

Possible Introduction

One of the country's first staging professionals, Diane Keyes has been bringing her innovative approach to the real estate industry for over twenty years.

Her unique talents have taken her to four-star restaurants, multi-million-dollar island get-aways and thousands of private homes. And when they needed someone to prepare the Minnesota Governor's mansion for the Swedish royal family, the governor's wife called Diane.

An accomplished author as well as an expert stager, Diane brings her engaging writing style and great staging advice to ***This Sold House***, her new, award-winning, do-it-yourself staging book filled with hundreds of quick, easy and inexpensive ideas to help homeowners stage their homes themselves.

Interview Questions

1. Would you explain the concept of staging for our readers/listeners?
2. Why is staging so important in today's real estate market?
3. Can you get more money for your home if it's staged?
4. What made the home more valuable after your two hour consultation?
5. Can homeowners stage their own homes?
6. What are the three most important things to remember about staging your home?
7. Can you give us a couple quick tips anyone can use to make their home look better online?
8. Do you have any ideas for vacant homes?

9. What are the most important areas of the house to stage?
10. How can readers/listeners get a copy of This Sold House?

1. Would you explain the concept of staging for our listeners?

I'd be happy to. Staging is more than the basic decluttering, cleaning and general repair necessary get any home ready to sell. It's taking a personal property and changing it into a saleable commodity—one that appeals to more buyers so it sells faster and gets the sellers the best price... even in today's tough market. Although most stagers define staging in terms of decorating, my 22 years experience as a stager tells me it is about showcasing the space rather than the furnishings. It's not the decorating that makes such a difference it's the *change*.

I was just talking with someone whose home had been on the market for many months. She'd lived in her home 32 years and said it was perfect.

I told her "it may be perfect for you but— not necessarily for your buyers." I suggested she move stuff around, and pack up some of her favorite things so it didn't feel as much like her space. She did and the house sold within a couple weeks—It became more appealing to buyers because it didn't feel as much like her home...it felt like it could be theirs.

2. Why is staging so important in today's real estate market?

Staging is crucial today because there are more homes for sale than there are buyers. There are about 20 houses for each buyer and in some areas that number may be much higher. And 86% of buyers see homes they are

interested in online before they ever schedule a showing. Add to those statistics the fact that it takes on average 20 to 22 showings to make a sale and you can see what homesellers are up against. To sell your home in this buyers' market your home has to stand out online to get showings. Sellers don't get a chance anymore to charm potential buyers with a beautiful neighborhood or the park across the street because they don't come unless they like what they see on the Internet and they are far more likely to like what they see if the house is staged.

3. Can you get more money for your home if it's staged?

Absolutely, not only can you get more money for your home, you may be able to list your home for a higher price. Not long ago, I consulted on a two-story home, the house had great features but they were buried under years of neglect. The day after my visit, the Realtor® phoned to say he was sorry he hadn't called me before he'd set the listing price and put the house on the market. After my two-hour consultation with the homeowner, the Realtor® believed the listing price should have been set at \$210,000 instead of the \$175,000 price they'd chosen. That's an additional \$35,000 in the listing price which would add up to a 20 percent increase in the profit! All without spending one nickel on the property.

4. *What makes a house more valuable after staging?* When the distractions, obvious problems and space inhibitors are eliminated, a home becomes

more *visually attractive* to buyers—the home's true value is revealed and its equity enhanced.

5. *Can homeowners stage their own homes?*

Absolutely, with my approach anyone can stage their own home. And it doesn't require any decorating savvy either because it's not really about decorating. It's about psychology. Most people buy homes based on how they feel about a home, not how it's decorated. So I help homeowners create an environment where buyers feel comfortable. It just stands to reason that the more comfortable someone is in a space the more likely they are to buy it.

6. *What are the three most important things to remember about staging your home?*

The three most important factors when staging your home are **light, space and color**. Natural light raises your buyer's comfort level. Even if the buyers pull down every shade once they move in, initially natural light will make them feel more comfortable. It just makes sense that if you're more comfortable in a home you're more inclined to buy it.

The second factor to consider is space. Even though you'd think that people would be very observant when visiting a house they're considering buying, the first time through, they're a bit nervous about being in someone else's house and they tend to get an overall impression rather than see details. So you need to make the visit easy for them. Don't give them too much to look at

or they'll get distracted and keep the traffic patterns straightforward so they get an accurate view of the space.

The third factor is color. Wherever you have a color you have someone who doesn't like that color and every time you add another color you continue to decrease your market segment. Even though the current trend is for more color in decorating--the fastest way to a sale is with the largest possible market segment. By reducing your color you eliminate color as a reason not to buy a property and increase your number of prospects. No one's sofa clashes with cream walls.

7. Can you give us a couple quick tips anyone can use to make their home look better online?

Like people homes have one profile that is better than the other so decide whether your home looks best when approached from the right or the left side use those pictures online and include directions for approaching your house in the showing instructions.

When you're arranging furnishings for your online photos, make certain that some bare wall (from the floor to the ceiling) surrounds each furniture arrangement. For example, if you have a chair with a lamp and table next to it, leave some space before you add your next grouping. The bare space surrounding the grouping actually acts like a frame and makes the room look

more spacious. Also, don't have furnishing touch window or door trim, it makes the space appear crowded.

8. Do you have any suggestions for vacant homes?

Without furnishings, the buyer can see every flaw in a house so vacant homes must be extra clean, with the walls and floors in good condition. Then make buyers feel welcome with a personal note on the counter inviting them to help themselves to a soda in the refrigerator. You could provide paper and a pen for notes, some pictures of the garden in its prime, a list of neighborhood conveniences etc., something that says they are welcome space and you've taken good care of the home just for them.

9. What are the most important areas of the house to stage?

First impressions are hard to overcome so it's best to stage the rooms that buyers will see first. If they see a problem after they've fallen in love they are more likely to rationalize reasons why it's not that important. And of course, it's crucial to have the outside of the home looking its best. A picture of the exterior of your house is the first one buyers will see online and you need to grab them before they click on by.

10. How can our listeners order your book?

You can order it on Amazon or on my Website ThisSoldhouse.biz.

Two Take-aways for the Readers/Listeners

- In today's market, you will sell your home faster and for more money if your home is staged for today's buyers.
- You don't need to spend lots of money or hire a professional stager or, with a little instruction you can do it yourself.

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