

Secrets to Staging the Outside to Get Them Inside

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You've had that experience with a client where you drive up to a house and they don't even want to go inside. It's an immediate "un-appeal." You may know the inside of the house shows much better, but you just can't convince them to spend the time to even go inside. In today's market where lots of choices in housing are available to the buyer, why should they? Let's talk about some easy, inexpensive fixes that will help create that outside appeal and get you one giant step further to a sale.

√Paint or stain the front and garage doors, especially if they show any weathering. These are the first visuals where a potential buyer focuses. If garage doors are metal and dented, they may need to be replaced.

√Any old, basically abandoned sheds or small structures must be removed and the area should be graded and the grass replaced.

√Change any dated outside light fixture(s).

√Fix that driveway. If it is blacktop, make sure cracks and crumbling areas are dug out and filled and then the whole driveway sealed. If it is cement, have large cracks filled and repaired professionally. The buyer must at least feel they can drive the moving truck in confidently!

√Make sure landscaping bricks are in their proper placement. Mowing, weed-whipping sometimes moves them and this is something the homeowner rarely notices, but makes the property look unsightly.

√Fill in bare dirt under large shade trees. Plant shade-tolerant plants in defined planters or groundcover. Landscape properly for that area.

√All landscaping beds should be cleaned out and updated for the time of year it is in your region. Place new bedding material down.

√Have trees and bushes pruned and trimmed. If a bush or tree is looking old or about to expire, remove it and replace it with a similar size and type if you can. If there is a tree limb(s) over the roof, have them removed.

√If the house needs painting and a full paint job is not in the cards; have it touched up professionally in the worst, most visible spots. Paint shutters and fix them if they are hanging crooked. At least this may help get your client in the front door, even if they negotiate a full paint job into the sale later.

√If the house is sided, have it power-washed and have gutters and windows cleaned! Window cleaning inside and out makes the house feel updated and fresh, rather than old and dingy.

√Make sure grass is in good shape, weeds are removed, trimming done regularly. So many sellers fall down on this job the minute the house is listed, and this is critical to selling a house quickly, especially one where the owners have already moved out. In snowy climates, removal must be done regularly too. If owners have moved out, make sure you have an HWA Home Warranty to re-assure buyers.

√Keep garbage and recycle containers inside the garage, along with all toys and equipment. Make sure the garage is neat and organized. Painted walls and floors also go a long way in this area and are inexpensive to do.

√Decks should be washed and repainted or re-sealed; with plantings around them cleaned, weed-free and looking good. Patio furniture should be in excellent condition. Even though it is in the backyard, this is the area where the family can envision enjoying the warm days and the new yard.

√If the roof has missing shingles and they can be replaced inexpensively, suggest this be done as it may save negotiation over a completely new roof. Roof repair needs and costs should be minor or the homeowner might as well replace the entire roof.

√If the homeowner wants to do a bit more, suggest solar lights lining the driveway or installing a more attractive front door with lead glass inserts and replacing plain doorknobs with something more custom.

√If you have an evening showing, make sure lights are on outside and inside the house. This is warm and inviting.

√If it's a holiday season, by all means decorate the home! Just like sugar cookies or vanilla scent on the inside of the house, this really says "it's a home" and I can see myself enjoying life here! In the least, always have some greenery

or flowers for the season on the front step or porch; even a birdbath with a little garden around it says home.

Remember, most homebuyers cannot visualize even these simple changes and clean ups in a house and the ones who can will be looking for a reduced price. So to sell the house at top dollar and quickly by making it "appeal" to the many who will be seeing it rather than the few who are looking for a "fixer upper." These people know what they want, go after it and need less assistance.

Finally, have neighbors or friends look at the finished results to see if you or the home owner has missed anything key that would be quick and easy to do. **Use this article in your listing presentations so they can get started right away on these easy, inexpensive fixes and adapt the ideas to their home.** When that home looks fabulous, update that picture on the Internet! This is especially important if the season has changed and it's a reward to your client too.



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