

How to home stage your property

Many of the properties Knight Frank market internationally employ the use of a professional home stager to help the seller make their homes as attractive as possible to potential buyers.

Home staging aims to present the home in a light where the potential buyer could picture himself living there and in his mind see his personal belongings fitting into rooms, without too much effort.

Professional home staging in South Africa, however, has not taken off. This is probably because sellers are unable to justify the cost for an average priced home, says Matt Mercer of Knight Frank Residential SA. Sellers should realise though, that spending a nominal sum, possibly R2 000, could make a difference of R100 000 more achieved on the selling price, and assist in selling the home in a shorter time.

The most important rooms in the home, such as the main entertainment area, kitchen, and main bedroom should be staged first. Many buyers choose a home based solely on the impact of these rooms, says Mercer.

The most important thing is to neutralise the home by repainting colourful walls or trim in neutral colours, i.e. purple or red walls could be replaced with an accent earthy colour instead. It is best to remove personal artwork that might detract from the house, such as nude portraits and overly large family photos. Aim to declutter rooms and minimise furniture as much as possible to make the house appear larger. If necessary, find storage off-site.

If anything is broken in the home, fix it. Even something that needs the smallest repair, such as loose kitchen cupboards or a broken intercom, will make buyers wonder if there are hidden repairs waiting for them, says Mercer.

Consider hiring extra help to make everything as clean as possible, paying extra attention to the windows and carpets. Ask a friend for an unbiased opinion and make sure that there are no offensive smells in or around the house. Homes that have pets living in them tend to absorb the animal smell without the residing family realising it, and while this is not offensive in general, it might be a put-off to those who do not own pets.

Lighting is any home's best accessory. Create an inviting mood with lamps, open up curtains and blinds and try make the home look like a furniture showroom.

Buyers will make their mind up about the home in the first two minutes of being there and spend the rest of the time rationalising that decision, says Mercer. Make sure that their very first impression is the best it can be and that each room is as inviting as possible.

If you can afford it, consider vacating the property for a time. This will make the property more accessible for the agent and less distracting for the buyer.

If you have repurposed a room, for example, converted the guest suite to a gym, restore it to its original state. Don't rely on a buyer imagining what the house should look like, says Mercer.

Most buyers will look at online photos before even looking at the property and the better staged the home is, the more likely they are to want to physically view it, he says.

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