



Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams



What is Staging?

Let's first discuss what staging isn't.... Staging is not decorating. It is not simply removing clutter and cleaning. Staging is not baking cookies or adding fresh flowers. These are all parts of a whole, but staging is so much more!

Staging is about creating a model home feeling in any home regardless of age of home or occupancy status.

The first thing you need to understand about staging is that homes are bought and sold based on emotional, not financial reasons. Home builders understand this concept and spend thousands of dollars creating an environment that makes buyers want their homes. Typically the value for a new construction property is less than that of an existing property when you consider improvements made over the years. What people are buying when they buy new is the feeling that life will be better, cleaner, PERFECT.

When a buyer looks at un-staged existing properties, what do they usually see? They see clutter, mess, to do lists, laundry that has gone undone, and a mound of chores that need to be tended to on a regular basis. Staging a home helps eliminate many of these images and convey the same feelings of the new construction home. We do this through careful attention to detail. We focus on the silent signals a home may be giving off and work to eliminate them!

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Why Stage?

Regardless of the state of the economy or the real estate market, Staging WORKS! In a hot market, staging your home can bring in higher offers, sometimes even a multiple offer bidding war! In slow markets, staging can be the difference between selling your home, or having it sit, and sit, and sit. National statistics show that staged homes sell for 3-9% more and in approximately half the time than un-staged properties.

Project	Typical Cost	Price Increase	Return on Investment	% of Agents Recommending	
Lighten & brighten	\$233 - 370	\$1,178 - 1,566	355%	97%	Home Staging
Clean and de-clutter	\$190 - 318	\$1,505 - 1,937	578%	97%	
Landscape front/back yards	\$378 - 546	\$1,718 - 2,158	319%	97%	
Stage home for sale	\$403 - 584	\$1,938 - 2,431	343%	91%	
Repair electrical or plumbing	\$436 - 621	\$1,205 - 1,590	164%	93%	Home Repair
Repair damaged flooring	\$628 - 878	\$1,633 - 2,061	145%	94%	
Update kitchen & bathrooms	\$1,404 - 1,828	\$3,216 - 3,934	121%	87%	
Replace or shampoo carpeting	\$562 - 808	\$1,532 - 1,950	154%	98%	
Paint exterior walls	\$663 - 938	\$1,757 - 2,205	147%	88%	

* Courtesy of HomeGain.com. HomeGain surveyed over 2,000 real estate agents in each of the U.S. regions. All agents might not necessarily agree on the same pre-sale strategy. See "% of agents recommending" column above. Differences of opinions may vary based on the climate of the market, region of the country or condition of the home in question. The percentage of agents that agree on the positive impact of a particular pre-sale activity is summarized here.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Where to begin?

There are 5 basic steps when helping a client stage their home. They are:

1. Cleanliness
2. Clutter Busting
3. Neutralize
4. Furniture placement & removal
5. Accessorize & Glamorize

These are the keys, in order, to bringing a client top dollar for a home and minimizing sale time. Let's look at each part individually....

1. Cleanliness - This is the number one priority in any home that is to be sold. The home must be squeaky, shiny, and amazingly clean! This may require professional help. Homes that are not clean will simply send the potential buyer on their way. They will stop looking at key features of the home and quickly discount this property. If a home is not clean, they will assume that it has not been maintained and there will be future problems.

2. Clutter Busting - What creates a warm inviting space for the homeowner is often considered clutter to outsiders. Family photographs, knick knacks and collections can be the end of a potential sale. Advise the client to pack up virtually everything they don't need for the next few weeks/months and store it. The more you pack now, the faster your home will sell! Besides, they are MOVING, isn't now a good time to start packing?

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

3. Neutralize - How's the paint looking? Is it clean, does it have scuff marks? Do they have 1980s green and peach walls, worse yet wallpaper? Fresh neutral paint is an important and often overlooked aspect of staging. New homes have fresh paint. Buyers don't to have to paint when they move in. They certainly don't want to have to strip wallpaper. Do this for them. Offers will be higher as a result!

4. Furniture Placement & Removal - Yes, you saw that... removal! Most people simply have too much furniture. While it may be great to have 8 chairs in the dining room when you live in a home, most should have 4-6 when showing. More furniture than a couch, chair, coffee table and end tables in a family room is probably too much. Once you have eliminated the excess, proper placement is key. Pay attention to architectural features, like the fireplace, not the big screen TV (that should probably be removed also!) Buyers want to see the space, the walls, the attributes of the home, not the furnishings.

5. Accessorize and glamorize – This is when we make the house shine! This is the jewelry for your client's home. Adding simple but beautiful throws, pillows and candles can transform a space. Too much, however and we are back to clutter. Keep clean simple lines and use small punches of color on a neutral backdrop.

Educating Homeowners

Educating homeowners on the importance of staging is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of staging. In years past most homeowners have had the philosophy that buyers will look beyond any deficiencies/dislikes and see the potential of the property. This worked because there was not the abundance we now see in the housing market. The average family

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

lived in a home a longer period of time than the current trend. This gave buyers the desire to fix up the home and make it their own.

In today's world the average homeowner only keeps their home for 3-5 years. This combined with the fast paced society we live in creates the need for more "move-in ready" properties. Most buyers will not simply take the time to remove wallpaper, change flooring, excessive painting, etc. They want neutrality and simplicity. Staging creates this image.

Here are some important things for homeowners to consider:

- Staging can shorten sale time by as much as 78% (RESA Stats)
- Staging offers are typically higher by 3-9%
- Once the home is listed, it should be viewed as a commodity or product for sale – staging can help to emotionally separate from the property
- Once an offer is accepted, typically there is less than 30 days to pack, clean and move. Staging can help make this much less stressful by beginning the packing & de-cluttering early on.

When working with homeowners, pictures speak louder than words.

- Show your portfolio of before and after photos. Make sure to use the right photos for the job (i.e. vacant before & after or owner occupied before & after).

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- Provide the homeowner with an owner occupied handbook, such as our “Preparing Your Home for Sale” homeowner workbook” and marketing materials to help them visualize and understand necessary changes.
- When providing your written consultation, make sure to include photos of their homes. Often providing photos that will be representative of what will appear in MLS will make them think twice if they are considering leaving the home “as-is”.
- If the homeowner just doesn’t understand the importance of staging and what their true competition is, recommend having their agent show them other similar properties for sale in their area and price range.

Working with Agents

It is important to bring the agent on as an ally. They will do more to get the homeowner to be on board with your staging job than anyone else. Having a good relationship with multiple agents will mean constant work, referrals and a satisfying profession.

The best way to get agents to understand the value of your work, in the beginning, is to show photos. Just like when dealing with a homeowner, a picture says a thousand words.

- Create and use marketing materials – they should contain great photos and can help agents more fully understand your services. They may also give these to their clients helping you gain more business.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- Include photos in consultation package. This will help homeowners understand what you see and the changes you recommend. This will also help to educate the agents you work with. They want to sell their clients home. Providing ammunition brings them to your side.

- Provide after photos for your agents. After you have completed your staging job, providing photos saves the agent time and money. Great after photos for MLS will bring more buyers increasing the likelihood the home will sell. The faster the home sells, the more likely you are to have satisfied repeat customers.

- If the client really doesn't get it, enlist the agent to show the homeowner other similar properties that they are in competition with – particularly new construction.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Sample Agent Introductory Letter:

Everyone has heard the saying, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” When it comes to Real Estate that statement is especially true. First Impressions Home Staging & Interior ReDesign is a company with both the agent and homeowner in mind. We have an array of services designed to grow the business of the realtors we do business with including:

- Home consultations with written report
- Full service owner occupied staging
- Full service vacant home staging
- Gift certificates
- Move-in client services
- Color Consultations & design choices for new construction homes

Our goal is simple. Do the best job we can for our agents and their clients – make YOU look great!

Personal service and education is paramount to First Impressions. We seek to provide individual attention and build relationships. This helps not only in gaining the clients’ trust and respect, but making sure that their decisions are built on the current market reality and not pie-in-the-sky promises. We believe this is the true way to a strong referral base and lifetime client relationships.

Working with Vacant Properties

Vacant properties are perhaps the easiest and most lucrative projects in home staging. The differences between vacant and staged are obvious. The results are quick and if the home is priced correctly, typically the effects for the homeowner are the most beneficial. This is a win-win scenario.

There are a few misconceptions that often occur between homeowner and stager in this arena, however. Most homeowners have a difficult time noting the differences between staging a home and decorating a home. There is a significant difference! Staged homes are very typically slightly under-furnished compared to decorated homes. Items such as headboards, twin nightstands, rugs, curtains, etc are often not needed or recommended.

When educating the vacant home homeowner, you need to stress to them that the items that will go in a home are to create the warmth of a “lived-in” feel – hearth & home – while showing off the home’s size, scale & best assets. To do this we use minimal furnishings and accessories. The palette will be neutral with splashes of color. It may or may not be representative of the homeowner’s personal tastes or our own. It will fit the scale, size & style of the property.

When looking for furniture to use in a vacant home staging size, scale and style are extremely important. It is best to have a few neutral-traditional pieces that can go from country casual, pottery barn or slightly modern by simply changing accessories. It is also important to have different scales of furniture. Keeping a few larger pieces and apartment sized pieces are critical. You must also pay careful attention to quality of pieces. The furniture you use in a lower middle class home, or condo is unlikely to transition into the million dollar estates.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

With this in mind, spend your initial furniture and accessory budget on the following:

- Neutral accessories that can transition into any home or price point. A list of often used accessories will be provided at end of this section.

- Furniture that can work in more expensive homes – look for pieces that look great but don't necessarily wear well (no one will be using them!). You can often find these pieces at great prices. Check for clearance sales, floor models, scratch & dents, etc. In many parts of the country these pieces are difficult to rent.

- Smaller apartment/condo sized pieces. This is much the same as the more expensive looking furniture. It can be difficult to find rental items in this size. Often the condos that you will be staging are higher end condos and need smaller upscale pieces.

- Begin looking for end tables, dining tables, lamps, art, etc before purchasing larger items such as sofas, beds, etc. Often these are the lower quality pieces in rental items or the items with the most wear/damage. These are also pieces that can transform a basic sofa or chair.

- Lastly, look for middle of the road basic neutral furnishings. Look for pieces in browns, beiges and creams. Slipcovered sofas and chairs are great as they can be transformed so easily depending on the pillows, tables and accessories.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Staging a vacant home (standard staging) typically takes anywhere from 4-8 hrs depending on how much preparation you have done prior to the staging date, whether you will need to change light fixtures, hang curtains, etc.

There are three main types of vacant home staging – Model Home Staging, Full Service (Standard) Staging and Vignette Staging.

Model Home Staging – Fully staged model homes are different than what we consider standard staging in that they are exaggerated versions of staging. In a model home you will typically find clothes in the closets, food in pantries, significant amounts of fake food, wallpaper and other personalized objects. This is done to convey a lifestyle and make buyers imagine their lives here. However, models are not typically sold to the average consumer. Instead they are selling the other units in the neighborhood. When the model unit is actually sold, near the closeout of the neighborhood, it is typically sold fully furnished and at a discount.

Full Service (Standard) Vacant Home Staging – Since there is no clutter, clearly no excess in furniture, and no overly personal items, why would we want to stage vacant homes? We briefly discussed this in introductory paragraphs regarding the model home scenario. Staging vacant homes:

- ❑ Helps to bring life to the home itself – creates warmth
- ❑ Shows size and scale – most buyers believe their furniture is larger than it is and the rooms are smaller than they are. Adding furniture to the correct scale helps them to more accurately estimate what their furniture would look like in this home.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- Helps potential buyers visualize possible furniture arrangements
- Defines the use of space
- Creates a visual appeal (particularly in photos used on MLS or other marketing)
- Makes seller appear more invested in property – When vacant homes sit for long periods of time buyers tend to think sellers are desperate. Staging can neutralize this effect, showing that they are still invested in the property.

What is important to understand when staging a vacant home, is that not all spaces need to be staged. Model homes do tend to create the feeling of someone actually living in the home. The average staged home is much more simplified. Staging will target specific rooms, creating the most appeal for the budget provided. The most common rooms for staging are as follows:

- Living room/family room – This will show off the family living & entertaining space. Particularly in large open floor plans & great rooms, staging the family/living room is a **MUST!**
- Master Bedroom – Because most buyers believe their beds are larger than they are, staging the master suite is vital. This space perhaps more than any other needs to show size and scale. Make sure the linens are luxurious and everything is ironed.
- Master Bathroom – Bathrooms tend to be cold and hard. Women in particular are drawn to the master bathroom. It should be staged in a serene, spa like fashion. Accentuate the look by using fresh fluffy rolled towels, beautiful silk plants, candles and fluffy rugs.
- Formal Dining Room – This room's space is underestimated second to only the Master bedroom. Most potential buyers believe their dining tables are much larger than they are. They may have multiple pieces of large furniture and will not believe their furniture

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

will fit here. To show off space in this room, it is important to use a slightly smaller table than you may normally use if you lived here. Rarely will you use more than 4 chairs or add the leaf to the table. Whether using a centerpiece or setting the table as if having a dinner party, it is important that the look be clean and uncluttered. It is typically unnecessary to add additional furniture beyond table, chairs and rug in the formal dining room.

- Eat-in Kitchen/Kitchen – This is another room that often feels cold and un-welcoming when vacant. Adding soft materials such as silk plants and hand towels along with color in accessories will help to warm the space. If the kitchen has an eat-in area, it is important that it be staged as well. This is an important selling feature to many buyers and it must be played up. Just as with the formal dining room, it is often thought of as much smaller than it really is. Staging will neutralize that feeling.

- Home Offices – Because home offices have become one of the most sought after amenities for today's buyer, staging a home office could create additional value for clients. Most can be done quite simply, adding a desk, chair and sitting area. In older homes, the parlor or formal sitting area are often good locations. In newer homes, you may want to consider a landing or bedroom as an office.

- Additional rooms – Once in a while you will run across a home with an awkward space that can't easily be defined. This is when you will need to stage additional spaces. It should be an exception, not the rule, however.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Accessories only and Vignette Staging – This is also commonly known as ‘partial staging’. *My personal opinion is that this is rarely the best option for sellers.* That said there are many stagers that offer this service.

- Vignette staging typically helps soften and define a small area such as kitchen, bathroom or fireplace mantel.
- Can be a cost effective solution for small budgets when rooms feel cold and unwelcoming or where adding smaller touches would make a large difference.

Commonly used items for vacant home staging

Living Room

- Sofa and large chair
- 2 End tables
- Coffee table
- 1-2 pieces of art in varying sizes
- Candlesticks & candles for fireplace mantle
- Soft throw for living room
- 5x7 Sisal Rug
- Throw pillows for sofa & chair
- Magazines or books
- 2 lamps
- Silk plants and large potted tree
- Small knick knack for tables

Dining Room

- Dining Room Table & 4-6 Chairs
- 8x10 Rug
- Centerpiece – plant/flowers or bottle of wine with small flower cups
- Art

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Master Bedroom

- King or Queen Mattress Set, Frame & Headboard
- Nightstands (for small rooms consider using a trunk, small desk or dresser when there won't be room for a full sized dresser)
- Lamps
- Bed skirt, sheets, coverlet, 2 shams & 2 pillowcases
- 4 bed pillows, throw pillows (3-5 recommended)
- Books or magazines
- Perfume bottles, candles, framed photograph or other knick knack
- Silk flowers in vase or jar for nightstand
- Art

Master Bathroom

- Candlesticks & candles for master bed or bath
- Shower Curtain
- Lotion or soap dispenser(s)
- 2 hand towels, 2 washrags, 2 large towels (minimum)
- Bathroom rug
- Silk plant (orchids are great), candles or other bathroom accessories

Kitchen

- Cook book & stand
- Eat-in table and chairs
- Decorative Jars, Accessories, Canister Set, Bowl with fruit and/or silk plant
- Salt & Pepper shakers

Child's Room

- Twin or full mattress set & frame
- Nightstand(s)
- Lamp(s)
- Bedskirt, sheets, comforter, sham & pillowcase
- 2 pillows, 1 throw pillow
- Misc accessories – stuffed animals, books, toy
- Art

Working with Owner Occupied Homes

Owner occupied homes are typically the most difficult home staging jobs. It is often difficult to achieve a balance of functional living space and an aesthetic showplace. Depending on the commitment level of homeowner great results can be achieved, however.

It is important to first have the homeowner's agent educate the homeowner as to what will happen at their consultation – what the staging professional will be looking at/for, what types of recommendations may occur. If this is not done, it is imperative that you as the professional stager do this for them.

We have developed [Preparing Your Home for Sale](#), a workbook for the homeowner that helps them to understand the importance of staging, staging basics and silent signals. A manual such as this should be given to all owner occupied homeowners at the initial walkthrough. This will prepare them for any negative information they will receive. After reading through the booklet, they will mentally understand the reasons you advised them to remove Great Aunt Sara's 500 piece hat pin collection from the guest bedroom and why the 1970s wood paneling in the family room needs to be painted.

The Consultation

There are three primary types of consultations: The Walk & Talk, Written Consultation, and Combo. All of the choices have their advantages and disadvantages. This next section will discuss those as well as provide details of what to expect in a consultation, how to talk to the agent and some common guidelines.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

The Walk & Talk Consultation – This is much like it sounds. You will need to schedule this when the homeowner is available. Often it is best to have this when all decision makers are available. The homeowner will need to have a way of documenting the information provided. The stager will need to walk through each space of the home advising all of the recommended changes.

The advantages of this approach are:

- Better ability to create a plan on the spot with the homeowners, submit your bid and close the deal.
- No time consuming reports to write and deliver.
- Homeowners have a clear understanding of what is recommended and can discuss recommendations in person.

The disadvantages of this approach are:

- No written documentation of recommendations. If the homeowner did not make good notes, they may forget the recommendations, or may do them incorrectly.
- The agent, unless they do the walkthrough with the client, will not receive a copy of report or recommendations.

Written consultations – A written consultation is exactly as it sounds. After viewing the property, the stager will complete a written report and send it to the homeowner and typically the listing agent as well. (Always provide this to the agent if they are paying for the consultation.) Most written reports include photographs of the home to show the seller exactly what that space will look like in MLS if they do not make any changes.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

The advantage of this approach are:

- Written documentation showing all of your recommendations. They should be clear and precise.
- Agent and homeowner both receive copies. This helps the agent work at getting the necessary changes done.
- Advantageous to new stagers as they may allow for more time for considerations of recommendations.

The disadvantages of this approach are:

- Laborious reports may reduce your potential hourly rate.
- Few stagers enjoy the report writing process. This can be monotonous and reduce the number of appointments you are capable of doing.

Combo Consultation – With the homeowner’s permission, you will stage a small area of the home as part of your consultation process.

In addition to the walk & talk or written report you will pick an area of the home that will show a dramatic change with staging that can be completed in the scheduled consultation time.

Create dramatic results and photograph them for use in written consultation.

The advantage of this approach is:

- It immediately shows how much of a change can be made in a short time.
- It may help close the deal at the end of the appointment.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- You may be able to charge a higher rate for your consultations, earning you extra income with each one.

The disadvantage of this approach is:

- You may need help to do this as moving furniture is not easy on your own.
- Appointments will take longer
- You will need homeowner permission before beginning this type of consultation.

The Consultation Process - Regardless of the type of consultation, they will be an important part of your staging career. Agents and homeowners will need this information to improve the property for showings. All spaces in and outside of the home will need to be viewed. You should provide enough information in the written consultations for them to complete the work themselves, but also provide an estimate of your cost to complete the work. Some sellers will want to do at least some of the work themselves, while others would rather write the check.

When arriving for the consultation, it is important to discuss with the homeowner what their expectations are and what feedback you have already received from their agent & any other agents who have already shown the property. Provide them with your business card & homeowner workbook. Advise them of the steps that will take place:

- Photograph all areas of the home – as you would for MLS if you were their agent. Take extra photographs of any problem areas. (You will be using these to show before & after, as well as a reminder for when you actually write the consultation.)

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- Take notes of any problems, changes or needed alterations.

- Provide the client copy of written consultation within 24 - 48 hrs. Include quote for doing work. If this is a large job, make sure you create various price points and note whether you will accept smaller budgets.

- Follow up with agent and/or homeowner after consultation is received (recommended time is 24-36 hrs after consultation delivered.)

- Send “Thank you” note to agent and client

- Send hard copy invoice, comment card & SASE – you will want the comment cards for your quotes & testimonials!

There are two key things to remember when providing consultations. Many (most) homeowners will not want to make many of the changes and may be upset regarding your comments. They also have many different reasons (motivations) for selling. If you are hired by the agent, it is important to discuss both of these with the agent. They should have an understanding of the level of difficulty or sensitivity you will need to utilize as well as the motivation for selling the property. This information will become invaluable for you!

Unlike on popular TV shows, professional stagers need to address the client with tact and diplomacy. Remember, this is their home and their belongings, you are not there to judge and should never appear that you are. I find it particularly helpful to remind the homeowner that

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

the way they live in a home and the way they sell it are completely different. It is important to balance any negative comments with positive ones. There is always something good to say about a property. Perhaps it has great schools, amenities, is rural with lots of land or a lake/pond view, etc.

You may also want to use some of these phrases:

- “Your belongings are so _____. That I am afraid the seller will be busy looking at them and not the home.” (Good words are interesting, beautiful, colorful, unique)

- “Your belongings really show your personality. While I’m sure your family and friends love everything here, they would have to – it is so you! It is too personal for most buyers. We want them to remember the home, not you.”

- “Your belongings really show your personal style. Buyers may have a hard time envisioning themselves here. We need them to remember the home, not your great things!”

Another thing to remember – not all homeowners who are selling actually want to move. Some are divorce situations, job transfers, downsizing, etc. When dealing with a client who does not want to make any changes, try to find their level of motivation and connect on that level. For instance, you may be able to remind job transferees that they may be stuck with two house payments if the home doesn’t sell. Perhaps they have limited packing time remaining, and doing it in the beginning may help them keep their sanity in the long run.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Standard Occupied Staging – After you have completed your written consultation and provided a quote you may get called back to do an owner occupied staging job. **You should never attempt to do an owner occupied staging job without first doing a walk through.** You will need to prepare the homeowner in advance for what is to follow. They may need to gather boxes, packing material, etc. You may even need them to move furniture out of rooms when painting or wallpaper stripping is required. Here are some helpful tips for preparing the homeowner:

- Advise them how many days you will be working
- Advise them of your hours – what time will you arrive, take lunch and leave for the day? Make sure you stick to these times.
- Will you be bringing in any subcontractors, assistants, etc?
- When do you expect to be paid for the work?
- If making a mess (wallpaper remover, drywall patches, etc) who will be responsible for clean up?
- Advise them what they may need to have done in advance – ex: move the furniture out of a room so subcontractors can paint. Confirm several days before staging that the work has been done.

Occupied Staging with Props – This is also referred to as owner occupied enhancement. Following the basic guidelines of the standard occupied staging you will also be adding additional elements. This is particularly true when homes are under-furnished, when there is a lack of art, accessories or lighting, or when you need to change the over all style of a space.

Just as with the standard occupied staging job **you will need to have done a walk through or consultation.** You will need this to prepare for staging day and to let your client know what changes will be made in their home. Using your consultation as a guide for work to be

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

completed, you will need to develop a plan for each space undergoing changes and discuss this plan with the homeowner. Some of what may need to be discussed with the homeowner is:

- Will the homeowner rent or purchase additional props?
- If renting the props, what fees are there, for how long and what condition must they be returned in? What is the cost if they are not returned in this condition?
- Advise them of your hours – what time will you arrive, take lunch and leave for the day? Make sure you stick to these times.
- Advise them how many days you will be working
- Will you be bringing in any subcontractors, assistants, etc?
- When do you expect to be paid for the work?
- If making a mess (wallpaper remover, drywall patches, etc) who will be responsible for clean up?
- Advise them what they may need to have done in advance – ex: move the furniture out of a room so subcontractors can paint. Confirm several days before staging that the work has been done.

When leaving props in owner occupied homes, it is important to create a list itemizing each piece left in the home along with replacement value if lost, stolen or broken. You will also need to get a signed contract advising how payment will be handled and when & how items should be returned. Both the itemized list and contract should be signed by your client before leaving on installation day.

So, you are ready to begin staging, with your written consultation and checklists handy, you will need to follow the basic rules of redesign (discussed in next chapter). Keeping to this fundamental practice will simplify the job and ensure that only what is necessary to keep returns to the room. Since this is a staging job, you will return fewer pieces of furniture, art &

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

accessories than you normally would for a standard redesign. Not following the steps typically will have some part of the room feel awkward or incomplete.

Common props to keep on hand – You will find that seems to be a particular trend of items needed in homes. Below is a list of some of these common items.

- Area rugs - typically 6x9 or larger. I find sisal/jute rugs particularly helpful as they match most furniture and are very neutral
- Art – most homes simply have too little artwork. You will need to keep both large and small pieces on hand. Investing in prints and metal art will provide variety and maximize usage.
- Fresh linens – sheets, comforters, throws, & throw pillows are often needed items. These are items I typically require homeowners to purchase outright, particularly if they will actually be used.
- Bathroom linens and accessories – this is one area that average homeowners simply have let go. Towels and rugs tend to be worn and un-matched. Invest in fluffy beautiful rugs and towels. Just as with the fresh linens, this is often an item I require the homeowner to purchase as it will probably be used.
- Lighting (lamps) – It is important for rooms to be well lit. Since most homeowners do not have adequate lighting, both floor & table lamps will be a common prop.

Helping the Homeowner Prepare for Staging Day – When actually doing an owner occupied staging it is important to ensure the homeowner is ready. You have already provided a checklist of things that need to be done in the home (your written report) and have negotiated

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

contracts on what work you will be doing. It is important that if any work is required by the homeowner prior to staging day (ex: pack up books or knick knacks, have storage unit reserved, pick up boxes, etc) that they have done their homework. Your time will be wasted if you arrive and these things are still undone.

- Provide new checklist for homeowner on work they are expected to have done.
- Follow up a few days before staging (this time frame depends on how big the job is, how far out you booked it, etc) to check on homeowner's progress.
- Call several days before staging to confirm that work is done and everything is a 'go'

Occasionally, despite your best efforts, something won't be done and you'll be left with Plan B. (Which usually is created the moment you arrive and find out the work hasn't been done.) Depending on what hasn't been done, you may need to reschedule your staging day, add on additional fees (discuss this with homeowner first) for work that you will now be doing or lowering the expectations of the staging performance.

Staging Day

This is the day the magic happens. The more prepared you are before today the quicker and easier this day will go for you..... *(don't forget your before photos...)*

- You should have a plan for the process laid out and a work area if possible. This is where you will keep your tools & supplies for the day. You will find it much easier if everything is kept close to where you will need it, but not in your way. If working on bigger projects such as wallpaper, painting, or refinishing pieces, you may need to consider bringing supplies to protect the homeowner's property (drop clothes, splatter guards, cleaning supplies, etc).

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- You may also need a 'holding area'. This is where art, accessories and smaller pieces of furniture that you will likely use are to be kept. Keeping these gathered in one central location will save you countless amounts of time hunting on where you left them when you emptied the room, packed all the boxes, or even unloaded your vehicle. When staging a vacant home, you may need a 'holding area' for all the props that you have set aside for this job. This way on staging day you will know exactly what you are taking. (especially helpful if working on multiple jobs at a time)

- Shopping the house – For owner occupied staging jobs, shopping the house is very important; this will help save the homeowner money. While working on the primary rooms, you will need to assess the inventory of all the rooms in the home (including closets, cabinets, etc). Find pieces that you think are particularly fitting for the overall look you are trying to achieve and store them in the holding area until you are ready to accessorize.

After staging is complete

Finally, you are done and everything looks awesome. There are a few things that still remain to be done....

- Pack up everything you brought with you (tools, supplies, excess props you did not use) and remove them from the home.
- Store all items that were previously in the homeowners rooms in a predetermined holding area. (Predetermined by yourself and homeowner)
- Clean up any mess you may have created. (Drywall dust, vacuum where a sofa once was, etc)
- Take your after photos.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- Provide your homeowner a 'day of showing' checklist.
- Provide invoice and client feedback form
- Write & mail homeowner a 'Thank You!' card
- Create folder with all necessary information (contracts, CC authorization forms, etc – particularly needed for vacant homes.

Common Suggestions

Closets, Cupboards, & Drawers

- Sort, pack and minimize
- Clean or paint
- Wipe down & add shelf paper if needed
- Organize (group like items together & face forward)
- Neatly stack
- Add shoe organizers, etc

Master Bedroom

- Go through closets and sort, pack, minimize, and organize
- Reduce furniture
- Clean or paint walls

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- Linens, make sure they are beautiful, add throw pillows, make daily
- Minimize accessories, perfume bottles, books, magazines, etc
- Add fresh flowers to night stand or dresser

Kids Bedrooms

- Sort, pack and minimize toys, clothes, etc
- Clean or paint walls
- Make sure toys remaining are stored away neatly
- Closets should be neat and orderly
- Remove posters or art hung by thumbtacks/tape
- Patch, spackle and paint any holes
- Beds are neatly made
- Dressers clear of toys, overflowing clothes, etc

Living & Family Rooms

- Reduce furniture
- Minimize accessories (keep one or two bold pieces, remove small ones that can look cluttery)
- Check lighting – light is extremely important – add lamps if necessary
- Reduce & pack most items on bookcases, TV stands, end tables, etc
- Fluff pillows, dust and clean thoroughly
- Remove unhealthy plants or large plants crowding room

Dining Room

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- Remove all furniture except 4-6 Chairs, table, rug, and possibly china cabinet/hutch (remove leaf from table unless very large room, only chairs that can easily fit under table, any additional furniture is too much!)
- Minimize amount of accessories, china, etc in hutch.
- Art should be very minimal – keep clean clear lines
- Dust, thoroughly clean glass, china etc. Everything should SPARKLE & SHINE!

Office or Den

- Clean surfaces thoroughly
- Remove all clutter from desktop
- Remove any equipment not regularly used
- Personal photos, awards, etc should be removed (you may keep one photo on the desk)

Kitchen

- Remove all appliances except coffee maker from countertop and store
- Pack & remove all dishes, appliances, cookware from cupboards that are not needed. Roomy cabinets will make storage seem abundant!
- Remove everything from every surface of fridge (including the top, magnets, notes, etc)
- Clean very thoroughly, pay particular attention to cabinet doors, appliances (inside & out if conveying), floor boards, pet bowls. This area must be particularly clean & sparkling!
- Only minimal decorative pieces should be left on countertops – everything else must go.

Bathrooms

- Very thoroughly clean tub, sink, shower – pay attention to soap scum on glass shower doors. This is an important room to have ultra clean!
- Only minimal decorations should be left on counter & tub area.
- Keep only minimally necessary shampoo bottles, etc – absolutely no more than 3 bottles

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- A decorative plant, such as an orchid, fluffy rugs & towels will go a long way in this space to create warmth & a spa like atmosphere.

Exterior

- Mow lawns often – keep a manicured look. Replace sod in areas if necessary
- Store hoses, yard equipment, etc. Make sure these items are all in a place of their own. If needed, purchase a stand for the garage, or a hose caddy for the side of the house.
- Trim plants & shrubs, replace any that are dead, dying or sickly.
- Make sure toys, bikes, extra vehicles, etc are stowed away or removed from property.
- Clean pet messes
- Sweep front porch & rake leaves often

Laundry Room

- No clothing should be visible!
- Baskets should be neatly stored
- Organize soaps, softeners, etc neatly on shelves or behind cupboard doors
- Wipe down appliances & folding areas
- Clean floors thoroughly

Garage & Driveway

- Reduce, unclutter & remove everything you won't be needing before the home sells
- Clean any stains on surfaces (oil, paint, etc) – consider painting garage walls and floor if very dirty or unfinished
- Add shelving to store anything you are not packing away
- Make sure recycle is kept to a neat & orderly pile – this may mean more frequent trips to the recycle center

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- Get rid of unfinished projects. Chances are you won't have time to finish them – you are MOVING!

Commonly asked questions

You will hear the following questions frequently by either homeowners or agents. It is important that you know how to answer them: (these are standard rules of thumb, you may need to slightly change your answer for your area.)

- **How much does staging cost? I've heard it is expensive.** – staging *typically costs* between ½ and 1 percent, but every home's needs are different and prices can vary dramatically. I would be happy to come view your property and give you an exact price.
- **Will you guarantee the home will sell if I stage it?** – Unfortunately no. There are simply too many variables that I have no control over.
- **What if I don't like what you picked out?** – Staging is about creating a generic look that will appeal to the majority of buyers. It may not be specific to your taste. *(You should explain you will work with them to make sure they are pleased with the end results even if it isn't their taste.)*
- **How long is the rental & what is included in the price?** – This question will need to be answered based on your terms & if you use a rental company. Be clear with what you provide.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- **What if the home sells before the end of the contract? Can I get a refund?** Sorry, but I don't offer refunds. If the home sells quickly then I've done my job. (If talking to an agent you could add, "Would you get paid less commission if the home sells quickly?")

- **Can I see samples of your work?** – You should have both a digital and hardbound portfolio for potential clients to view. I find having a variety of homes available will help them visualize what you can do in their home. (If this is an agent, offer addresses of currently staged properties so they can view them in person– this particularly applies to vacant homes.)

- **Can I see the furniture you will be putting in my home/listing?** – This is up to you, but usually I find the best comment to be: I *could* show you the furniture but it wouldn't give you the whole picture. I choose the furniture, art, rugs and accessories to match the home. By mixing these things up I can achieve a wide variety of looks. Let's take a look at my portfolio so you can see the end product I provide for my clients.

Staging Contracts & Service Agreements – This area is crucial, particularly when working with vacant properties. Having these in place will help protect your inventory against theft, loss or damage, as well as helping create a solid plan for when things go wrong. Your contracts should include when you get paid, what is included, where the props should be kept, and how long the contract will be in effect at a minimum. I have included copies of my contracts to use as examples. You should look these over and create your own *after consulting with an attorney*. These will be discussed at length in another chapter.

What is Redesign?

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Redesign, commonly called “One Day Decorating” or “Use what you own decorating”, is basically exactly that. In a single day redesigners redecorate a room using items the client already owns. A redesigner will “shop” from other rooms of the home, repurposing various pieces to achieve a cohesive, well designed space. Successful redesigns are achieved using four distinctive principles:

- Always match the space to its purpose - Redesign is about the client’s needs, not our desires. While as designers we may not love big screen TV’s and oversized recliners, if this is the room they watch TV in, chances are they are staying!
- Always remember the client’s taste and style is paramount – We redesign with the client in mind. These are their treasures and cherished possessions. Our job is to make them look great in their space.
- Always follow basic decorating principles – Size, scale, texture, balance and color. Regardless of the items you have to work with in a home, these rules must be followed.
- Always think outside the box – This is what you are paid to do. You may be working with many items from different eras or genres. Do your best to give them something pleasantly unexpected. After all, it’s great to hear, “I never would have thought of that!”

Always remember that interior redesign is a service oriented business. We are not here to sell art, accessories or other products. While this may become an option or an additional source of income, keep in mind the client’s needs first.

Where do I begin? - You’ve been hired to do your first redesign and you’ve assessed your client’s needs for the room you are working on. What now? Every room begins and ends the same way – no matter how long you have been in redesign. Briefly, they are:

1. Empty Room

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

2. Focal point?
3. Shape of the room?
4. Add furniture, rugs, large plants or trees
5. Lighting
6. Art
7. Accessorize

There will be many times when you will enter a room that a client wants redesigned and will wonder, “Ok, now what?” If you follow the above steps, you will always know where to begin and what comes next.

Steps to a Successful Staging or Redesign

1. Empty Room – Empty everything out of the room you are working on except the single largest piece of furniture. You will find this gives you a clean palette to work with. When redesigners simply attempt to rearrange the furniture with it all in the room, invariably they will come to realize they are working with preconceived notions of layout and form. Here are some additional helpful hints:

- Store items such as art & accessories in a different location than items like furniture. You may not bring all of the furniture back into the room and you don’t want to have to climb over objects when it’s time to accessorize!
- Group like items together. Storing all of the pieces of art, or all of the glass figurines in the same place will help you assess any collections that the owner may have that should

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

be shown off together. It will also help you assess what the owner actually has for you to use when you get to that particular stage.

2. Focal Point? – Determine the focal point of the room. Focal points are usually either architectural or purpose driven. It is necessary to determine the focal point to maximize both beauty and utility in a room.

- Architectural focal points are things like columns, built-in bookcases, windows and fireplaces. These items are things we can't change and should work on accentuating.
- Purpose driven focal points are typically items such as the TV, entertainment center or a piano.

Occasionally architectural and purpose driven focal points can compete with each other (i.e. a TV and a fireplace). In these cases it is important to determine the needs of the client in order to decide which focal point will be the primary one.

3. Shape of the Room? – Very often the shape of a room will determine much of the furniture layout. For example, a room that has a built in fireplace at an angle in the corner would best work with another large piece of furniture at an angle directly across from it.

- Pre-existing wall, ceiling or architectural angles should be mirrored when deciding furniture placement.
- Pay attention to ceiling height changes, this may connect or break up larger spaces. Crossing these imaginary walls can create a disconnect in room cohesion.
- Room shapes and ceiling heights can determine where larger pieces of furniture may need to be placed in order to create balance. (i.e. Slanted, pitched or vaulted ceilings will have taller areas – placing a tall armoire or entertainment center against this wall may be more balanced than on the shorter wall.)

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

4. Add furniture, rugs, large plants or trees – The first thing to remember for this part is that we are not limited to what was in the room originally. We can pull pieces from other rooms, and we don't need to add everything back into the room when we are done. We are here to change things up a bit. Unless one of the other rooms has already been professionally redesigned, or the homeowner specifically says so, feel free to borrow from other spaces. (It is good to discuss this with the homeowner before they leave for the day. Get permission; make sure there aren't any off-limits areas.

- Using the information we have already discussed (room purpose, focal points, room angles, etc) begin adding the furniture. Add the most important pieces first – these are probably your largest items, conversation area, bed, etc. Notice each piece individually. Try them in several different locations. Ask yourself: What works best? What feels best? Sit down and try them out. Would you want to sit here?
- After placing the largest and most important pieces of the room, add rugs and tables.
- If possible, add large trees. Trees can warm up a space, create life, and texture. If the plants are real, pay attention to lighting and watering requirements.

5. Lighting – Appropriate lighting can make or break a good design layout. Make sure there is adequate lighting in the room.

- The most common lighting arrangement is the lighting triangle. This is pretty much exactly what it sounds like. Add three light sources that create a triangle effect, with edges overlapping.

Some information about rugs....

- Rugs are important because they help to add texture to a room while also creating a cohesive anchor and balance to the space.
- In small areas, rugs at the foot of the bed can help anchor the bed to another piece of furniture across from it (say a dresser or seating arrangement).

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- Rugs in a seating area can help keep everything feel like it belongs to that space – even when a chair may be placed a distance away from the couch or other chairs.
- In a large open space, rugs can help to create definition – making a living room and dining room separate from each other.
- Rugs should be 4 ft wider and 4 ft longer (2 ft on each side) than a dining table.
- NEVER use smaller than a 5x7 rug in a conversation area!

6. Add Art – Remember we are going to borrow from other rooms. We are also going to add art in different ways, perhaps trays, baskets, or even small decorative chairs can become art. Learn to think outside the box.

- Gather all of the available artwork in one place. Get a good look at all of it. Look for art that would work well in groupings. Lay groupings out on floor to get a feel for their size as a group.
- Start on the most prominent wall and decide what art will go on this wall. Work your way around the room. Once you've decided where something is going to go and you love it there, leave it!

7. Accessorize – The first part of this actually started when you walked in the home, or talked with the owner. How do they like things? Some people are minimalists, some adore things everywhere. What do your clients like? If they love things, they aren't going to love it when there are minimal accessories out and vice versa.

- This step is very much like adding the art. Look at what you've got, start with the most prominent focal point and work your way around the room, surface to surface. Once you've decided the arrangement is good, leave it and move on.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Tips to remember...

- A bold color needs to be represented at least 3 times in a room, or it doesn't work!
- Odd is better, as in nature, accessory groupings in odd numbers simply looks better. 3, 5, 7, etc....
- Objects with varying heights and widths look better. Texture is also important.

Earning an income from Redesigns - Redesigns are great for earning income. There is very little initial expense (outside of marketing expenses) and the hourly is pretty good money. Once you have a few happy clients, this area can grow rapidly through referrals.

The typical way of charging for this service is by the day or half day. You will want to research your area specifically, but generally speaking \$350 for a half day or \$700 for a full day are pretty average. A half day should be about one average sized living room.

CAUTION: When you are new to redesign, you may take longer to work on a room. Don't overcharge your client for your lack of experience. Be realistic with their money!

Payment should always take place either before the job begins or before you leave for the day.

If you are uncomfortable asking for the check, try these methods:

- Keep a file folder with you. After your client has sufficiently oohed and ahed, pull it out of your purse or briefcase. They will usually get this hint and grab their checkbook.
- Come with a blank invoice and begin filling it out when there is a lull in conversation after the reveal. Again, they will go get their checkbook.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

- If you accept credit cards, pull the invoice out and simply ask if they prefer to pay by check or credit card. They will happily give you the correct payment type.

You should always give your client a proper written invoice with amount due. Check your local area to see if you need to charge sales tax, then decide if you will cover the tax or charge your client for it.

Color Consultations

Another common revenue stream is the Color Consultation. This is when homeowners rely on you as an expert on color. We will discuss color at length in another chapter dedicated to it. What you need to know here is that the pricing for these services is typically the same as an occupied consultation. Most color consultations, depending on the number of rooms you are consulting on take approximately 1-2 hours. You will need to be very comfortable with a paint fan deck, hues, pigments and tints.

If the color consultation is for a property for sale, you will need to stay with neutral colors that appeal to the majority of buyers. If it is for a redesign client, you will need to listen carefully to their needs and desires then choose one that best fits their taste and lifestyle. Remember that is not about you and your likes – this is about them.

Shopping Fees

When marketing yourself as a home stager or redesigner, you may be asked to do shopping for a client. Typically these services are paid at either a flat rate, hourly rate, percentage or a combination of these options. Depending on the size and scope of the job, you will need to decide how much time shopping will take and charge appropriately. Will you require a minimum fee for your shopping? Remember, even though in the beginning shopping may be 'fun', it is taking time away from your other income earning or marketing opportunities. You will need to charge for your time and efforts.

Project Management

While working with either staging or redesign clients, you may find yourself in the business of project management. This is when you have other contractors or tasks, which you do not normally personally handle, under your supervision. Frequently this is a larger job. You will want to add a fee for your time, energy and liability. (If something goes wrong it will fall on you as the project manager.) This is typically either a flat fee or a percentage of the project.

Holiday Decorating

Many homeowners are simply too busy to put up their holiday decorations, or perhaps they lack the decorating knack. They would prefer to just pull out their decorations and pay someone to put them up. Businesses are also a good source of revenue during the holidays. They don't necessarily want to pay staff to do this type of project. This is a great opportunity to earn some additional holiday cash. You will need to do significant work to market this type of project, but it could be well worth it if you are so inclined.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

DEFINITIONS & TERMINOLOGY

Previews – Typically only for vacant properties. They are done for a nominal fee, if any. The goal of a preview is to assess the time frame and needs (props or manpower) of the staging job. No relevant information on changes are made at this point. This is strictly a fact finding mission.

Consultations – The appropriate term for work done where information is provided to the homeowner or agent on preparing their home. These should always be paying jobs.

Accessory only staging is when your client rents or purchases ONLY accessories to stage their property. This typically only encompasses kitchens and bathrooms. It will soften the hard lines of these rooms.

Vignette staging is when the home is staged with accessories AND some small pieces of furniture. A typical example of this would include a chair and ottoman in the master bedroom, sitting area or near a fireplace. This style of staging will show some degree of size and scale without filling up the room with the standard amount of furniture usually seen in model homes. This is a good option when staging is needed to help soften the home, show off rooms as larger than they appear or help create impact for marketing photos. It is typically only done when the budget is small.

Full Service (Standard) Staging – This is when targeted rooms of the home are fully staged using the appropriate amount of furniture, art, lighting and accessories. This style most fully encompasses the strategies of staging. *In my opinion it is also the most effective.* Full service staging is the only style of vacant home staging that addresses the primary needs and concerns of the majority of buyers.

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Day of Showing Checklist

Kitchen

- Remove excess items from countertops & wipe down
- Make sure dishes are cleaned and put away
- Remove garbage
- Fridge is clear of any magnets, coupons, etc
- Sweep floors if necessary
- Make sure appliances are cleaned and wiped down

Bathrooms

- Remove excess items from countertops & wipe down
- Toilets clean and seat down
- Towels fresh & rolled or folded
- Laundry out of sight
- Make sure this room is white glove clean
- Hide all personal care products

Bedrooms

- Make bed, adding throw pillows
- Limited accessories on end tables & dressers
- Dresser drawers closed
- Open curtains & blinds if possible
- Clutter is out of sight

Dining Room

- Limited chairs, should be pushed under table comfortably
- Add centerpiece & table runner, nothing else

Living Room

- Vacuum
- Fluff pillows and throws
- Put away any clutter including magazines, knick knacks, etc
- Open curtains & blinds if possible

Types of Consultations, Jobs & Revenue Streams

Closets

- Pare down as much as possible, removing any empty hangers
- Shoes should be lined up neatly or in boxes/organizers
- Shelves neatly organized

Laundry Room

- All clothing/laundry put away
- Cleaning supplies neatly organized in baskets or out of sight
- Floors swept
- Appliances & counters wiped down

Porches

- Swept, if necessary
- Clutter put away
- Flowers watered or removed if not in healthy condition
- Pay attention to front door and door mat – these need to look really good

General info

- How does the house smell? Add air fresheners (not overwhelming scents)
- Clean litter boxes or animal habitats
- Fabreeze linens & upholstered items
- Check for missing or burned out light bulbs & replace
- Lights should be on, if possible
- Curtains & blinds should be open, if possible
- Keep a large basket to throw clutter, kids toys, etc in as you are doing a once over on showing day. Then store this out of sight.