



Week Two - Vacant Staging & 5-Step Marketing

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Day 8- Week Two Overview



In Week Two of your *HSR Certification Training*, we focus on marketing and building your new business. Remember this is training at your own pace. **Do not feel rushed and take your time.**

It's important to look at the marketing sections in Week Two from an "overview" perspective. Very likely you won't be ready to actively market your business until after Week Three but you'll have an overview of the *Marketing Plan* you should be employing at that time from your studies in Week Two. Don't let all the material in Week Two slow you down since most of the sections are detailed ways for you to market your business in the *future*. ***Momentum in key, so review this area and move on to Week Three where we tie it all together.***

Objectives

After completing your Week Two training, you will be able to:

Have a clear understanding of Vacant Home Staging and how to implement this service into your business.

Understand Branding and how to create a look and feel all your own

Understand critical aspects of social media and digital marketing for your business

Build Marketing Materials - Create custom marketing materials using our Discount Print Shop

Schedule the items on the First 50 Marketing Things List in your marketing launch calendar

Complete or schedule items # 43 – 73 on your HSR Planning Checklist.



Build a Strategic Marketing Plan for your business based on the *HSR 5-Step Marketing Plan* on the HSR website.

Have a clear plan for contacting agents, sellers and builders about your services



Locate and identify HSR marketing tools and forms.

Week Two Agenda

1. Watch the Week Two Overview Video
2. Read the *Vacant Home Staging Guide*. 
3. Watch the A-Z Vacant Home Staging Section Videos
4. Read the *First 50 Marketing Things List*. 
5. Understand and choose your Target Market
6. Set up a Contact Management System
7. Understand Branding by going through our Bling Your Brand section.
8. Set up your social media profiles and Facebook Ad campaign strategy
9. Create your Marketing Materials using the HSR Print Shop as inspiration.
10. Have a website plan and text ready
11. Develop your marketing strategy after reviewing all the elements of the 5-Step Plan
12. Complete your HSR Planning Checklist as directed.

You will always be referring back to this week throughout your membership! My favorite sections are the Blinging your Brand, Facebook Advertising and Directory sections among the many others.

Since all of our members have various “technically savvy” backgrounds ranging from 0-10...know thyself! As an entrepreneur you have to push to gain knowledge and we do live in a tech savvy world, so embrace it. Having said that, if you have very little “tech savvy” consider outsourcing those items to the many freelancers online who can do this stuff in their sleep!

The secret to entrepreneurial success is knowing what to outsource and what to learn. You can't easily learn it all but resources like www.upwork.com, www.fiverr.com and other freelancer websites make it easy to pass that frustrating, time consuming work off to...experts. Hmm, sounds like what we want our sellers to do right?



Day 8 - A-Z Vacant Home Staging Guide



At one point or another, every individual involved in professional home staging has addressed whether they will or can offer vacant home staging as part of their services. There are pros and cons involved in offering this service. For the most part, it can be a profitable solution or niche to many clients. The costs up front for accessories can be a bit exorbitant, but if you plan ahead and use this guide, they need not be overwhelming.

This guide is designed to walk you step-by-step through the process of offering and implementing a vacant home staging service. My goal is to allow you to slowly grow your inventory (starting with the smaller pieces), so that you are not over extending your business and resources. Unless you have quite a bit of space to store inventory, the expense of storage/warehousing can add up if you don't have the marketing in place.

After you read through this guide, you will also want to go to the Member's Area and watch my Vacant Home Staging Videos that details your entire process, as well as provides the downloaded forms, contract and check list's to get you going...



Website: Watch the on-demand *A-Z Vacant Home Staging* videos.

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Day One>>A-Z Vacant Home Staging** section in the menu or right hand bar and watch videos after reading this Guide



The Benefits of Vacant Home Staging for Your Business

Many professional home stagers today specialize in staging vacant homes only. Why? There is a good market for this kind of niche, it allows stagers to make money on product rental vs. purely service time, and they love creating that model home look which is much easier in a cleared out home. Stagers who like to work alone and with a clean slate are perfect for this service. Do some research in your area to discover the stagers who mostly handle vacant homes in order to assess whether this can be a lucrative niche for you. Remember, there is usually plenty of business to go around but it's always nice to know thy competition.

The home stagers, who have invested in beautiful accessories and inventory to grow their vacant staging clientele, have done very well financially. My very first trainee, Charles Woods in Sacramento, CA told me his yearly sales was less than 50K when he joined HSR and now he's topping over half a million...woot!

There is some long-standing home staging companies with warehouses of inventory that do an average of 30+ vacant homes a month in our industry. Many of these big-time stagers are part of my Staging Mentors program, so if you have big goals/aspirations for your business, you may want to purchase a Staging Mentor day to see how these "staging giants" in our industry get it done.



Website: Go to www.stagingmentors.com to check out the Mentor near you and consider getting hands-on training in vacant staging if that is your chosen niche.

Vacant homes sit on the market longer than even poorly furnished homes. Real estate agents are usually able to convince a home seller to pay for the expense of staging rather than lowering the price. With the rise in popularity of home staging, you rarely see a vacant home placed on the market and when you do...you think, "shame on that agent for not suggesting home staging!"

In Week One, I explore the "personality types" usually associated with different staging niches, so if you haven't watched that video, you may want to do so now.



Website: Watch the on-demand *Industry Overview* video.

From the Member Area, click on **Week One>>Day Two>>Industry Overview** section in the menu or right hand bar

Vacant homes appear cold, sterile, small and boxy. With no frame of reference in the form of furniture and accessories, a buyer is lost as to the size and purpose of each room. Their imaginations are kept in the dark. For home sellers, that is a very bad place to be. We know that only 10% of buyers have the capacity to see beyond what the home holds.



Vacant home staging also allows us to completely create a “model home” look because we are not constrained to the home owner’s furnishings. We have a blank slate to place beautiful furnishings from top to bottom!

Below is a Sales Handout also available online about the benefits of vacant staging for your clients.

Why Vacant Home Staging is Critical for Getting the Best Price for Your Home

People don’t buy houses. They buy *homes*.

The number one reason a buyer purchases a home is because it “felt home.” It was warm, inviting and the buyer made an emotional connection with the home. When have you ever heard of an empty room described as warm and inviting? Sterile, cold and uninviting are the three most popular words to describe an empty room.

Without furniture, there is no frame of reference.

How big is the room? Without furniture it’s incredibly difficult to tell the scale and size of a room. When the buyer does not have answers to their questions, they walk away. What is this room for? Many times a buyer can’t even tell if it’s the living room or dining room in an unfurnished home. Don’t keep them guessing, because it only distracts them from considering the home as a purchase.

When a room is kept empty, buyers focus on negative details.

Can you imagine a brand new Mercedes without a paint job? Do you think people would notice the beautiful car or the missing paint? It’s so much easier to notice that crack in the wall or the chip in the tile when there is nothing else to look at. Home staging capitalizes on the positive aspects of a home while de-emphasizing negative aspects in order to position a home that will make an emotional connection with buyers.

Only 10% of home buyers can actually visualize the potential of a home.

Nine out of every ten people walking in your home have no imagination of the wonderful possibilities your home has to offer them. They just can’t picture it. Don’t let a simple thing like no furniture or limited furniture ruin your sale. Don’t take those odds; they will hurt you in the price significantly!



Offering a Vacant Home Staging Service

Consider thoughtfully before diving into purchasing full inventory and furniture yourself -- as some home stagers do. Heavy inventory will quickly eat at your budget, become outdated, is expensive to store and may not be where your heart is in terms of this business. Many veteran home stagers have realized this headache a bit too late. Read through this Guide and watch my online videos before making any big purchases if you can.

Offering this kind of service is really not as hard as you may think. In fact, with a little planning, your accessory dollars will go a long way and your rooms will look beautiful. Any good service offering starts with a plan. The big question to ask yourself is, am I going to first work with a furniture rental company or buy furniture myself? This depends upon your budget and my recommendation is to make mistakes with the furniture rental companies "stuff" first before you become their competition...in other words don't reinvent the wheel if you don't have to. Don't get to frustrated if your vacant bids are higher than competitors because of the expense of working with a furniture rental company because that is out of your control until you have more inventory (it's also a learning process).

If you're just starting your home staging business, it's a good idea to save your money for marketing your business rather than spending money on expensive furniture to rent, storage units and trucks to move it. There are furniture rental companies who already offer this kind of thing and here is where you first need to start. Furniture is the most expensive item, so work with a furniture rental company and all you need to purchase is the finishing accessories.

If you've already decided you're going to go the furniture rental direction, which we'll talk more about in a bit, it's a good idea to get a handle and price on the service. You will need to figure out how much time it will take you to complete a vacant home staging from start to finish. You will also need to know how many accessories will be involved. Time and accessory rentals are two different things, so it's a good idea to price them separately in your mind in order to create an accurate proposal. Both time and accessory costs will most likely be based upon the square footage/number of rooms staged in the home since that directly relates to volume.

A vacant staging consultation is VERY different than the consultation process I have outlined in the past! For your first few vacant home staging projects, you will want to get a look at the home before you bid on a price. However, after some experience in this area, you will discover that this is the only service you can safely bid a *broad* estimate over the phone (based on square footage and rooms needed to be staged) in order to "qualify" and screen the client.

For example, if the client balks at a two month, main area vacant staging minimum cost of \$2,000, then it will be very difficult to work with them. Why? Because when you break down the costs of vacant staging: furniture rental company, your accessory rental and your time, it probably won't pay the bills. Phone estimates save you the time and added expense of a visit IF the client is unrealistic.

I'm getting a little ahead of myself, so let's start from the top...



Working with Furniture Rental Companies

Furniture rental companies offer a wide range of furniture choices but lack in the accessory and planning department. That is where a professional home stager comes in. Home sellers have already moved out of their house so they just don't want to deal with it. You may think that working with furniture companies may undermine your service but it actually compliments what you do, is a great place to start (and make mistakes). Starting your business working with a furniture rental company gives you a model for what works in your area...why reinvent when there is a company who already does this where you live. Later on you can decide whether you want to become their competitor and get a warehouse of your own but for now, save your money for accessories.



Tip: In some areas you can search online for the furniture rental companies like www.cort.com and select/order furniture from the comfort of your home.



Tip: Before you purchase any accessories, make sure you meet with the furniture rental company ahead of time to get a good idea of their inventory and costs and their process. Most furniture companies will offer a discount to you that you can either pass to the client or take as a commission/referral fee.

The Home Staging Resource has arranged national agreements in our Member Discounts area of the Member Area home page. Make sure to check there and proceed. You will very likely be able to negotiate a better deal on a local level. **Make sure you do this with ALL of the available furniture rental companies in your area.**

Many furniture rental companies will have a minimum amount of months (usually 2-3) and a separate delivery charge. Become familiar with their process and all their charges so you can pass that information to the client. In a booming, seller's market where homes are moving fast, make sure to negotiate down to a 2 month rental cost that is affordable (since the home may not sit for even that long). Remember, that EVERYTHING is negotiable and furniture that goes into staged homes is NOT being used, so it should be discounted more than furniture they rent to the average person.

Make sure you completely understand the financial arrangements with the furniture rental company i.e. contracts, deposits, how they are made (either by phone, email, text, etc...once you have decided on the pieces and price.)

At this point, you will want to decide whether you will have the client pay the furniture rental company directly (and keep you out of the liability loop) or bundle the cost into your proposal, so you have more control. To limit your liability, you may want to keep the agreement and payment of large furniture between your client and the furniture rental company. If you have good insurance and a strong contract in place (consult your attorney), you may want to package the entire service as we do in our Staging Proposal example. Ask the furniture rental company what most stagers do in your area since they can guide you in this regard.

Take pictures of each piece of furniture as well as general measurements ahead of time. Try to choose a neutral furniture pallet you can punch up with colorful pillows and accessories. It's not a bad idea to bring in some of your pillows/throws to take photos of with the furniture. When you meet with the client initially you can show them some of your furniture ideas using the pictures you have taken.

If you have a choice of furniture companies, make arrangements with both since that will nearly double your options. Some companies appeal to one style over another and are priced accordingly. When you view the home you'll be able to get a general idea of which Furniture Rental Company will be best suited for the job. You will also want to develop multiple relationships because this gives you options.

Once you've reviewed the available furniture options you can shop to your heart's delight for accessories.



Tip: The last thing you want to do is buy beautiful red couch pillows only to discover they won't match any of the available rental couches. Step-by-step planning is critical before making any purchases.

Your Inventory of Accessories

We talked a bit about what to look for when choosing accessories. Now let's discuss which accessories to choose right away. Before you go shopping, make sure to have a way to manage your inventory, track your items, create sales invoices/orders and generally keep track of your goods! Luckily there are great products designed for home stagers that does all of this at a fantastic price, StageForce and/or Darby Inventory Management. I suggest going to the Members Area and reading/watching more about this...



Website: Inventory and Shopping Management:

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>A-Z Vacant Home Staging Section** in the menu or right hand bar. Scroll down to the Managing and Choosing Your Inventory section.

Many home stagers simply start by picking furnishings out of their own home. This is fine if you have nice things, but will not work for bedding, towels and pillows.

I have a section in the Members Area>>HSR Library called "Products I Love" which has direct links to my favorite Amazon Staging essentials and a curated Pinterest board of great buy accessories:

<https://www.pinterest.com/audraslinkey/audras-favorite-staging-accessories/>

**Tips:**

I don't recommend going to garage sales. Your time is valuable. It is doubtful you will find the kind of accessories you will be proud to charge to clients there.

Shop intentionally and you will spend much less than if you bought random things from discount stores and garage sales.

Go to the Black Book Member Discount area in the Member Home page and begin to apply for the various designer discount programs available. Some of my favorite furnishing resources when you're just starting out are:

WayFair.com, Houzz.com, Amazon.com, Ikea.com and of course haunt your local Home Goods, Target, Ross, etc....

Every time you make a purchase, make sure you record it in the inventory sheet and don't assume you'll remember what you own. The inventory sheet is designed for you to keep track of what you have: where it's currently located, where you purchased the item, the retail/parting price you're willing to sell it for (as some clients will want to buy), and the original purchase price you paid (for your records).

Remember, an easy way to figure your accessory rental fee is to take the *conservative estimated lifespan* of the item (usually 10 months) and divide it by your **retail/parting price**. The retail/parting price should be **DOUBLE** what you paid for that item since I know you are an amazing shopper!

You can play with these numbers so they make sense but it's typically 20% of the wholesale price and 10% of the retail price, so your inventory is paid off within 5 months....get it? The key is to make sure your inventory is paid off and making money by month 6 ideally.

The point is to have a formula for best ROI (return on investment) and keep it simple and consistent. Use your spreadsheet to track everything, sort by location, and print out the list for the client to sign-off of at time of delivery or use my *Packaged Vacant Proposal* to have them sign. For those of you who are Excel savvy, input the formula in your rental price and Excel will do the numbers for you.

Accessories Needed to Successfully Stage a Vacant Home

You will need furniture for at least the main areas if not every room: bedrooms, dining room, living room, family room, office, and den.



Website

From the Member Area, click on Week Two >>A-Z Vacant Home Staging section to see a video I created with photo inspirations and example vacant portfolios to look at for shopping ideas.

Bedroom linens - sheets, duvet/comforter, throws, pillows, shams, Euro shams

Bedroom accessories - lamps, clocks, plants and books for night stands

Bathroom linens - assorted plush towels for luxury, rugs for floor

Bathroom accessories - scented candles, bath soaps, silk plants

Counter top accents - beautiful cookbook on a metal scroll stand, layered cutting boards, fake fruit, etc.

Kitchenware and dining room place settings; set the table to emotionally connect with buyers' sense of entertainment and family gatherings.

Throw pillows – Lots of pillows for couches, chairs and beds. Make or purchase pillow covers to save space at etsy.com. See my “6 Tips to Staging with Pillows” for a good idea of what to purchase and how to mix and match: <http://www.homestagingresources.com/staging-pillows-6-tips/>

Beautiful throws such as knit, faux fur, angora - for couches, chairs and beds

Silk plants and trees: See my favorite tree to purchase in the Week 3>>Products I Love in the Amazon store (my favorite place to get quick items!)

Silk orchids and floral arrangements

Hurricanes, vases, books, clocks and lamps throughout. Go LARGE on knick-knacks.

Mirrors and artwork for walls. Think light weight, large canvases.

Large Rugs to anchor living area spaces (make sure the front legs of the furniture are on it!)

Kid's theme room stuff (table and chairs, basinet, stuffed animals, toys, etc.)

Window coverings (optional). Make sure you specify this as an add-on service since this takes serious time!

Small chairs, small side tables, throw rugs and ottomans

Staging trays to complete the look

Baskets, white sheets

Use my easy bed formula in the A-Z Vacant Section or Aero beds to stage additional rooms inexpensively

Make sure you label everything with your company name and phone number in case movers or sellers grab it in the chaos of de-staging.

Consider creating floorplans using our www.floorplanner.com software we discuss in Week 3>>Model Homes ahead of time, so movers know where things go



Vacant Planning Checklist

Below is a quick checklist I created to keep the process above organized and to prepare you for offering a vacant staging service.

Vacant Service Planning Checklist

Before tackling a vacant home, confirm you have completed the following:

- ☐ Researched and connected with ALL the local furniture rental companies in my area
- ☐ Photographed and inventoried the chosen furnishings I will be using for my business
- ☐ I have a clear picture of the process, limitations and cost of furniture rental stand alone for each furniture rental company in my area
- ☐ I would be able to easily provide an estimate over the phone for furniture rental alone for each room (just as the rental company is able to do)
- ☐ **Based upon their payment process and agreement, decide whether you will be the main contact or have client go direct to furniture rental company.**
- ☐ **Based upon the above, create your Staging Proposal and Vacant Contract to reflect payment structures**
- ☐ I have my Staging Proposal and Contract Forms ready and in place
- ☐ Set up an inventory management system in order to keep track of my personal inventory/accessories going into homes
- ☐ Shop for accessories and inventory to *build out rooms*
- ☐ Label, photograph and store all my accessories and inventory
- ☐ Consider “bundling” accessories that always work together in clear, plastic bins and putting a rental price on it i.e. kitchen counter décor, little girl’s bedroom
- ☐ Create space in my home or rent storage for my accessories
- ☐ Scan each piece of inventory into my inventory management system with photos
- ☐ I have my Staging Toolbox completely ready and well-supplied
- ☐ I have Staging Insurance that covers my furnishings and business in the event of theft

Figuring Out Your Time Costs

You can figure that for a 2000 square foot home, it will take you two to three hours to measure, draw up and plan the house. It will take you another two to three hours at the furniture rental place picking out furniture. That will take longer when you're first starting out. You need at least a day to gather all your accessories and meet the furniture rental people at the home, direct where each piece should go and your own accessories in the home. Don't forget another partial



day to de-stage, which can usually be absorbed in the accessory rental cost. Nevertheless, it is another day of your time. So, a safe estimate is *three full days* for 2000 square feet.

Planning for a 4000 square foot house doesn't necessarily mean six days of work. For large homes, it's best to meet with the clients and bid in person. If you can minimize your driving time by making four trips (room planning, rental furniture planning, staging and de-staging), you'll be saving yourself a lot of expense and time.

The key to good vacant home staging is in the details of measurements and planning. Having an idea of furniture type and sizes by becoming familiar with your local furniture rental company is also critical.



Tips:

We offer furniture cut-outs and graph paper in the Vacant Home Staging Resource section of the HSR website for you to use. You can also purchase these at a book store.

If you are computer savvy, you can purchase software packages that let you arrange furniture and then print out the plan.

Figuring Out Your Accessory Costs

Some stagers expect the home sellers to pay for the additional accessories that go into a vacant house rather than have their own. I think that's a bit unrealistic. Many chosen accessories can be universal and easily stored in your own home or garage. As a professional, you will usually receive a discount on those furnishings. Make sure you take note of the retail price -- not your price -- when you consider accessory rental. At times, your clients may want to purchase an accessory and this is a good way to turn-over your product and refresh with updated items.

Our inventory sheet is a great example of how to keep track of what you own and its cost. Make sure you price your accessory rentals conservatively and assume the worst in terms of wear and tear. Pillows and throws will not last as long as artwork and silk plants.



Tip: It is safe to say that the cost of accessory rental will be about 30 - 50% the cost of furniture rental. Use your best judgment and measure your return on investment. Feel out the client and accessorize more sparsely if cost is a huge concern but keep a close eye on quality. I'd rather see fewer rooms staged then more sparsely done.

Here is a good formula to use when renting out accessories. Charge 10% of your retail cost or 20% of your wholesale cost (typically retail should be 100% more than wholesale) monthly for all accessory items. This means you've successfully paid for your accessories within 5 months!

That's accessory rental in its simplest form BUT if you want to add an estimated lifespan to the equation, that works too. I say keep it simple and charge 20% of your wholesale cost.

Here's a few examples to make it more clear...



A bed set:

You buy a bed set on sale at Home Goods for \$100.

Your parting cost or retail cost (if someone wanted to buy it from you today) is \$200.

10% of the retail cost of the bed set is \$20 which is your monthly fee

20% of the wholesale cost of the bed set is \$20 which is the same...get it?

The cost is \$20 per month to rent your bed set which is MUCH cheaper than if the client were to rent from the furniture rental company!

Enter this formula into the inventory spreadsheet we gave you to easily compute your costs. It's always best to base it on the "retail" cost since it allows a client to understand full cost, consider buying that item from you and feel they got a good deal by renting at 10% vs. buying.

Another example would be a large statement piece of art

You bought it on sale for \$200.

Your parting cost or retail cost (if someone wanted to buy it from you today) is \$400.

10% of the \$400 cost is \$40 a month rental fee (same as 20% of \$200 wholesale)

The cost \$40 per month to rent your statement artwork

Enter this formula into the inventory spreadsheet we gave you to easily compute your costs.

We will be providing a general accessory list later on in this guide. For now, some things to consider when planning or purchasing accessories are:

Consider the weight and size of the accessory. Remember you are lifting and fitting it into your car when you're just getting started.

Avoid the temptation of going light on furniture in order to save the client money.

Buy coordinating colors. Have a cool palette of accessories and a warm one for variation.

Use accessories with dual purpose, e.g., wicker storage box as coffee table, pillows that would fit a bedroom or a couch, large charger plates for dressing up a table or a wall, and sheets for beds, drapes, or a table cloth.

Use neutral linens but always have a few colorful things that pop. See our living room after pictures.

Avoid overdosing on popular colors and styles for a longer lifespan

Buy paintings, not prints. They are lightweight and are generally more expensive looking. Make sure they only require a single Monkey Hook (see Week 3>>Products I love for these awesome picture hangers)

Buy lightweight baskets to put your fake trees and plants in, since they never come with good bases.

Buy pillow covers and duvet covers to switch out and save you room.

I recommend sticking with white towels and duvet covers in order to mix and match your pillows and throws on the bed for dramatic effect.



Audra's 3-Step Simple Bid Process

As you can imagine, calculating a rental cost for every single accessory you put into the home can almost drive you crazy! That's why it's good to begin bundling some of those items together in bins, so you don't "reinvent the wheel" every time you need a coffee table centerpiece or shelf filler.

There's been A LOT of confusion over how to build out a vacant proposal taking all of your furniture rental costs, your time and inventory into consideration while staying competitive against other stagers who are bidding against you. Yes, there will be many situations where an agent is calling on 5 different stagers to give her a vacant bid/proposal to present to her sellers. I talk a lot about how to handle and overcome this situation in my vacant section videos in order to put you in the right mindset.

Having said that, while looking at hundreds of proposals and varying vacant prices over the years, I managed to come up with a simple formula that should cover your costs, make you look credible and confident, **while allowing you to bid a vacant project in less than two minutes.**

I explain this process in detail in the A-Z Vacant Home Staging section since you have to SEE where to find your local variable and how to use that to easily get your *per room ranges* based on the scale and luxury level of the home. It's simple, puts your bids right in the middle of other stagers bids and should more than cover your costs if you're keeping it simple.

So after you quickly read through this guide, go to that section and watch all my corresponding videos as I know you will LOVE it!



Website: Watch the on-demand *A-Z Vacant Home Staging* videos.



The Vacant Staging Phone Order Sheet

Now that you've done the homework and have researched your furniture inventory, as well as shopped for accessories to match, it's time to talk process.

First Client Contact: Use the "Pre-Appointment Phone Order Sheet" Key Questions

- Is the property **vacant or occupied**?
- What is the **approximate square footage**?
- What is the asking price and is that comparable to the area?
- How many **bedrooms and baths** are there?
- Would you say the bedrooms are **large or small**?
- Is there only **one main living room or is there a separate family/tv room**?
- Would you say the living rooms are **large, small, or standard sized** (i.e. is there room for just a single seating area – sofa, 2 chairs, coffee table, end tables – or is there room for a secondary seating area)?
- Is there a separate dining nook and formal dining area?
- Are there any **other rooms inside** the house that require staging like outdoor areas?
- What is the **style of the home** (traditional, contemporary, transitional or Mediterranean)?
- Is this a luxury home in an upscale neighborhood?
- What is your **preferred staging date**?
- Consider screening client with cost scenario I mentioned earlier in order to make sure they understand that vacant staging is more costly yet more critical.

Time to Close Client and charge for the consultation –

"I work a bit differently than other stagers in that I provide a per room cost to provide you flexibility and clarity in pricing. I've loosely estimated based on the scale, price and luxury level of the home you've described that a living room, formal dining room, kitchen and main bath would cost \$XXX amount for 30 days. Does that fit into your budget?"

You see that I've quoted the minimum of only 3 rooms in this quote to prequalify if this client is even worth my time? I call this the "getting out of bed" quote...what's it worth to you? If they agree, you can close them on your strategy for charging or not charging for the initial property preview as every area is different in this standard.

"I would like to spend a couple hours in the home in order to create a proposal that will give your home the model home look, as well as fit your budget. I have room in my calendar for Thursday at 9am or Monday at 9am, which day works best for you?" Get the date set.

If you charge for the session (see my video for clarity on this): *"I charge \$100 for this one-hour planning consultation which will give you guidance in getting the home ready for furnishings and go towards the vacant service that you choose, so do you have a credit card you would like me to use to hold the day?"*

If you have not done your homework nor have a clear picture of costs, you can end the conversation by letting them know you will get back to them with an estimate.

Here is a Vacant Project Checklist to give you an idea of the entire process. I go over this worksheet and the ones that follow in my video in Week 2>>Vacant Staging, so please login to get more direction.



Vacant Project Checklist

First Client Contacts and Arrangements

- ☐ Pre-Appointment Order Sheet is filled out and details of vacant home provided
- ☐ Your company process and philosophy has been communicated
- ☐ Screen Client: Generic estimate for Main Area vacant staging has been provided and client is open to pricing models
- ☐ Deposit fee for viewing property has been provided and date has been set for viewing with client present

What to bring to appointment:

- ☐ Vacant Home Worksheet – Quick checklist to help you play what to bring into home
- ☐ Measurements of furniture rental main items (couches, chairs, consoles, tables, dressers)
- ☐ Small set of paint chips in case the client needs paint prior to staging
- ☐ Measuring tape and Graph paper (for measuring out areas) and Staging Toolbox
- ☐ Digital camera – Take photos of every angle and entrance (especially questionable areas)

Day of Initial Appointment:

- ☐ Quick Tour property with client noting “staging potential” and architectural highlights needing to be emphasized.
- ☐ Ask client to view your portfolio/sales pieces while you take the time to take photos of every angle of each room, plan/sketch the rooms/windows/closets and take measurements.
- ☐ Using Vacant Home Worksheet check each item that ideally will stage the space for each package (use two different pen colors i.e. red for budget and green for premier package)
- ☐ Prepare Staging Proposal based on your worksheet and give estimated wiggle room for artistic merchandising (you should already have a keen idea of pricing and time frames)
- ☐ Discuss repairs, paint ideas and cosmetic needs if paid appointment. Discuss “Stage Ready”.
- ☐ Ideally get client buy-in and signed agreement, so you can go directly to furniture Rental Company and hold furniture for project. If not, explain timing and exactly when you plan on getting proposal to client.
- ☐ Once agreement is set, money is paid and staging date coordinated, create folder for client with all forms in place including staging timeline and this checklist

Staging Day Instructions:

- ☐ Arrive 30 minutes before rental company in order to get your staging accessories loaded in before big pieces
- ☐ Take more before photos if you hadn't already
- ☐ Place large rugs down right away in perspective areas



- ☐ Create a "Staging Area" for your tools which will ideally be in the kitchen and out of the way of movers
- ☐ Unpack accessories and place in appropriate rooms as identified
- ☐ Ideally have a rough layout of where furniture should go for furniture movers
- ☐ Allow movers to move in furniture per your instructions
- ☐ Ideally photograph the space with rental furniture alone (this makes compelling evidence of light staging vs. real staging)
- ☐ All beds should be made and steamed to de-wrinkle
- ☐ All lamps should have light bulbs and be tested for working order
- ☐ All lamps should be plugged in unless the cord drapes across furniture or flooring in which case it should be coiled neatly and hidden away
- ☐ Every furniture and art piece should be free from dust or streaks
- ☐ All price tags should be removed, pieces should be inspected carefully
- ☐ Vignettes should be created and photographed up close
- ☐ Rooms should be photographed from every angle, as well as close up
- ☐ Staged by Sign should be placed on entry console or kitchen counter with business cards
- ☐ Make a list of every piece of your inventory and take inventory photos.
- ☐ All lights, heaters, etc... should be turned off before leaving
- ☐ Double check inventory left in the home with the Sales Order for client
- ☐ Ensure all windows and doors are securely locked

Finishing Administrative and Marketing Tasks

- ☐ Download photos taken into folder for client and edit/adjust
- ☐ Email photos to real estate agent and client. Watermark extra set of photos to upload to Stagers Connect and blog page on your site. Share to Facebook, Pinterest, Houzz, etc...
- ☐ File complete list of inventory into client's file
- ☐ Set a reminder on calendar for 30 day follow up AND 10 days prior to lease expiration to get in touch to renew/schedule pickup
- ☐ Follow the listing on Redfin.com or Zillow.com, so you are alerted when it's taken off the market
- ☐ Consider hosting a broker's open house (contact furniture rental company to pay for the catering)
- ☐ Thank Realtor via Facebook and upload photos inviting buyers
- ☐ Track the statistics of each property

I know this seems overwhelming when itemized but watching my video will break it down for you.

The next few pages are forms available to you to help you with this process. They are fairly self-explanatory but the video will help you to decide which to use.

Here is an example time-line form you can use to keep track of where you are at with your clients, as well as key dates in the process.



Vacant Home Staging Proposed Timeline

This is a proposed timeline for completing the Vacant Home Staging Package you purchased. In the interest of garnishing a faster sale, we prefer to finish the first three steps within a one - two week time frame.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Initial Consultation:

Date:

- ☐ Fill out Order Sheet and review process.
- ☐ Complete initial walk-through and proposal.
- ☐ Sign agreement and receive payment.
- ☐ Take pictures, measurements and diagram.
- ☐ Mentally furnish each room.
- ☐ Make furniture rental list.
- ☐ Make accessory rental list.

Furniture Planning:

Date:

- ☐ Decide on best suited furniture rental company
- ☐ Pick out pieces/negotiate with furniture dealer
- ☐ Send furniture invoice to client for payment
- ☐ Arrange a furniture delivery date



Moving Days (Reserve two days)

Date:

- ☐ Load truck with all the needed accessories.
- ☐ Bring inventory sheet and diagrams.
- ☐ Give movers room diagrams and direct where all should go.
- ☐ Decorate room by room. Do accessories first and window coverings last.
- ☐ Build *emotional connection points* throughout the home.
- ☐ Go through the house with “buyer’s eyes” and fill out walk through checklist.
- ☐ Take lots of final pictures.
- ☐ Discuss additional invoicing for accessories as well as our “keep in touch” policy.
- ☐ Ask if your cards may be displayed for the Open House.

Vacant Planning Worksheet

There is a fantastic tool in the Week 2 Vacant Staging Section entitled “Vacant Home Worksheet” that will really help you in planning for the furniture and accessories you will need to stage a vacant home! I could not include it in this manual due to the formatting constraints.

Pricing Your Vacant Staging Service

There are many other ways to price out your vacant staging service but the costs are generally the same: 1. Furniture rental 2. Accessory rental 3. Service cost. The real question is, “what is the best way to package this service so that clients can understand it and get onboard?” I suggest researching your area and taking note of the ways other stagers price this service on their website. I’ve also given you an easy way to bid in 2-minutes in the Members Area.

Below are some example pricing forms (also in Week One>>>Forms Library) to get you thinking of what will work best in your area. I talk about these in my videos in Week 2, so refer there for my latest advice.

Remember, that while I am very specific about how to calculate costs, industry standards and my simple bidding process...you can use the forms however you like, it’s your business. Each price model is really a matter of varying look and feels, as well as how you think your clients will respond to it. Keep your costs low, outsource the grunt work, start buying inventory slowly and you will eventually be making quite a bit “passive income” on furniture on your client’s homes...how cool is that?!

Lastly, there is an example contract that corresponds with the packaged pricing and covers many of the items you will want to consider when building your own agreement. Remember, HSR cannot dispense legal advice and this is not a legal contract simply a guideline since each state is different.

Audra's Recommended Staging Proposal (See Video)

STAGING SERVICES PROPOSAL



Date: 10-25-2019
Prepared For: Client Name/Contact Info
Property Address: 123 Olive Street
Tentative Staging Dates: Nov. 7-11, 2019

Thanks so much for the opportunity to stage your property. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns. In order to move forward with our services we require a signed staging agreement which will secure the date for staging your property.

Main Areas to be Transformed:

Entry
 Front Living Area
 Dining Room
 Kitchen
 Kitchen Nook
 Main Bathroom
 Master Bedroom
 Master Bathroom
 2 Bedrooms

Staging Investment based on the luxury level, scale and size of the home is \$XXX.XX:
\$XXXX.00 is the total investment for staging design, installation and the initial 30 days rent, as well as removal of furnishings. Payment is due at the signing of the Staging Agreement.

A monthly renewal rate of \$XXX.00 will be auto-billed to the card on file and will continue until you terminate the Staging Agreement

Staging Service Includes:

Staging Design
 Selecting Furnishings
 Packing and Loading
 Furnishings Delivery
 Staging Installation
 Includes furniture, artwork and accessories
 De-Staging and Inventory Pick-Up

We are expert designers who choose furnishings that compliment the home, as well as appeal to the lifestyle of the buyer who will most likely be interested in the property.

Other Pertinent Details/Client Requests Place Below:

Each home is different and has unique staging needs, so stager reserves the right to add/remove pieces above to creatively market the space for maximum staging impact. Proposal price is good for 30 days.

Home Must Be "Stage Ready" Upon Arrival or a Fee Will Be Assessed and the Appointment Rescheduled

****Stage Ready** includes completion of construction, painting, repair or remodeling work, and the house must be professionally cleaned (including all surfaces, carpeting and windows professionally cleaned) and removal of unnecessary items prior to the agreed upon staging date.

****It is the responsibility of the Customer to have electricity, working heat/air and running water available**

****For safety and efficiency, no one can be at property during staging without approval. Pets cannot be present without approval.**

www.yourwebsite.com | 888.563.9271 | name@email.com

ABOUT US...

Audra Slinkey is President and Founder of the Home Staging Resource (<http://www.homestagingresource.com>), an advanced [home staging](#) and redesign certification training company. Audra has been awarded the Most Innovative Product of the Year Award three times for her training and serves on the board of the Real Estate Staging Association. Audra is a published author and international speaker on staging, color and design. She is proud and privileged to help create and mentor thousands of staging and design businesses across the globe.



Top Tips for Choosing the Right Home Stager for Your Project

- **Make Sure to Review the Home Stager's Portfolio (Style)** – Every home stager designs differently, so don't assume we are all equal and have the same aesthetic. Have a clear idea of their talent by reviewing their portfolio and style ahead of time (I've included my work in this proposal below).
- **Ask to See Examples of Their Inventory in a Space** - Each home stager shops differently and we can all agree that Walmart furniture is not the caliber of Restoration Hardware furnishings. Make sure to review the stager's portfolio, so you are happy with their inventory and quality of furnishings.
- **Ask the Home Stager What Kind of "Look" You Can Expect in the Home** – A qualified stager should be able to talk you through their ideas, expertise and style planning for the space.
- **Make Sure the Staging Matches the "Luxury Level" of the Home** – Every home is unique, so it's critical to match the furnishings with the level of luxury the buyer demographic expects in the home.
- **Make Sure the Scale Matches the Size of the Room and Home** – The scale of furnishings in a space matter and should fill the space appropriately. Small scale living room furniture in a large, grand space will look like doll's furniture:-). Conversely, a king bed in a smaller sized bedroom will cramp the room.
- **Make Sure the "Style" Matches the Style of the Home** – Architectural style matters and buyers have an expectation of what they want to see *inside* the home many times by looking at the outside of the home.
- **On-Trend, Statement Pieces are Not Cheap...BUT That's What Buyers Need to See** – Luxury begets luxury and buyers are looking to "aspire to live in that home" so stagers need to have statement items, well placed in the home in order for the buyer to fall in love.
- **You Usually Get What You Pay For in a Vacant Home** – Home Stagers have to charge enough to cover the cost of their inventory, so technically *you are always getting what you pay for when it comes to the furnishings that go into a space*. Unfortunately, many times stagers simply cut out inventory in order to fit your budget...this does not make for a very nicely staged home. Beware of the "lowball stager" who charges less and only puts \$500 of inventory in a room vs. the stager who completely stages the space with \$2500 worth of inventory...there is a difference.
- **Education and Reputation Matter** – The staging industry is not much different than the real estate industry, so check a stager's credentials, proof of insurance and website testimonials. I'm dedicated to enhancing your reputation with the quality of staging and design we put into your listing. I know that when you look good...I look good, so I'm excited about this potential partnership!

www.yourwebsite.com | 888.563.9271 | name@email.com



Pricing Based on Sq. Ft., Broken Up by Cost Where Client Pays Rental Direct

The need to stage a vacant home is more critical than for a furnished home. Your goal will be to add enough home furnishings in order to give the space a warm, open and comfortable feel that gives the buyers a frame of reference and fuels their imagination.

Vacant Home Staging Package - Our Four-Step Process

1. **Initial Consultation** -- A YOUR COMPANY consultant meets with the home sellers and real estate agent, goes over the process, the budget and reviews the home. During this time, we will be taking lots of pictures, diagrams and measurements. We will also brainstorm about furniture pieces, accessories and details needed to complete the home.
2. **Furniture Planning** -- When the home seller decides to proceed, the YOUR COMPANY consultant meets with the furniture rental company that best fits this project. We have pre-arranged relationships with furniture rental companies that serve different purposes depending on the type of home. We pick each piece that best suits the home and the seller's budget. *Note:* The seller is responsible for paying for the furniture rental directly.
3. **Moving Day** -- The YOUR COMPANY consultant and assistants meet the furniture rental movers at the home and direct where all of the pieces should go. The consultant will also bring additional accessories, such as bed linens, wall coverings, plants, trees, table décor, pillows, throws, light furniture, knick-knacks and additional pieces. The consultant and assistant will spend a day or more adding these home accessories in order to finish the "look."
4. **Sold!** - When the house is sold and escrow is almost closed, we will meet with the furniture rental movers and spend a day de-staging the home.

***We highly recommend keeping the home staged through the buyer's inspection. ***

Up to 2000 square feet

- ☐ Staging Services - _____
- ☐ Home Accessories Rental - _____
- ☐ Furniture Rental (paid directly to company) - _____

Up to 3000 square feet

- ☐ Staging Services - _____
- ☐ Home Accessories Rental - _____
- ☐ Furniture Rental (paid directly to company) - _____

Up to 4000 square feet

- ☐ Staging Services - _____
- ☐ Home Accessories Rental - _____
- ☐ Furniture Rental (paid directly to company) - _____

Example of Bundled Vacant Staging Proposal Packages

Both Proposal Packages Include: On site consultation and room design ~ selection and coordination of furnishings ~ room configuration and set-up ~ 2 month's rental (furniture, accessories, and artwork) ~ inventory delivery ~ de-staging and inventory pick up

Areas Transformed	Premier Package (2,000+sq. ft.)	Budget Package (under 2,000)
Entry Way and Living Room	Entry table, accessories, mirror, Couch, chair, cocktail table, end table, table accessories table lamp, pillows, throw, artwork, mantle setup + tree, console table, large mirror, extra chair/loveseat, plasma TV, floor lamp, rug	Entry table, accessories, mirror, Couch, chair, cocktail table, end table, table accessories, table lamp, pillows, throw, artwork, mantle setup
Dining Room	Dining table, 4 dining chairs, centerpiece, table runner, artwork + 2 end chairs, tree, hutch, hutch accessories, large rug (opt)	Dining table, 4 dining chairs, centerpiece, table runner, artwork
Kitchen	Countertop accessories, barstools + island accessories, glass cabinet accessories, tree	Countertop accessories, barstools
Master Bedroom	King Bed frame, king mattress set, bedding, dresser, mirror, night stand, table lamp, accessories, artwork + extra night stand, table lamp, chair, tree	Queen bed headboard, queen mattress set, bedding, dresser, mirror, night stand, lamp, accessories, art
Master Bath	Bath Accessories	Bath accessories
Main Bath	Bath Accessories	Bath accessories
Main Area Pricing:	\$4,900 - \$5,900 (includes labor and delivery)	\$3,900 - \$4,600
Kitchen Nook	Dining table, 4 dining chairs, centerpiece, table runner, artwork + tree, cabinet accessories, desk set-up	Dining table, 4 dining chairs, centerpiece, table runner, artwork
Family Room	Couch, chair, cocktail table, end table, table accessories table lamp, pillows, throw, artwork, mantle setup + tree, console table, large mirror, extra chair/loveseat, plasma TV, floor lamp, large rug (opt)	Couch, chair, cocktail table, end table, table accessories, table lamp, pillows, throw, artwork, mantle setup
Extra Bedroom	Queen bed headboard, queen mattress set, bedding, dresser, mirror, night stand, table lamp, accessories, artwork	Twin bed headboard, twin mattress set, bedding, dresser, mirror, night stand, table lamp, accessories, artwork
Office	Desk, desk chair, table lamp, table accessories, artwork + tree, chair	Desk, desk chair, table lamp, table accessories, artwork
Complete Pricing:	\$7,900 - \$8,900 (includes labor and delivery)	\$6,900 - \$7,600

**Each home is different and has unique staging needs, so stager reserves the right to add/remove pieces above to creatively market the space for maximum staging impact. Proposal price is good for 30 days.

Home Must Be "Stage Ready"

****It is the responsibility of the Customer to have the home cleaned and completely vacant at the time of staging**

****It is the responsibility of the Customer to have electricity, working heat/air and running water available**

****No one can be at property during staging without approval. Pets cannot be present without approval.**



COMPANY Staging Agreement

This home staging service agreement is between _____ the owners of _____ heretofore referred to as the "Customer" and STAGING BUSINESS, at 555 Olive Street, San Diego, CA heretofore referred as the "Service Provider"

IN CONSIDERATION OF the mutual benefits and obligations set forth in the Agreement and Staging Proposal, the receipt of and sufficiency of which consideration is hereby acknowledged, the parties agree as follows:

1. **Payment Details:** Contract is considered valid under the following terms and conditions.

- A. First two (2) months payment of \$_____ paid on this date of execution of this agreement. \$_____ to be auto-billed to credit card listed below for each consecutive month after initial two month period on a month to month basis until termination of contract. No partial months will be accepted nor refunds given. Time will begin on the day staging is completed.
- B. The term of this agreement will begin on the date of this Agreement and will remain in full force until the completion of services on the De-Staging Day or before, upon successful sale of the property.
- C. Customer must provide a minimum of 15 day written notice (via confirmed email) to cancel contract. For emergency pick-up (less than 15 day notice), there will be a charge of \$75.00. Cancellations of less than 72 hours will be charged a 10% restocking fee.

2. **Delinquent Payment:** After 5 days from the due date each month, seller shall pay a late charge of \$35.00. Any payment which is 15 days delinquent shall automatically terminate this agreement and Service Provider shall be immediately entitled to retake possession of furniture and accessories used in this staging service.

Engagement

1. The Customer hereby agrees to engage STAGING BUSINESS to provide the Customer with services listed in Staging Proposal. Staging, although proven to be effective, is a trained professional opinion and services provided do not in any way warrant or guarantee the sale of the home.
2. The Customer acknowledges before and after photographs will be taken during the Staging process and gives permission to STAGING BUSINESS use of these photographs in advertising and marketing.
3. The furniture and accessories herein shall be kept on property and shall not be moved within or off premises.
4. The Customer grants to STAGING BUSINESS's employee's permission to enter and use the property for the purpose of providing Home Staging Services listed in Staging Proposal.
5. Entry to the premises must be made available to STAGING BUSINESS immediately by way of providing a key and/or combination to lock box.
6. Customer acknowledges STAGING BUSINESS has permission to move anything within the property, as well as permission to put holes in the walls for artwork, etc... Touch-up is not the responsibility of STAGING BUSINESS.

Furniture and Accessory Rental

7. Customer agrees to have property "Stage Ready". There is a 10% restocking fee if property is not Stage Ready.
8. Customer acknowledges receipt of the furniture and accessories in good condition by accepting delivery. Furniture and accessories remaining on the property are the direct responsibility of the Customer. All items are to be returned in the same condition, as when placed, otherwise replacement costs will be added to the invoice.



9. Furniture and accessories items are for display purposes only and not to be used whatsoever
10. STAGING BUSINESS has the right to enter premises for the purpose of checking on staging props, refreshing items and condition.
11. Customer agrees that if a petition of bankruptcy is filed by or against costumer, or a receiver is appointed, Staging Company may declare this agreement terminated and without notice or demand, or process of law, take the possession of the furniture and accessories wherever located. Customer shall pay all cost of locating and repossessing the furniture if the agreement is violated. Customer agrees that if a lawsuit is brought to collect money under this agreement, customer shall pay all court cost, including attorney's fees, as the court shall determine. If court proceedings are filed, Staging Company may file for the then delinquent staging service fees plus fees for any damages to furniture and accessories.
12. In the event Customer is in violation of any of the terms of this agreement, Staging Company shall have the immediate right to remove the furniture and accessories from said premises.

Liability and Governing Law

13. STAGING BUSINESS shall have no liability to the Customer for any loss, damage, costs and other claims arising from information or instructions supplied by Customer that is incomplete or incorrect.
14. Is it the intention of the parties to this Agreement that all suits and special proceedings be construed in accordance with and governed by the laws of California

In witness whereof, the parties have hereunto set their hands the day and year written above

Customer: _____ Customer: _____ Date _____

All property owners of said premises must sign this agreement and upon doing the right and obligations of said persons shall be joint and several.

Staging Company: _____ Date _____

Credit Card Authorization

I _____ authorize STAGING COMPANY to charge my credit card for the payments listed in this contract. I understand my credit card will be auto-billed after the first two months to a monthly auto bill of: _____ beginning on: _____.

Name on Card: _____ Card Billing Address: _____

____ Visa ____ MC ____ Amex Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Code: _____

Customer Contact Information

Customer Names: _____ Cell 1 #: _____ Cell 2#: _____

Phone: _____ Current Address: _____

Email Addresses: _____

Agent Contact: _____ Cell: _____ Listing Agency: _____

Agent Email: _____ Notes: _____

***This example agreement is not a legal document but merely an example of many of the things you will want to consider when talking with your attorney and building your agreement.



Building Your Vacant Home Staging Business or Luxury Home Staging

If you decide that vacant home staging is for you, consider becoming the “furniture rental company” for your clients, as well. Target high-end homes for luxury home staging and only invest in dramatic, high-end accessories that will still go with some of the key pieces the furniture rental company can provide.

You will need additional insurance, storage and delivery for this service, so consider thoughtfully before entering into this larger arena.

You can use an independent moving company, 1-800-PackRat or Door to Door to store and deliver your home furnishings to the homes you stage. See the Member Discount section of the HSR website.

Model your furniture rental after the other furniture rental companies in your area and improve upon your business. The only way you'll be able to improve upon the existing furniture rental business in your area is by working with them first. That is why I suggest “cutting your teeth” on them before entering into this more expensive business venture.

Price the luxury home staging similar to an agent's fee and make it a percentage of the home value (around 1-3% of the total sell price but not less than the original list price). Since this is a much different beast requiring much higher cost furnishings and expertise, it's best to play safe and shoot high, so you can really deliver on quality luxury staging.

In Summary



Website: Review the *Vacant Home Staging* section.

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>A-Z Vacant Home Staging** in the menu or right hand bar

Vacant home staging can be a lucrative service that you may want to eventually transition into full time.

Don't be afraid of the challenge, but keep a watchful eye on your expenses.

Make sure you can validate additional purchases and storage costs.

If you do go into the furniture rental side, make sure you are insured and follow in the footsteps of the local furniture rental company. Don't reinvent the wheel on this. Partner with a local furniture wholesale company like “Living Spaces” (in the West Coast Area) that can do “same day” delivery. Use a reliable and insured moving company (outsource) and start with a storage container or price out warehouse space locally.

Offering a price range of some sort is always safe in the beginning. Inevitably, you will win some and you will lose some, as with every service job.

Remember, the key to successful vacant home staging is in the planning. Letting the client know what to expect and all the steps that go into this process is valuable for setting proper expectations.



Tips:

I suggest you print out or create your own pages of Why It's So Important to Stage a Vacant Home, some before-and-after pictures, price sheet and timeline for the client in advance, so they stay the course.

We supply a fantastic grouping of Vacant Staging Forms in the Week One "Forms Library" section, we highly recommend you use.

HSR Planning Checklist



HSR Planning Checklist:

Complete item # 47 – 49 on Vacant Staging in your *HSR Planning Checklist*.



Day 9 - First 50 Marketing Things List -- Overview



"Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard" – Tim Notke

HSR's Marketing Strategy and Competitive Difference

In Week Two we focus on your complete Marketing Plan, so feel free to skim this area since you will always be referring back to it once you begin your business launch!

At HSR, we have a long-term stake in your success as a Professional Home Stager and Redesigner. We don't want to sell you a quick training and never see you again. We want to develop a relationship with you by helping you reach your business goals.

We work very hard to help you reach your goals by not only offering gorgeous, branded, marketing materials and websites, but by teaching you advanced marketing techniques that we *promise* our competitors are not doing.

We hate cold calling and focus on teaching you creative and dynamic ways to market yourself, so that you are *found* – not *doing the finding*. When a prospect contacts you, it gives you so much more credibility and control over the conversation, as opposed to you cold calling to a prospect.

As many of you know, my previous life before staging was an international speaker, corporate trainer and published author on Internet sourcing, research and marketing. Fortune 500 corporations would pay me thousands of dollars to train their employees on how to use the Internet to source, market and contact prospects. When I turned to staging, I realized very quickly that there was nothing out there that taught home stagers how to use the Internet in order to develop key client relationships.

Make no mistake - the Internet will be critical to your marketing success! I will show you how to get your phone to ring using strategic Internet Marketing.



The First Fifty Marketing Guide is a quick, marketing brainstorm of all the ways you can market this business within the framework of our *5-Step Marketing Plan*. Read through this guide and consider the activities that fit your strengths. Most of these activities are covered more in-depth in the online Members Area but we wanted you to get a quick overview here first. Here's how this Guide is broken down and this also corresponds to our *5-Step Marketing Plan*:

1. **Define Your Plan**
2. **Representation - Establishing Your Image, Brand and Marketing Materials**
3. **Credibility Connecting – Being Found Online**
4. **Intentional Marketing – Identifying Heavy Hitters and Contacting Them**
5. **Capitalizing on a Job Well Done - Leveraging Existing Business**
6. **Putting the Plan into Motion**

Similar to the “Getting Started Guide,” we want you to schedule the marketing efforts and activities that you think fit best for you on your calendar. Right away in this Guide, we will be outlining our “5-Step Marketing Plan” for your business and highlighting the marketing activities that we think work the best...right now. The Internet is always changing, so our marketing ideas and “hot tips” will change as well...this is why we send out Member FYI newsletters to let you know where we've seen members have great, marketing success.

Your primary target market as a stager should be Realtors and they are *all* over the Internet! They are an Internet and social media savvy group, so having a professional website presence is critical! You may think you're *not* “technical” but every entrepreneur understands the importance of embracing new things, learning and growing their business. In fact, you can have all the design talent in the world but if you're unable to reach your clients and “sell” your credibility, it will be touch to “make it”! The good news is that you have the technical training “edge” just by taking this course!

You can't train someone on natural decorating talent, but you can train them on how to employ successful business and marketing principles to build their business. In the next section of marketing ideas, tricks and tips, you'll find several ways to easily market your business in the style and area that fits your business best. We've broken down your marketing plan into five steps in our Members Area, so that your action steps will be very clear for your business. You'll notice that many times your marketing approach is one in which you give valuable information in exchange for someone's time. This is called “permission marketing” because it develops rapport building and relationship building rather than a “hard sell.”

Our goal for you is that you develop a handful of real estate agent partnerships that use you on all of their listings and pay you directly as part of their marketing budget (or have the seller pay you). Our whole training is focused in that direction because we don't want you to be spending your valuable time marketing yourself a year from now!

When you have 10 agents who use you for all their listings, you're not having to market your business nearly as much!



Marketing Staging First, Then Redesign

You may be looking over Week Two and thinking that it's primarily focused on marketing the staging side of your business and...you are absolutely correct! Staging is easier to market because you have target markets you can find and reach easily. Staging done right will turn into Move-In Redesign! I've seen many veteran members start off in staging and now work primarily in redesign/design, so don't feel like you're neglecting that side of your business simply because you market staging first.

In Week Three I will discuss best practices when it comes to marketing the redesign side of your business, so feel free to skip ahead if you want to get started on this right away! Having said that, marketing your "staging services" in this market will be MUCH easier than marketing design services.

The Home Staging Resource 5-Step Marketing Plan

In the over ten years I've trained stagers and redesigners to be successful in their businesses I've discovered a pattern to marketing success. I want you to consider these "Building Blocks to Success" because if you skip a step...your marketing will falter. To see the 5-step Marketing Plan explained more in-depth, go to Week Two>>5-Step Marketing Plan and watch my quick video about it:



Website: Review the HSR *5-Step Marketing Plan* section.

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>HSR 5-Step Marketing Plan** in the menu or right hand bar

The rest of this guide is broken up into activities that correlate with each step in the marketing process. You may want to schedule the marketing activities into that days' worth of training (if you're following an aggressive schedule) or put them in next week's calendar to give yourself time to complete each one.

Here's a visual of the HSR 5-Step Marketing Plan...



5 Capitalizing on Each Job

- >Capitalizing Overview
- >Public Relations
- >Referrals & Testimonials
- >Email Campaigns
- >Agent Caravans

4 Intentional Marketing

- >Intentional Marketing Overview
- >Identifying Heavy Hitters
- >Wave Marketing
- >Realtor Presentations
- >Local Advertising & Direct Mail

3 Credibility Connecting - "Being Found"

- >Credibility Connecting Overview
- >Google and Business Mapping
- >Directory Connect
- >Facebook Connect – Getting Your Phone to Ring!
- >Associations, Articles Writing & Blogging

2 Professional Representation

- >Representation Overview
- >Blinging Your Brand
- >Social Networking
- >Create Marketing Materials
- >Build a Website that WORCS for Your Business
- >Perfect Portfolios – Photo Posting, Home Staging Shows, etc..

1 Define Your Plan - Market Research and Foundation

- >Define Your Plan & Know Yourself (SWOT Analysis)
- >Set up Contact Management System
- >Research Competitors
- >Identify Target Markets
- >Discover A Niche



Day 9 - HSR Marketing Step One -- Define Your Plan



Although you will be tempted to just jump right in and get going, there are a few things you should address so you don't set yourself up to fail. Just as a good business plan is critical to consider before starting your business, so is a strong marketing plan. Take it step by step and build a good foundation that will serve your business for years to come.

1. Develop a strategic *and* focused marketing plan based on your strengths.

As you read through this 50-point list, have a notebook handy and start strategically plotting your marketing plan. This list will give you tons of ideas and may seem a bit overwhelming if you're not always taking into consideration your circumstances and needs. Remember in the last section where you mapped out your strengths and weaknesses? Create a marketing plan that is based on your strengths.

You know what methods you will be most successful with. Some people will have a knack for speaking and training, so giving presentations to real estate offices and associations will be the route they will go. Others are great at knocking on doors and networking. Be true to yourself, yet step out of any fears you may have. Fear is an obstacle that all entrepreneurs must face. Courage is moving forward despite the fear. The key is to recognize your fear and have the courage to step out and overcome it.

I don't go into cold calling a lot in this marketing guide because I feel like that is a fairly obvious way to sell. I'm not looking for obvious and predictable ways to market my business. Are you?



2. Stay focused.

Do the research first. Get it on paper. Then think in terms of action. An ounce of research will save you a pound of wasted time in the future. We give you A LOT of options in the first two weeks for your business but are VERY SPECIFIC in Week 3 when we put it all together for you, so make sure you go to Week 3.



Tip: Take your time going through all HSR offers in terms of marketing. Focus on going through this process with us, so you don't waste time reinventing the wheel or working on marketing efforts that don't work. In Week Two of the Members Area, we've listed everything under the sun, so that you can refer back to new and improved ways of marketing your business.

Once you are finished with the training, have your marketing materials and website ready, *then* you can plan your week and make activity goals for each day. In the beginning you should spend over 90% of your time promoting yourself, not getting bogged down with minute details and decorating books.

If you are focused on your primary goal of creating real estate agent relationships, then think in terms of what will get you there. Once you develop those partnerships, the 90% marketing figure will reduce to 30%. But it will always be critical to your success as a business. So formulate your plan, make action goals and never stop marketing!

3. Always think business building.

Wherever you are and whatever you do, look for ways to build your business and network. Successful entrepreneurs never stop looking for opportunities to build their business and "spread the word". They have given up the 8-5 and want their "baby" to grow.

That doesn't mean you bore every person you meet with a liturgy of details.

- Have a quick informational pitch and give people your business card.
- Write a personal note on the back or give a "first time client" discount on the back.
- Branch out. Meet new people. Encourage referrals.
- **Always** use a "signature" on every email you send (even personal) that declares your business, website address, tagline and phone number. It's also good to include your social media links too! (www.wisestamp.com is great for this if you use an online email program like gmail.)
- Always get a business card so that you can send them helpful information.

If you have a variety of services, then anyone is a potential client. (Unless they live in a cave☺)



4. Organize your contacts and leads.

Develop an organized method of keeping track of your contacts and making notes. It can be as simple as using Excel to capture their name, phone, email, address and comments, so you can do a quick mail merge and send them an email newsletter or Christmas cards. Capturing the email and keeping in contact will be the most critical data to have for your company because staying in touch is half the battle of marketing. My favorite online tool for sending newsletters, emails and keeping your database can be found at Mail Chimp (<http://mailchimp.com/>) and that is because it's FREE! Yep, as long as you have under 2000 contacts (which is a lot in the staging world), your membership is free.

Insightly, 17Hats, Zoho, Freshbooks or other software packages are for those who love sales contact management bells and whistles. Stick with what makes you most comfortable but embracing these new and mostly free (to start) technologies will help your business run much more efficiently in the long run. Consider outsourcing the set up to a freelancer.



Website: Review the *Contact Management* section.

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Contact Management** in the menu or right hand bar

5. Identify your competition

In the home staging industry, there are several forms of competition. The obvious one is the *home stager* who is direct competition. Luckily, there are not too many of these. The *Interior Redesigner* or *One-Day Decorator* who also offers home staging as one of their many services, but whose focus is not home staging, is another competitor. The *real estate agent* who stages their homes by themselves makes them an indirect competitor. This agent is also a possible client who at least “gets the value of staging” so don’t get discouraged if they tell you they also stage.

A good portion of home staging is done by the home sellers themselves who might have read one of the many “how to” books available. *Home sellers* who try, usually unsuccessfully, to stage their own homes are your greatest competition. They are the reason professional home staging is so important and successful.



Tip: Most homeowners cannot objectively view the home they have lived in for more than a year. If they can’t view it objectively, they cannot stage successfully.

- Recognize that the home seller thinks they can do the staging on their own because they have falsely been told they should in the “how to” books.
- Be the expert you are and use lots of visuals.
- Give them lots of information. They will be astounded at the difference a professional home stager can make!



Most people do not have a knack for interior transformations and need hand holding in this regard. If a talented artist tells someone how to paint, do you think the finished product would be as good as the artists? *No!* If a gourmet chef gives a novice a recipe, do you think the meal would taste as good? *No!* What comes easy to you as a professional home stager *does not* come easy to most people. Even those homeowners who have the knack still have a hard time being objective about their home, much less understanding what buyers are truly looking for.

6. Research the “stager” competition.

Know who and where your direct competition is. Focus on your local area. Look them up on the Internet.

- Go to www.google.com and search for "home staging AND your city."
- Research their website.
- What products and services do they offer at what prices?
- Do they focus on a niche market?
- Is staging secondary on their list of services or do they focus mainly on interior decoration?
- Write all of them down and make notes on what you liked about them and didn't like about their initial approach.



Website: Later in the training, I'm going to have your look at your competition from a "Branding" perspective in Week Two>>Bling Your Brand so you may want to write down some of your favorite websites now.

As you research your competitors, you will be better equipped to create your own strategy and niche. You will want to search the HSR Directory and Houzz.com to further research stager and designer styles in your area. You will also notice that your HSR-provided website and marketing materials are significantly more professional looking than most of your competition. This will go a long way in your potential client's mind when deciding whom they wish to choose.



Tip: Another great tool for researching competition is at www.semrush.com. Here you can enter your keyword, "Dallas home stager" and find what the best websites are doing to get to the top, similar strategic keywords, the average cost to pay Google for click rates and much more information.

7. Identify and profile your target markets.

Knowing your customer is the first step to successful sales. Get a good feel for who your customer is (target markets). What do they want? What motivates them to purchase what you have to offer?



Website: Search for Target Markets.
From the Member Home Page, click on **Week Two>>Your Target Markets** for a great list and **direct links** as to where to find them.

Staging is a tricky business because the ultimate customer is the home seller. However, the potential for repeat business or what I like to call your “A” Target Market is with the real estate agent. So you actually have two main customers to please. Great service and transformations can either double your publicity for great value or poor value depending on the job you do.

Understanding that these are the core customers to whom you want to market allows you to break down each individual’s needs and formulate a plan. Once you have plans in place for where to reach these two markets, you need to have a clear understanding of what it is they want and what benefits them!

Their “wants” are not necessarily the same. The home seller wants to sell their home stress free, for top dollar and quickly. The real estate agent also wants those things. But it may not be worth the risk of losing a hard-earned listing to an insulting home stager. Other agents may not want to hold up the listing with cosmetic changes and repairs. Make no mistake; real estate agents want more listings and ways to differentiate themselves from other agents. That is the core of their business.

How are you going to offer them this? As a *staging partner*, you need to address this need in your products and services so that real estate agents can garnish more listings and then give more business to you.

Now that you have identified your two primary target markets, we’ll talk further in this guide about profiling and marketing specifically to them. Go online for other markets!



Tip: Other target markets to consider that have the ability to give you repeat business are mortgage brokers, new home builders, relocation companies and retirement communities.

The next page is a visual of the online Target Market Section in the Members Area. You will want to go directly there and click on each link to find sources for each market!



Staging "A" Level Target Markets

Target Markets:	Sources for Finding:	Sources for Being Found:
Real Estate Agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First 50 Marketing Guide • Office Presentations • Office Preferred Vendor List • Association Networking • Association Affiliate Directory • Realtor.com • Advertising • Real Estate Communities • Open Houses - Or search local paper under Real Estate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Engine PPC • Search Engine Maps • Yellow Page Directories • Real Estate Directories • Service Directories • Articles • Social Networking • Website • Email Campaigns
New Home Builders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAHB - National Association of Home Builders • NAHB at the Local Level • Move.com - New Home Community Locator • NewHomeSource.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Engine PPC • Search Engine Maps • Yellow Page Directories • Real Estate Directories • Service Directories • Articles • Website • Email Campaigns
FSBO's (For Sale By Owners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owners.com • FSBO.com • forsalebyowner.com • Local FSBO MLS sites that need content - Go to Google • Assist2Sell Offices • HelpUSell Offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Engine PPC • Search Engine Maps • Yellow Page Directories • Real Estate Directories • Service Directories • Articles • Website
Relocation Companies and Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocation Service Company Directory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Engine PPC • Search Engine Maps



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocation Association • List of Top 2000 Companies in US by Area - Search your area and identify large corporations that are relocating employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellow Page Directories • Service Directories • Articles • Website
Seniors & Retirement Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SeniorHousingNet - Part of Realtor.com network website for Retirement Communities • NewRetirementCommunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Engine PPC • Search Engine Maps • Yellow Page Directories • Real Estate Directories • Service Directories
Foreclosures, Bank Owned through Real Estate Investors	<p>Your best bet is to work with real estate investors (REI) who buy these auctioned properties by networking with your local investor club!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National REI Group • REI Club • Community Clubs • REI Club Directory • Bigger Pockets Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Engine PPC • Search Engine Maps • Yellow Page Directories • Real Estate Directories
Probate Lawyers These lawyers specialize in handling the property after someone has died and transitioning the furnishings and home into something that is saleable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probate Lawyer Directory • American Academy of Estate Planning Attorneys • Probate Articles and Info 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search Engine PPC • Search Engine Maps • Yellow Page Directories



Tip: Make sure to go into the Member Area to view this section which has direct links to all those Target Market Locations above!.

8. Consider a niche market.



Note: According to the Small Business Town Network, a *niche market* is defined as “the area of a target market where a company or product is particularly strong. This specialization often results in super high quality by the specialist company and elimination of competition because of the uniqueness.”



After studying your direct competition and various target markets for your industry, you should be able to identify niches you could exploit. While simply being in the home staging industry is niche enough, you could further identify yourself with a large neighborhood or track home development where you can become the expert in staging.

- You could specialize in a certain style of home staging like coastal homes or city lofts and develop an inventory befitting that style.
- You can be the vacant home staging expert and have extensive inventory.

You get the picture. By separating yourself from the rest of the pack, you are offering something no one else has. By targeting your business to a few select markets, you protect yourself not just from the competition, but also from the changes in the economy. Also, once you know who your market is, it's much easier to target them in your marketing efforts without spending a ton of money.

9. Questions you should continually ask yourself while defining your niche.

Finding your own niche is a matter of putting a new spin on what you already do. Ask yourself:

- How can I differentiate my business from others?
- How can I create a perception that my client market simply cannot live without me?
- What do I have to offer that adds extra value?
- Who do I want my customers to be and what are their needs?
- Is this a large enough market?

10. Develop your one-minute pitch or elevator speech.

What do you say when someone asks you what you do? Is your pitch benefit-rich or boring?

Now that you've identified and profiled your target markets, you should have a quick practiced pitch that is interesting, unique, clear and focused on the questioner. If a friend asks you what you do, you can either say:

- "I'm a home stager." or
- "I specialize in helping people make their homes comfortable, organized and beautiful places to live by using what they already have to transform their home either for themselves or to get top dollar in the resale."

Which phrase would peak your friend's interest more?



The idea of the quick pitch is to sell your idea with conviction and make someone really listen to it in a very short space of time. Therefore, you need to make it sound really exciting and compelling!

Quick Realtor Pitch

“My expertise is partnering with realtors like you, by offering home staging, preparation and photography services to your clients in order to obtain more listings, market the listings better, sell the homes faster, and for more money.”

General Quick Pitch

“I specialize in decorating people’s homes, using what they have in less than a day, so that their space makes them comfortable, happy, stress free and is a wonderful reflection of them.”

Here’s a great article on developing your sales pitch from SCORE, www.score.com (a site you should be using):

Plan your sales pitch down to the word -- here’s why

You’ve probably heard hundreds of sales pitches in your life. Some immediately captured your interest, while others were tuned out almost as soon as they began.

What made the difference? The most effective sales pitches were those that were well-prepared and delivered with confidence. Even if you weren’t interested in that product or service at the time, you remembered the pitches that made a positive impression, when conditions changed or somebody asked for a recommendation.

Now that you’re an entrepreneur, you want the sales pitch for your small business to have that kind of positive impact on your prospective customers. Don’t worry that you’re not a “born salesperson.” In truth, few people are. All it takes is research and planning—the same steps needed for every other business decision you make as an entrepreneur.

Prepare several pitches for different situations

Because you’ll find yourself in many types of selling situations—both expected and impromptu—it’s best to prepare several pitches, each with the same basic facts tailored to the setting and audience.

The in-person pitch—a formal presentation about your business given to one or more people.

The phone pitch—a variation of the formal presentation designed for cold calling or following up on inquiries. An email version of your phone pitch may be good if you expect to market online. Just remember that the content written text varies in format and style from the spoken word.

The elevator speech—a concise description of your business for informal situations, such as social gatherings and plane trips. Imagine yourself on an elevator with only a few “floors” of time to explain to someone what you do.

Putting It Together

Of course, the content and delivery of these and other sales pitches will vary depending on the setting, who initiates the conversation, the product or service you’re describing, whether you’re providing general information or pursuing a specific assignment, etc.



The fundamental ingredients are a full understanding of your business, and as much knowledge as possible about the interests of your listeners. Your pitch is about you, but it's also about them—what they do, what they need, and whether there's a way you can help.

Here are some other guidelines for making any kind of sales pitch successful:

Know what to say, even if you don't say it. Structure your pitch like the trunk of a tree that leads to multiple branches of increasingly specific information. You may not need all of them over the course of a conversation, but you'll be prepared to field any question that arises.

Organize around your key selling points. The first 30 seconds usually determines whether you capture your listener's attention. You have far less time for phone calls and conversations. You want your pitch to have a logical order, with a defined beginning and conclusion.

Be flexible. If your pitch is too tightly scripted, an unexpected question or distraction may throw you off track. Being aware of your listeners and surroundings will make it easier to answer or defer questions, or take up a new conversation thread of more interest to your listener.

Be honest. Avoid the temptation to tell prospective customers everything they want to hear, as you may not be capable of following through.

Practice makes perfect. As you develop your sales pitch, practice with people who can provide honest and fair feedback, and who understand your customer's perspective. Encourage them to pose questions to practice your ability to respond, improvise and keep your pitch on track.

Always be alert for ways to keep your sales pitch fresh and timely, whether it's a different setting, trends in your prospective customers' businesses, or changes in your product or service.



Website: Review the *Your Quick Pitches* handout.

From the Member Area, click on **HSR Library**>>Click on **Forms Library**.

Day 10 - HSR Marketing Step Two - Representation



11. Your business image or make a great impression.

It's been said before, but this is one maxim that bears repeating: you never get a second chance to make a first impression and image matters in our industry.

We teach our clients this. Professional home stagers should consider this maxim for themselves. My personal pet peeve is going to unattractive web sites of professional home stagers -- or worse, home staging training providers -- where many times this is the client's first impression! If you can't make your website appealing to the eye, then how can you expect a client to believe you are capable of making their home appealing? At HSR, we have updated our Premium Website product every three years, so the websites are on-trend, mobile friendly, lightning fast and gorgeous!

The same goes for your personal image, business cards, marketing materials, etc. We are in an industry of "taste." If you recognize general poor taste in something that reflects on me, you will translate that to the work I do -- especially in our industry!



Website: Use our HSR Certification Logos in your materials, forms and website for credibility and industry recognition:
 From the Member Area, click on **Week Three>>Downloadable HSR Logos** from right hand bar.

Don't turn off your customers. Make it an opportunity to let your taste shine! In addition to the beautiful, professional image HSR has helped create for you, consider the way you greet clients

or your personal style of dress. Do you dress according to the standards of our industry? The real estate industry is a sharply dressed group as a whole. This may seem unfair, but consider a moment how closely people identify themselves with life's smallest details. Allow your clients to identify with you and play the part. For goodness sake, I wouldn't go to a hairdresser who has a terrible haircut, would you?

12. Importance of Branding

We have talked about the importance of beautiful and professional marketing materials as an extension of your image and first impression. Let's talk about another useful purpose to the "brand" you have created and its importance to your business.



Website: Go to Week 2>>Bling Your Brand

Watch this series of videos to learn all sorts of tips on creating your beautiful image!

A secondary but just as critical message we have created is of consistency and unification by using a logo or "hero photo" throughout your materials. All of your materials match and are cohesive. As you grow and expand your relationships, your consistent brand will become more recognizable in your area and industry.

The Bling Your Brand section in Week 2 will show you how easy it is to create a memorable logo for your business!



Important:

HSR makes it very clear in our Terms (<http://www.homestagingresources.com/terms/>) that our photos are exclusive property of HSR and are not to be copied, taken or used without our express permission. This allows us to control and manage the template brands, so that you won't find it elsewhere. We took all of those photos of staged homes on a simple digital camera just as you would your after photos. We require that your Portfolio photos be your own work.

13. A Logo for Your Business

Creating a logo for your business has never been easier! If you have some extra cash for this then I recommend going with a professional. One of my favorite resources is 99designs.com for logo creation because your satisfaction is guaranteed. You give them your ideas, many different designers create logos based on your feedback and you only pay when you choose one of the logos you like...how great is that?

If you're on a budget, the best resource and gorgeous logo choices can be found in the Bling Your Brand section. If you have a fairly good "marketing eye", you can easily create your own simple logo using www.canva.com or www.picmonkey.com. Keep it simple. Here's a quick video I created about that:

<http://www.homestagingresources.com/how-to-make-a-logo-in-2-minutes/>

Once you have a logo, you can add it to your website, marketing materials, forms, etc...

14. Social Media Profiles for Your Business

Social media is here to stay! Many of your client's first impression of your business may be found on Facebook, Pinterest or LinkedIn, so make sure to list your business in the right way.



Website: Go to Week 2>>Social Networking

Since social media changes monthly, this section is where you will find the best information for listing your business and creating social profiles from a "Branding" perspective

15. Marketing Materials for Your Business

HSR has created a set of marketing materials that you can pick and choose from depending on your personality, color preference and style. Each set is a bit different and has its own look and feel.

If you have ordered our *Premium Website Package* (see Member Store) then you have our permission to save the "hero photo" and swap it into any of the Marketing Materials in the VistaPrint Dealer Portal as a HUGE benefit to going with our Premium Website!



Website: Go to Week 2>>Marketing Materials to access our discounted print shop that we've created with Vistaprint



Note: As a common courtesy, please check the HSR directory for your local area and choose a different marketing style than others in your area. This will help to ensure you will not run into a competitor with the same materials.

A great benefit to having a nationwide resource is volume pricing. We can offer those savings to you as a member. Our goal is to get you up and running quickly and that is the purpose for the *Premium Website Package which gets you online beautifully right away!*



Tip: You will want to watch our Bling Your Brand section first for inspiration then feel free to use the portal to create a "custom" look since those materials are discounted as well.



Tip: Many veteran home stagers will tell you that creating their own marketing materials from scratch took far too much time in the beginning. Our materials are beautiful and can easily be customized using the photos we give you for that style and changing the fonts, colors, text, etc....

This gets us to your business cards and letterhead. These are invaluable marketing tools because they offer a tangible feel and reminder that clients can hold onto. They also serve to refer clients to more information -- your web site.

Giving them away generously, business cards allow you to constantly be in the business building mode. Print on BOTH sides of the cards for a gorgeous look!



Tips:

Make it a goal when you attend functions to collect and give away at least five business cards.

During any meeting or appointment, have business cards ready to hand to the individuals during introductions. This is a standard business practice and shows your professionalism.

Print your sell sheets, proposals and Action Plan cover sheets on your letterhead. Do not print your entire Action Plans on your letterhead unless you plan on purchasing bulk.

Brochures can become outdated quickly. Therefore, they can be a waste of valuable dollars if you use them to place your services and pricing on. HSR has professionally created *informational* brochures that will educate your prospects and match your brand. They are very useful to give to your real estate agent partners as handouts to home sellers, or leave on the front desk of real estate offices. Make sure to swap out the latest and greatest Staging Statistics since those change regularly.



Website: To order brochures and thank you cards:

Week 2>>Marketing Materials

****Not all styles have matching brochures, so feel free to use the photos provided to swap out photos from another style brochure since they are all very similar.**

16. The importance of marketing postcards

Your postcards can easily be customized and changed, so you can use them for multiple purposes and target markets. They are glossy, double sided, full color and will represent you well. They are ideal for quick mailings to new home sellers in your area as well as real estate agents. They give the benefits of home staging statistically and should generate enough



curiosity for the recipient to pick up the phone and call for a consultation. Feel free to change the text or keep it!

You may also want to use postcards to mail out and advertise a new home you have just staged to agents and local home sellers and invite them to the open house. It is easy to simply write a note on the back and quickly mail them to prospects.

The postcards are also good for matting and framing and displaying at your staged homes. Have a nice postcard holder set up at the entrance of the home you have staged, especially on real estate agent caravan days, so that other home sellers and agents can see your work first hand. We've designed the post cards to be easily mailed to all new listings in your area.



Tip: You can go to www.realtor.com or www.redfin.com, register for a saved search, and request that they auto-email you all the new listing addresses in the zip codes you specify. Every day, when you check your email, you can quickly write the new addresses on the post cards and pop them in the mail. This has worked well for some members, while for others, not as successfully.

You can also plug in those addresses into www.whitepages.com and do a "reverse address" lookup to find out the **names** of the home owners in order to personalize the postcards and letters.

Try everything and do what works for you and your area!



Website: Refer to the Direct Mail section in Week 2 for sending postcards to new home owners

Go to Week 2>>Direct Mail in right hand bar

17. The importance of your website

In this day and age, *every* viable business worth their salt should have a website to represent them -- especially in the real estate industry! A website is a window into your business. Since most of us work out of our homes, it's a lucky thing we have them!

To help you get up and running right away, we provide a "stager ready" website for you in our *Premium Website Package*. We think it's critical to your image marketing plan and we want you to look great! We save you the cost of building and hosting one for yourself, as well as the marketing cost of becoming well trafficked, which on its own can cost thousands of dollars. We also build your site so that it offers content and represents you well. The benefits of our website design to you are enormous.

- Google loves Wordpress and you'll find that most people use Google when they are searching for a service provider, so we want your site on top!



- Our websites are very mobile-friendly, so your visitors see it beautifully on every device
- Your site is designed to create curiosity and interest, so that your viewer will pick up the phone and call you.
- Your contact information and click to call can be on every page in order to make it very easy for them to contact you.
- The specific locations mentioned on the top of your page assist with search engine optimizing your site so that when a home seller in your area searches for home staging and your area, they will find you.
- We spend quite a bit of time and money driving traffic to the HSR website. This allows our members to benefit from that traffic by being listed in our Directory.



Tip: We have members that have been contacted from real estate agents the very next day after signing up for our HSR Certification Program!



Website: Familiarize yourself with the *Website that WORCS* section in *Week Two* in order to capitalize on your website investment regardless of who you pay to build it.

- When we receive your completed Website Form (for *Premium Website Package Purchasers only*), we take about a week to get your site up and running.
- The site will look exactly as you see in the examples but it's very easy for you to login and edit each page, add/delete pages, content, pictures or switch themes.
- We send you an email with login information on how you can login to your new WordPress website and make all sorts of edits and changes.
- Make sure to watch our Website Video Tutorials ahead of time, so you don't make any mistakes with your new website!

We provide the set up and hosting for your website but if you want to get creative and do more with this amazing technology you can easily hire a professional to do this.

18. Your professional portfolio from a marketing perspective

We spent quite a bit of time in the *Perfect Portfolios Section* on building a professional, well-represented portfolio to display and use at your consultations. The reason is because we want you to "wow" your clients, develop their trust in your abilities, and therefore, purchase your services. Without a professional and organized portfolio this would be very difficult to do.

Take your time putting it together and make sure all of your sell sheets are on letterhead and available to hand out if needed.



Tip: Maureen Henry from *Rockland Home Staging* came up with a great way to create your portfolio online and print small but effective photo books, using www.shutterfly.com. Create a short photo book by uploading your photos and company information and leave them with real estate offices.

19. Creating Slide Shows, “Home Staging Photo Shows” or Virtual Tours

Go to <http://create.realestateshows.com/admin/newrep.php?id=2675b87d> to sign up and for complete details and tutorials of this fabulous program just for professional home stagers! You will love this website because it is so easy to use, and can be used in so many different capacities to build your business, promote your current business and create valuable, true partnerships with real estate agents in your area.



Website: To create a Slide Show or Home Staging Show:
From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>> Perfect Portfolios.**


20. Focus on driving traffic to your website at all times and with every email.

There are several easy ways to drive traffic to your website but one of the best and simplest is to have email “signatures” you can attach to every email you send regardless of whether it’s for business or pleasure. It’s especially important to do this with agents.

Create a tag line and separate portfolio page on your website for both the staging and redesign sides of your business. Use a signature for staging which you will send to agents and sellers and one for redesign that goes to friends, family and anyone else you email. Earlier I recommended using www.wisestamp.com as an online tool but any email client that you use will let you create these in the “tools” section and easily insert them in an email by clicking on “insert signature.”


The email signature your business needs

We've created a vast variety of templates, apps and designs to fit any type of business




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Day 11 - HSR Marketing Step Three – Credibility Connecting



21. What is “Credibility Connecting” and Why Is It So Important?

The Step 3-Credibility Connecting step is about *“Make sure you are found by BEING in all the places a client might search for you”*. When your website and profile comes up in searches, directories, listings, etc., so that a client can find you when searching...your phone will ring. When your phone rings for business, you will very likely “make the sale.”

Every salesperson knows that when someone calls in, they have an 80% better chance of turning that call into a sale than calling out cold. HSR wants you to be found, so you’re not relying on cold calling out. When you take the time to “Credibility Connect” that activity works while you sleep, so that is why it is an essential element in your marketing plan.

We have several ways you can Credibility Connect, so it’s important to take the time now, and get listed and linked. Review the following items to find out how.

22. Know that the Internet is Always Changing and Be An “Early Adapter”

When Houzz.com came on the scene, most every staging training provider was not aware of the huge benefits of that Directory for home stagers. Why? Because they are not like me and actively using Google to see who comes up for competition (Remember we did that exercise earlier?) I quickly told all my members in an HSR Member FYI Newsletter and they signed up...this put them to the top of a popular directory right away.

My point is that technology is always changing, so I may recommend something here but for the latest and best marketing recommendations, refer to my latest Member FYI newsletters which I post in the Members Area.



Website: Review the latest Member FYI's.

From the Member Area, click on **Member Home>>Member FYI News**

Many times I will post a "hot tip" about a new technology and don't be turned off if you are non-techy. Consider it an opportunity to "get the jump" on your competition!

23. List Your Business on Google and Consider Starting a Pay-Per-Click (ppc) Campaign

Most Internet searchers are using Google to search for what they need. Now that we have a gorgeous website up that represents you well, we want you to use it to gain clients who are *looking for you*. This kind of marketing account works while you sleep!



Website: Search for Google Page One and "Mapping Your Business."

From the Member Home Page, click on **Week Two**.

Click on **Google Page One** and **Mapping Your Business** for more information.

Will a home seller in your area simply type in "home staging" to find a home stager in their area? *No!* They will type "home staging san diego" or "san diego home stager" or "home stager san diego." Get the picture?

- To keep your costs low, *make sure* you sponsor specific search words for your area like the ones above. These are called "long tail terms" because they are more specific, longer and easier to get to the top of Google with.
- List every way you can imagine that your clients will search. Google will also help you with this.



Website: To set up a program on Google:

Go to www.google.com.

Click on Advertising Programs.

Google will walk you through the sponsoring process. Once you have an account you can make very easy changes to it.

Go to Bing and Yahoo and do the same thing.

24. List Your Business in Heavily Trafficked Online Directories

There are so many great places to connect your business online! I list my favorite online directory places in the Week 2 Members Area with direct links to over 20 sources that allow you to list your business for free. Currently, the best places to list a local staging business are Google (which I have a separate section on), Yelp, Houzz, Thumbtack and AngiesList among others. The key is to search your area on Google and see which directories are at the top of your location search.



Website: Review the *Directory Connect* section.

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Directory Connect** in the menu or right hand bar

25. Make sure you're listed in the HSR, ASHSR and other Internet directories.

This is the easiest way to get exposure so don't pass it up! The Home Staging Resource spends quite a bit of money and resources driving traffic from your clients (real estate agents and home sellers) to our site. Make sure you like how you are listed accurately in both directories.



Website: To update your HSR Directory listing:
Go to the Member Area>>Week One>>Training Overview.
Watch the video on how to edit your directory profile.
Update your information. Click Save Information.



Tips:
We have an ongoing list of valuable places for you to connect your business!



Go to Week Two in the Members Area and click on:

Directory Connect – I outline the free directories that Google loves, so make sure your business is listed!

26. Consider Becoming a Houzz Pro

Houzz.com has a Houzz Pro program that allows you to pay to get to the top of their directory AND be inside the searches that local home owners do on Houzz. This is an amazing way to get the word out for your business IF you have AWESOME portfolio photos. Become familiar with Houzz.com by doing some searches and saving some of your favorite photos in the IdeaBooks.



27. Create a Sales Funnel for Your Business

What is a sales funnel? It's an automated process in which you are connecting with prospects, giving them something of value for their email address, dripping an email campaign to those prospects, so that they eventually become clients.

I've talked about how it generally takes about "7 touches" for a prospect to become a client who knows, likes and trusts you. Get to those "7 touches" a little quicker with an automated sales funnel for your business!



Website: Review the *Facebook Connect* section where I detail how to create an automated sales funnel and give you the sales tools.

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Facebook Connect** in the menu or right hand bar

28. Create a Facebook Ad Campaign

Do you want to get your phone to ring right away? Consider creating a Facebook Ad Campaign that directly targets real estate agents in your area! Give them something free and amazing like a checklist, special report or free webinar in order to get their email address and continue to market to them via your Contact Management system.

Since Facebook is always changing, I've created a separate online section and video to walk you through how to set up a campaign that really works while you sleep!



Website: Review the *Facebook Connect* section.

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Facebook Connect** in the menu or right hand bar

This is a key section in the training that will help your business grow when done correctly. It takes work to put all the pieces of your "sales funnel" together but once you have them in place, you can use it for a Google ppc campaign, Pinterest Ad campaign, etc..

29. Create a Pinterest Ad Campaign

Pinterest is similar to Facebook in that you can sponsor "pins" that you have to get to the top of different searches users create on Pinterest. You can specify a location, exactly which pin you would like to promote and have that pin ideally point to a blog post or sales funnel (see Facebook Connect), so that you can stay in touch.

30. Join and get involved in your local realtor association.

To be successful in business, you must go and get networked where your clients are. What better place than your local realtor association to network with successful agents?



Website: Review the *Facebook Connect* section.

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Association Connect** in the menu or right hand bar

Do you see any home staging affiliates listed? It always amazes me that with all the home staging businesses out there, few are getting connected online. That's why HSR shows you where you can connect easily to give your business the boost it needs.

We highly suggest you join as an Affiliate member.

- Ask if you can speak at the next meeting, since very likely you'll be the first home stager to join.
- Attend Broker Caravans or Open Houses and network with agents
- Make sure you become listed on the directory, both online and print.

Guess what? Now that you are a member, you can call and email other realtor members from the directory and introduce yourself as a fellow member of the Association of Realtors in Your City and the only home staging affiliate member. Not cold is it? When an agent is deciding to use a professional home stager where do you think they will look? In the directory!

Join and take advantage of everything they have to offer. As a member, you will have access to great marketing tools and lists that the association has to offer.

- Some associations use a flyer service where realtors pay to send flyers of their listings to other agents. You can tap into this resource and send a flyer of your staged homes to other agents in the association.
- Use your membership to be the *expert* professional home stager and redesigner in the association.

31. Consider a Blog, Guest Blog and Write Articles

In Week Two of the training under "Blog and Article Connect" I state that it only makes sense to spend considerable time writing a blog when you're connected via social media and ideally have a sales funnel on your website.



Website: Review the *Blog & Article Connect* section.

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Blog & Article Connect** in the menu or right hand bar



Once you have those marketing connections in place to post your new blog and article, website traffic will come your way. This gets back to giving a little to get a lot. Websites, publications and even local real estate agent newsletters are always looking for interesting content for their readers. By writing articles you not only solidify yourself as an expert in your field, you promote yourself while building lasting relationships with the media outlets.

Look for real estate agent newsletters in your area. Call them to ask if you can be a content partner. Offer to assist with postal costs. Focus on real estate agents in your niche, as well as title companies, mortgage companies and local inspectors, some of which offer a newsletter to their local markets.

These newsletter partnerships could be the start of a long and profitable business partnership. Don't overlook them in your overall marketing plan.



Website: Search for Article Writing Tips and see my *Top Five Tips and Places to Post* online.

:

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Blog & Article Connect** in the menu or right hand bar



Tip: Don't forget to send your articles to Home Staging Resource. If it's chosen, you will be featured on one of our newsletters.

I'll never forget writing my first article for my new business in 1997 and all the BUZZ it brought my business and me personally! The Internet allows you to have a voice, but it must be compelling enough to be heard over MANY other voices. Here are the pros and cons of article writing:

PRO - May Establish You as an Expert in Your Industry - Depending on how well you incorporate my Five Tips below, article writing may help to build credibility to you and your business. In the home staging industry, credibility is KEY since your business is ultimately based on your design talent and art.

PRO - Is a Free Way to Advertise in the BEST Way - Who looks at ads anymore? I don't read ads but I would read an article and IF it was well written, the article would serve as an Ad for the writer. That's why articles are better than ads because they establish credibility without selling...PLEASE don't sell in your articles because that wouldn't be interesting.

PRO - The Articles Work While You Sleep for Many Years - The great thing about online print vs. paper, is that it circulates for many years bringing traffic to your website that you never even knew existed. I still have many articles circulating from over 20 years ago online!

PRO and CON - Article Writing is Better for People in Large Cities - Since Article Writing is "Next Steps" in Marketing, it serves those whose audience is in metropolitan areas.

CON - It Takes Time! - Articles should be thoughtfully done, so they do take time to write

CON - MUST Be Well Written - If writing isn't your strength...forged about it!



Day 12 - HSR Marketing Step Four – Intentional Marketing



Now that you've researched your local area, created gorgeous marketing materials to represent your business, made sure your business is listed in all the places prospects might search for you, it's time to go out there and network!

Your time is money. I can't seem to say that enough because I find too many home stagers spending time on things that will not make them money in the long run i.e. shopping, agonizing over website verbiage, searching homes online, reading blogs, etc.. Many times, I feel they are avoiding the inevitable for every entrepreneur and that is the dreaded *cold calling* or what I like to call *Intentional Marketing*. Following the HSR Marketing Plan to Step Three will not make you successful, yet many people want to do just that because they do not want to get out there and contact people or cold call.

You did not start this business because of your love of sales, but the success of your business will rely on your sales ability, as well as your design talent. **Yep, there are two factors that make for a successful professional home stager and redesigner and that is:**

1. **Your Natural Design Talent** - That's what your client is ultimately paying for
2. **Your Sales Ability** - How well you communicate and sell yourself

I have trained over 5000 people in the art of creating a successful home staging business and by in large ALL of them had the design talent (some much more than others). The ones that struggle, are the ones that do not get out and intentionally market themselves and their business...they struggle with their sales ability and stop at step three in the 5-Step Marketing Plan.



In a study of professional home staging businesses, it was found that over 50% of them only contacted 1-5 new agents EVERY THREE MONTHS! Needless to say, these were the same stagers in the study who were not as busy as they would like to be.

Simply put, they let the fear of rejection damage their business. What is fear? **False Evidence Appearing Real**. What is Courage? Acting despite of fear. What is the worst that can happen? You call an agent using our script and they say no...BIG DEAL! Guess what? There are 500 other agents who need your service but don't realize it. If you don't believe me, go to www.realtor.com and look at their listings. They desperately need to stage, photograph and sell better than they are!

You must *courageously and proactively* market your business to your target markets in order to succeed in this industry. It is not enough to get to Step Three and hope for your phone to ring. Proactively means contacting prospects weekly and getting out there to build relationships.



Website: For tips on Conquering Your Fear.

From the Member Area, click on **HSR Library>>Conquering Your Fear** in the drop-down menu bar

Here are brainstorming ideas to Intentionally Market your business...

32. Focus on benefits, client value and listing generation.

We talked about this when you created your one-minute pitch to each target market. Now, let's talk about your real estate agent target market.

The real estate industry is extremely competitive. The all-important listing is critical to a real estate agent's revenue and success. They will not do anything to jeopardize this relationship; including bringing in a professional home stager who might offend the sellers or slow down the sales process by recommending time-consuming improvements.

Understand this and focus on how you will handle their clients gently and increase their listings. You will do this by offering an *Action Plan* to the home sellers who list with them. The real estate agent who paid for the half-day of staging in our *Anatomy of a Staging Day* video received two additional listings because she let people who came to the Open House know that *as part of her listing package*, she pays for a professional home stager. All the people needed to do was look around at the gorgeously staged home to know that this agent offered more than the average agent.

Another way to partner with agents is to help to market the homes that you stage by offering to do targeted mailings to local real estate agents and home sellers in the area.



Website: For tips on partnering with real estate agents:

From the Member Area, click on **Week Three>>Realtor Partnerships** in the menu or right-hand bar



Tip: A genuine partnership is one where each partner benefits by the other's assistance. Focus on how you can benefit the agent's business. Make your partnerships convenient and easy for a real estate agent to implement and offer. If you do, they will forever be a partner.

33. Identify key players and do more.

What if the most successful real estate agent in your area used you to stage all of their listings? You would be busy full time! Wouldn't it be worth more of your time and energy to focus your marketing efforts on these folks?

Research the successful realtors in your area by searching for listings online at www.realtor.com, driving around and taking note of "For Sale" signs, or going to the real estate agents' offices and looking at their listings.



Website: To find Heavy Hitters in your area:

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Identifying Heavy Hitters** in the menu or right-hand bar

Build a target list of key players and begin a specific marketing campaign to them. These quality leads should *not* be sent a simple post card and never touched again!

- Your most ideal agent partners are the ones with a handful of listings that they don't use a stager for...make mistakes on the smaller players first
- Keller Williams is the most "staging friendly" real estate office, so target those agents first
- When you're ready to work with bigger players, know that they usually have teams of people they work with.
- It's a good idea to start by emailing them useful information and links to your sales funnel or one of our many videos which you can use on your website:



Website: For Videos for your website.

From the Member Area, click on **HSR Library>>Videos for Your Website** in the drop-down menu bar

- Let them know you would like to drop by with some information on home staging services that could increase your team's value proposition to sellers.
- Let them know you will call tomorrow to schedule a meeting.

- Just give them a day you will do this. *Make sure you do it.*
- Call them when you said you would and introduce yourself, giving your one-minute pitch. Ask them if you could meet with them to discuss improving their listings.



Website: Use a Wave Marketing System:

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Wave Marketing** in the menu or right-hand menu bar



Website: To create an effective campaign to agents:

Go to Week Three in the Members Area

Click on Realtor Partnerships

34. Build your target list.

We talked about this a bit already, but it's critical to stay organized and classify your hot leads, warm leads and cold leads.

Spend most of your time on the hot leads, which should be the bigger real estate agents in your area, and you won't find yourself spinning your wheels as much.

Know who the heavy hitters are, which offices they work out of, and what is their niche market. Yours should be similar. Know when their weekly meetings are and what associations or groups they participate in. Their circles of influence should be yours as well. Your warm leads should be those real estate agents *new* to the industry, gung ho, adaptable and looking for a niche in which to competitively differentiate themselves.

The agent we mentioned in the *Anatomy of a Staging Day* video was just such an agent. She was new and was willing to try something different to differentiate herself from the crowd. You can imagine her excitement when she received the two additional listings during the Open House. She turned a \$350 dollar marketing investment into thousands in return!



Tip: Remember, your goal is to partner with a handful of real estate agents by offering them something of value that will assist them to either obtain more listings or market the listings they have. This will allow them to sell faster and at a higher price. Home staging is simple economics. Home stagers improve upon a product, thus raising the *demand* and *price* for the home.

35. Send targeted emails to real estate agents about specific listings.

In the *Guide to Successful Consultations*, we talked about how to research real estate agents in your area. Another way to market yourself is to email the agent about a *specific* listing and offer your services as an alternative to lowering the price.



Website: To download these handouts:

From the Member Area, click on HSR Library>> Forms Library in the drop down menu

Make sure you include a link to your website where they can print out the *Top Dollar Guide* and *Staging Statistics* handouts to help them educate their sellers on the benefits of home staging. Include the link to our 10-minute *Anatomy of a Staging Day* video or Amazing Transformations Video that they can pass along to the home seller in order to give them an idea of the dramatic changes that can occur in a single staging day.

By offering tools to do their job better, you are forging a relationship that is focused on your client's success.



Tip: When you begin your marketing campaign, your goal should be to email 25+ agents every week. Call within two days to follow up.



Website: Learn more about Wave Marketing and Contact Management.

From the Member Home Page, click on **Week Two**.

Click on Wave Marketing Section or Contact Management.

This kind of consistent, personal marketing activity *always* leads to success. Sales is a numbers game. Very few stagers are actually calling to follow-up on their informational emails.

36. Schedule office visits and do Realtor Presentations.

When starting out, plan on visiting at least one real estate agent's office a week with a basket of goodies, such as gourmet coffee, cookies, or candy.

- Bring lots of business cards and before-and-after pictures.
- Meet the owner or office manager and ask if you could give a presentation at the next agent meeting.



Website: Use a Realtor Presentation

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Realtor Office Presentations** in the menu or right-hand menu bar

- Ask if you could post some good before-and-after pictures showing the benefits of professional home staging on the office bulletin board. These will usually always get people's attention and don't cost much.



Whatever the purpose of your visit, do not demand their attention without giving something of value for it. This shows respect and courtesy, which is an extension of how you will treat their clients. Remember, face-to-face goes a long way!

One of our members had a family chocolate store and specialized in brining baskets of chocolates to the Realtor office when she dropped in. Before you knew it, the agents knew her as the “chocolate lady” and her business recognition grew instantly!

37. Offer training.

You’ll see a lot of pure redesigners do this to obtain business because they don’t have a target market they can easily reach otherwise. It’s still a good idea since you can reach your redesign and staging clientele by exercising and offering your expertise in the form of training classes to real estate agent offices or your community for a nominal cost. This will give you exposure as well as build trust.



Tip: Many times your local community center offers room rentals on the cheap. Make sure to promote these “trainings” on the NextDoor app, your city calendar of events and Facebook ads for maximum exposure.

For real estate offices, we suggest you have a professional PowerPoint presentation like those you’ve seen in our On-Demand web trainings. We have a few examples online in the Members Area, as well as other easy ways to present to a real estate office on the fly. Make sure to swap materials using the most recent home staging statistics and your own before-and-after photos.



Website: Use a Realtor Presentation

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two>>Realtor Office Presentations** in the menu or right-hand menu bar

Start by introducing yourself, talk about the benefits of staging using a lot of before-and-after pictures. Give them information they can use such as the *Picture Tips*, *Top Ten Reasons to Stage*, *Top Dollar Guide* and *Staging Statistics* handouts.



Website: To download these handouts:

From the Member Area, click on HSR Library>> Forms Library in the drop down menu

Next, tell them a bit about how you work. Show an example *Action Plan already filled out*.



Important: Since statistics change regularly, make sure to update the forms with the most recent stats by going to:
<http://www.homestagingresources.com/category/home-staging-statistics/>



Important: Never hand out a blank HSR Action Plan or email an HSR Action Plan. Use it as a display only. This Action Plan should be reserved only for your realtor partners.

Describe your services and pricing and your FEEL HOME process which commits the home seller to the sales process. End the session by asking for questions. Hand out a feedback form.



Tip: Gather all of their business cards in a bowl and have a drawing. Give away a free consultation to an active listing for the whole office to view once the home is completed. Now you have all of their contact information and email addresses.

38. Place an Ad in Your Local Paper

Courtney Brooks out of North Carolina placed a simple 20-word ad in the service section of her local newspaper every day for one month. The ad cost her \$48.00 and netted her two projects - a redesign and a home stage!

If you live in New York City, that ad would not have been worth it, but otherwise call your local paper. They will work with you to find the correct placement at the right price.

Remember, all marketing you do in the beginning is an experiment to find what works in your area. So measure your success and have fun!

39. Send targeted mailings to new listings.

Make direct mail an active part of your daily schedule. This is very easy to do. There are many real estate agent websites, such as www.realtor.com, that will automatically email you new listings in your area, including addresses. You can take it one step further by copying and pasting that address into an "address lookup" at www.whitepages.com to find the seller's first names.

Take advantage of this by sending every new home listing in your area a marketing postcard. Every morning, check your email for the new listings. Quickly hand write the addresses onto your postcards or stationary using a Sharpie and mail them out.

By incorporating marketing as a regular part of your day, you are marketing yourself easily and efficiently. Amber in California sent ten cards and got three calls immediately. You never know when something will work for you in your area, so it's good to try everything at first.



Website: Learn more about Direct Mail and Credibility Connecting.

From the Member Area, click on Week Two> Direct Mail in the menu or right-hand bar



40. Canvas the neighborhood.

It is in your benefit and best interest for your neighbors to get a good price for their home. Offering your services at a discount may be a great place to start your marketing campaign.

Do a neighborhood walk, introduce yourself and give them a post-card with a note on it. Bring an example *Action Plan* to show those neighbors who have the time to view it or, better yet, leave an information packet and ask if you can come and pick it up the same time tomorrow.

Whatever your strategy, don't forget to use your neighbors as a great source of business.

41. Network with friends, family and a business networking group.

Never underestimate the value of your current relationships! Most multi-level marketing companies have people write down 100 people they know when first starting a business. Why? Because you already have a sphere of influence, so get the word out about what you are doing - or better yet, build a referral plan to those folks.

You will be amazed at the business that comes your way since this is referral business and the strongest kind of leads. Use your social media channels to connect your new business with those who already know, like and trust you.

- Email your pitch and before-and-after Home Staging Show link to brag about your business.
- Ask them if they know anyone interested in one-day redesign or home staging.
- Ask them to forward that email to those people they think would be interested in your services.

Remember -- always *be in the business-building mode*, but don't be self-centered and obnoxious about it.



Tip: Another great resource for networking is local networking groups. The Business Networking International group at <http://www.bni.com> was single handedly responsible for Lisa Green of *UV Home Staging's* business success.

42. Target "For Sale by Owner" sellers.

This is a great avenue for business especially if you are a real estate agent too. Many times the FSBO client thinks they can "sell" their home on their own but they can't stage it themselves. Why? Because they can't be objective about that piece of the home selling equation. These sellers will usually fit your *Do It Yourself* profile. Your Staging *Action Plans* are an easy sell to these people and you may be able to upsell them on your real estate services once in the door.. They are willing to do the work to get top dollar but they just need the expertise and direction.



Search Google for “house for sale by owner websites” to find the local sites and national sites where FSBO’s can list. While you shouldn’t email people from these sites, this is another easy way to use your postcards to send them a direct mail piece.



Tips:

Go to Google and enter “for sale by owner” and your local area and see what local MLS sites come up for your area.

To find sellers’ contact information, you can also go to:

- [http:// www.forsalebyowner.com](http://www.forsalebyowner.com)
- <http://www.fsboadvertisingservice.com/fsbo.htm>
- <http://www.congressrealty.com/list/listings/default.aspx>.

For those of you who have your real estate license, this is a great way to build rapport with “For Sale By Owners” in a non-threatening manner. Once the relationship is developed, it’s easy to let them know you are also available to handle their listings, if need be.

Brad in Florida sent his postcards and received three staging jobs from a house flipper within the week!

43. Exhibit at a local home show.

Who goes to those home shows? People who are looking to improve their environment and have some extra money do. Is that your redesign target market? Absolutely!

Many times people who are planning on selling their home, but know they need to do some improvements are there, as well. You can capitalize on both markets by having a simple booth (if cost allows).



Tip: Combine your marketing efforts through ASHSR or Stagers Connect by sharing a booth with another HSR member home stager.



Tip: Use the VistaPrint Portal to create a large poster that you can frame and hang at your booth.



Day 12 - HSR Marketing Step 5 – Capitalizing on a Job Well Done



One of the best things about the home staging business model is the fact that each job you do is a marketing statement and activity all on its own! Why? Because your number one target market (real estate agents) will then be "caravanning" through each home you stage. Don't miss any opportunity to brag about your work!

Here are some marketing brainstorming ideas you should consider doing for EVERY home your stage:

44. Use your postcards as advertisements.

Your postcards are a beautiful reflection of you and have your company and call to action on the front, so they will serve you well as advertisements.

Mat and frame your postcards and leave at the front desk of the office along with a stack of business cards. Mat and frame your post cards for homes that you've staged.

Remember, agents are coming in and out of the homes you stage. You want them to know you were the home stager responsible. If the agent does not want people to know the home has been staged, educate them on the fact that when buyers see that the agent employed or partnered with a professional to transform the home, it is a huge feather in their cap and will result in more listings.

When an agent uses a professional home stager, it adds instant credibility to what they do. Similar to when an agent has a painter they bring in for paint fixes, bringing in an expert stager

gives them clout. Do you think the agent would appear credible if they were to paint the homes themselves instead of outsourcing to an expert? It should not be expected that busy agents should also spend hours *and* have the knowledge of home redesign and organization to do this themselves for their clients.



Website: Search for Buildasign to create lawn signs

In the HSR Members Area Home Page>>Black Book

45. Build a referral program for real estate agents. (See online section “Referrals & Testimonials”)

Experts say that customer referrals and word-of-mouth are about ten times more effective than other marketing. Building referral programs for real estate agents and other associated industries is critical. Translating that to dollars and cents means that every dollar you spend enhancing your referral programs is worth about ten dollars in other marketing ventures.

It's important to ask yourself these questions when creating a referral program:

- Why should a real estate agent refer you business?
- What's in it for them?

You'll get a better response for your referral program if you include an incentive, such as a free consultation or a gift, for referring a fellow real estate agent to you.



Tips :

Advertise your referral program in your real estate agent presentations and consultations.

Make it consistent, rewarding and specific.

Ask every agent you do business with for names of other agents you think would benefit from your services.

Make sure to let them know you will not badger these folks but that you rely on referrals as the source of your business.

Don't forget to show your appreciation.



Website: Search for Referrals and Testimonials:

Go to Week Two in the Members Area

Click on “Referrals and Testimonials”

46. Market your partnership success.

After you work with a real estate agent, do some serious bragging by sending some of your before-and-after pictures to everyone in their office or local home sellers in their area. Good PR involves memorializing what you did and putting it into a story that people will find interesting.



Tip: Before-and-after pictures are *always* interesting. *Perfect Portfolio* in **Week Two** allows you to easily handle your photos, upload them onto Stagers Connect and create a slide show



Note: Make sure you watch their wonderful tutorials on this at their website.

Once you create a home staging show, make sure you include the link in your email wave marketing campaign!

Keep in touch and follow up with the agent to see when the home sold and what the response was. A success story is worth its weight in gold. It can be used to pitch to your local media who is hungry for good story ideas and visuals.

47. Generate publicity.

Professional home stagers are in a unique position to offer interesting content and photos simply by bragging about the work they have done. Media writers are always looking for good ideas and visuals to write about. Put the two together and you have publicity.

- Write a column for your local newssheet with before-and-after photos. Sometimes they'll even give you ad space for free when you do this!
- Send notices of newly staged homes to the real estate section of your paper.
- Treat the media with respect. Think of them as your prospective clients and that your story idea is the item they've been waiting for.
- Learn about the media outlet before you contact them and frame your story idea around their customers' needs and interests.
- Request media kits from the publications you are targeting to get demographics and editorial calendar. For example, if they are doing a magazine on no-cost home improvements, you want to be listed as a redeigner.
- Do your research. Put together interesting content. Be patient.



Website: Learn more about generating publicity

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two> Public Relations** in the menu or right-hand bar



Here is a quick rundown of how to get good public relations:

- **Research exactly who to contact.** – Every publication will have the author's name and contact information. Build your *local* media list by finding out who the editor of the real estate section in your paper is or who does the writing. Do this for your local magazines and real estate publications.



Website: We provide an online media list by state in the Members Area!

From the Member Area, click on **Week Two**.

Click on Public Relations

- **Cultivate the art of a good email.** – I know you're probably not fond of the idea of picking up the phone and pitching your idea, so don't. Craft a short email news story with a link to your Kodak album that will interest their readers. Include your quotes and any other people's that would have interest to the story, for example, "This was the best money I've ever spent to market a home!" said Jane, a Coldwell real estate agent." *Make sure the subject line of the email pertains to what they would be interested in, e.g., "Unique Home Selling Story".*
- **Cultivate the art of a press release.** –You can also include a press release on the bottom or in the body of the email.
- **Be professional.** – Watch what you send and don't be too pushy. If they like it, they'll use it. Make sure you send success stories, special interest stories and lots of photo links to keep it interesting.

48. Newsletters, event emails and mailings

There are so many fun ideas to put yourself in front of your clients. Just make sure you are giving something of value in exchange for their attention. Remember the 7-touch rule and don't get discouraged when you don't get responses right away...it's about filling your sales pipeline...

- Consider sending a newsletter if you love to write. Feature your before-and-after pictures and staging statistics of the home you just staged.
- Put together a monthly calendar of local events with your company name and number and send it to prospects, compliments of your company. This is a valuable resource for your clients and it will hopefully post up all month.
- Capitalize on your staged homes by emailing and inviting real estate agents from your target list to open house events or theme parties.
- Create specialty newsletters and mailings geared toward each particular target market and affiliates as well.



49. Leave postcards and business cards at houses you've just staged.

We mentioned this before, but it is really critical for people to put a name with the work they are viewing. It also benefits the real estate agent as one who goes above and beyond for their listings. Agents will all tell you that given the myriad of homes on the market today, they are only taking their buyers to homes they know look good.



Tip: Do what Charles in Sacramento does with quite a bit of success. "One thing that I do that would be a good tip for HSR stagers is I set up a quality display board in every home I stage with business cards and brochures. I buy the nice looking 8 1/2" x 11" acrylic display boards with a business card holder attached. I simply print out a sign on letterhead saying that I've staged the home, insert business cards, postcards and brochures on a wonderful tray that works great as a part of the staging. It has yielded some good results so far at really no cost."

You can get a yard sign, but it looks a bit tacky and might make the home sellers uncomfortable. Simple postcards left at the entrance next to a nice bouquet of flowers would be ideal and your clients should not be uncomfortable with this, especially if the bouquet comes from you.

Kristine Ginsberg, a RESA Stager of the Year fills a beautiful bowl filled with chocolate kisses and her business cards and leaves it in the entry or on the kitchen island. What will be your great idea?

50. Offer a signature item that makes your work recognizable.

The Real Estate industry is a small one, so having a signature gift that you give to real estate agents and home sellers for their business can also be used as a marketing tool. Be creative. A potted orchid, scented candle centerpiece, or particular flower may represent you well.

Buy supplies in bulk and show some creative flair by making a handful of gifts.



Tip: Michael's and IKEA are great places to source these kinds of creative "thank you" gifts cheaply and beautifully.

When real estate agents tour homes that have this centerpiece or bouquet on display, they will more than likely think of you. That is marketing at its core.

Don't forget, the best reason to give a signature item is to show appreciation for the business you receive. That attitude will be central to your success in business in general.



51. Up-sell your services and offer move-in staging.

Move-in staging or interior redesign services should be an easy sell to satisfied home staging clients. Once they see the transformations in their old house, they will surely be interested in those same transformations or at least a guideline for their new house.

At HSR, we make this easy for you to do because we've created a "Staging Thank You Follow-Up" Email in Week 1 Forms that easily upsells the benefits and savings they will get when working with you in their new home!

We also talk about an upsell process for redesign in Week 3, so stay tuned.

52. Ask for a "Wine and Design Party" and transform their home.

This can be a very creative way to build your interior redesign business and to get additional business from existing clients and friends. Much like the Tupperware parties of the past, this is a fun way to show your talent, hand-out information and obtain further business

- Ask a friend to be a hostess and invite friends to their house so you can redecorate some of the rooms over wine and cheese.
- The hostess gets free decorating.
- The friends get free decorating tips, can fill out your *Initial Redesign Lifestyle Questionnaire*, find their personal Style from our *Home Styles Module* photos and will see your work first hand. Very likely they will want to purchase some of your products (e.g., *Action Plans*) and services.
- Better yet, offer this to a real estate agent and have them host a party for real estate agent friends to see first-hand the benefits of staging.

53. Extend your professionalism into a code of ethics.

Now that the argument has been made for image and first impressions, let's talk about true professionalism and your image. Treat these suggestions as a habit of behavior for you.

- NEVER use another stagers wording, photos or information...be creative not a copycat.
- Always proofread or have someone else proof your work -- especially marketing materials and correspondence.
- Always be pleasant and helpful when answering the phone.
- Always be on time and do not park in their driveway.
- If you're in the middle of a consultation, *don't answer your phone*. Your time is on their dime. Respect it.
- Always return phone and email messages promptly.
- Always show appreciation for what is given to you. We'll talk more about this later.



- Position yourself for success by giving referrals when you can't handle a job. Use those as a networking opportunity with fellow home stagers. People will respect your honesty and consideration.
- Offer more than your service delivers and exceed expectations.
- Offer a guarantee to dissatisfied customers.
- Never disparage the competition, and in fact, work with them to educate the public. There's plenty of business out there for all of us.

54. Implement a customer appreciation process.

It always pays to sit back and take stock of how you're running your business. The first thing to focus on should be how well you treat your customers and potential clients.

Make sure you have a start-to-finish process in place that puts the customer first and remembers the small details of customer service. It's also a good idea to track this process in your customer database.

- Make follow-up phone calls before and after your client's open houses.
- Send thank-you cards for referrals and testimonials.
- Send a card to mark a special occasion.
- Send a congratulations card on the sale of their home. You can throw in a discount for a *Staging to Live* or a redesign consultation.

As a small business you have the advantage because you can respond quickly and personally to customer inquiries. Always put yourself in the customer's shoes and react quickly to their concerns and questions.



Tip: A service guarantee is a great way to assure a client will be taken care of and will get their money's worth. Consider this in your portfolio and presentation. Honor the guarantee and keep in mind it's very rarely called upon.



First 50 Marketing Things List – Putting the Plan into Motion

I know, I just couldn't stop at 50!

Now that you're brimming with marketing and sales ideas, it's time to put your plan into motion. Remember that initially 90% of your time should be focused on sales and marketing. When you get over the hump, 90% of your time will be home staging.

55. Define your marketing objectives in terms of money.

- How many home seller postcards will you send before an inquiry?
- How many inquiries will you make before a purchase?
- What is the ratio of consultations to other services? In other words, how many consultations result in further services?

All of these ratios should be considered and improved upon along the way. Define your actions in dollar amounts.

If you make ten sales calls to real estate agents and get one \$200 consultation per ten calls, then that is the dollar amount for that activity. Once you can start placing dollars to actions you will be in a better position to consider which actions to prioritize over others. You will also be able to set realistic financial goals. If every four \$200 consultations result in \$1000 of additional services and you have a goal of making \$4000 in a month, you will need to get consultations a month to achieve your financial goals.

56. Set realistic marketing goals and objectives.

Focus on activity every day. Using the above proposition, in order to make \$4000 in a month, you will need to do ten consultations. In order to get ten consultations from real estate agent sales calls alone, you will need to make 100 sales calls in a month. (Every ten sales calls results in one consultation, ten calls X ten consultations = 100 calls.)

The great thing about the staging business is the opportunity for repeat business from real estate agents. This is exactly why they should be your primary target market. If you have a real estate agent who offers your consultations to all of their listings and they have three listings a month, then you have decreased your sales calls by 30.



Tip: Be realistic with your activity goals. Everything takes longer than you think!



Bling Your Brand



Spend some time considering your brand. There are so many cool, free online tools these days to assist you in building a gorgeous brand for your business it's incredible! I spent months figuring out the best online sources and how to use them to your branding advantage when I created the "Bling Your Brand" Section because image is so important for our industry!



Website: Watch the on-demand *Bling Your Brand* videos.

From the *Member Area*, click on Week Two>>Day Ten>>Bling Your Brand section in the menu or right hand bar and watch videos

I provide helpful links to my favorite online image creators (www.canva.com and www.picmonkey.com), as well as a plethora of other tips to consider when creating a cohesive brand for your business.

It takes a lot of time to create collateral materials, so if you're in a time crunch and needed income yesterday, consider going with our "done for you" marketing materials and Premium Website package since it will save you literally months of time!

To help you stay organized in your branding, I created a simple Bling Worksheet where you can log your brand colors, etc...

Bling Worksheet

Bling Check!	Print Marketing	Website	Social Media	Handouts
Do I get noticed and stand out from other stagers and designers?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Do I get traffic and calls from my site?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Do I get leads and calls from my presentations?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Has it been over 2 years since I updated?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Do all my materials look consistent?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N

What makes my business special, unique and different?

What is my brand focal point? Do I even have one?

Houzz Research: Site Address and Style:	Ratings (1 being best):	Notes:
	Colors: 1 2 3 4 5 Layout/Pages: 1 2 3 4 5 Logo: 1 2 3 4 5 Header: 1 2 3 4 5 Background: 1 2 3 4 5	
	Colors: 1 2 3 4 5 Layout/Pages: 1 2 3 4 5 Logo: 1 2 3 4 5 Header: 1 2 3 4 5 Background: 1 2 3 4 5	
	Colors: 1 2 3 4 5 Layout/Pages: 1 2 3 4 5 Logo: 1 2 3 4 5 Header: 1 2 3 4 5 Background: 1 2 3 4 5	

More Design Inspiration: Zazzle.com, Minted.com, Tinyprints.com

How do my social media profiles look? Are they consistent?



Get Color Inspired: colourlovers.com

What are my two to three brand colors?

60% _____ 30% _____ 10% _____ (bling color?)

Color 1 _____	Color # _____
Color 2 _____	Color # _____
Color 3 _____	Color # _____
Color 4 _____	Color # _____

Patterns I liked (also search patterncooler.com): Create a folder on your computer and save images

Resources for brainstorming my new logo: Houzz.com, crowdspring.com, 99designs.com

Resources for brainstorming my new fonts: dafont.com, fontsquirrel.com, google.com/fonts, pinterest.com/audraslinkey/ "fonts to love"

Main Header or Logo Font (bling):

Content or Tagline Font:

Free image programs to help you build your images:

1. www.canva.com - Great for pre-made logo creating, Facebook covers, business cards, etc...
2. www.picmonkey.com - Premade shapes, textures, upload backgrounds, room photo collages
3. www.ribbet.com – Another easy to use program
4. www.fotoflexer.com - Good for transparent backgrounds
5. www.liveluvcreate.com – Wonderful free image choices to add text to for quotes or print for clients to fill their frames



Ordering Your Marketing Materials



Website: Marketing Materials:

- From the Member Area, click on **Week Two** and scroll down to **Marketing Materials** section for a good video about ordering gorgeous marketing materials that have already been created for you and can easily be customized!
- These materials are at a deep discount!



Note: This item applies to all HSR Members!

Select your marketing style

Now that you've put careful thought into your company name, address, phone and mission, you can use that information to create your own marketing materials at our discounted print shop (Week Two>>Marketing Materials). If you have ordered the Premium Website package two (which includes a website and hosting) you can download your website theme images once you fill out the basic website form (private link that was emailed to you).



Website: Bling Your Brand

- From the Member Area, click on **Week Two** and scroll down to **Bling Your Brand** section for a great videos on researching and creating your customized brand

If you are building your website on your own, consider swapping out the photos in the discounted print shop with your own photos for a cohesive and branded look. We want you to have a branded look and feel, so using a “hero” shot from your own photos or one of our themes is critical to “being remembered” by clients!



Website: If you have ordered the Package Two, Premium Website and hosting you will want to choose the website style before you order your print materials to make sure you like your branded look! Go to the link below to see all the great themes available to you:

<http://www.homestagingresources.com/websites-for-stagers/>

If you’re thinking you may want to purchase our pre-built, premium websites you can do so by going to our Member Store on the Members Area Home Page.

The cost to upgrade is only \$699 and includes a fully-loaded Wordpress website and hosting, so it’s a fantastic deal! Google loves Wordpress websites, so when you set it up correctly it can often be seen on page one fairly quickly!



Website: If you want other marketing materials like signs for your seller’s front lawns or car magnets, we’ve got you covered!

We’ve partnered with BuildASign to create multiple templates for signage, decals and magnets that you can order at the click of a button...

Go to the Members Area Home Page>>Member Store

HSR Planning Checklist



HSR Planning Checklist:

Complete item # 47 of your *HSR Planning Checklist*.



A Website That WORCS for Your Business

On-Demand Training – Developing a Website that W.O.R.C.S for Your Business!

We've already talked about how your website will be an important element to marketing and building your business. In this section I explore strategies you need to consider as you develop your website whether it's through HSR or on your own!



Website: Watch the *Website that WORCS On-Demand Training* video.

From the Member Home Page, click on **Week One**.

Scroll down to A Website That WORCS Section

The following are notes pages to follow along when you watch our On-Demand Training – Developing a Website that WORCS for Your Business – 10 Critical Keys to Success

Why do you need a website for your business?

1. *Marketing by definition in our industry is “getting people who have a specific need or problem to know, like, and trust you.”*
2. It takes at least 7 touches/contacts for a prospect to begin to know, like and trust you.
3. Your website is your prospect's “first impression”
4. Websites and your web presence automate that process and time is money!
5. Your website is a tool like anything else, if you don't use it, it won't work for you.

What Does a Website that WORCS for You Look Like?

W ebbsite Image – Should I stay or should I go now?

1. 10-Second First Impression Test – Wow that sure sounds familiar!

- ☒ Professional NOT homemade (this is not an area to cut corners)
- ☒ Clear navigation
- ☒ Key content “Above the Fold”
- ☒ Clean lines and roll-overs
- ☒ No music, sound or flash intros when visitors first link it (that is a sure way to make them click out)
- ☒ Clear text, no more than two typeface style fonts (Ariel, Tahoma, Times New Roman NOT Comic Sans) and avoid italics and cursive style
- ☒ Don't underline words or phrases (unless it's a hyperlink)
- ☒ Do not use all caps (it's poor netiquette and looks like you're shouting at visitors)
- ☒ Same color text and no more than three colors to the page
- ☒ Understand the relationship between color and emotion
- ☒ Artwork size and proportions consistent and page load friendly (respect your visitor's time)
- ☒ Keep your contact information on every page and do not use a contact form



2. Website Control – Using blog based, content managed systems (CMS) to control the look and feel of your website

- ☒ Having a good website image means having control over the look and feel
- ☒ New technology that gives user control in a web interface (Wordpress)
- ☒ They can be up and running in very little time and grow as needed
- ☒ You can change or add content instantly
- ☒ You can change the look and feel of your website by swapping out “Themes” instantly without messing up your content
- ☒ Search engines and people like them because they are relational in nature in that they allow for blogging, commenting, sharing ideas, showcasing videos, airing podcasts and syndicating content
- ☒ When updated and maintained regularly, this is one of the best ways to move up in natural search engine rankings

3. Direct Response Copy – Who is visiting and how do you benefit them?

- ☒ Know your Target Markets
- ☒ Speak only in terms of how you benefit that Target Market
- ☒ Talk naturally, be personable yet professional and personalize the visitor’s experience
- ☒ Speak/empathize with your prospects Problem and offer a Solution
- ☒ TRUST – Give your credentials, use client testimonials liberally, photo shows, statistics and a guarantee.

Optimized for Search Engines – It’s all about Google and Yahoo!

4. Keyword Research and Usage

- ☒ Got to know your keywords because you can successfully optimize – Key word tools <https://adwords.google.com>, <http://tools.seobook.com/keyword-tools/> (Lists resources)
- ☒ Know your location key words
- ☒ Industry + Location = Keyword success!”
- ☒ Use the best of both keywords in your html Title tag in such a way that it serves as a call to action – What Google loves and lists! (60 characters)
- ☒ Use the best of both keywords in your html Description and meta-tags
- ☒ Use H1 Headings in your page content with these keywords
- ☒ Use the main key words at the top of your website home page or in the header
- ☒ Link the keywords to blogs that you create...speaking of blogs...

5. Blogging – Better Optimization, Relationship Driven and Credibility Building!

- ☒ A blog on your website gives Google a reason to visit again – Pings the search engines
- ☒ Helps to establish you as an industry expert – As long as you are blogging to your prospects not your peers!
- ☒ Builds credibility, community and interactivity in that it allows visitors to comment
- ☒ Connects with Twitter via Twitterfeed.com automatically and Wordpress has a plugin that allows you to connect your blog to Facebook as well.
- ☒ Repurpose your blog content on other blogging community websites for greater links in and exposure



R elationship Driven – It's about getting people to know, like and trust you!

6. Email Marketing – The best way to automate and build relationships!

- ☒ Must have a Contact Management System (CMS) that allows you to email all your contact with the click of a button! No 3X5 cards or BCC! www.mailchimp.com or www.constantcontact.com
- ☒ Create an email capture system that leads prospects down a comfortable and natural path towards that first sale. Offer a special report, insider secrets, top ten, etc...Permission Marketing
- ☒ Set up follow-up email auto responders that continue to give clients benefit driven, valuable information while building the relationship, so they know, like and trust you.
- ☒ Website Email Capture + Email Auto Responders = Automated Relationship & Less Work!
- ☒ Every job is a marketing opportunity for your business and gives you a VISUAL credibility boost which is the strongest form of referral/client trust builder in our industry!
- ☒ Use your CMS to follow-up/keep in touch. Marketing is reminding customers that you are there!
- ☒ Don't forget an iron clad privacy policy!

7. Social Media – Easy way to create unobtrusive connection and get in front of clients

- ☒ LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook are the big three for connecting
- ☒ Connect your social media relationship with customers
- ☒ Casual and easy way to let people know what you are up to ie. "Staged a home that had a trouble kitchen with amazing results" (Display link to photoshow)
- ☒ Helps to establish you as an industry expert – Focus on speaking to your prospects not your peers!
- ☒ Builds credibility, community and interactivity in that it allows visitors to comment
- ☒ Avoid redundancy! Blog first then have the blog feed to Twitter and Facebook or better yet use ping.fm to connect blog to ALL your social media!
- ☒ Don't forget to ask for comments, reply to comments and speak respectfully!

C redibility Building – Your product is YOU so this is critical!

8. Get Visual – A picture and Video is worth a thousand words!

- ☒ Triple check your online portfolio and use a professional photographer if need be!
- ☒ Don't make client's click again to view your portfolio, put it in a slide show that is easy to manage like Picasa.com
- ☒ Use homestagingshows.com for email links to your photo shows in your email campaigns
- ☒ Connect your iPhone with a Youtube account for instant uploading of videos! (Time Saver)
- ☒ Use jing.com to create video screen shots of your work and upload to youtube. Embed show on your website and blogs and ping to your social media accounts.

9. Get Connected – Make sure your website is in all the places your clients might be looking for you

- ☒ Google + Yahoo = 80% of online searchers
- ☒ Pay per click (PPC) on Google, map your business on Google, Yahoo, MSN
- ☒ Home staging directories, Association directories, Yellow page directories
- ☒ Remember your target markets and link your website to the places they hang-out
- ☒ Connect your online presence with your offline marketing – Postcards, business cards, email signatures, car signs, home signs, advertising, flyers, mailers, etc...
- ☒ Don't forget to use your permission marketing email capture device as a call to action in your offline marketing ie. Go to www.stagingco.com for your Top Ten Insider Secrets to Selling a Home!



S tats and Metrics - What is working and where to spend \$\$

10. Tools of the Measurement Trade

- ☒ Ask specifically! Don't accept "online" as an answer; ask "where online?"
- ☒ Measure you website stats (Wordpress has a great plugin for this or you can use Google Analytics)
- ☒ Measure your email and newsletter stats (CMS system should provide very specific stats about who opened, clicked, etc.)

Premium Website Package – Why Choose HSR for Your Marketing and Website

You may consider saving money and going with an inexpensive website option through Godaddy or Vistaprint but beware; Google does not like those sites like it does Wordpress! Also, you won't have a branded look and feel for client's to remember you by. There is no point putting up a website that no one can find, so that is why we offer our Premium Website Package. We set up a Wordpress website that Google will like and will grow with your business by allowing you to edit, customize, add pages, images, video and anything else you can think of. Our sites are for the least technical but will also work and expand for those are technical gurus!

You've got to look good in this industry since we are selling an "image" and taste! If your site looks unprofessional, then your clients will translate that to your service. We provide clean, professional sites that make you look good but don't cost you an arm and a leg. For a complete listing of site examples, benefits and an informational video go to the Member Store on the Members Home Page or to this link:

<http://www.homestagingresources.com/websites-for-stagers/>

You don't have to renew with us to keep your website! If you decide not to renew with HSR after your yearly membership is up, you can find a new host company for the site we built for you and transfer the site to that location. Make sure to give yourself plenty of time to do this and consider using a host (like www.hostgator.com) that will do this for you.

If you're absolutely out of budget, Weebly.com and Wix.com are other good alternatives but watch out for the constant nickel and dime upgrades and monthly fees.



Blog and Article Connect



Don't forget to check into the Members Area to see critical sections like Directory and Facebook Connect which feature "how-to" videos for growing your business! The "Credibility Connect" sections on Day 11 will get your phone to ring right away above any other marketing activity, so just because it's not in the manual, doesn't mean you don't have guidance

Some of you are fantastic writers and will consider starting a blog. Right away, I have critical advice for you since blogging takes time and you need exposure to really make your writing matter



Website: Watch the on-demand *Blog Connect* video.

From the *Member Area*, click on **Week Two>>Day Eleven>>Blog and Article Connect** section in the menu or right hand bar and watch video

Blog Worksheet

Who Am I Targeting?

My Target Audiences:	Places They Are:	What Do They Need?
Realtors	FB, Associations, Offices, Real Estate Hubs (see Real Estate blog list in HSR>Week 2>> Blogging	Staging Success Stories, Information to convince their sellers about staging, check lists, graphics, statistics
Home Owners interested in remodeling	Houzz, Pinterest, FB	To be convinced to “not go it alone”, design success stories

What Are My Keywords?

Location –

Home Staging – home stager, house stager, house staging, staging my home, real estate stager, home staging company, certified home stager, staging a house to sell, staging your home, home staging tips, staging a living room...

Design – interior designer, interior decorator, color consultant, decorator for my home

Why Reinvent...

1. Search Google for “home stager CITY”
2. Click on Houzz result (or top stager website if better)
3. Copy top stager website address
4. Go to www.semrush.com and paste top stager website to see their paid and organic best key words
5. Write them down...try another

Hot Headline Ideas

“Top 5 Staging Tips for Selling in Atlanta, GA”, “4 Keys to House Staging in Atlanta”, “7 Products for Staging a House in Atlanta”, “8 Qualifications to Look for In a Atlanta Stager”

Good Image Sources to Use: www.shutterstock.com and www.istock.com

Easy Ways to Create Cool Images:

- www.canva.com – Choose FB Ad
- www.picmonkey.com – Size 1200x627 and png (don’t use too much text)

Tips for Readability:

- People want snippets
- People like bullet points and numbered lists
- Shoot for 4 paragraphs tops (or make it a series)
- Use www.grammarly.com to edit and make sure it’s not plagiarized
- Do not use any of HSR content since Google will consider it plagiarism



Blog Steps for After You Post

Date/Post	FB Me	FB Biz	Pin	Tweet	LI	LI Groups	G+ Groups



Additional Tools – Building and Marketing Your Business

As you know, HSR's motto is to do the prep work for you, so you're not wasting time "reinventing the wheel" with your business. We have put together several forms in Word for you to download and *tailor* to your company and desires.

The following pages are examples of the forms that relate specifically to marketing and vacant home staging.

Refer to the Week Two Table of Contents for a complete list of the tools included in this section.



Important: We regularly add forms and other tools to the *Forms Library* section of the HSR website. Check there frequently and look for any tools that are identified as "new."



Tips: If you decide to use this as a client handout, copy and paste the information into a new file. Enter your company name in the body of the text. Then print it out on your letterhead.



Great Hand-Outs for Clients!

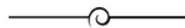
The next two handouts were created on www.canva.com. You can upload these images to picmonkey and add your company information in the "Couresy Of" section.

Staging Cheat Sheet

PREPARING YOUR HOME TO GET THE BEST PRICE
POSSIBLE AND A QUICKER SALE...

WHAT TO DO FIRST...

- Disassociate - See your home as a "product"
- Commit to the Process - Hard work = Rewards
- Get Help - Using a professional stager will increase your staging returns enormously
- Packing Starts Now - Get boxes and have one for trash, packing & Goodwill
- Fix It - Only low ball investors like homes that need work, so make those repairs now!
- No Profile - Don't allow buyers to profile you politically, religiously or otherwise-Pack it up
- Photo Rules - Lifestyle photos only. We want buyers to see the "good life" in your home
- De-Clutter - Clear the home accessories that are over 4 years old & smaller than a baseball
- Lighting - Remove old or cheap drapes in main areas, trim bushes around windows
- Modernize - Buy fresh pillows, large artwork, live plants & white towels for the bathrooms
- Outsource - Your Agent has a list of fantastic vendors to assist you with this BIG job!



www.homestagingresource.com

DID YOU KNOW

According to a recent survey of over 3500 homes, spending 1-3% of the value of your home on home staging & upgrades will typically net you a 10% return in the sale!



COURTESY OF:



Red Flag Checklist

A HOUSE HUNTER'S GUIDE TO AVOIDING A
POTENTIAL "MONEY PIT"

WHAT TO LOOK FOR...

- Exterior cracks in walls or sidewalk
- Yard slopes toward house
- Trees with roots near foundation
- Curled or warped shingles/broken tiles
- Mismatched or missing roof sections
- Floors/walls not visible level/straight
- Gaps or jams in windows or doors
- Water or dark stains on ceilings or wall
- Peeling paint - could be water damage
- Standing water
- Musty smell or visible mold (attics too)
- Wood rot around doors, trim, decks, etc.
- Leaking faucets or low pressure
- Rattling when faucets turn on
- Drains empty slowly
- Water stains under sink/toilet
- No bathroom or kitchen ventilation
- Exposed wires or warm outlets
- Flickering lights - Check main panel



HOT TIP

Search www.Zillow.com for "red flags" in the home's sales and price history like a large, price gap indicating a probable past flip or foreclosure.



COURTESY OF:



Quick Real Estate Agent Email – Sample 1

Make sure you personalize the email and keep it ALL in text only in order to get around any spam blockers. Notice that I included the “hope you don’t mind if I keep in touch” so that I could upload their contact information into my email marketing program when I’m done.

A quick way to email several heavy hitters is to research them online and click on the email link to open up an email to them. Select the following text and hit the keys **CTRL C**. This copies the text onto your clipboard. Go to the open email and hit the keys **CTRL V**, which then pastes the text into the email.

You may want to add a link to your home staging show or a quick sentence about how you would improve a current listing they have.

EXAMPLE SUBJECT: Responding to your website and listings

Dear NAME,

I was on your website, reviewing your listings and wanted to meet with you to talk about how we can work together to help you get more listings, market them better, sell them faster and for more money. I partner with successful realtors like you in order to assist you in staging and photographing the home, so that it is marketed to its fullest potential. Here is a quick 2-minute, before-and-after video to illustrate how the partnership works:

<http://www.homestagingresource.com/realtorvideo.htm>

I would love to come to your office on ENTER DAY AND DATE, bring your favorite Starbucks, my portfolio and chat about your business. I respect your time, so unlike an unannounced telephone call or visit, I am emailing you first with a little information in the hopes that we can work together in the future. I will call you DAY to follow up and I hope you don’t mind if I keep in touch.

I’m aware that many times the difficulty lies in convincing the home seller of the importance of staging, so here is a two-minute, before-and-after video link you can send to your client:

<http://www.homestagingresource.com/homesellershow.html>

Thank you again for your time and I look forward to speaking with you!

YOUR NAME

YOUR COMPANY

YOUR PHONE

YOUR WEBSITE ADDRESS

YOUR HOME STAGING SHOW



Quick Real Estate Agent Email – Sample 2

Make sure you personalize the email!

A quick way to email several heavy hitters is to research them online and click on the email link to open up an email to them.

Select the following text and hit the keys **CTRL C**. This copies the text onto your clipboard. Go to the open email and hit the keys **CTRL V**, which then pastes the text into the email.

You may want to add a link to your home staging show or a quick sentence about how you would improve a current listing they have.

EXAMPLE SUBJECT: Responding to your website and listings

Dear NAME,

My name is YOUR NAME and I recently visited your website and reviewed your listings. I am a professional home stager in the YOUR GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION area.

Did you know that...

Home staging can help homes sell quickly and for top dollar?

Staging your listing with a professional frees you up to do what you do best -- listing homes and serving your clients?

A professional home stager can make suggestions to home owners concerning pets, repairs, odors, and decorating styles that you might not want to make because you could offend them.

I would welcome the opportunity to help your clients make fast, dramatic transformations to their homes, often using what they already have! Please call me at YOUR PHONE NUMBER so we can set up a time to chat and review my portfolio. You might also want to contact SATISFIED CUSTOMER'S NAME, a client who has been very pleased with my services.

I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME
YOUR COMPANY
YOUR PHONE
YOUR WEBSITE ADDRESS



Quick Realtor Vacant Home Staging Email

Make sure you personalize the email!

A quick way to email several heavy hitters is to research them online and click on the email link to open up an email to them.

Select the following text and hit the keys **CTRL C**. This copies the text onto your clipboard. Go to the open email and hit the keys **CTRL V**, which then pastes the text into the email.

You may want to add a link to your home staging show or a quick sentence about how you would improve a current listing they have.

EXAMPLE SUBJECT: Responding to your vacant home listing

Dear NAME,

I was on your website, reviewing your listings and noticed you had a vacant listing that would be very easy to stage.

Vacant homes take twice as long to sell and are currently at a 40-year inventory high. The home in this article received multiple offers in three days for over the asking price in winter because it was staged http://www.homestagingresource.com/vacant_home_staging.asp

I partner with successful realtors like you in order to home stage and market the home to its fullest potential. This is especially important in the case of vacant homes, where buyers cannot imagine themselves living there.

I understand your priority is the client's quick listing and sale. I specialize in providing a vacant home staging service that is fast and within budget while able to make dramatic improvements to the home so that it will sell quickly and for top dollar.

I would love to come to your office on CHOOSE A DAY, bring your favorite Starbucks, my portfolio and chat. I respect your time. Unlike an unannounced telephone call or visit, I am emailing you with a little information in the hopes that we can work together in the future.

I will call you tomorrow to follow up and in the meantime, I ask that you visit my website at YOUR WEB ADDRESS.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME
YOUR COMPANY
YOUR PHONE
YOUR WEBSITE ADDRESS



Example Real Estate Agent Letter

(Print on your company's letterhead or nice stationary)

DATE

Dear NAME OF AGENT,

I noticed you have a home for sale at ADDRESS OF HOME. I am a professional Home Staging Consultant and work for YOUR COMPANY and hope that I can assist you in the process.

This home looks like it might be a strong candidate for the benefits of home staging. Professional home staging is a surprisingly easy and fun process to complete. It usually yields a 50% faster sale, and 6-10% increased selling price. Would you like to sell your homes twice as fast and make almost 10% more in commissions?

As a first time realtor courtesy, I am offering my initial consultation to you for free (a \$YOUR CONSULTATION FEE value). This will allow you to see how this works for you and to trust that I will handle your clients with the utmost care. During this time I will spend about an hour walking through your client's home, give you and the client helpful tips and suggestions for better ways to market the home, as well as a proposal for further services.

I want you to get the best possible price for your listings and to forge what I hope to be a strong, mutually beneficial partnership, so please call me today at YOUR PHONE NUMBER or go onto the YOUR COMPANY website (www.yourcompany.com) for more information.

Please, do not reduce your price - offer the solution of professional home staging!

Warm Regards,

YOUR NAME
YOUR COMPANY
YOUR PHONE
YOUR WEBSITE ADDRESS



Example Home Seller Letter

(Print on your company's letterhead or nice stationary)

DATE

Dear NAME,

Stress is trying to sell your present home in a buyer's market. YOUR COMPANY can help.

Statistically, having your home professionally staged will cut your sell time in half and give you 6%+ more than you would have otherwise. Our success rate is one of the highest of any local home staging company. We sell fast and for more.

In a single day, we will work with you to use what you have, add a few additional accessories and transform each room of your house into a home buyers will notice. You set the boundaries, and together we have fun getting you top dollar and a faster sale. We'll even take and give you gorgeous "after" photos for your agent to use in their marketing in order to attract more buyers. What have you got to lose?

YOUR COMPANY is the market leader for a good reason. Hand us the stress of selling. We can handle it.

Call by DATE and receive 20% off a Staging Day of \$YOUR STAGING DAY FEE. The cost of a single Staging Day is much less than your first price reduction. Call us today.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

YOUR COMPANY

YOUR PHONE

YOUR WEBSITE ADDRESS



Example Neighbor Letter

(Print on your company's letterhead.)

DATE

Dear Neighbor,

I noticed you have your home for sale and was hoping I could assist you in the process. I am a professional Home Staging Consultant and work for YOUR COMPANY. I live up the street and would love to help you sell your home for top dollar.

Professional home staging is a surprisingly easy and fun process to complete. It usually yields a 50% faster sale, and 6-10% increased selling price.

As a neighbor courtesy, I am offering my initial consultation to you for free (a \$YOUR CONSULTATION FEE value). During this time I will spend about an hour walking through your home and giving you helpful tips and suggestions for better ways to market your home and a proposal for further services, if needed.

As a neighbor, I want you to get the best possible price for your home. Please call me today at YOUR PHONE NUMBER or go onto the YOUR COMPANY website (www.yourcompany.com) for more information. Please, do not reduce your price - have your home professionally staged!

Warm Regards,

YOUR NAME
YOUR COMPANY
YOUR PHONE
YOUR WEBSITE ADDRESS



Top Ten Benefits to Staging Your Home For Sale

Investing a little bit today in home staging will pay in dividends towards your home selling tomorrow...

1

You Will Make More Money

According to a 2014 Zillow Survey of Real Estate Agents, hiring a professional home stager is the second BEST investment a home seller can make in the process of selling their home.

2

Your House Will Sell Faster and For More Money

A National Association of Realtors survey found that the longer a home stays on the market, the further below list price it drops. Homes that sold in the first 4 weeks averaged 1% more than the list price; 4 to 12 weeks averaged 5% less; 13 to 24 weeks averaged 6.4% less; than list price; and 24 weeks averaged more than 10% less than list price.

3

The Cost of Staging...Doesn't Cost A Dime

In a Home Gain Survey of over 2,000 Realtors, it was discovered that home staging typically provides a 399% return on investment!

4

Home Sellers Cannot View Their House Objectively

If you can't see a product objectively, you can't "package" effectively. I will assist you in the staging process to view your home through "Buyer's Eyes" and position each room for maximum appeal!

5

Your Online Photos Will Stand Out Amongst the Competition

According to a NAR profile of buyers, over 95% of buyers are searching for homes online first before deciding to visit. Give buyers a reason to drive to your home by having multiple photos of beautifully staged rooms that will stand out among the competition!

6

Only 10% of Homebuyers Can Visualize the Potential of a Home

That's why staging a home is critical! You don't want the advantages of your home overlooked and left up to the buyer's imagination.

7

Less Headache and Stress In the Sales Process

The packing starts now in order to create a sense of space. I will give you easy, organizational strategies, so that you can have your home ready to show at a moment's notice.

8

The Money You Make On the Sale of Your Home May Be TAX FREE and the Money You Spend on Staging is Deductible!

Take advantage of a possible tax-free capital gain by getting every dollar possible while getting a possible tax deduction for spending on staging services to improve and sell your home! (States vary, so please consult your accountant.)

9

Leaving Your House in "As Is" Condition Will Only Help Sell the Competition

Competition can be stiff and buyers have very high expectations, as well as choices. Successful agents know that the key to competing is professional staging because it creates compelling online presentations, drives buyer traffic to the home, and turns prospects into buyers.

1

You Can Relax

You will have the satisfaction of knowing you have done absolutely everything possible to affect a quick sale of your most valuable commodity and for top dollar!

0



Why You Have Made a Great Decision to Stage Your Home

You will make more money, meaning possibly tax-free cash in your pocket.

- QR Statistics suggest staged homes sell at an average of 6.32% over what they are listed for. Non-staged homes only average 1.6% over the listed price.

Your house will sell faster, equaling more money, fewer headaches and hassles.

- QR A National Association of Realtors survey found that the longer a home stays on the market, the further below list price it drops. Homes that sold in the first 4 weeks averaged 1% more than the list price; 4 to 12 weeks averaged 5% less; 13 to 24 weeks averaged 6.4% less; than list price; and 24 weeks averaged more than 10% less than list price.

The cost of staging doesn't cost a dime.

- QR In a 2013 Home Gain Survey of over 2000 Realtors, it was discovered that home staging typically provides a 399% return on investment!

You'll have less guesswork and "Do It Yourself" work.

- QR At **YOUR COMPANY**, we can manage your projects from start to finish *or* give you a detailed enough report based on our extensive knowledge and training to have you "do it yourself."

Did You Know That...

- QR Only 10% of homebuyers can actually visualize the potential of a home.
- QR Studies show that the longer your home stays on the market the lower your selling price will be...

So...let's get started and stage this house for top dollar!



Home Seller Open House Check List

As your HSR Certified Professional Home Stager, I want to go over a few things to do before you show the house. This will make the most out of your potential buyer traffic and appeal to all of their senses while creating “emotional connection points” for them to respond to throughout your home.

Curb Appeal

- Park cars down the street and away from driveway and front of house to give buyers clear picture of home.
- Remove any front lawn debris, toys, trashcans, pet debris, etc.
- Garage doors down and front door wide open.
- Lay out “emotional connection points” we have prepared.

Interior

- Go through home quickly and pick up any extraneous items such as toys or clothes.
- Turn ON every light in the home. Light candles in safe areas only.
- Open all blinds and window coverings for maximum light, unless there are view issues.
- Spray and wipe bathroom and kitchen counters.
- Quick vacuum high traffic areas (if time).
- Fluff couch pillows, place throw strategically, organize coffee table.
- Fire in fireplace, if appropriate.
- Close TV cabinet doors.
- Turn on interior lights in china cabinet or shelves.
- Set out dress towels in bathroom.
- Toilet seats down, all trash cans emptied (especially kitchen trash!).
- Fluff beds and pillows in all bedrooms.
- Keep music on low. Use TV cable in order to keep uniform in every room.
- Always have fresh flowers on hand during home selling months and place them throughout home, particularly in bathrooms and bedrooms.
- Bake chocolate chip cookies in oven and give to guests along with a pitcher of lemonade on tray or coffee brewing on a tray.
- Ideally, have windows open but make sure the home is comfortable temperature.
- All ceiling fans should be on low.
- All doors in house should be open as far as they can go except closet doors (unless walk-in).
- Set out “emotional connection points” in each room, e.g., set kitchen place settings, bed tray, patio trays, etc.
- Remove any pet dishes and litter boxes completely.



A Word About Closets

Many stagers will ask you to clean out *all* of your closets and cabinets on the off chance a buyer will look through them. We think this is a good idea, but a bit over the top.

Remember, our focus is on the priority transformations, not to drive you crazy with a lot more work. Ideally, since you will be packing things away anyway, take a closet at a time and weed out anything you haven't used recently. Discard or donate any items you no longer need.

The Master Bedroom closets are the exception to this rule. This is an area that homebuyers pry into. It's a good idea to appear spacious, neat and organized. The tidier you appear to be, the more your homebuyer will view the house as "taken care of."

Below is a step-by-step checklist of how we suggest you attack your Master Bedroom closets:

Pack away anything you have not used or worn in four months. For most of us, it's about 80% of our wardrobe. Think ahead in terms of weather and special events, but overall, this should not be hard to do.

Group by item. Start with shirts, blouses, jackets and skirts. Finish with pants. If you have a walk-in closet, pants should be in the back. Separate the His and Hers sections.

Arrange by color within each item category.

Make sure each item is facing the same direction (away from the door).

Organize shoes, preferably in a rack on the floor.

Clear off and pack away anything on the top of the closet shelf.

Organize any loose items such as belts and scarves in matching boxes or baskets on the top of the closet.

Consider buying inexpensive hat boxes/nesting boxes for accessories to add a little drama.

Consider buying wood hangers or matching hangers.

Consider buying a closet organizer which can be very appealing to homebuyers. Target has these now.

Since closets usually don't have any natural light, make sure your artificial light is extra bright by replacing the bulbs and cleaning the fixtures.

Remember, preparing your home to sell is a process that takes time but will net you thousands in return!