

# Staging starts with attitude adjustments

## Help your home make a good impression

By Jennifer Waters  
MARKETWATCH

CHICAGO — Craig and Amy Smith always felt quite confident in their abilities to tastefully design the spacious interior of their steel-and-concrete loft in downtown Denver.

That was until they decided to sell and a consultant hired to help them "stage" their home told them to neutralize a dramatic accent wall, put away family photos and place most of their furniture and artwork in storage.

"The hardest part was not taking it personally," Craig Smith said.

In turn, the hardest part of

the job for those offering the advice is breaking it to sellers that their taste in decor could be a turnoff to a prospective buyer.

"What's fine for living is not always fine for selling," said Donna Dazzo, president of Designed To Appeal, a home-staging company that serves New York and the Hamptons.

"The basic reality is that people buy on emotion," said Gina Ferraro, president of Cross Home Concepts in Chicago.

"We like to think that we're going to live in a beautiful, always-clean home and that we're going to entertain a lot."

Here's a list of some of the basics — with a few secrets:

**Get rid of stuff.** It can't be said enough how important it is to de-clutter your home. Most people accumulate things and then find places for them, rather than taking something out.

**De-personalize.** Put away family photos, education degrees, children's pictures, trophies, awards, collections.

But, Ferraro said, "Don't mistake de-personalizing with removing personality."

**Clean, clean, clean.** If the three most important points to selling a home are location, location, location, the next three are sparkling, glittering, clean.

See STAGE on page 3D



A neutral decor and an uncluttered look are the best choices when a home is on the market.

## STAGE

FROM PAGE 3D

**Update old and deteriorating spaces.** You might not have to totally redo a 1980s kitchen, but you will want to put new hardware on cabinet doors, replace countertops and appliances, and fix what's broken, peeling or worn out.

"Buyers don't want projects," Dazzo said.

**Define spaces.** Buyers don't like to guess which rooms are which. Dining rooms need ceiling light fixtures; sitting rooms are marked by comfy chairs and reading lamps; family rooms are set off with couches and a TV.

**Fill empty rooms.** A vacant home is an empty shell, and buyers have very little imagination.

**Lighten up spaces.** The most obvious way is by getting rid of heavy curtains, rugs and furniture, and painting the walls white or a lighter color. But here are some other tricks: Add new light fixtures; clean windows, remove screens and take treatments down to let in natural light; never hide

good views or scenery behind window treatments; use fresh, white towels in bathrooms; pull up carpets to expose hardwood floors.

**Clean out closets and leave them one-third empty.** Old houses can be problematic because of their limited closet space, but you can trick the eye by leaving plenty of space empty.

Even with bigger homes and closets, keep shoes and clothes neat and tidy.

**Curb/halfway appeal really counts.** The buyers' first impressions are set as they approach the door. That's also true for apartments and condominiums.

**Be model-ready.** Rooms posed for photo shoots are becoming a must because buyers get a first peek at your home on the Internet. "The time that people actually have to spend physically looking ... is very limited," Ferraro said.

4/14/11

G. Ville News