

Home Staging by Abigail



Staging Tips to Sell Around the Holidays

By Abigail Halal, Owner of Home Staging by Abigail

Before you deck the halls, see which holiday decor can help you sell. It's that time of year! Our calendars are packed with holiday parties, budgets are strained by gift-giving and the roads are covered in freshly fallen snow.

'Tis not the season for real estate.

But the good news is that the few brave house-hunters who do venture out are serious about buying a house and stylish trimmings will make them want to ring in the new year in your home. Holidays can be personal on a lot of levels, but you want to make sure your decor is neutral. You want to romance your buyer, not invite them to your Christmas party.

Try these tips to get buyers in the right spirit:

Clean and stage.

Before you decorate, your house needs to be staged. If your living room is already piled high with clutter and tchotchkes, your ceramic reindeer collection is only going to add to the sense of overcrowding.

Create a cozy vibe.

The less-is-more mantra of home staging may tempt you to forgo holiday cheer this year. But a few subtle touches like a bowl of pinecones, an evergreen wreath or a pot of cider simmering on the stove can create a warm and festive feeling in your home.

Complement your palette.

Before you start untangling your tinsel, make sure your holiday collection matches your current decor. If your living room is painted a soothing ocean-blue hue, skip the clashing red garland and opt for white snowflakes or a silver glass-ball wreath. If you've got an earthy color scheme, accent with rich tones like cranberries, forest greens and gold.

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Accentuate the positive. Too many trimmings may distract buyers, but the right accessories can draw attention to your home's best features. Dangle mistletoe in an arched doorway, or display a candle on the ledge of a bay window; just don't block a beautiful view with stick-on snowflake decals or clutter an elegant fireplace with personalized stockings.

Lights. Step away from the inflatable snowman. One man's "merry" is another man's "tacky," so tone down any garish light displays while your home is on the market. (No, your neighbors didn't pay me to say that.) Instead, use simple string lighting to play up your home's architecture or draw attention to the gorgeous fir tree in your front yard.

Be an equal-opportunity decorator. Leave the life-sized Nativity scene in storage this year, because overtly religious flourishes may be off-putting to some buyers. Not sure what qualifies? Rather than decorate for a specific Holiday (such as Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa) try just decorating for Winter to keep a neutral palette and appeal to the masses.

Mind the tree. If you must put up a tree (and I understand why you just can't skip this traditional altogether) consider size and theme. A tall Christmas tree can help you show off your two-story great room, but make sure the wide base won't overwhelm the floor space. If your living area is on the small side, save space with a skinny tree. Swap the gaudy heirloom ornaments and trim your tree in a cohesive theme such as icicle lights and silver tinsel, for example, or blue and gold glass balls. A few decorations can stir the holiday spirit, but don't feel obliged to hang every last ornament... Definitely store away the personal ornaments.

Clear the clutter.

A lot of people, when they decorate, tend to use all the extra space in their house... But you still want each space to look as spacious as possible. Limit yourself to a few hints of holiday flair, but stash the rest in the basement for now. If you start to miss your Santa figurines, just remember that with a little luck, you'll be celebrating next year's holidays in a new home. And you can decorate that place any way you please!

Ready to stage? Contact me today.

Email: HomeStagingbyAbigail@gmail.com
Phone: 617-519-9133 (Call or Text)



A Small But Mighty Business

As the year comes to an end, I'd like to thank all my repeat clients for their continued business. I appreciate each and every one of you. Someone recently asked me: "What is the future of Home Staging by Abigail? How big do you want to grow?"

And the honest answer is big – but not that big. I don't need to stage America... I don't even need to work with every agent in MA. And honestly, my knees would give out if I tried.

There was a time in my life when I was staging 500+ properties a year... (May I remind you, there's only 365 days in a year...) But, for what? Who am I trying to keep up with? I am a small business and proud to be so. When I was in my twenties (so, just the other day, I swear), I used to joke: "As long as I can always add guac to my order without checking my bank account, I'm a success story." Well, at least 22-year-old Abigail would be proud.

But in all seriousness, I recently had to sit down and redefine success for myself... And I've realized it's not quantity, it's quality.

When I look ahead to the future, my only goal is to continue offering my current clients consistency in quality... Quality customer service and quality staging.

For me, I define success the way most people do: Freedom. The freedom to grow my business as much as I choose. The freedom to work with who I want and when I want, which also includes the freedom to say "no" to business that isn't the right fit. And just as importantly: The freedom to enjoy my life, family and friends... The big picture has to include down time, self care and travel. As I've grown the business, I've realized there needs to be balance because without it comes burnout... It's important I continue to feel inspired as I tackle each and every staging project so the quality of work will continue to increase over time. So, as we enter the holiday season and start to set new intentions for the New Year, I first challenge my clients – especially my clients who are agents – take a moment to just rest this holiday season. Take the time you need so you can jump into 2024 with bigger and better goals.

I realized something this year: Hardworking, motivated people always feel behind because they are so focused on the future and what comes next. Rarely do they stop and look back at what they've already accomplished.

So right here, right now, I want to stop, rest and reflect. I want to take a moment to thank my clients for working with me and trusting me with their business. Your success is my success. I am just as proud of you as I am myself. Cheers to us and all that it is to come in 2024.

Happy Holidays!

- Aby

REVIEWS AND CONSULTS



By Abigail Halal
Owner | Founder | Home Stager

Winter is coming! Wait... Winter is here!

Summer bodies are built in Winter! Same goes for homes...

Book a Home Staging Consultation and you'll receive a completely customized report broken down by room and priority on how to prep your home to sell!

What exactly is a Home Staging Consultation?

A Home Staging Consultation is a \$250 service and includes a walk-through of your entire home starting with the exterior.

This service is intended for sellers who plan to occupy their home at the time the property is listed. To really clarify: the sellers plan to live in the home with all their furniture and personal items.

What can you expect during the consultation? I schedule myself to be available for one-hour. We will walk and talk at your own pace! I'm here to answer all your questions. But no need to take notes! (I immediately tell my sellers to put down the pen and pad of paper!) Within 24 hours, you will receive a detailed home staging report with all my recommendations, broken down by room.

What are some topics we'll discuss: Listing Timeline, Storage Solutions, Simple Updates and/or Major Renovations, Unfinished DIY Projects, Paint Colors, Curb Appeal, How to Depersonalize and Appeal to the Masses, Decluttering (Pack It/Toss It/Donate it), Use of Art/Mirrors, Lighting, Window Treatments, Furniture Layout, Number of Furniture Pieces in Each Room, Defining Spaces, including Quirky, Untraditional Spaces, Reverting Spaces Back to Original, Intended Purposes, Answering Common Questions and Solving Frequent Problems for Potential Buyers ("Where will I put my couch? Where does the T.V. go? Will my queen bed fit in here?"), Who Are the Potential Buyers? (Single Adult, Young Professionals, Starter Home, Families, Forever Home, etc.), What Are the MOST Important Spaces to Stage?, Accessory Rentals (Occupied Homes) vs. Vacant Stages (Empty Homes)

Ready to learn more? Book your Home Staging Consultation today!

Brokers/Realtors: Home Staging Consultations is a great add-on to your list of services!

Email: HomeStagingbyAbigail@gmail.com

Phone: (617)-519-9133 (Call or Text)

How T.V. Influences Buyers... And My Fake HGTV Pilot Experience

By Abigail Halal Owner | Founder | Home Stager

According to the 2023 Profile of Home Staging by the National Association of REALTORS® Research Group, 55% of buyers felt homes should look like they were staged on TV shows, 64% of buyers were disappointed by the way homes looked compared to TV shows and 73% of agents said TV shows that display the buying process impacted their business by setting unrealistic or increased expectations.

I'm here to tell you that TV shows absolutely influence buyers and their expectations. I'm also here to tell you that once upon a time, I shot a TV pilot all about home staging for HGTV and it was FAKE, FAKE, FAKE!

Here's how it went:

- It took an entire week to shoot the pilot which featured just ONE stage. It typically takes me 3 hours to stage one property. I can usually accommodate 14 installs and/or pick-ups in one week. I said "no" to a lot of business that week. Didn't love that!
- I had actually already staged and destaged this particular property. It was actually scheduled to close... But I had to return, "meet" the developers for the "first time" and act like I had never seen the property before.
- The producers wanted me to do more than "just stage" the property. They wanted me to help with paint and backsplash selections. This is actually a service I already offer, it's called the "Design to Sell" package. However, this house had essentially already sold, so we had to get permission from the new buyers to install a backsplash and paint a feature wall in their primary bedroom. We, of course, allowed the buyers to pick so I had no say in the actual selections... I just acted. I walked into a paint store and acted like the paint color was entirely my idea. I acted like I chose the green backsplash tile. I ignored the fact that the backsplash was installed sideways, but on the inside, I was mortified.
- On staging day, I had to back the moving van in and out of the driveway like 100 times so they could get the right shot. (That's when the sweating really began for me.)
- The producers needed drama. We needed a problem. They wanted a sofa not to fit through the door or a leg on an accent chair to break. This is the only time I pushed back... I'm not going to allow them to portray me as a rookie who makes these kinds of mistakes. Or damage my inventory, even if it's somehow faked. Not to say mistakes don't happen, but not to those extremes. I've never been unable to clear a doorway with a sofa... Of course, I measure at property views in advance! We settled on removing a vase of long stems on the kitchen island that "I felt" was blocking the beauty of the kitchen. I also had to act shocked and appalled when I arrived at the property to find it wasn't stage ready (i.e. still dirty as it was a flip/new construction). Unfortunately this part of the staging process is typically an annoying truth. However, in this case, it wasn't dirty... Remember, it had already been staged and destaged. Can you believe they emptied a shop vac to dirty the property just for that scene?
- There were so many times something happened or occurred naturally that was "good" for TV, but the cameras weren't rolling. I was also told to stop doing that. (Doing what? Living?) I had to stop and reenact those moments.
- The numbers weren't accurate. The cost to stage and final sale of the property were made up. In reality, the buyers got a way better deal on the property because sometimes that's how things work in the real world.
- To wrap the week of filming, an agent and I sat down to discuss these fake numbers. But she wasn't the actual selling agent... She was a paid actress. Also, in reality, I would never sit down with the selling agent to discuss numbers! I'm not the seller!

I'm not going to knock the entire experience. It was fun. I laughed a lot. Actually, I remember sweating a lot. Like more than I typically do when I'm actually staging. So much so that the boom operator (person who assists the production sound mixer on set by operating boom microphones, selecting and placing radio microphones, and maintaining the audio equipment) had to keep yelling "Cut!" because my mic would completely slip away somewhere down my shirt and no one could hear me.

But, I wouldn't do it again. I prefer the real thing and I especially prefer doing more business than one install a week. So unfortunately, TV shows will continue to impact both my business as a stager and your business as the agent.

DECEMBER INSTALLS



UPCOMING EVENTS

HOME STAGING BY ABIGAIL

Booking: Home Staging Presentations for Agents

By Abigail Halal

Owner | Founder | Home Stager

Are you a real estate broker, sales manager or office administrator looking to educate your agents on the topic of home staging? Are you a new (or even experienced!) agent having a tricky time convincing your sellers to stage? Let's fix that!

Based on the conversations I've had over the years, I've realized it's not that agents don't want to list and show staged properties - they're just not sure how to introduce the topic to their sellers.

After all, selling a home is an emotional process. It can be challenging for sellers to change their thinking and see their property as something to market and sell to the masses rather than their home...

I get it! Especially for new agents! Perhaps the sellers just signed the listing agreement and the agent already pitched them on their commission percentage... Now agents are faced with the challenge of introducing their sellers to this new concept of home staging and convince them to pay for it. And the sticker price can be shocking to sellers if they're completely unfamiliar with home staging services!

As an agent, you know it's in everyone's best interest to stage - statistics tell us staged properties sell quickly and for a higher price - but you're not sure how to convince them and you certainly don't want to pay for it! Why should you? You're already working for commission...

And now you're up against those super successful, multiple-closings-a-month, full-service agents who DO pay for staging services... Or their broker pays or there's a program that covers the cost! How do you compete with that?

Well, you can! You just need to learn how to introduce staging services in such a way that a seller will feel foolish for ever thinking of skipping such an important step in the listing process... Education is key!

Let's chat! Or better: Invite me into your office for a presentation! I'll not only tell you about my services, pricing and share some before and after photos, but I'll present you with some proven home staging statistics that you can turn around and share with your doubting sellers.

And more importantly: We'll talk about sellers and their common misconceptions on home staging.

You may have tried to suggest staging services - even went out of your way to get them a few quotes to consider - only to hear:

"Oh no! Am I buying the furniture!? Home staging is too expensive!"

"We don't need home staging... Our home has been professionally decorated."

"We don't need a stager to declutter and clean."

"We can't have the house staged while we're living here!"

"Let's just wait and see what happens... We can always stage later if we need to."

"What's the point? Staging won't fix all the problems."

"Why do I need to stage? Won't my house sell eventually?"

I'll share how I educate sellers and respond to these common misconceptions so you're better prepared in the future!

Contact me today to schedule your in-office presentation!

Email: HomeStagingbyAbigail@gmail.com

Phone: 617-519-9133 (Call or Text)



"I cannot convince my sellers to stage!"



Home Staging Presentations for Agents:

- Services
- Pricing
- Before-and-After Photos
- Statistics
- Common Seller Misconceptions
- How to Educate and Respond to Hesitant or Refusing Sellers

Let's fix that!



Contact me today to schedule a presentation at your local real estate office!