage themselves in this property. Urns with the ashes of loved family pets or relatives are surprisingly common too, it may seem harsh, but put them away safely as they convey sadness, and buyers are looking for a happy home.

PETS

This is the living ones. Not everyone will find your dogs, cats, (or worse) as endearing as you do. Remove pets from the home for viewings. Make sure that any lingering pet odours are dealt with from flooring and furniture.

DEFINE FUNCTION

If you live in a house that has been extended, the chances are that some of the rooms will lack 'function'. I am often asked for advice on how best to make a property 'flow.' Dining rooms have often been overtaken by the family computer, and homework, guest rooms are now the house overflow, and conservatories look like a shed. These rooms need to be reinstated to their original function, it will make the house flow better and will give the impression of more space and more rooms. This may not be how you live, but this is about selling a lifestyle.

LIGHT

Ask any buyer what they are looking for in a house and you can guarantee that one of the answers that trips off the tongue is 'light'. If your viewings are during the day, pull back the curtains to let in the maximum natural light. Do not place furniture in front of French doors, and remove the nets, pull up the blinds. Light rooms convey a feeling of space. This is all very well I hear you say, but with the evenings drawing in and many viewings taking place in the dark how do we get around that one? Use table lamps to create an ambient warm cosy atmosphere. Be creative with lighting, don't simply turn on all the lights in a retina blinding frenzy, highlight architectural features with uplighters, and light plants from below for interesting shape and texture. If you are lucky enough to have a fireplace then light the fire for a really seductive piece of marketing!

STAGE IT

Finally having covered all these points now look at you house as a blank canvas and add some luxurious accessories. This is where you can use accent colours, pick either a warm or cool colour scheme and take it throughout the house. This will ensure that rooms flow easily from one to another. Layer cushions and throws in tones of the same colour using contrasting textures. This doesn't need to cost a fortune, high street stores and supermarkets have great cost effective ranges that reflect the latest colour trends.

Collette Hanlon is the creative design director for Home Stagers the UK's leading property presentation experts, and assoc member of BIDA the UK's only professional body for the interior design industry. She has several years experience in the local property market and works closely with home owners, estate agents and property professionals. From consultation through to full interior design projects.

Call us today to book your consultation or show home quote. tel 0800 542 8 952

Home Stagers wish you a
Very Merry Christmas

