



## Gentry Magazine “Staged for Success— What the Pros Know” By Jodi Murphy

It’s such a stressful time—finding a new home while planning, packing, and trying to sell your current home first. It can be overwhelming, especially if you need to live in your home while trying to sell it. Gentry’s Contributing Writer Jodi Murphy asked Arthur McLaughlin and Sylvia D’Anna, two of the

Industry’s finest stagers, for their expert advice on how to present a home for an expeditious sale.

### **There is only one opportunity to make a first impression.**

Sylvia D’Anna cannot stress this enough. She advises her clients to “think like a buyer and walk through our home to see it from the buyer’s perspective.” Arthur McLaughlin wholeheartedly agrees. “You must understand to whole the home will appeal. Is it a young couple with children, a single urban professional, or an empty nester? Refining your interior style will alter the overall appeal of the home.”

By looking at it from the buyer’s perspective you can make non-emotional design choices that can increase the mass appeal for your home. McLaughlin suggests looking through style magazines to see what design choices are most current as this will attract the most attention. D’Anna also emphasizes making sure rooms are staged for their intended us. Many people adapt spaces to fit their own lifestyles, but this can create a confusing picture for prospective buyers. “One of our clients used a family room as a large dining room and the dining room as a sitting room,” says D’Anna. “It made perfect sense for our client but not for buyers. We brought everything back to normal.

### **Clean, clean, clean!**

McLaughlin says it is essential for homeowners to de-clutter and de-personalize a space “so that potential buyers can see themselves living there, not you.” He says so many homeowners just put their homes on the market and don’t take the time to clean up their residences. “When you sell your car, you would normally have it cleaned and polished. You should do the same thing with your home. Wash your windows, hide your trash cans, and start packing your excess now. The dollar returns on your efforts will be amazing.”

He also suggests doing the deep cleaning before the stager gets there so you can save money. This way it allows the staging firm to “work on the home’s assets instead of removing your personality.”

### **Address the defects.**

In addition to the clutter, D’Anna says there is even more to getting a house ready to go on the market. “The homeowner must address any obvious defects, and after that, cosmetic issues should be reviewed. Attend to such defects as leaky faucets, outdated fixtures, cracks in the walls, missing molding, broken tiles, and unkempt landscaping. Cosmetic fixes include a fresh coat of neutral paint to brighten up dingy walls or lurid paint colors, replacing worn carpets, and setting up the right placement of furniture and accessories.

### **Focus on primary areas for the biggest impact.**

Both D’Anna and McLaughlin agree that living rooms, dining rooms, and master bedrooms are the key spaces in which to focus. “If staged effectively,” says D’Anna, “they will take the buyers’ breath away.”



It is also essential to update kitchens and bathrooms, too. “Rooms should be visually appealing from where you enter,” says McLaughlin, “Each area needs to tell a romantic, wonderful, and complete story visually. This is what sells a home and sells it for top dollar.”



### **Creating a sense of natural light.**

McLaughlin says many residences suffer from a lack of natural light, and creating a sense of natural light is of the utmost importance. “Go through your home and make sure that all light bulbs are clean and with maximum wattage. Every light should be on during showings and every window clean and uncovered.”

When he designs for a space for sale, he creates multiple levels of lighting that can be set and reset throughout the day. “Designing for resale is very different; rooms will be seen while standing, during the midday, and rather briefly. You only have a moment to capture the viewer.”

### **Don’t leave the job to amateurs.**

A professional stager is worth the investment. They have market knowledge, know the current design trends, understand the competition within your neighborhood, and can create an atmosphere that will appeal to the broadest range of potential buyers. Expect to pay as little as \$1,000 to \$3,000 for staging an empty, small to average-sized home and potentially up to \$100,000 on a large estate involving some renovation.

D’Anna and McLaughlin suggest that you look for a stager with a proven track record. Start by checking online to see samples of the stager’s work and get references from real estate experts or other home sellers. It’s advantageous to find one who has an extensive inventory for the lowest rental fees.

“Resale staging is not the same as interior design,” says McLaughlin. “it’s not about your lifestyle or where you like to relax and read the newspaper; it’s about how the room looks and appeals to prospective buyers. Don’t risk your greatest investment on someone who has just started a staging business. Don’t skimp, as you are the only one who will pay the price.”