

Welcome to the Home Staging Resource!

Congratulations on starting your training to become an *HSR Certified Professional Home Stager and Redesigner!* We are very excited to partner with you as you make this journey. I personally think you will find home staging and redesign to be an exciting and rewarding career that allows you the flexibility and freedom to do what you love.

We have a genuine interest in assisting you to reach your business goals. Please remember to fill out the “Getting to Know You” form that was emailed to you when you first signed up. Also, make sure to add my email to your address book, so my critical emails don’t go to your spam folder.

By now you’ve probably familiarized yourself with the *Member Area* of the *HSR Website*. Right away I recommend you watch our *Training Overview Video in Week 1*, print out the *Training Calendar* and *Site Map* (which is in the top right hand area of the *Member Area*), so you can find everything. Our most up-to-date information will always be in the *Member Area*, so check back frequently.

We also send you this printed training manual for you to use as one of your tools in this journey to home staging success. The training manual has all of the instructional guides and forms printed in an easy-to-follow manner that mimics what you see in our *Member Area* and training sections. Much of the training activities are online, so you will want to regularly login to access those resources directly. Just follow the instructions and go online to complete those activities.

Begin by following our timeline for your business. **Remember -- the beauty of online training is it is at your own pace! Take your time because your HSR membership and training access is for a year and we’re not going anywhere.** It’s a lot of training material, so *take it day-by-day*. Once you have completed the Week One Quiz (at the end of Week One) and HSR Certification Test (at the end of Week Three), we will send you your gorgeous, HSR Certificate in Home Staging and Redesign via email with an instant click to download and brag via social media.

Throughout your business training, we want you to perfect and refine your craft by going to our *Design Module* section in the *Member Area* and completing a module each day of your three weeks. Combining staging and design “how to” with the business training will help you stay motivated and balanced.

I also recommend that you connect with me and HSR on Stagers Connect, Pinterest, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter for the latest updates, staging tips and events. We know you have the natural gift of decorating and design, but want to assist you by adding content that helps to keep your gift current and refined, as well as assists you in communicating your talent to your clients.

In closing, I want you to know that we strive to offer you what is current and critical to assist you in establishing your business. We rely on your valuable feedback as we accomplish this goal so throughout your training and the coming year, I will be touching base with you.

Warm Regards,

Audra Slinkey

President - Home Staging Resource

Week One - Getting Started & Business Foundation

by Audra Slinkey



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Day 1 - Overview -- Your 21-Day HSR Certification Training



Your **Home Staging Resource Certification** training is a self-paced program supported by online content and training. You can go at your own pace during hours that are convenient for you. We have a recommended *HSR Training Calendar* you can download in Week One, as well as a *Site Map* (in Member's Area, top right) you should print out for training reference.

We have found that members who take the training on a full-time basis complete it in about three weeks. However, that is an aggressive schedule. The important thing – and the beauty of self-paced training – is that you can complete the program on your own schedule! There is no deadline for completion. Just remember that the sooner you complete the training, the sooner you will be staging houses. A training calendar is provided to help you schedule your time and stay on track.

If you currently have a staging business, are a Realtor or an Interior Designer incorporating staging, then you will want to skim/skip those sections that do not apply to you. We have members with all different backgrounds and business goals, so we include all of those elements one would need if they were starting a staging and redesign business from scratch. This training is not linear like a school course but fluid in terms of finding the resources you need for your business right away. For example, you may not need the information in Week 2 on Realtor Presentations today, but in a few months when called to present in front of the local Realtor Association, you'll be glad it's there and available to you.

Remember, we are more like a franchise (with no royalty fees) who imparts the tools, methods, resources and knowledge to their successful business entrepreneurs. Your true "test" is whether you are able to take all that is available to you in this training and meet your personal business goals. Having said that, there is a brief Certification Test at the end of Week Three in order for us to insure you are ready to start staging!

You will be overwhelmed by the amount of materials at first, so don't be alarmed and take it step-by-step. You have access to all Three Weeks on day one, but trust me, it will all come together for you by the end of training and you will emerge confident and able to take on any business or job that comes your way. The most important things to remember are:

- Take your time and keep to your own pace (the slow and steady wins the race)
- Have fun and consider this an adventure (you will LOVE where it takes you)
- Momentum is key, so don't let any item "bog you down"
- We are here for you every step of the way, so call or email me with any questions
- Other HSR Members are here for you too, so connect with them at **Stagers Connect**

About the Training

The training is comprised of three week modules – one for each week of training. In addition, there is a Design Module section in the online Member’s Area that has a different design concept for almost every day of the training. In the example training calendar below, you can see we added a Design Module to each day’s worth of materials to give you a “calendar example” you can follow. The training is self-paced, so while it’s broken up by days...you can jump around, take months to get through it or follow our calendar...it’s up to you.

Remember, that many of the training materials, resources and videos are in the Member’s Area, so make sure to review both the Training Manual and Member’s Area as you go through that week’s materials. I will be referring to various online sections for further discussion/video throughout this manual as another reminder.



As you can see, it’s a lot of material we will be covering! Having said that, you may decide that you only want to focus on “occupied staging” which means you will mostly be looking at Week One for your business. Remember, we are a *RESOURCE* for your business and should be looked at in that regard. Having an all-access pass to over three weeks of training materials is always daunting but you will be glad it’s available for you to jump around.

During your training, you will be provided with:

- Objectives to let you know what you will be able to do as a result of completing the module.
- Road Map to show you what you have completed in the training and what you have left to cover.
- An agenda that shows you the topics to be covered and their order
- An *HSR Planning Checklist* for you to complete as you finish each section and module of your training.
- On-demand training and videos which you access through the HSR training website for that week.
- References to additional resources, such as videos, “how-to” guides, and forms that are in the *HSR Member* area of the website.
- Live training webinars for Q & A, MLS critiques and Next Steps trainings are occasionally available on the HSR calendar in the Member Home Page for you to click on and reserve your seat.

Throughout this guide you will see several different icons that will help you as you progress through the training:



Note: These sections will include additional information or pointers that you should pay special attention to and remember.



Tip: These boxes will provide you with tried and true techniques that have worked well for other successful home stagers. Tips will also be posted in the Member’s area of the website for easy reference later on.



Website: These sections will identify information that is on the HSR website and will tell you where to find it.



Important: This icon is used to emphasize a particularly important piece of information.



HSR Planning Checklist: This icon is used to direct you to your *HSR Planning Checklist* to document your own list of activities.

About the HSR Member Area of the Website



Website:

- Go to the *HSR Website* (www.homestagingresource.com).
- Click on **Members Login**. The *Member Home Page* will display.



Note: On the website, items that are underlined are hyperlinked to additional information. In other words, if you click on that word or phrase, you will be taken to another page with even more information.

On the HSR website *Member Home Page*, you will see a set of labels or tabs at the top of the page.

- **Member Home** – This is the member services and news center. You will find Member FYIs and Newsletters, access to Stagers Connect and the American Society of Home Stagers and Redesigners (ASHSR), our Member Store, information on numerous vendor discounts, and other helpful updates.
- **Week One, Week Two, Week Three** – These sections will be your primary focus for each week of training. Each one includes your objectives, agenda and links to all the resources you will need that week.



Note:

- The Training Calendar is in the right-hand bar for quick access.

- **Design Modules** – HSR Definitive Guide to Home Staging and Redesign broken up in daily Design Modules for you to follow in conjunction to your business training.
- **HSR Library** – This is the one-stop shop of HSR resources. This will be particularly useful for you after graduation. Materials are constantly being added, so check back frequently to see the most current resources HSR has posted for its members.



Tip: It's a good idea to become familiar with the *Member Area* of the website. Get a feel for the layout and how to navigate within the area by clicking on the "**Site Map**" (**under "Quick Links"**) and **printing it out**. However, don't let it distract you too much from your training and getting your business set up.

HSR Member's Area Site Map





Member Home - Member Services Page

- **Stagers Connect** - Private Social Networking site just for HSR Grads!
- **Member Store** - Purchase brochures, thank you cards, business folders, marketing material refills, renew your membership or add a business partner here
- **American Society of Home Stagers and Redesigners (ASHSR)** - Networking Association that our members use to connect locally in our over 40 Chapters nationwide
- **Member's Black Book** - Over 70 member discount vendors who want your business
- **Member FYI's** - View current and past member email announcements
- **Member Calendar** – Here's where you can sign up for the occasional live webinars we have



Week One - Establishing Your Business Foundation

- **21-Day Training Overview and Video** - Must watch video review of entire training
- **Week One Overview** - Overview of Week One
- **Getting Started Guide and Video** - Setting up shop and all that it entails
- **Domain Reservation Section** - HSR walks you through choosing a domain/website address/url (all the same thing)
- **Industry Overview and Strategy** – Video on the industry and finding your niche
- **Guide to Successful Consultations** - Consultation Guide  and 2-part Video Series detailing the consultation
- **HSR Guide to Pricing & Process Success** – We are specific in what we know works 
- **Client Action Plans** – We walk you through available Action Plans
- **The Art of the "Walk and Talk"** – Excellent Videos to guide you through
- **"Quick Start" Your Business** - Informative section for handling business right away!
- **Anatomy of a Staging Day** – How to structure your Staging Day service
- **Valuable Vendor Partnerships** - How to research vendor partners and create value for your business
- **Open House Assessments** - A fun assignment that is sure to "broaden your horizons"
- **Forms Library** – This is also in the HSR Library but we wanted you to see it right away
- **Week One "Check-In" Quiz** – We want to know how you're feeling about your business plan and goals, so please take ten minutes and fill this section out, so we know you're working through and absorbing the materials. Easy Quiz based on the Training Manual Tab One.

 **Week Two - Building Your Business and Vacant Home Staging**

- **Week Two Overview** - Overview of Week Two in video format
- **A-Z Vacant Staging Section** - Complete details on how to provide a vacant home staging service easily, inexpensively and effectively!
- **First 50 Marketing Guide** – A brainstorming marketing guide on the many ways to sell yourself.
- **HSR 5-Step Marketing Plan** - Creating your marketing plan and all that it entails. This page is critical because it maps out your marketing plan with links to pages that give further training.

Step 1 Market Research - Marketing First Fifty 1-10

1 Analyze Target Markets - Did you know there are several target markets that can keep you busy? In this section we analyze each one and provide links to how to identify and market to them.

Contact Management System - This section explores different programs available and the importance of having one!

Step 2 - Representation - Marketing First Fifty 11-19

Blinging Your Brand - Tools to take control of your image

2 Social Networking – Getting connected easily
Marketing Materials - Order inexpensive, professional materials from our Discounted Print Shop

A Website That WORCS! - We detail things you need to consider when building your website!

Perfect Portfolios – How to create your Portfolio

Step 3 - Credibility Connecting - Why it's so important to be where your clients might be looking for you!

Google Page One - How to get on Google Page One

3 Directory Connect - Over 20 FREE direct links to key places on the Internet to "Be Found"

Facebook Connect – Get your phone to ring right away!

Association Connect - List of good association to connect with, as well as "5 Keys to Association Success"

Blog and Article Connect - For those of you who love to write, this is a great resource for how and where to get published for credibility

Step 4 – Intentional Marketing- A must read that simplifies what will ultimately determine the success of your business.

Identifying Heavy Hitters - Research is the first step in your Intentional Marketing campaign and here is an easy system and my secret formula to follow in order to find agents that can keep you very busy!

4 Wave Marketing Plan - Now that you've done the Research, it's time to create a contacting process that works

Realtor Office Presentations – Several example presentations to choose from!

Local Advertising - Five tips to success with local advertising, as well as example ads.

Direct Mail - Getting the most out of your direct mail and automating the process.

Step 5 - Capitalizing on a Job Well Done - The importance of taking advantage of every opportunity

5 Public Relations - Things to consider, as well as example press releases in Word for you to use.

Referrals and Testimonials - Build an easy testimonial and feedback system!



Week Three - Putting It All Together with Advanced Expertise!

- **Week Three Overview** – What to expect in this week's materials
- **All About Redesign** - Hour long video training that outlines a winning redesign process!
- **Marketing for Redesign** - Video presentation shows you how market your redesign business
- **Realtor Partnerships** - A step-by-step marketing plan for developing agent partnerships including a 10-page plan and videos
- **Alternative Income Streams** - Many other ways you can make money in this business!
- **Shop Like a Pro** - Learn how to get the most from our Trade Connections
- **Model Home Staging** – Learn how to tackle model homes and work with Builders
- **Window Coverings** – Working with our industry partner to offer window coverings at extreme trade discount
- **Holiday Design** – We outline how you would process, price and market holiday design services
- **Adding Organization** – We have a guest speaker on how to structure, price and market organization services
- **Staging Day Videos** - On demand videos detailing different Staging Days and what was done.
- **Download Your HSR Logos** – Logos in various colors and formats for you to use
- **HSR Certification Test** – Simple exam to test your knowledge of the training in terms of pricing, process and design.



Design Modules - The Definitive Guide to Staging and Design

- **"How To" Stage an Occupied Home** – Video filled with member before-and-after photos
- **The Elements of Great Design** - The basic principles that make design work.
- **Listening to the Home's Style** - Reading the "Integrity" or style of the home.
- **The Secrets to Guiding the Eye** - Finding and emphasizing a positive focal point in each room.
- **The Art of "Arrangement"** - The art of arranging furniture, accessories, artwork and bookcases.
- **Creating Curb Appeal** - Warm and welcoming exteriors
- **Extra Spaces** - Interior first impressions and extra places in the home
- **Living, Family and Great Rooms...Oh My** - Creating livable areas
- **The Heart of the Home** – Designing kitchen and dining areas
- **Sanctuary Spaces - Master Bedroom and Baths**
- **Designing Bedrooms and Offices**
- **Comprehensive Color** – A great starter guide for understanding color!
- **Window Covering Resales** - Alternative income through the easy sale of window coverings
- **Feng Shui Basics** - Expert Feng Shui Master Linda Lenore gives an amazing presentation!



HSR Library - A Growing List of Education and Resources

- **Forms Library** – Full forms resource
- **Social Media Library** – Free videos and imagery for you to use in your social profiles
- **Videos for Your Website and Marketing**
- **Amazon Products I Love**
- **Conquering Fear**
- **Technology and Business**
- **Staging and Redesign** - Descriptions, links
- **Real Estate Wisdom** - Cost vs Value Reports, Real Estate Projections
- **Educating Clients** - Additional links to explore are Staging Statistics, Understanding Buyers, Art of Phraseology
- **Member Veteran Interviews** - Learn valuable lessons and wisdom from others who have been there!
- **Tales from the Trenches** - Some great emails I've gotten from members who have given back
- **Photo Galleries** - Staging Tips and Tricks, Room-by-Room Emotional Connection Point Ideas
- **RESA Convention Recap Video** – Webinar where we outline what we learned from the latest RESA Convention

Training Calendar

As with any new business owner, it's important that you keep your activities on track. The same is true as you work through your *HSR Certification Training*. As you begin your training, you will see that there are many actions that need to be completed during the training. Keep in mind that this is a very aggressive plan. Don't worry if you don't stay completely on track and know that there is no such thing as "getting behind" in the training since it is at your own pace!



Website: Download the **Calendar**.

From the *Member Area*, click on **Calendar** in the top right hand bar to find an example calendar

Example HSR Training Calendar



Now let's go to Week One...

Week 1 – Getting Started and Establishing Your Business Foundation

Day 1 – Week One Overview



“Real success is finding your life work in the work that you love.”
David McCullough – US biographer and historian (1933 -)

In Week One, you will complete a myriad of activities necessary to establish your business foundation and get you started on the road to success. In Week One, you will also learn how to conduct successful consultations, develop pricing and be knowledgeable about the real estate industry.

Objectives

After completing Week One training you will be able to:

Plan your activities for the next month.

Schedule and complete the items on the Getting Started Guide “To Do” List.

Describe the key points for conducting successful consultations and am beginning to structure my own Consultation and style.

Use the Consultation Checklist.

Reserve your domain/url/website address for your company at www.godaddy.com (i.e. www.homestagingresource.com is our url/domain)

Describe various pros and cons of pricing styles and am beginning to form my own services and pricing page.

Begin your Open House Assessment Assignments (optional) for further training reinforcement


Locate the *Resources and Forms* provided to you by HSR. **These forms are each listed in the bottom of the various sections of the training, but we also have a library of all them in this section.


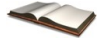



Week One Agenda



Note:

Items listed on the agenda that are underlined can be accessed from the *Week One* training section of the *HSR Website*.

Items on the agenda that have the open book icon () indicate those modules of the training that are in your **printed training manual**.

1. Watch the On-Demand Training – Overview Video.
2. Download and start reading the Week One – Getting Started & Business Foundation section of the Training Manual (to get started before your manual arrives) 
3. Print out your HSR Planning Checklist, Training Calendar and Site Map 
4. Watch the On-Demand Week One Overview Training
5. Read the Getting Started Guide 
6. Watch the corresponding On-Demand Training – Getting Started Guide Videos
7. Complete your *HSR Planning Checklist* as directed in the *Getting Started Guide*.
8. Watch the Domain and Email On-Demand Training. - Reserve your domain at www.godaddy.com and set up your email
9. Watch the Industry Overview Video
10. Read the Guide to Successful Consultations. 
11. Watch the Consultation Videos.
12. Read the HSR Guide to Success – Pricing and Process 
13. Watch the corresponding On-Demand Training – HSR Guide to Success Videos
14. Watch the Client Action Plans Overview Video
15. Watch the “Art of the Walk and Talk” Videos
16. Watch the “Quick Start” Your Business Video, so you can handle a phone call right away
17. Watch the Anatomy of a Staging Day Videos (optionally)
18. Watch the Valuable Vendor Partnerships Video for direction in creating great partners
19. Read the Open House Assessments section online and watch video
20. Week One Quiz – Online quick quiz to let us know you’re staying on track with your certification

On-Demand Training Overview Video

There is a lot of material to cover during this three-week training. This video will provide you with an overview of what to expect. You can watch any of the on-demand videos as many times as you wish.



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

From the *Member Area*, click on **Week One>>Day One>>Training Overview** section in the menu or right hand bar and watch video



Tip: Make sure to have the volume turned on when watching the on-demand training videos. Remember that you can pause and play at any time since some of these videos can get long. You may also want to click on the bottom right, “full screen” icon to watch the HD video in full screen and see exactly what we are presenting.

On-Demand Week One Overview Video

Each week will also have an “Overview Video” for you to watch which will help you plan for what’s to come in that weeks’ worth of materials..



Website: Watch the on-demand *Week One Overview* video.

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

- I have a good idea where to find all the resources in the training area
- I know to click on the “email support” button on the Members Home Page if I have a question
- I have joined Stagers Connect
- I have connected with Audra’s social media profiles

Day 1 - Getting Started Guide -- Introduction



The *Getting Started Guide* includes the activities needed to form the foundation of a successful business. I recommend quickly reading through the guide and then watching the corresponding videos for more clarity, ideas, inspiration and calendar planning.

As you considered taking the first big steps toward owning and operating your own business, you probably had about a thousand ideas and things “to do” swirling around in your head. Creating a business plan helps to keep organized from the 10,000-foot view, but what about your day-to-day details?

The Home Staging Resource doesn’t want you to reinvent the wheel as you create your new home staging and design business. In fact, most of our products are centered around setting up your business foundation and marketing plan so we can help you focus on what you do best...transforming interiors.

The *Getting Started Guide* will help you cut through the storm in your head and organize your priorities step-by-step. It will take the mystery out of how you start a business and what to do.

We’ve listed all of the important details of starting and getting your home staging and design business up and running in a workbook format. You can interact with this guide and check things off on the *HSR Planning Checklist* as you move along through the three weeks. The final tab in this manual is your *HSR Planning Checklist*.

We’ve also taken the *Getting Started Guide* activities and put them in a calendar format with our HSR Planning Checklist and Training Calendar. You can see that with a little bit of planning, it’s not hard to complete all of these steps within four weeks. Schedule your activities as you go.



Tip: Don't get bogged down with future details such as marketing, vacant home staging and the details of your consultation and walk-through just yet. Focus on what's critical first in order to get up and running quickly.

We are excited for you in this journey and know you will do well if you consider thoughtfully every step of the process.

On Demand Training – Getting Started Guide



Website: Read through the 40-page, Getting Started Guide, then watch the on-demand *Getting Started* videos.

From the *Member Area*, click on **Week One>>Day One>>Getting Started Guide** section in the menu or right hand bar and watch video

Fill out your HSR Planning Checklist (at the back of the Training Manual) as you work through this section with Audra

(Optionally) In that section, Audra shares her blank calendars for you to download and fill out to monitor your progress, set your goals and acknowledge your achievements...you got this!

Google Calendar or Cozio app works well for this too.

Personal Section – Focus on You

The first ten things you do when starting your own business is to focus on you. This is an exercise most small business entrepreneurs are familiar with because it will give you the motivation and environment you need to keep persevering toward your success.

Working on your own -- with no one to answer to -- can be very challenging. Unless you take the time to discover your reasons, visualize your goals, create a mission statement and build an activity-based accountability calendar, you will not easily realize your success.

HSR does everything we can to give your business the boost and information it needs, but you are responsible for its ultimate success.

So, first things first.... be honest with yourself, dig deep and dream big!

1. Where do you see yourself?

- Are you looking for something part time or full time?
- Is this a side job you would like to do for friends and then expand into something greater?
- Are you ready to invest forty plus hours a week to build your business?

The answers to these questions will be critical in helping you in your business planning and spending goals. Don't expect huge profits for a minimal investment of time. You get what you put into a business especially when it comes to marketing. Be realistic and true to your expectations. You should plan on working at least 20 hours a week. Most new business entrepreneurs put in 50 – 70 hours out of pure passion.

When you signed up with HSR, we asked you to fill out a *Getting to Know You* form because we want to play a vital role in your success. In order to do that, we ask you to define your business goals. If your goal is to create a successful home staging and redesign business, invest in your goal by putting in the time. Have a clear picture of how much time you can invest in making this business a success!

2. Why do you want to do this and what are your Strengths/Weaknesses that will lead to Opportunities/Threats (SWOT)?

- What are the reasons you want to start this business?
- Are you passionate about redecorating?
- Do you want to be your own boss?
- Do you want to be in charge of your income potential? Do you want the freedom to set your own schedule and go to your kids' events?
- What strengths do you bring to the table? What opportunities would those strengths give? What are your weaknesses? What threats to your business would your weaknesses possibly provide?



Website: Go to <http://www.homestagingresources.com/staging-homes-success-stories/> to find many reasons why people go into this business. Discover your own!

Write down your priority reasons and keep the list handy so you can use it to stay motivated! Have you heard the expression, “Have a *why* that makes you cry”? It sounds corny but when your “why” is compelling enough, it will drive you to do great things!

Capitalize on your past experiences (strengths) in order to build your current business. Some of you come from teaching/training environments in which case giving Realtor Presentations and training sessions would really benefit your marketing. Be true to who you are and use those strengths to build your business.

In the same token, some of you have weaknesses that might be a threat to your business. Evaluate what those weaknesses may be and see if you can farm out the work. Most of us will be weak in the area of sales and marketing, so take the time to hone your sales skills by reading some best-selling sale books like: *Selling 101* by Zig Ziglar, *Duct Tape Marketing* by John Jantsch, *The Accidental Salesperson* by Chris Lytle and many others you can search and read reviews on at www.amazon.com.

3. Develop your Mission Statement and “Story”

Evaluate your priority reasons for starting this business and create a mission statement for your business. Your mission statement should define the reasons why your company exists. The statement should also answer these three questions:

- What are the needs you want your company to address?
- What will your company do to address those needs?
- What principles guide your work and staging philosophy?



Note: The mission statement of the *Home Staging Resource for Home Stagers* is: “Empowering creative design talent by giving them the resources and tools to create successful businesses, while building nationwide awareness of the important benefits of professional home staging and redesign.”

Before you can create a good mission statement, I want you to be clear on what your business is about. You may have come to us because of your interest in staging initially but trust me...good staging leads to move-in redesign. Why? Don’t you think that if clients love what you did with what they own in the home they are selling that they will be far more inclined to ask your guidance (and pay much more for it) in the home they are moving into? People are statistically willing to pay more for the home they are moving into, so that is business you will want to capture, as well as the staging business!

Marketing the “staging side” of your business will be our first priority (since it’s a necessity and easier to market to agents, etc..then redesign). Redesign is easy to market to existing staging clients, so it’s a “next step” in your business model usually if you allow it to be and intentionally promote it. We will explore this much more in Week 3, under Redesign Marketing and Alternative Income Streams but I want you to be aware of the avenues your business will take you from the beginning and plan accordingly.

4. Define Your Vision by Goal Setting and Organization

At this point, you know how many hours you will be able to dedicate to your new business. You have also defined your “why” and “what” (mission statement). This step involves setting the “when” and creating a realistic time frame and calendar by staying organized. I suggest using a day timer/planner early on where you register your important activities/appointments, as well as keep your passwords and login information for all the places we will explore and register to use throughout this training.

In the Members Area under the Getting Started Section in Day One, you have blank calendars you can download and print. The videos show you how I use these calendars on a regular basis and my strategies for getting things done. Google Calendar (<https://www.google.com/calendar/>) or Cozio (<http://www.cozi.com/family-calendar.htm>) are great online calendars you can tap into on your desktop, phone and iPad to stay in sync and organized.

Specific goal setting helps you stay focused on the most important tasks at hand --generating business and billing clients. When putting together your goals, consider these six important things:

- Make your goals inspirational and challenging, but realistic.
- As you read through this Guide, start scheduling the business activities in your HSR Action Plan and calendar, so you have goals for completion
- Define your goals with clarity. Dream a little.
- Write down your goals in the form of a timeline that is both specific and action-oriented. If you set a goal to bill \$5000 in a month, what activities are you going to do to reach that goal? Our *Calendar* is designed to assist you in doing this, as far as the initial set-up of your business, which is time consuming to begin with.
- Evaluate your progress daily. You’re not going to reach \$5000 in a month if you don’t do any marketing today.
- Don’t procrastinate! If the idea “I’ll do that tomorrow” comes into your mind, then that means you need to do it right now!
- Do the “tough stuff” first and then reward yourself with the “fun stuff” (that’s why we recommend doing one Design Module a day AFTER you do the business activities.

Remember, in the beginning over 90% of what you do is sales and marketing rather than actual home staging work. Make sure your day-to-day goals and calendar reflects this once your business is set up.

By going through the *HSR Certification Training Program*, you are already well on your way and have bypassed what is usually a very time-consuming part of starting your own business:

building a website and designing marketing materials; putting together your forms, services, products and walk-through guides; understanding what to do to get your business started, performing a consultation, developing a marketing plan, vacant home staging plan, and business plan.

We've thought of all these things for you. What seems overwhelming at first will become easier to understand later so don't get discouraged. Take your time. I recommend you open up your Google Calendar and start scheduling some of the Getting Started Guide's business activities (like opening up a bank account, getting a credit card, etc..) in the following week's around your personal schedule.

When we talk about money, it's good to start considering some financial goals too. Here is a good financial example of how to reach your goals:

If you want to earn \$75,000 a year and have 50 weeks (minus 2 weeks for vacation) to do this, you will need to make \$1,500 a week or \$300 a day to reach that financial goal.

5. Define Your Personal Style.

Image is important in this business. We talk about "image" a lot at the Home Staging Resource because we feel it is critical to success in this industry. Would you go to a hairstylist who has bad hair? Would you hire a personal shopper who looked like she stepped out of the 1980's? No! Because they are creating a representation of you!

Your greatest competitors in this industry are the home sellers and real estate agents who believe they can stage the homes themselves. If they feel that you have a poor or outdated sense of style, then they will logically translate that to the way you stage their homes. By defining your personal sense of style, you are helping to complete the image the Home Staging Resource has already started for you.



Tip: A word of caution -- some people think that being in the creative fields allows them license for wild eccentricity which can very easily be construed as tacky and be a turnoff to your clients.

We suggest taking a cue from many of the professional real estate agents you work with who are polished and dressed professionally. We have painstakingly created a professional, image-conscious website and marketing materials that will represent you well. Now it's your turn to put together a look that will create confidence in your buyers. Do you need an excuse to go clothes shopping?

To find the kind of "Brand" you want your business to aspire to, you have to get inspired.

6. Invest in Yourself and Get Inspired!

When you put money into your own experience, knowledge and training, you are investing in the future of your business. HSR offers an extensive "Design Modules" section where we explore the principles and elements of great design and apply it to staging and redesign room-by-room.



Website: From the *Member Area* of the *HSR website*, go to the *Design Modules*.

One of my favorite design inspiration websites can be found at <http://www.houzz.com> which features designer/stager's work and profiles. While you're looking at homes I suggest you also review some of the designer's profiles and "brands" to form an idea of the kind of brand you want to create for your company! I also want you to get into Stagers Connect and start reviewing the photos there and reading the forum entries. Immerse yourself in the industry while formulating and building your business!



Tip: There is a wealth of *free* decorating information and resources at www.pinterest.com (make sure to follow me while you're at it!), www.hgtv.com, www.bhg.com and www.diy.com to keep you inspired and informed on the latest trends.



Warning: Don't get too bogged down with this step since I find that Pinterest and Houzz can really take up all of my time! Simply make observations, have fun with this but focus more on what will move your business forward.

I also highly recommend you take advantage of your local library for a variety of decorating "how to" books as well! I've had members easily drop \$500 on books that they could have very easily checked out for free at the library, so save your dollars for marketing and use this fantastic and free resource!

HSR recommends that you build your business knowledge by attending classes in areas you feel weak such as computers, accounting, Word, Excel and sales. The Internet is an invaluable tool in this industry, yet highly underutilized! The small businesses that succeed are the ones who learn about the technology and resources available to them. Simply search Google or www.youtube.com when you want to know "how to do" anything!

7. Decide how much money you have to start your business.

Although a home staging and redesign business is one of the least expensive businesses you can start, it will require some capital to get it off the ground and growing. Figure out how much you're willing to *invest* in this business and let that guide your growth. We use the word *invest* because expecting to grow a successful business for under \$1000 may be setting yourself up for disappointment or very slow growth.

As you set your budget, allow for some flexibility. For instance, a large expense in this industry is staging vacant homes because of the purchase, storage and the moving of inventory.



Tip: You may decide after going through our training in *Week Two* and reviewing your capital that a vacant home staging service will not be in your offerings right away. That's okay.

8. Be Accountable.

Owning your own successful business is about self-motivation. It means that you have to tap into what's going to get you up in the morning and sometimes do things you don't like to do. We talked about finding your "why" and referring to it often as a form of self-motivation. Along with your "why", as painful as it can be, you need *accountability*.

You can do this by sharing your goals with a few people you trust or asking your spouse to "check in" with you every day after you work. We HIGHLY suggest you get the most out of your Stagers Connect and ASHSR membership by connecting, attending meetings, taking part and joining your peers in building the industry and encouraging one another! The Real Estate Staging Association (RESA) is the trade association for our industry and another great resource to connect with stagers but you have to pay to join this Association (look for an HSR discount in the Member Black Book: <http://www.realestatestagingassociation.com>)

Work hard, stay motivated and take the time on things that really matter (like your branding, Portfolio, marketing, networking and design talent).

9. Build and photograph your own "Emotional Connection Points."

Does your work environment draw you in or does it stress and frustrate you? If you've never thought of this before, then enter your workplace/office and look around.

- How does it make you feel emotionally?
- Does the disorganization cause you to break out in a cold sweat?
- Do you have a sanctuary seating area where you can work creatively?
- Do you have a special place in your home where you can curl up with a magazine and cup of coffee?

At the *Home Staging Resource*, we believe that the art of great marketing is the ability to position the product (a home) in the mind of a buyer as something that will fill their specific needs and desires. Later on in the training, we provide staging philosophy where we use "emotional connection points" throughout our rooms in order to build emotional impact in our buyers and foster a sense of "feeling home."

We will be using those same "emotional connection points" in our "home living" services as well, but we punctuate them with the individual personality and style. We need to give that same gift to ourselves by building "emotional connection points" within our own homes, especially in our workspaces.



Website: To see some examples of emotional connection points:
From the *Member Area*, click on **HSR Library in the menu**.
Under *Photo Galleries*, click on **Emotional Connections**.

If you don't know what that looks like, then go to our *Emotional Connection Gallery* and browse through the photos. You will quickly see and gauge how those photos make you respond emotionally.

Your office should be a place that motivates your efforts by being beautiful, organized, comfortable, well equipped and a reflection of you. You create this environment by having a place for everything, important files and office equipment within reach, an ergonomic chair, desk and computer set-up, as well as plenty of lighting and beautiful elements that make you feel comfortable and at peace.

Creating an environment you will want to work in will only boost your productivity and allow you to meet those goals you set previously.

In our Design Modules section of the Members Area, we have several “hands on” exercises where you may want to use your office as a before-and-after portfolio makeover.

10. Developing Your Relatable Story and “About Us” Page

Here’s the bad news...there’s probably a lot of talented competitors in your field, so having a relatable story that people can connect to is critical! Have you ever heard of the “law of attraction”? Basically it states that you will “attract” the kind of person that you are. This is good news for us in business because we know that we can work well with people that see things the way we do BUT in order to attract those people, we have to tap into our “story”. Get another sheet of paper and write it down in this way:

- a. **Your Purpose** – Think about what made you go into this field? What problem did you want to solve? It helps to start with, “I am here to help _____ do _____, so that _____.” Example, in redesign one might say, “I am here to help people love where they live, so that coming home evokes a feeling of warmth, peace and harmony.”
- b. **Write down the challenges your clients would face.** Example, “Have you ever had a room that you just couldn’t figure out or want to be in?”
- c. **Tell your story of struggle and then your solution** – If you’re background was very different than what you’re doing now, connect aspects and your strengths to the current situation.
- d. **Get personal but not uncomfortable** – No politics, religion or swear words unless you truly believe that your target market fits that profile.
- e. **Use visuals** – Your portfolio is key!
- f. Document your credentials as they relate to the service/product you’re selling. Don’t mention things that seem random and do not relate to your topic because then it just sounds like you bounce around from industry to industry.
- g. **Testimonials** – Don’t forget to have testimonials and ideally a photo connected to each one.
- h. **Awards/Recognition** – Use logos from sources you’ve been quoted. Lastly, it’s time to brag.
- i. **YOU ARE YOUR BRAND!** People will hire you because they know, like and trust you...that happens when they connect to you.
- j. **Take a Good Photo of Yourself** – Even if it’s a selfy, people want to see a FACE on a website “About Us” page, Houzz profile, Facebook, etc...

From these beginnings you will be able to formulate a clear “About Us” paragraph that will resonate with clients and you will use in all your branding. Have this paragraph handy so you can simply copy and paste it when each directory asks for a bit about you.

Planning Section– The Business Structure

The next items on your “To Do” List focus on *planning your business*.

It’s tempting to skip these steps or not put the time and research into them, because --let’s face it – it’s just not fun. But, these are the kinds of things you want to get right the first time around. Many small business owners will tell you they regret the way they initially set their business up and the difficulties they had correcting those initial mistakes, especially in the areas of insurance and accounting later on in their business.

11. Research your demographic market and “competition’s” websites

Spend some time now going to the Internet and do some research on your local competition. You can Google “home stagers in [city name]” or “[city name] home staging.” Review any websites you find carefully. These are the staging businesses that you will be competing with in your area. Pay particular attention to the services they are offering and list them in your HSR Planning Checklist. Find out as much as you can about what they charge for their services. This effort will help you to start planning and help you set your own financial expectations for your business.

How do they structure their Consultations and what is their Pricing and Services look like? Did you connect with their “About Us” page? At this point, just start doing some preliminary planning.

- Each demographic market is different, so have an understanding of what you’re real estate market is doing by using www.zillow.com, www.realtor.com or www.redfin.com to research.
- Remember to review your estimated budget and personal "why" to make sure you can offer all of the services you see other stagers offering.
- Allow for flexibility and discounts.
- Don't assume you have to do four consultations a day to make money.



Tip:

When crunching the numbers remember that *everything* will take longer than you think it will and you can always change your pricing.



Note:

You will be learning much more about determining what services you will offer and what you will charge later in the training when you read our HSR Guide to Success.. We even provide you with sample pricing sheets.

Hopefully while reviewing Houzz.com you had a chance to get an idea of you like about some of the designer’s branding and websites and what you don’t like. Write down your observations since you don’t want to brand yourself similarly to anyone in your area. You want to be unique and memorable! We’ll talk about this a lot more in Week 2 under Marketing but since you’re

researching and looking at websites now, you might as well take note of what will be your differentiator. Another great location to research both stagers and designers in your area is www.Houzz.com.

12. Prepare a general business plan outline (optional)

Don't waste time going into extreme detail unless you plan on applying for a small business loan (which you will usually not need right away). A business plan is a written description of your company's future. By setting some goals for yourself and understanding your own strengths and weaknesses (previously), you created a plan of action to achieve those goals.

Your business plan should simply convey:

- Your business goals
- The strategies you'll use to meet your goals
- Potential problems that may confront your business and ways to solve them
- The organizational structure of your business, including titles and responsibilities
- The amount of capital required to finance your venture and keep it going until it breaks even and eventually turns into a profit!

You've already completed the goals and capital portion. Now it's time to identify and troubleshoot the obstacles you may run into and make plans to overcome them.

Here is a general guideline you can follow:

- a. The first is the *business concept*, where you discuss the industry, your business structure, your particular product or service, and how you plan to make your business a success. Use your prior competitor research and Houzz research to assess what others have already done in your area.
- b. The second is the *marketplace section*, in which you describe and analyze potential customers: who and where they are, what makes them buy and what features to focus on when selling to them. Here, you also describe the competition and how you'll position yourself to beat it or capitalize on it by educating the public. (We list these out for you in Week 2, so don't worry too much about this).
- c. Finally, the financial section contains your income and cash flow statement, balance sheet and other financial ratios, such as break-even analyses. This part may require help from your accountant and a good spreadsheet software program (which we'll delve into later.)



Tip: The Small Business Administration website (<https://www.sba.gov/>) offers lots of free information on preparing business plans, including samples, instructions and even an online workshop!



Warning: Don't get too bogged down with this step unless you need a small business loan! After week 3, you will be much more ready to thoughtfully put a business plan together because HSR will have provided a whole lot more insight. Remember, if anything is stumping you, move on!

13. Talk to Your Insurance Agent or Connect With Our Insurance Provider

Peace of mind goes a long way in business although as a business model goes, the staging and design "service model" is fairly risk free. You should already have insurance, so contact your agent and discuss your business venture. We suggest you have an experienced broker you can call for specific advice. When you have a broker representing you -- especially someone with experience in insuring home stagers -- it's a lot easier to get paid if something should go wrong.

You may need both personal liability and general liability insurance. You may want to just have one big umbrella policy to cover everything, particularly your staging inventory if you plan on doing vacant homes. Vacant staging will determine how much insurance you need since the primary purpose of staging insurance is to protect all of your inventory and assets in the home.



Tip: Consider picking your agent's brain on what kind of business structure you should create. You'll find more on business structures in Item #13 below.



Website: From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Member Black Book for Staging Insurance and what Pen-Ex covers.**
Judy Fobes - judy@pen-ex.com - 877.438.7369x105
Judy at PenEx is the most recommended by RESA and knows our industry VERY WELL. Tell her I sent you!

14. Decide on your business structure.

Should you structure your business as a Sole Proprietorship, Partnership, LLC or Corporation?



Tip: Guidelines and policies on business structures vary by state. Check your own state's website and search for "corporations" or "corporation commission." You will find free information on the definitions of each structure and how to file applications.

Talk to other business owners and your accountant about the pros and cons of each. If you have considerable personal assets, you may decide to form an LLC or Corporation for added protection of those assets. If you're like many stagers and just want to start small, consider a simple sole proprietorship and register the business with your county.

There's not a lot of "exposure" in this service based industry but since people can sue for almost anything...it's good to consider all options.



Tip: There are online companies who can do all the tedious filings for you to set up an LLC or Corporation, so compare costs and services. Here are three to consider: www.bizfilings.com, www.legalzoom.com and www.corporate.com.

15. Name Your Company.

What's in a name? Everything! Put some serious thought into your business name because it is one of the first impressions your clients view.

- The name you pick should state in some way what your business is about. It should be easy to pronounce and easy to understand over the phone. The terms “design” “Interiors” and “homes” work well to cover both the staging and the redesign side of your business. I caution the use of the term “interior design” unless you are an interior designer since the Association of Interior Designers (ASID) is strict on this.
- Stay away from a long name or one that is difficult to spell or remember. You're in a creative industry. Be creative when deciding on your name.
- While you are naming your business, consider the domain name you will use, so that you can have a short and consistent name for your business. **BE ORIGINAL!** Instead of www.sallysmithhomestaginganddesign.com, choose www.sallysmithdesign.com because it is short, consistent and encompasses all that your business will cover...both staging and redesign.
- Make sure the name you choose is not already taken by first checking to see if the web address is available on Godaddy.
- As tempting as it may be to pick a .me or .design ending...stick with a .com ideally
- Google the name to make sure it's not used elsewhere or taken on Facebook
- Go to the Trademark website and searching trademarked names to make sure any part of your name is not trademarked at:

<http://www.uspto.gov/trademarks/index.jsp>

Having a domain that matches your company name is important to establishing your business credibility, brand and consistency. This is especially true to an Internet conscious real estate industry. Start searching for available domain names you can reserve. Have fun and take your time on this! At HSR, we see a lot of people rush to have us reserve their name, only to regret it later on. **We also suggest choosing a .com over any other since that is the way people search.**

Remember, YOU are your brand and the product! Your clients are paying for your artistry and talent which is unique and special. I personally love when people create company names that incorporate their name as well ie. Emma White Interiors. I have created a section in Week 2>>Bling Your Brand that you may want to review as you consider your name.



Tip: To determine whether your chosen domain name has already been taken, go to www.godaddy.com. This website allows you to enter the domain name you want to use to see if it is available. Don't

be discouraged if your domain name is already taken. Be creative to find a variation that is still available. *****Make sure to watch my Domain and Email Videos in Week 1, under Reserve Your Domain before paying to reserve your chosen domain!**



Important: Once you decide on a web address, make sure the name is not taken locally by going to your city office. It seems improbable that an international domain (web address) would be available and the name is taken locally, but stranger things have happened. Domains are inexpensive so if you do reserve the wrong one, you can always choose another.



Website for Marketing Package Purchasers:

****We highly recommend you reserve your domain at Godaddy but don't buy hosting (that's what we cover) a domain costs only about \$15 and Godaddy has the best service.**

16. Register and license your business.

It's a very simple and somewhat archaic process. But when you want to start a business, you simply go down to City Hall and register the name of your business locally. You will also want to get a reseller's license or license to sell, so that you can *resell your inventory* and shop wholesale for clients (like a retail store). It's very easy to do this **(I have a link in the Members Black Book where you can get the resell license online in 10 minutes!)**

Shopping on behalf of your client and obtaining "to the trade" discounts can be a HUGE alternative income stream for you, so getting your "resale" or "wholesale" license is essential. For instance, if you received 50% trade discount on a \$2,000 couch you purchased for a client, the recommended "split" of your discount would mean \$500 in your pocket! We talk about this in detail in Shop Like a Pro, so just be aware it will all be made clear.



Website: In the *Member Discounts* section of the *Member Area Home page*, you will find various designer discount programs from retailers who may want to see a copy of your reseller's license IF you want to purchase their goods without getting charged sales tax.

17. Get a business phone and voice mail.

Getting a business phone and voicemail is a necessity because your phone will be your best friend. The business of home staging keeps you away from the office. Most all home stagers their cell phone for their business so they are always accessible.



Tip: Make it a habit to check your voice mail and return messages several times a day. Make sure to turn off your cell phone during appointments and have a message that states you are with a client but value their call and will contact them immediately afterward.

If you have partners, we recommend you subscribe to www.grasshopper.com. For around \$10.00 per month, this program provides you with five mail boxes, an 888 (toll-free) number, and other call forwarding benefits.



Tip: For those of you who want to keep your personal cell number out of your business or have a more portable lifestyle ie. live in a couple locations or are moving in the next year, use Google voice. Google voice gives you a phone number that will ring you wherever you tell it, as well as give you voicemail and transcription services. You can review the features at: <https://www.google.com/voice>

18. Decide on your business address.

Most stagers simply work from home. If you will be working out of your home, you may not want your business to reflect a home address. A post office box can sound a little shady. Many UPS stores have PO Boxes that appear to be actual addresses (suites), rather than PO's. Call around since the appearance of an office space might be important to some of your customers. Otherwise, consider leaving your address out of your marketing materials which is standard practice



Tip: Now that you know the business name, domain, email and phone number for your business, feel free to get your website created in the Premium Website Section (for Premium Website Purchasers) since that is all we need to get your gorgeous site up and running!
To see all our fantastic styles and functionality of the sites, go to:
<http://www.homestagingresources.com/home-staging-certification/>

19. Open a checking account AND be able to accept credit cards from clients.

The best way to keep track of your expenses and account for business activities is to keep your personal finances SEPARATE from business. Banks are fighting for small business accounts, so make sure you get these bells and whistles -- free checks, online bill pay and a debit/credit card. Your bank is usually the best place to coordinate the ability to accept credit cards from your clients, so make sure to ask them about that as well.



Tip: Using your cellphone, it's very easy to accept credit card payments through a service called Square (<https://squareup.com/>) or Intuit GoPayment at www.gopayment.com. Here you get a FREE card reader that attaches to your phone and allows you to swipe a client's credit card, sign for charges and even emails the client a receipt! The only cost is each take a percentage of the amount, so price it out.



Tip: For online payments, you can use www.paypal.com or www.stripe.com to set up an instant account and have "buy" buttons on your website!

You can set up specific service dollar amounts on your website that

clients can click and pay in advance for your shopping services.

Each of the technology services above are free to sign-up and all charge the same percentage amount on the sale.

20. Obtain a credit card.

You may be saying, “But I already have a credit card through my bank.” It doesn’t matter. *Developing good business credit is important.* There are credit card companies that can offer you more in terms of rates, cash back, airline miles, etc.



Tip: Do your homework. Look for hidden costs and fees. Test their customer service ahead of time. You don’t want a card you can’t cancel because you’ll be on hold for 20 minutes!

HSR Planning Checklist

HSR Planning Checklist:

Complete items # 11 – 20 of your *HSR Planning Checklist*.

Preparing Section – Preparing for Business

“Between two products equal in price, function and quality, the better looking will out sell the other.”

Raymond Loewy

21. Get very familiar with the area your business will be serving.

You will be going to clients' homes for your consultations and staging days, so it is important that you can find your way around efficiently. You don't want to waste valuable time trying to find your way. I love just adding the address to my iPhone and having Siri guide me but here are some tips:

- Plan your route in advance by checking Google for driving directions at <http://www.maps.google.com>. You can drag the stick figure to the street to get an idea of what the neighborhood and homes look like in advance.
- Print them out before you leave for your appointment but don't assume they are always right!
- In Week 3>>Products I Love I've curated my favorite Amazon products for a staging business. In that store, there is a great \$10 product that magnetically holds your phone in your car for you at eye level...it's amazing!



Tip: Give yourself plenty of time to get where you're going. If you get there early, simply drive around the neighborhood to better acquaint yourself with the type of home buyer who would want to live there. Remember, we are staging for the typical home buyer for the home in question.



Tip: I love an app on my phone called Waze because it will tell me the quickest way to get to an address especially during traffic time. If you live in a metropolitan area, you will use this app daily!

22. Buy a great digital camera or upgrade your iPhone and become a pro!

Your pictures will be the strong foundation of your marketing and you only get one chance to capture the image for your portfolio typically. Ideally, the agent you work with is hiring a professional photographer since those are the best “after” photos. Ask the agent and look into contacting a real estate photographer for a stager discount if the agent does not use one...**especially for that first job.**

If a professional photographer is not an option, I recommend purchasing a good, easy-to-use digital camera with a wide-angle lens. Make sure you choose a camera with a **28mm wide angle or LOWER** in order to get the wide angle you will need and capture the entire space. Since technology changes daily, go to www.amazon.com to search their reviews and stats about their most popular camera choices before buying.

You can also search Stagers Connect for these kinds of conversations in the past to get insight.

Great pictures of the interiors of the home are so important in this digital age! According to the NAR Study of Home Buyers over 95% of home buyers are online shopping for homes and no longer driving door-to-door. Even my iPhone takes better photos than the ones I've seen online, so just know that you will usually be the one getting the best shot for the client!



Tip: Having enticing photos of the home online for buyers to find is imperative and essential to the home sales process! I recommend doing some research in your area for "real estate photographers" and connecting with one on your first major transformation to get portfolio perfect photos to use in all your marketing.

23. Start considering all the various services you will be offering.

Many people enter into this industry because they see the great need for home staging in a real estate market gone crazy. Trust me; staging is not all that you will be doing in your business! In fact, I've often wondered why other training companies don't train like HSR and offer both staging and redesign/home styling training because the reality is you will be doing both in your business!



Note: The terms redesign, redecorating and home/interior styling can be used interchangeably because they refer to the process of *using what the home owner already has to enhance the space*. I will talk about this in great detail in the Week 3, Redesign Sections

In fact, most of your staging jobs will turn into move-in redesign or Home Styling work because your clients are *statistically much more inclined to spend money on the home they are moving into than the one they are leaving*. As a stager first, you have first dibs on the Interior Designer's number one target market: New Home Owners. This is why so many savvy Interior Designers have joined HSR to offer staging as part of their service offering. We go into detail about Redesign in Week 3, so you're going to love it!



Website: We have a section in Week 3 on "Alternative Income Streams for Your Business" that details the many other ways you can expand your business offerings. If you're interested in this topic right away, go to the Members Area >>Week 3 >>Alternative Income Streams section

Keep in mind; I don't mention all of these to scare you but rather to encourage you! Once you go through the training and start working with your clients, you will find your business head into the direction you find most exciting! This is one of the wonderful things about our industry!



Website: I explore picking your niche more deeply in the Industry Overview section which is in Week One, so stay tuned...

24. Get a good small business accountant and attorney.

Now is a good time to build your team of advisors. Spend the extra money to get highly experienced professionals in the small business arena because they will save you money in the long run. Ask trusted and successful friends who they use for the best referrals.



Tip: A good place to find these folks would be to contact your local SCORE office to get referrals at www.score.org. You can also email questions to SCORE to get valuable, FREE, small business advice. **Another GREAT resource is Yelp.**

Your accountant will be able to go over the many tax benefits of owning and operating a small business from home. Meeting with an accountant early in the process will also help you understand the basics of tax reporting and filing estimated taxes each quarter.

Your attorney will be able to quickly draft an "Agreement" for your clients to sign that protects you from liability and fraud.



Website: To download sample agreements to review with your attorney as a starting point but they are NOT legally binding. From the *Member Area*, click on **HSR Library**.

Under the Forms Library, locate the *Agreement Examples*.

HSR makes no claims as to the legal validity of its forms. Each state is different and has their own requirements.

25. Set up your business accounting system.

How "tech savvy" are you? Some of you may be old fashioned and want to simply use a ledger or excel spreadsheet but with technology moving quickly these days, there are some fantastic and inexpensive online, project management and accounting systems worth looking into. The top online systems are 17Hats, Freshbooks, Tave, Studio Cloud and Zoho. I recommend going to Google and starting a search that looks like "17hats vs..." and let Google fill in the blanks. This will bring up the most recent blog posts comparing the best small business consulting based systems available for use. Since their technology and pricing moves rapidly, it's best you do a bit of quick research on your own to find the system that is most "user friendly" for you..



Tip: Staying organized and automating this process as much as possible will be key to your growth! One thing I like about 17Hats is that they have a new side service called "Ally" and for a small fee, you can have an "assistant" do lots of the processing for you!

26. Start reviewing various vendor options.

Your clients will always ask you for vendor referrals for work that you cannot perform for them. In the beginning, it may be best to refer these vendor questions to the real estate agent representing the home. Most agents have specific vendors they prefer to use and this removes you from any liability should things go wrong.

When you research various real estate offices to market to, make sure you check out their “Concierge” or “Preferred Vendor” list as a good place not only to get your business listed, but to network with other service providers. A good painter will be worth his weight in gold. Make sure you have built some established referral-based relationships that you can fall back on should the situation arise. Down the road you can use these referrals for multiple sources of income streams if you have a good system and relationship in place.



Website: Watch my quick video this week on how to find, evaluate and create strong partner relationships with various vendors you will need in your area!
Week One>>Valuable Vendor Partnerships

The relationship comes first. Create a list of vendors you can see yourself working with and ask around. Have a few vendors come over and give you estimates on work at your own home. This will allow you to see how they work, how well they follow up, and their overall professional demeanor. We will cover this area of your business in more detail in Week Three under *Alternate Income Streams*.

27. "Stage to Live" at home or practice what you preach.

You are emotionally connected to your home. How does each room make you feel? Previously, we talked about creating an emotional, organizational haven in your office. What about the rest of your home?

- Is there a sense of organization and neatness?
- Do you have *emotional connection points* in each of your rooms that make you feel warm and good?

Make sure you are redesigning your own space so that *you* “FEEL HOME” in it (we will discuss the “FEEL HOME” process in the HSR Guide to Success in a couple days). While you’re at it, take before-and-after photos to start working on your portfolio and photography skills.



Note: You will need to have a couple beautiful before-and-after photos to give the client “an idea” of the way you work! These must be your own work, so taking the time to dial in your own home while photographing each space is a worthwhile endeavor for your portfolio.

Many of your clients will be referrals of friends and acquaintances of yours who have been to your home. Therefore, it is critical to take this step and redesign your home. Living in a clutter-free, organized, clean and beautiful environment should be our goal -- for us as well as for our clients. When you understand the concept of “redesign to live,” clients you “stage to sell” will *always* ask you to stage/style their new home to live in.

28. Organize and inventory your belongings.

Like every new business owner, you're on a budget. It is very likely you will be borrowing from your own home to fill in the void for your clients in vacant homes. Make sure you have a very clear picture of what you own as well as where it is located. We suggest creating an inventory guide or spreadsheet so that you can quickly look things up, catalog where they were purchased and what you are willing to sell them for if a client requests. This can be a very lucrative income stream, so you want to be prepared.



Website: To download a sample Inventory form:

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One**. Click on **Getting Started Guide** and it's listed as a resource download.

Having a record of the possessions you can draw from to stage a client's home reminds you of your options. As your inventory grows, there is a wonderful staging software available to you in our Vacant Section online in Week 2 called Darby Inventory that we highly recommend you use for your growing vacant accessories if you decide that vacant staging is your niche (we will explore your niche in the Industry Overview Video in Week One.)



Tip: We *don't* recommend you rent out your *textile* accessories in a non-vacant home as you run a greater risk of loss and it also poses a sanitary issue (mites, etc..). Clients should be encouraged to purchase those finishing accessories as necessary investments in a quicker more profitable sale. The only time I would recommend renting to occupied homes is for items that won't get used/damaged/mites like artwork.

Clear out some of your closets, cabinets or space in your garage for inventory you purchase along the way for your business. Shopping is one of the many perks in this business. It can also be a tax deduction if used exclusively for home staging! Have a place for everything and everything in its place, and you will save a lot of time! Take before and after photos as you go.

I know it's tempting to want to shop right away...especially when you find a great deal at HomeGoods but try and refrain from spending money randomly. The best source for your business investment in the beginning will be on marketing items like a website, print materials, Google pay per click and Facebook ad campaigns, etc..I will outline all of this in Week 2>>Marketing, so for now...keep studying!

29. Price shop, compare and review Trade Discounts in Member Black Book.

You already obtained your reseller license earlier and should plan on setting up your discount accounts at the retailers you think you use the most often. This is particularly true if you're offering a vacant home staging service and redesign services.



Website: From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Member Black Book** for the full list of vendors with established relationships with HSR and a video about my favorites.

Many of these accounts cannot be created without your HSR Certificate which is why we send that to you electronically when you've shown us you've completed the program in Week 3.

For now, while you're reviewing these accounts, take mental inventory of their products, styles and prices. **Make sure to get their catalogs and keep them on hand!** Many times when asked to stage a home, you will also do some personal shopping for items to "dress up" the home as part of your service offerings. When you know where to go and at what price, you can save yourself a lot of time and headache.



Tip: Each retailer has a different reseller or "To the Trade" plan. Don't assume you will get an automatic discount. Ask to speak to the manager. Explain the nature of your business and ask about their reseller discount. Inquire whether you can set up an account now or simply show the cashier a business card at check out.



Tip: Don't get caught up in the trap of buying every good deal you see just in case a client could use it. You will end up with a lot of stuff and few places to store it. I will list items that are more universal for purchase in the Industry Overview video this week!

HSR has already established relationships with retailers like Pottery Barn, Pier 1, Ballard Designs, Kirkland's and more. For the DEEPEST trade discounts, going to the market is the best shopping option and I detail how to do that and where to shop in the Week 2>>Vacant Section. Other more heavily discounted stores like Target, Wal-Mart and Home Goods will only discount the tax of the items you purchase after viewing your reseller's license if you have one.



Tip: If there is a local retailer (of any kind) that you would really like to shop at, approach them by saying "I am a professional stager and home stylist who does a lot of shopping on behalf of my clients. What is your "to the trade" policy, so I may connect with my clients with your gorgeous furnishings?"

Trust me, they WANT you to shop there and will usually just require to see a business card or reseller license from you. Having these local connections will give you credibility with your design clients as you will see in my "All About Redesign" training video in Week 3.

HSR Planning Checklist



HSR Planning Checklist:

- Complete Items # 21 - 29 of your *HSR Planning Checklist*.

Day 1 - Domain and Email



On-Demand Training – Domain and Email



Website: Watch the *Domain and Email On-Demand Training* video, so that you know what to do when you pick your name.

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One>> Reserve Your Domain** in the menu or right hand navigation bar

Remember to be creative and pick a business name that you can reasonably find a matching domain for. Ideally you will want a .com. Do your research and follow my steps in #15 of the Getting Started Guide, since I've seen people pick names only to find that another company had trademarked the name!



Note: I don't expect you to pick a name on the first day as this is an important part of your training BUT I want you to know how to find a good name, follow my tips and celebrate once you've done it!



Note: In Week 2>>Bling Your Brand Section I have a video on "Finding Your Muse" and going onto www.houzz.com to see other Interior Designer Websites. **Feel free to skip to that section for more "name" inspiration!**

Day 2 - Industry Overview



On-Demand Training – Industry Overview



Website: Watch the *Industry Overview Training* video.

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One >> Industry Overview** in the menu or right hand navigation bar

I've learned a few things in the over 15 years I've been in the home staging business! I've spoken at nearly all the RESA Conventions, served as Vice President for two years on the board of RESA and have personally mentored most of the RESA Stagers of the Year every year.

I'm also fascinated by personality type and am certified in various personality/strengths inventory training companies. As a hobby, I love to study people and what makes them tick.

Why do I say all of this? Because I've seen some serious commonalities in the personality types that veer toward pure vacant staging and the ones that love mostly occupied staging and redesign. In the Industry Overview presentation, I help you do some soul searching in order to recognize right away the type of services that will be a better personality niche for you.

When you have insight into your direction, it's much easier to fast track your business into a revenue creating machine. This video is also highly inspiring because it showcases more home stager success stories and niches.

Day 2 - Guide to Successful Consultations



You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do.

Henry Ford (1863 - 1947)

What is a Consultation?

When you researched those in your area who are stagers you probably found out fairly quickly that the term “Consultation” can mean different things to different stagers. Striking a balance between what to “deliver” in the Consultation and how to charge for that deliverable is a critical element to creating a successful home staging business!

The Consultation is the gateway to your business and the prospect of future business with the client whether it's the seller or agent. Your job is to get to know your client, build rapport, listen to their needs and expectations, assess the space, and deliver education and a plan that is within their budget and time frame. Sounds like a lot right? Don't worry, when you follow our specific consultation process you'll find that it sets you up for all these initiatives to be achieved.

Vacant homes have a different approach which we'll go over in Week 2, so this Consultation Guide is for Occupied Homes.



time, your clients will also respect that time and it's not unreasonable to ask for full payment up front or at least a deposit to hold that day for the client.

- 2. Offering Free Consultations (Unless it's a Bid for a Vacant Home)** – What is the problem with structuring your business like a painter and going to the client's home for 20 minutes and providing a proposal for free? First off, our industry still struggles with educating clients on the “need for staging” and developing the seller “buy in” and rapport needed for the job to be complete. It would be difficult to fit a sit-down discussion; education process and seller “buy in” with your clients if you had to be in and out in 20 minutes wouldn't it? Secondly, “free” tends to attract the kinds of clients who have no intention of buying anything and hope to simply “pick your brain” and get something for nothing. These kinds of clients are what I call the “red flag” clientele. Thirdly, your business may not be able to sustain a model where you are spending hours on business and clients that you don't get paid for. You may not need the money or may consider yourself a “hobbyist” but you are doing a huge disservice to the industry and your fellow stagers by offering too much for too little.

- 3. Doing Laborious Written Reports Without Getting Paid** – Sure the agent and seller want a professional, detailed report from you but are they really willing to pay for that time? To do a full consultation walk through and then go home and fill out a detailed, written report typically takes over 5 hours of the stager's time in which none of those stagers charge anything over \$300...does that make sense for your business?

- 4. Using a Blank Page or Notepad for “Walk and Talks”** – By not giving any context to the client's notes because you are using a blank sheet of paper or simply a room-by-room page, means you will be repeating yourself a lot and your client will not be able to write it all down much less have it look very clean for the agent to view.

- 5. Doing a Walk Through of the Home Immediately** – A very popular staging how-to book recommends walking through the home right away in order for you to have clear “first impressions” but I believe this is a BIG mistake for a few reasons. The main reason you do not want to tear into the home right away with your client is because building rapport with your client, having some “couch therapy” and “taking their temperature” should come first. How do you take a client's temperature? Well it starts with a sit down conversation where you ask them their thoughts on staging, selling and so on. A cold client is someone who resents the idea of having to pay someone to fix up their home and can't understand why buyers can't “see past their belongings.” A warm client is someone who is familiar with HGTV staging shows and can't wait to get started preparing their home with you. Do you see the difference and the need to know what kind of client you have?

What if you were dealing with a very “cold” client who hated the idea of someone walking through their home and criticizing their rooms? Don't you think this would be important for you to know BEFORE the walk through? Remember, the consultation is for your clients benefit mostly, so taking the opportunity to understand where they

are coming from and what their expectations are *first* is essential. We will discuss how to do this later in this guide.

6. **Not Taking the Client's "Temperature" during the Consultation** – Clients are like homes and each one is complex. Some will be "hot" clients in that they are excited about the staging process, can't wait to get started and will hang on every word you have to say...obviously these are ideal clients. Other clients will be resentful they have to have someone tell them how to live, criticize their surroundings and make them do extra work...these are your "cold" clients and obviously not the most ideal. The key is to recognize which type of client you are working with and turn them ALL into HOT clients.
7. **Not Recognizing the "Do-It-Yourselfer" vs the "Do-It-For-Me" Clients** – Similar to taking the client's temperature, you will want to assess whether these are handy, do it yourself type of clients, or clients that need extra hand holding. Remember, some people are willing to just pay you to do it for them, so don't turn a blind eye to this extra business for yourself.
8. **Not "Assuming" and Closing the Sale** – The seller has phoned or brought you to their home for a reason, and that is because they want their home to sell. In order for homes to sell for the best price, they need to be staged, so assume the sale starting from the moment you answer the phone. Being intentional with your words and having a plan in place from first phone call to end of consultation is critical. We will provide role playing ideas to walk you through this.
9. **Not Mentioning Redesign** - Who is the number one target market for interior designers and redesigners? New Home Owners! You are staging a future "new home owners" home, so essentially you have first crack at this client. I've met so many stagers who only think that staging is what they can do and forget the critical redesign component of their talent and business. If you don't "up sell" the redesign side of your business then you are missing out on 50% of it. If you handle the client superbly and subtly up sell your move-in redesign business through the process, then expect that client to use you for their new home.
10. **Not Staying in Touch and Following Up** – Sales 101 simply states that keeping in touch is most of sales. Setting up a contact management system (Week 2) and connecting via social networks are easy ways to stay in touch with clients past and present. The simple act of sending a newsletter or posting some of your finish choices for a current client on Facebook will remind your past clients of the work you do.

Now that you've seen the pitfalls of the many ways stagers structure their consultations, I'm going to detail how to avoid those pitfalls and give the most value to your client. Before I can give you an exact process and forms, let's talk money and types of consultations...

Let's Talk Money for a Bit

I know it's tempting to go into homes for free and help them out since it's our passion, it's what we love to do and frankly, it's what many of you did BEFORE starting this training. This training is what separates the "hobbyist" from the serious business. The hobbyist hurts the staging industry by doing work for free while the serious business makes money, helping people and get respect for the work delivered. If you're going to do something for free...do it for a homeless shelter!

Earlier you set goals and hopefully crunched some numbers. It's most important that you not devalue your expertise and service by pricing too low...trust me, people are not looking for "the low price leader" when it comes to staging and design, so don't focus on price but on quality. They want competency, professionalism, skill, confidence and advice from someone very certain of their abilities. My hope is that once you go through all this training, you will be that person...patience and diligence is essential.

Here's some example numbers you will want to crunch for your business: If you need to make \$75,000 a year, then you need to conservatively make/bill at least \$1,500 a week (minus a couple weeks' vacation) and your business expenses which you will want to write off, like cell phone, home office space, meals, office materials, staging items, etc...the benefits are unbelievable!

If you focus on selling no-overhead "Walk and Talk" Consultations with the occasional Staging Day, then according to my pricing (which you will see later), you will want to sell 3 "Walk and Talks" and 1 Staging Day a week or thereabouts to make that goal. The equation looks like this:

$(3 \times \$250WT's) + \$750SD's = \$1,500 \text{ week, or in terms of time } (3 \times 2\text{hours}) + 7\text{hours} = 13 \text{ hours}$

Since you've already done a bit of research on your area and competitors, you should hopefully have an idea of the way you want to price your service and structure your consultation.

Three Types of Consultations

I have to say that my philosophy on pricing has changed over the years with the various economic markets, demographics and staging awareness. In all honesty, I can't really say what Consultation Style would be best for your situation and demographic but I do know that once you look at the various ones to choose from and start marketing your business, you will find your comfort zone in this area. First, let's educate you on the various Consultation Styles available and my business pros and cons of each.

- 1. Proposal Styled** – Similar to a painter going into the home for a quick bid, the stager goes in and quickly evaluates the home, bidding on what is recommended i.e. "Walk and Talk" or "Staging Day" of work.
- 2. Written Report** – Stager goes into the home, walks through each space making some recommendations to the seller and then goes home and writes up a report (or uses a report software like www.stagingconsultations.com or www.marketreaddyrealestate.com)
- 3. Walk and Talk** – Stager goes into the home and does a "Walk and Talk" in each space making recommendations to the seller on what they should do.

I'm going to detail the pros and cons of each style, so you can make an educated decision on the best structure for your consultations...

Proposal-Styled Consultation

This type of consultation likens your business to that of a painter who will go to the home first and bid on a job. In this style of Consultation you are relying on your charming personality and sales ability to build rapport and upsell your services. You've already taken the time and expense of going to the client's home in the hopes of getting the job. In the staging realm, it looks like this:

Initial Home Assessment, Consultation & Proposal – Free
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will meet with you and discuss your goals, expectations and how to receive the maximum return on investment for your home improvement dollars.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will end with a proposal based upon the amount of work needed in order to gain a speedy sale and the highest dollar amount for your home

In terms of time and money, it looks like this:

0-1 hours of time spent = \$0 (in the hopes of an upsell)

Pros of the Proposal Style

Many Stagers use the proposal-styled consultation when just starting out as a way to get in the door, build rapport, and get referrals, experience and future business. The idea is that you are going into the home, meeting the client, doing a walk through and providing a proposal for work. This style allows you to assess the home first without the financial commitment of the seller.

Cons of the Proposal Style

Rather than dazzle the client on your staging and design expertise, you have to withhold staging advice and count on future business. You've gone through the time and expense of preparing for the consultation and driving there, so you very well may be out of luck and pocket if the client needs to "think about it."

You see, the "free" client is not usually one you want to attract because they generally try to get something for nothing and will never value your expertise or time. I do not recommend you go with this structure of consultation.

Written Report Styled Consultation

In this type of consultation you charge a bigger fee and really deliver by providing everything a client must do to really dial in their home for maximum return on investment in the form of a written report. Here's what it looks like:

Consultation, Home Assessment and Written Report	\$2-300.00
I will meet with you and discuss your goals, expectations and how to receive the maximum return on investment for your home improvement dollars.	
I will do a detailed walk through of the home and take photos of each room	
I will prepare a written, customized report about what is needed in the home for maximum staging effect	

In terms of time and money, it looks like this:

5-7 hours of time spent = \$250-300 or \$50 an hour

Pros of the Written Report Style Consultation

As I mentioned before, it's a tangible deliverable that usually sets the seller off on the right path to preparing their home to sell. It looks highly professional and can easily be sent to all parties involved in the sale of the home. It allows you to do what you love and that is creatively dispense design advice that will give them big bang for the buck. It's a perfect service to sell to agents and possibly have them cover the costs of it as a start in the staging process.

Cons of the Written Report Style Consultation

For some of you in more rural or unsophisticated housing markets it may be too big of a first service price tag for sellers. Written reports are extremely time-consuming, so you very well may find that you are making very little money for the amount of time spent on this service.

I do not recommend you do this style of consultation because it's a lot of work for very little money...plus there's a better way and it's the "Walk and Talk" Using a Staging Report Styled Consultation.

Walk and Talk (using a Staging Report) Styled Consultation – Best Choice!

In this type of consultation you charge a similar fee as the Written Report Style but are spending less time doing tedious reports and more time with the client using an HSR Action Plan. Many stagers hand their clients a notepad and do a walk and talk but I recommend following a plan by using our Staging Report to make you look more professional. Here's what it looks like:

Consultation, Home Assessment and 10-Page Staging Report	\$2-300.00
I will meet with you and discuss your goals, expectations and how to receive the maximum return on investment for your home improvement dollars.	
We will go through the home thoroughly and discuss what needs to be done right away in order to prepare the home to sell	
You will have a photo filled, 10-page Staging Report that you can fill out and take notes on while we verbally do the walk through of the home.	
We will also discuss shopping list items that should be purchased to create the model home look.	
We will discuss cosmetic changes that will have a powerful return on investment OR are simply necessary to do in order to sell in your marketplace.	

In terms of time and money, it looks like this:

2-3 hours of time spent = \$250-300 or \$100 an hour (twice as much as the Written Report Style!) As you become more efficient at this service, you can reasonably charge \$250 and finish in less than 2 hours.

Pros of the Walk and Talk Style Consultation

As I mentioned before, it's a tangible deliverable that usually sets the seller off on the right path to preparing their home to sell. It allows you to do what you love and that is creatively dispense design advice that will give them big bang for the buck. Using our cookie cutter Staging Report, it's easy to look really good, yet fill out easily with the client. It's a perfect service to sell to agents and possibly have them cover the costs of it as a start in the staging process. Most importantly, it simplifies the Consultation process, provides you with more income and your client with details. In fact, if they are overwhelmed by the staging activities listed, they may be more likely to have you come back and just do it all.

Cons of the Proposal Style

For some of you in more rural or unsophisticated housing markets it may be too big of a first service price tag for sellers. Too many times we assume they won't be willing to pay for anything, so don't jump to this conclusion right away. In fact, I'm going to give you an amazing marketing plan and consultation process plan that will make price not as much an issue because it focuses on your expertise, credibility and deliverable.

If You Still Want to Go With a Proposal-Styled Consultation Here's Some Advice

If you don't think your area is ready for a Walk and Talk and want to do a proposal-styled consultation here's what you need to keep in mind:

- Make sure you keep it to under an hour.
- *Do not* give out your expertise room-to-room.
- Make sure to charge at least \$100 (and feel free to credit that to a future staging service if even that makes you uncomfortable) so you are at least compensated for your time and avoid the truly "free" red flag clients
- Build the consultation around giving a proposal while assuming a future Staging service like the Staging Report or Staging Day (similar to other home service vendors).

Remember, a client paying very little will not expect you to spend two or more hours in the home. A client paying quite a bit will. Let your price and service correspond with client expectations and *always* deliver. Even though I don't recommend you follow this kind of structure, if you're planning to go cheap then here's what it should look like using the above tips:

Consultation and Proposal -- \$100

I will meet with you and discuss your goals, expectations and how to receive the maximum return on investment for your home improvement dollars.

I will give you a quick demonstration of the difference home staging makes by transforming a room of your home. I will give you the photos to use in your marketing efforts.

We will end with a proposal based upon the amount of work needed to gain a speedy sale and the highest dollar amount for your home.

A \$50.00 credit will go towards any future staging service if decided that day (optional).



Note: We recommend you follow a lower priced proposal-styled consultation to start IF you are not in a very sophisticated market (which there are very few of these). As you become very busy you can switch to a walk and talk consultation.



Website: Later on in the HSR Guide to Success we will provide you with all the services and pricing forms for the various types of consultations to download and tailor to your business.

During a proposal-styled consultation, you're *not* going to give out your ideas for the home! You will sit down and get to know the client, walk through the home while following the first page of the *Staging Report or HSR Action Plan*, taking notes, and engaging the client in your process by having them do all the talking by giving you their "First Impressions."

You will conclude the walk-through with a possible quick visual transformation of a room, and a proposal of work based upon the amount of time you need to spend and the client's budget.



Note: If you focus on building real estate agent partnerships, the consultation will eventually go away and be replaced with Walk and Talk Consultations.

Now that you have a general idea of the structure I recommend you choose, let's start from the beginning and talk about what to bring and how to prepare BEFORE you get that first phone call...

Preparing for the Consultation

A lot happens before you even get to the consultation portion of your client interaction, and the Home Staging Resource wants to make sure you are completely prepared, so buckle up!

First Things First

I'll never forget my first consultation with a home seller who happened upon my website and wanted me to bid on her vacant home. I was already nervous about my first consultation. To make things worse, I felt ill-prepared to handle a vacant home! I had no process. Thus, I had no control over my consultation. The home seller ran all over me. I left feeling like I needed structure built around educating the client and providing me with more credibility.

Needless to say, I was not the confident organized professional I should have been. We can only learn from our mistakes and share what we have learned with others. I'm going to go into detail every step of the consultation process so that you can be confident and organized going in to your first consultation. ***Structure builds credibility which leads to confidence...when you are confident going into a home and making design decisions, your client will not question you.***

This brings me to the importance of confidence that comes from knowing what you're doing, having a plan, and providing "value" to your clients. The Home Staging Resource wants to provide you with the ongoing training, plan, organization and products that will help you achieve the expert knowledge and training your clients deserve. Part of that confidence comes from having a process and a big part of it comes from refining your design skill set which is best done by getting ideas from others, so going onto www.houzz.com in your free time and saving photos to your ideabooks will help you become more confident as well.

Even if you're new to staging and not the least bit confident going into your first consultation, think like you have \$20,000 in your pocket and you're going to give it to the home sellers by providing them with this consultation. Believe me, this is a confidence builder and the analogy is not so far off.

Another critical confidence builder is role-playing. Before you put yourself in front of a real estate agent, make sure you have practiced with a friend or neighbor. No matter how prepared you are for your consultation, the first time is always a little nerve racking. Once you get that first Consultation over with, you'll realize how much value you have to offer and how rewarding home staging really is!

What separates you from your competition is your professionalism, decorating expertise, ability to educate your clients, and your warmth and service. At the *HSR*, we are firm believers in giving generously of your knowledge, time and assistance because it's the right thing to do and it goes far in your marketing efforts. This is a small, referral-based industry where people talk. You want them to talk wonderfully about you. In fact, *HSR's* goal for you is that you build a handful of real estate agent partnerships that exclusively use you for all of their listings.

Professionalism at All Times

Being a true professional should go without saying but let me tell you that most people make the mistakes below in our industry and it alienates them from clients. Here are a few rules I think worth mentioning:

- Always compliment the home before criticizing.
- Speak expertly in terms of using principles and elements of design during the staging time to highlight/de-emphasize the architectural elements of the home (see our Design Modules which go over example of this in detail)
- Think before you speak. Listen. Listen. Listen.
- Answer questions honestly...even if you don't know, you can source the answer.
- Provide honest time lines, costs and expectations – even if it's not what they want to hear.
- *Never* talk badly about any of your competitors or colleagues.
- Never plagiarize or pull images or text off the Internet that are not yours
- Understand the personality and temperature of the individual you are working with. Tailor yourself accordingly.
- Always be punctual, professional looking and prepared.
- Return phone calls and emails promptly.

- Never use the phone during your client's time.
- Remember your good manners by always asking permission to touch their things and open their cabinets.

What to Bring to the Initial Consultation

The consultation is the springboard for all of the additional business you are going to get from this home seller. It's imperative you are always over-prepared and have a plan for the structure of your consultation, as well as are open to more hours of staging if need be. For instance, if the client immediately decides to have you do an a half-day of staging and you have the time, be prepared to do the work right away if you're able. Driving to and from a client's home is a time waster, so if you can avoid extra trips, do so.

I like to keep a large beautiful wicker bin/basket that doubles as a prop, if needed. It holds my "transform a room" props, tie-garbage bags filled with pillows/pillow covers and throws of different colors and textures, a small roller suitcase for my Staging Toolbox, camera, and Staging Portfolio (which has my day timer, iPad and important forms).

Let's take a look at these items, one-by-one.



Website:

Member Home Page, click on **Week One>> Successful Consultations** in the menu or right hand navigation bar to find the downloads and forms below on that page

1. Consultation Checklist (see below)

Our quick checklist to make sure you have brought everything and have covered all the bases in the consultation. Until the consultations become second nature to you, the *Consultation Checklist* will be an invaluable reminder throughout the consultation so you don't forget any important steps.

2. Phone Order form and Interview form (see below)

Bring in the questions you already had answered over the phone along with your notes. This should include the address, phone, and a map to the house so you can find it easily.

3. Your Profile, Marketing Materials, Certificate and Before-and-After Pictures

Let your clients know a bit about you and your training as a way to break the ice and build confidence in your expertise. Some people are visual and like to read while you talk. Having a *Profile Sheet* and your *HSR Certified Professional Home Stager Designation and Certificate* available helps prepare you for your consultation.

You should also have 8x10 prints of your before-and-after photos available for the client's review, if they so choose. A great way to showcase these is in a full-page, Shutterfly (www.shutterfly.com) album. Seeing believes. If you see skepticism in your client's eyes, displaying your portfolio is critical.

4. Sell sheets: 3-Keys to Selling Your Home, Top Ten Reasons, Why You Have Made a Great Decision in Staging Your Home, Let's Talk Buyers and any recent statistics (see below)

These informational sheets are always helpful in your ongoing quest to educate individuals on the benefits of home staging.

5. Client Action Plan (like the Staging Report) – Use the Staging Report to easily walk through the home with the client and checklist priority items

6. Pricing and Service sheet and Proposal/ Invoice sheet

You should always end your consultation with a proposal for work, including what additional services you recommend they purchase. Make sure you have services to cover every need and tailored to each client.

7. Photo Release Form or Contract if Your Extend the Consult to a Staging Day

These are suggested agreements and forms you use before starting any work. They protect you by getting everything in writing and indemnified in case you break something valuable.

8. Client Feedback and Referral Forms or Better Yet, an Email Follow-up

Always learn what you did well and areas you could have improved. Always ask for referrals, which will be the cornerstone of your business. You can do this by asking the clients to fill out a *Feedback Form* of some kind that will also double as a *Client Testimony* in your portfolio. It may be easier to do this in an email follow up, so you have it in print.

Staging Tool Box

We have told you what to include in your portfolio. Now let's talk about what tools you should have on hand to assist you in your day-to-day staging.

As I mentioned before, I like to use a roller suitcase for portability and functionality since it allows me to see all of my tools at once. You can easily purchase an inexpensive rolling cart at Costco. Here is a list of tools I suggest you bring in your staging toolbox:

- **Toolbox**

Have home repair tools on hand like a 25' measuring tape, electric drill, staple gun, screwdrivers, screws, nails, pliers, and a hammer.



Tip: You can find these kinds of "DIY" Home Repair toolboxes ready-made for you at hardware stores or your local Target (my personal favorite!).

- **Dry Wall Hooks/Monkey Hooks or picture hanging supplies box**

I can't say enough about the Dry Wall Hooks in our Members Discount Section (they even offer free samples!). No tools required, just press the hook into the wall by hand. I have used these to hold very heavy mirrors, etc.! These hooks are also at Target. You can find picture-hanging supply boxes ready-made for you at Target, as well. They should include wire and various picture-hanging screws. Bring putty and a putty knife to easily fill any large holes created.

- **Paint Color Wheel**

Have regular suggestions in individual paint card forms you can give to clients as reference. Use a color wheel to assist you for variety.



Website: See our *Comprehensive Color Guide* in the Members Area under *Design Modules* for my favorite colors and a Benjamin Moore connection for free samples/wheel

- **Different colored tape or stickers**

You can buy a pack of various tape colors. Once you decide on a service, walk through the home and place these stickers on items that should be packed away, so that you can get the most out of your staging day. Using the *HSR Action Plan*, you can identify what should be discarded or displaced. Give a little homework to the home seller before the staging day. Also bring painter's tape and masking tape.

- **Furniture Sliders**

You can buy different sizes of these at Target or your home improvement superstore. They are a great help in moving furniture! I've used these and moved armoires all by myself!

- **Scissors, glue, large safety pins, zip ties and tape, two-sided fabric tape for covering pillows**

- **Space Bags (www.spacebags.com)** – Another Target favorite for me, because these vacuum-sealed bags allow me to bring several pillows, towels and linens and store them efficiently.

- **Hand-Held Steamer**

Having a hand steamer you can use to smooth out bedding and curtains is critical.

- **Light bulbs to sell**

Many rooms have been made more beautiful by simply changing to a brighter bulb.

Cleaning Supplies

Although you're certainly not expected to do any cleaning, it never hurts to have some easy cleaning supplies on hand for top-notch photos. Again, this is for the client to use to clean since you're not a cleaner!



Tips:

Carry your supplies in sealed containers or Ziploc bags.

Get supplies in the form of easy wipes for windows/mirrors, walls, stainless steel, wood and general kitchen cleaning.

Krud Kutter is a good heavy-duty cleaner you can also get in easy "wipe" form.

PureAyre odor eliminator is also very good to have on hand, as well as Glade plug-ins.

Dust rags, gloves, sponges and scrubbers are all good to have handy. At the very least, have a good house cleaner you can recommend that will be able to whip the home into selling shape!

Here's your general list of cleaning supplies:

- Windex Glass Cleaner or Windex Wipes – Works great on carpet stains, too!
- Murphy's Oil Soap
- The Works (degreaser, lime and rust remover) .
- Mr. Clean's Magic Eraser -- Great for scuff marks on the wall.
- Krud Kutter -- Cleans everything.
- PureAyre Odor Eliminator -- Neutralizes pet or other foul odors.
- Lightly scented candles -- Lemon, cinnamon and vanilla.
- Folex -- Excellent carpet stain remover.
- Restore-A-Finish – Neutral -- Restores color to faded or scratched wood finishes.
- De-Solve It -- Adhesive remover.
- Restore 4* -- Great for rust removal and grout restoration.
- Lint Roller – For pet fur, etc..



Note: All of these products can easily be ordered at www.amazon.com. I recommend looking into getting an Amazon Prime account which provides you with free 2-day shipping, free movies and books for a yearly membership fee.

Transform-a-Room Toolbox

Sometimes it's a good idea to bring common staging items to transform a room to give the seller a glimpse of the kind of things that you can do or to better showcase a room via photo. IF you are going to structure your Consultation process to include a "quick transformation" just to show seller's the benefits of staging, then this section will be helpful to you. Either way, it's never a bad idea to have these few items on hand in case you have a "cold" seller who really does not "get it". Giving the client a "visual" is sometimes the "aha" moment that make them buy-in to the benefits of staging. Not all clients are the same, so being able to take their temperature and go the extra mile with a ten-minute transformation may be just what they need to believe in the process.

Below are general staging items and separate items you can use to transform a room for the seller. Ideally, you'll have seen some of the seller's room photos beforehand, either by email or from your research, so you'll know what to bring that will help the home seller visualize some of the changes that can be made.

We suggest choosing an easy room to transform -- usually a bath, kitchen or guest bedroom --

- Take a photo of the room as a *before* shot on your iPad ideally (for large viewing).
- Rearrange the room and bring in some of your accessories and take an *after* photo.
- Remind the seller that over 95% of buyers search online *before* visiting the home.
- Show the client on the iPad, the two room photos side by side.
- Ask them which photo they think would attract more online buyers.
- Explain how a staging day will transform the main areas of the home in just this way, "we took twenty-minutes to transform your bedroom, so imagine what a few hours of rolling up our sleeves can do in the home."

General Common Staging Items



Website: Check out the *Products I Love* on the *HSR Website* for my favorite Amazon staging products.

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **HSR Library**.

Scroll down to find the *Products I Love* section.

Remember, these are visual props to assist your client in imagining the importance of investing in these small purchases that go a long way in helping sell the home!

- **Pillows, pillows, pillows!** Neutral, zipper enclosure, bigger than 20 inches ideally. Bring several different colors, textures and sizes in order to transform a "tired" couch, chair, outdoor furniture or bed. In the Staging Day Videos, you will see how we added our own pillows to each room in order to give the client a visual of what to purchase and to get a fantastic photo for marketing purposes. We use large white-tie garbage bags to carry them easily, and keep them organized. Pillow covers are easy to purchase at one of my favorite websites: www.etsy.com and HomeGoods

- **Seashells, large bowls, placemats, colorful cloth napkins, hard back books, cookbook holder and fake fruit**

These items are great for staging emotional connection points and small enough to always have a few on hand! Go to your local library for a huge supply of hard back books on sale and remove the covers. A nightstand with a lamp, book and plant sets a relaxing bedroom mood.

- **White queen sheets**

White sheets are excellent for impromptu table clothes, shower curtains, hotel bed making and drapes.



Tips:

- Bring hooks for drapes.
- A fitted sheet gathers nicely under a small table.
- Use three sheets to make a bed beautiful. Use sheet one to cover mattress. Put on a blanket and use sheet two to cover the blanket. Fold the lip at the top. Use sheet three to wrap around (and cover) a tired comforter and place at the foot of the bed, hotel-style.

- **Fluffy White Towels**

Quick bathroom redo with fluffy white towels photographs really well.

- **A Bed in a Bag**

Nothing transforms a bedroom like a new bed set piled high with pillows.

- **Ribbon and rubber bands**

These are handy for dressing up towels, pillows, napkins and drapes.

- **Quality fake or real plants**

Orchids are a personal favorite that go well everywhere in the home! Fake succulents in white vases also look very real and go well. For a staging day, bring in a large plant you can move from room to room for all of your photos.

Nothing you bring in should look cheap or flimsy. Don't forget to walk through the home before you leave to make sure you didn't leave anything!

Quick Ways to do Twenty-Minute Transformations

Build a Bathroom

With a white fluffy rug, towels, queen sheet and orchid, you can almost transform any bathroom into a luxurious spa.

- Remove all of the client's things from the counter and wipe down.
- Place your fake large orchid in ideally a white pot on the counter

- Stack your fluffy white towels on the other side of the counter
- Use the queen sheet over the existing shower curtain to hide an unsightly tub, if necessary.

Build a Tranquil Guest Bedroom

With a simple white coverlet, matching European pillows in cases, bed tray, coffee cup and coffee carafe, you can spark the home seller's imagination.

- Remake the bed using the white coverlet.
- Fold the seller's existing spread on the bottom of the bed.
- Add extra pillows from other rooms, if needed.
- Fluff up three rows of pillows.
- Clear off all dressers and side tables except for two matching lamps, a sleeveless hardback book and fake succulent plant or clock.

Recommended HSR Consultation Process Explained

Okay, so now that you know the various types of consultations and have done the preparation of what to bring, it's time to detail from start to finish what process we recommend you follow, as well as the forms to use. Since this is a healthy part of the training, we've broken it down into the rest of this Consultation guide and tomorrow's HSR Guide to Success.



Note: I'm going to assume you are going to choose the Walk and Talk styled Consultation in the rest of the training and provide the scripts, forms and instruction with that in mind since that is the recommended way you structure your business.

Initial Introductions over the Phone

Let's assume your first contact with the home seller or agent is the initial phone call during which they are just trying to "get some information." While this may seem like a prospect, I want you to consider this a *client* and be very intentional with your interaction. Here's a great way to answer a phone call (my notes/reasons are italicized):

You: Company Name, how can I help you?

Client: I wanted to find out about your staging/redesign services.

You: Wonderful! Which of my clients has referred you?

(Do you see how this builds your credibility instantly in that it assumes you have many clients referring your business regularly?)

Client: Actually I found your website on the Internet while searching on Houzz. I'm putting my house up for sale on a limited budget and I've never worked with a stager and needed to know how it works.

(We've learned two important things: how they heard about you which will be critical to where you spend your marketing dollars and whether they have ever worked with a stager.)

You: Great. I'd love to help you with your staging project. I specialize in creating a priority list of staging changes that have BIG IMPACT on your home price, give you a great return on investment while being gentle on your wallet. Since I know you don't want to spend a lot on the home you are moving out of...we focus on using what you already have to create a vision or lifestyle that that buyer will aspire to and want to have. My customers can live and show their space easily, so that the hassle of selling is minimized tremendously. Does that sound good?

(Notice how I inserted what should be your mission/about you philosophy which helps them to understand a bit about why you're different and how you can benefit them?)

Client: Yes it does. Since I have no idea how this works, can I ask what you charge?

You: Of course, fees are important to discuss. Each staging project for a home that is not vacant begins with a phone interview and a two to three hour, onsite design consultation, home assessment and written Staging Report, for which the fee is \$250*. Here's what you can expect to gain from that working session: I will research your market in order to determine the typical buyer demographic that will be viewing the home, I will review your existing furniture layout, color schemes, lighting and accessories and make suggestions for better traffic flow, modernization and online photos. I will repurpose some of what you already own to create "emotional connections" for the buyers. I will identify "price eroding" items that buyers believe will cost more to change than not. I will also make shopping and cosmetic recommendations that will greatly improve the sales price of the home while eliminating elements buyers will likely disapprove of. I do all of this in a 10-page, Staging Report that we fill out while we walk through the space together, so that you can refer to it regularly. We will also create a "priority shopping list" with recommended sources during that time. At the end of our consultation time, you will have a thorough plan for the work and how to get the most from the sale.

(Do you see that I immediately link the fee with the value of what is provided during that time? This is important because it sets the expectations right away)

Client: \$250 for a consultation? I didn't realize there was an initial charge for that meeting and was hoping to interview a few stagers in the area.

You: Some stagers will come to your house for free but let me tell you how that typically works and why I don't think it's in your best interest. In a scenario where a stager is not paid for their time, they usually don't provide any worthy ideas to move your staging project forward and their agenda is to upsell you rather than giving you the expertise. In contrast, when you hire me for a consultation, we actually work the entire time and I give you all the ideas you'll need to get the quickest sale and best price for your home in the form of a photo filled, checklist Staging Report customized to your home. Since we're working together the entire time, you'll be better able to judge my expertise and the merit of my ideas. I know you'll be pleased with what you learn during the consultation, plus you are able to keep the customized, Staging Report we generate to do the rest of the project yourself or have me handle the project for you. I'd love to work with you and have some availability on May 3rd or 5th at 9am. Shall I book that staging consultation now?

(Do you see how I educated the client on the alternative, without bashing my competition? I used the question as a way to further advance my credibility/expertise while closing the sale with specific dates...never letting a client if I have an open calendar)

Client: Yes, thank you.

You: The consultation fee is \$250 and I accept Visa or MasterCard. How would you like to pay?

(Getting the money up front is always easiest for both you and the client...if you are uncomfortable with up-front payment, then you should at least do a 50% deposit to "hold the day")

You: Okay, do you have ten minutes for me to get some critical information in order to prepare for our time together?

*Here's where you can take out your handy **Seller or Realtor Pre-Appointment Order Sheet** and gather the beginnings of the information you'll need to research the home and buyer demographic, as well as build rapport with the client (forms are below).*

Being confident and unwavering in your service offering, pricing and expertise is essential! Agents are expert negotiators and will try and negotiate with you automatically, so stand by your talent. If you waver or bend, it gives them the edge and hurts your credibility. Know that what you have to offer (once you are through this training) is WAY BETTER than any other non-HSR stager in your area...trust me on this.

Do you see how easy it would be to tweak this conversation for a design client or agent? It won't change a lot since the crux is communicating the value, credibility and expertise you provide to the target market you are speaking to. Go ahead and create a similar dialogue for an agent or home builder who calls or a prospective design client.

You should always try to answer the phone every time you are not at an appointment rather than letting it go to voicemail. Once you become adept at this dialogue and selling your services, you'll see how always answering the phone gives you a huge opportunity for business!

Recognizing the "Do-It-Yourselfer"

After going through the phone interview, you should have a good idea of what the sellers are like and their emotional attachment to the house. You may want to consider asking a few of these questions in order to determine whether they would do the work themselves or not. This will help you assess whether they are DIY or want you to do the work for them:

1. Do you enjoy doing physical work yourself?
2. What is your patience level and completion level with projects you have begun in the past?
3. Do you like to do projects yourself or have others do them for you?
4. Do you anticipate the need for renting furniture and accessories?
5. Is there anything else you can think of that would be helpful to me?
6. Have you ever used home staging services in the past? If not, do you mind if I go over it a bit with you?

The next few pages are the Pre-Appointment Form examples for various clients that you can download in Week One >>Successful Consultations



Seller Pre-Appointment Order Sheet

By: Name and Company

Date: Home Owner: Address: Phone/Cell: Email: Additional:	Realtor: Company: Address: Phone/Cell: Email: Best form of contact?
General Overview of House	
Sq Footage: _____ Vacant: ___ Occupied: ___ Year Built: _____	
How long in home: _____ Builder if recent: _____	
# Bedrooms: _____ # Bathrooms: _____ Living Room & Family Room? _____	
Has the home been listed prior to staging? Yes _____ No _____ (If Yes, answer below)	
How many days has it been on the market? _____ What was the list price: _____	
Do you think it was priced right? _____	
Any reductions? _____ Any offers? _____ How many? _____	
Pictures or link available to email to me?	
What were the comments made by the Realtors/Buyers previewing the property?	
List price (approx.): _____ Date to list? _____	
Is there a target market for this area (demographics)?	
What about the home did you like when you first purchased?	
What (if any) are the problem areas (buyer hesitations)?	
Why are you moving?	
Are you happy about the move and where are you going?	
Have you done any research on home staging? How did you hear about us?	
General Overview of Your Company – Hopefully Done in Initial Phone Call	
What to expect from your consultation and research prior:	
Pricing and service options: Everyone present at initial consultation and why: Request they go to www.zillow.com to look up home and research those that have sold. Payment Schedule and Agreement:	
Additional Details:	
Directions: Gate Code? Appt. Reconfirmed? <input type="checkbox"/> Deposit Given/Prepaid? <input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card Info:	



Realtor Pre-Appointment Order Sheet

By: Name and Company

Date: Home Owner: Address:	Realtor: Company: Address:
Phone/Cell: Email: Additional:	Phone/Cell: Email: Best form of contact?
General Overview of House	
Sq Footage: _____ Vacant:___ Occupied:___ Year Built:_____	
How long in home:_____ Builder if recent:_____	
# Bedrooms: _____ # Bathrooms: _____ Living Room & Family Room? _____	
Has the home been listed prior to staging? Yes _____ No _____ (If Yes, answer below)	
How many days has it been on the market? _____ What was the list price: _____	
Do you think it was priced right? _____	
Any reductions? _____ Any offers? _____ How many? _____	
Pictures or link available to email to me?	
What were the comments made by the Realtors/Buyers previewing the property?	
List price (approx.): _____ Date to list? _____	
Is there a target market for this area (demographics)?	
What (if any) are the problem areas (buyer hesitations)?	
Why are the sellers moving and will they be present during the consultation?	
Are they happy about the move and where are they going?	
Have you worked with any stagers in the past? What was your experience?	
How can I better serve your business?	
General Overview of Your Company – Hopefully Done in Initial Phone Call	
What to expect from your consultation and research prior:	
Pricing and service options:	
Everyone present at initial consultation and why:	
Request they go to www.zillow.com to look up home and research those that have sold.	
Payment Schedule and Agreement:	
Additional Details:	
Directions:	
Gate Code?	
Appt. Reconfirmed? <input type="checkbox"/> Deposit Given/Prepaid? _____ Credit Card Info: _____	

Additional Agent Questions

When an agent is involved, you have the added bonus of the knowledge they can impart as well as the potential for creating a repeat customer. It is critical that you acknowledge their expertise and involve them as an ally in the process.

By asking good questions and building your relationship with the real estate agent as a win-win without undermining them, you will create a partner for life! Many times the agent has allocated home staging services in their budget and will cover some or all of this expense. Here are some important questions to ask:

- Have you heard of home staging or used any professional home stagers in the past? Why or why not?
- Is this house your listing?
- What are your thoughts on the home?
- How long have you been in the business?
- Do you have a website I can view the photos on?
- Is there an Open House date already scheduled?
- What can you tell me about the owners of the home?
- How long have they lived in the home?
- How old is the home?
- What is the “buyer demographic” of the home? (Who typically buys in this neighborhood?)
- What style is it?
- Any trouble spots?
- What feedback have you received from other buyers or agents?
- Do you have pictures of the home on a website or that you can email me?
- What home staging services do you think are needed?
- Will you be absorbing the cost of the staging services yourself or do I need to make a presentation to the home sellers?
- When can we preview the property?
- Will the seller be present during the preview?
- Are the sellers the "Do It Yourself" types or will they want full service staging?
- Have you discussed a home staging service with the sellers already?
- If so, what has been their reaction thus far?
- Are there any deadlines or additional factors of which I should be made aware?

Make this conversation spontaneous, depending upon how much time the real estate agent has and how much information they are willing to share. The most important thing is that you meet your primary objective: getting a consultation and having your general questions answered. Let the agent know your services and pricing ahead of time so that they are prepared to compensate you during the consultation or pass the information along to the home seller.

Critical Initial Internet Research

You already have a lot of information even if you only got the answers to the general questions. You can make yourself extra prepared, credible, and potentially more income by following the next few Internet research steps before you go to the consultation.

Research the "client" real estate agent's website.

Any time a real estate agent is involved in the sale of a home you are staging, it is in your best interest to consider them an important client -- even if they are not paying for the services or didn't make the initial call.



Tip: The real estate agent has the potential to feed you repeat business, as well as become a direct client, which makes your marketing budget go a long way.

Get to know the real estate agent ahead of time by going to www.Google.com. Insert the real estate agent's name in quotes and add the city ("John Doe" AND "San Diego"). The results will include the real estate agent's website, Facebook page (which you will want to "friend"), as well as any other sites this real estate agent is listed in.

If you can't find them this way, then go to www.realtor.com. Under "Find A Realtor," enter your location and scroll by real estate agent's name to find their corresponding website. You can also go to www.zillow.com and search the listing/agent.

When you go to their website, you can research how busy the real estate agent is by viewing their current listings. You can take note on general locations and price ranges this real estate agent covers. In other words, what is his/her niche market. You can also start to see additional personality traits which help you get to know your real estate agent client better.

The more you know, the better prepared and more credible you will be. If this real estate agent has the potential to refer quite a bit of business, you will want to have a mutually beneficial "referral plan" in place for heavy hitter agents when you meet this real estate agent. If you see quite a few listings that look in need of staging, you may want to mention specific ways you work with real estate agents to transform listings.



Tip: There are several handouts in our *Week 3>>Realtor Partnerships* section that you can use to "break the ice" with the real estate agent.

Research the "client" real estate agent in general.

The reason we had you look up the real estate agent on Google rather than go directly to real-estate-agent.com is because there is a lot of potential additional

information you can find out about your new client real estate agent that will help you build that relationship.

Look at your Google results. If a wine association listed the real estate agent as a member, it might behoove you to send a nice bottle of wine. If the agent is part of a local realty office or association, you can ask to be allowed to give training or speak at their next meeting. Realtors are always looking for better ways of doing business, as it is a highly competitive business they are in.

Research the home in question.

While you are reviewing the real estate agent as a potential partner, click on **Featured Listings** or **My Listings** on their website to find the home you will possibly be staging. You will find a more detailed listing of the home (if it has already been listed) and pictures you can print out and study beforehand. Take notes. Mentally put together the layout of the house. I like to try and diagram it based on the various photos given.

Research the neighborhood

Go to <http://www.maps.google.com> and enter the address into the search bar. Review the cross streets and surroundings of the home. If it's close to schools, then very likely your buyer demographic will be a family with school age children. If it's close to a pedestrian walking city area, then the retired couple may be your buyer demographic. Zoom into the home and get more specifics on the yard. Place your mouse over the orange stick figure (little man) and drag them to the street in order to get a frontal view of the home and walk the neighborhood.



Tip: Another excellent website for researching and area demographic is found at www.neighborhoodscout.com. Enter the Address to find average education, income, age, race, gender and much more!

Research and understanding the “Buyer Demographic” – Six Critical Cues

An essential part of staging is the “who” we are designing for! Every neighborhood has a general “buyer demographic” that is worth researching and becoming familiar with before even entering into the home. You probably already asked the agent but don't always take their word for it and do your own research. There are four demographic cues to research:

1. Location Style Cue - Many times the nature of the area in general determines the buyer demographic whether it's metro, coastal, rural or suburban, you can tell a lot about your potential buyers by noting the “style” of the area and taking your design cues from it.



2. Business Lifestyle Cue - Another key factor is how close the home is to business centers in the area. If its 30 min. away make sure to stage an office in the home assuming telecommuting is probably part of the household business lifestyle.

3. Activity & Purchasing Lifestyle - You can also tell a lot about an area by the nature and style of businesses that surround it. In my small suburb, there are four different whole foods/specialty markets, several upscale restaurants and five wine shops in a 1 mile radius. What does that tell you about my buyer demographic? Yes you guessed it, white collar, highly educated, health conscious with high incomes. It might make great sense to stage a “wine bar” in the home or give a vision of a potential wine cellar closet area.

4. Education Cue - Another helpful hint would be to go to www.greatschools.com research the local school scores and see how it compares to the county as a whole. If you find that the home in question is in an area with the best school scores, that tells you that the buyer demographic is a family where staging kids rooms is essential.

5. Grouping Cues - Some things you wouldn't know about an area unless you had lived there for a long time. Many times certain types of groups of people gravitate toward each other in a neighborhood or suburb dictating the typical buyer demographic. Take San Diego for example which is the area I live in. A section of San Diego called Hillcrest has a very large gay population while another area called Mira Mesa has a large Asian pacific population. Do you think that this knowledge would have an important influence on your staging? Absolutely, so get to know your county and all the various suburbs in order to become the expert in reading and staging for the buyer demographic!

6. Real Estate Cues – Of course it's always a good idea to take a look at the other homes for sale in the area that you are staging in order to assess the competition and typical pricing. While you're looking at the homes, you can get cues about the people who live there by looking at the style, furnishings, room purposes and yards of these homes.

7. Research the history of the home and home seller.

Did you know that if the home has not been listed you can still find pictures of the home by employing two Internet strategic methods?

1. Go to <http://www.zillow.com> or better yet <http://www.redfin.com> (if they cover your area) and enter in the address of the home. Zillow will give you full details of loan history and owner history. Zillow will many times have photos of the home posted from past times the home was on the market.
2. Go to <http://www.google.com> and enter in the address of the home. Many times you will find a real estate agents old featured listing page on the home from past sales.



Note: My life before home staging was as an expert Internet researcher in the field of research, marketing and sourcing. Corporations would pay me thousands of dollars to show them how to use the Internet to further their business.

Putting It All Together In the HSR Guide to Success

Now that you know the different structures of consultations stager's use, as well as how to prepare and research for the consultation it's time to detail step-by-step what to do once you enter the home for your Walk and Talk Consultation. We're going to give you our 8-Step Staging process in the HSR Guide to Success tomorrow which will finish up your consultation process, the forms to use and the proposal/pricing that should correspond.

Since we've covered so much today, I want you to end this time by watching the Video in the Successful Consultations while going over the HSR Planning Checklist below and scheduling your "to do" list on your calendar:



Website:

From the *Member Home Page*, click on *Week One*>>Successful Consultations to watch the corresponding video and download the forms

Below is our Quick Consultation Checklist which will be handy for you to keep track of your consultation preparation supplies, forms and process...

Quick Consultation Checklist

Before the consultation, confirm you have the following:

- Client Order Form (Pre-Appointment Interview sheet you filled out over the phone)
- Client Internet Research - Real estate agent research, home photos, printed listing, early product recommendations and buyer demographic notes
- Text/call/email to reconfirm appointment, confirm that **all decision makers are attending**, and driving directions
- Additional Interview Questions
- Arrive early and drive the neighborhood, pulling any additional home-for-sale flyers
- Portfolio - Business cards, sell sheets, photos and proposal forms
- Staging Day contract, photo releases
- Client feedback/referral form
- Recommended Vendor list if the agent does not have one
- Staging Report, HSR Action Plan or General Action Plan to guide you and fill out front page
- Staging Toolbox - measuring tape, drill, picture hanging supplies, paint chips, etc. Refer to the *Guide to Successful Consultations* for full list of tool box necessities.
- Transform-a-Room Toolbox - Have an idea what room to transform ahead of time
- Cleaning supplies – Just to have handy, you're not going to spend your time cleaning!
- Digital camera, iPhone, iPad
- Map out your process, have the materials handy, and mentally go over it.

In Conclusion:

- Do a final review of the Staging Report and hand them your "Priority Shopping List"
- Use the GeniusScan app to video the completed report to pdf. Get final payment
- Ask client if they feel confident moving forward or are they feeling a bit "overwhelmed"? Moving is stressful, so reassure them of your ability to assist. Do they need you to come back? Power Shopping?
- Consult your calendar for a day to complete the staging process if additional styling is needed. Assume the client will want this automatically for best photos. Get deposit
- Ask to take photos now for further study in preparation for the Staging Day
- Schedule day to follow up with client on calendar.
- Send "Thank You" email to home seller *and* real estate agent.
- Send Staging Thank You Follow Up Email to upsell your Redesign Services

Day 2 - Consultation HSR Action Plan - "To Do" List

A goal without a plan is just a wish.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1900 – 1944)



Important: Before completing this section, review the *Guide for Successful Consultations in this manual* and watch the *On-Demand Consultation Video in Week One of the Members Area* which will prepare you for filling out or at least "scheduling" these "To Do's"

30. Know how to take a phone order, collect information, and qualify the lead.

Have you looked through our order sheets and tailored them to your business? Don't kick yourself after a client calls in for not asking questions pertinent to your preparation to the consultation. Make sure to use my phone script to better sell your Walk and Talk Consultation!



Website: A sample *Pre-Appointment Order sheet for both sellers and agents* is in the *Week One>>Successful Consultation Section*. They were also in the Consultation Guide prior.

Use these questions to develop rapport and establish confidence when questioning a potential client. If you aren't able to get the answers over the phone then simply have them finish the questionnaire at the time of your initial "sit down" during the consultation.



Tip:
Have your forms handy for quick reference and note taking.
Make sure you get their phone number so you can do the following up rather than waiting by the phone for them to call you back!

31. Research as much as you can ahead of time using the internet.

Have a research process that really helps you to be prepared by following our steps in the Consultation Guide. Getting used to using the Internet to shop, research and gather information and expertise will be invaluable to your business!

In this day and age, you can find out a lot about your clients, real estate agents and homes by doing some simple research online. For instance, if a real estate agent calls you about a home they have listed; you can go to www.realtor.com and look up the home. Many times there are several photographs included in the listing.



Tip: An easy online tool you can use to find out quickly the demographic of an area you are unfamiliar with is at www.neighborhoodscout.com. You can even copy and paste the demographic information into the clients Staging Report in order to really impress them!

You can also look up the real estate agent's website by going to www.realtor.com or Google. Enter the real estate agent's name. On Google, make sure you put it in quotes and include the city. You can ascertain how many listings this agent currently has and review whether those listings look like they need to be staged by their photos.



Tip: By the way, if you ever questioned whether there is a need for professional home staging, just go to www.realtor.com. Look at the photos of the homes listed. *Rarely* do they look professionally staged.



Note: The *Guide to Successful Consultations*, *corresponding video*, *Open House Assessments* and *Week Two* training covers Internet research in more detail.

32. Know what to wear when going to a consultation.

You want to project professionalism yet remain comfortable. You may be moving a few pieces of furniture. We suggest comfortable slacks, lightweight blouse, and jacket or button sweater. Layers are good for temperature changes. Make sure you wear comfortable shoes since you will be doing a lot of standing and walking.

33. Have a Consultation Checklist (see above)



Website: A *Consultation Checklist* can be found on the HSR website. From the Member Home Page, click on **Week One>>Successful Consultations**. Scroll down to Consultation Checklist in the Resource area. It is available in both .pdf and Word format.

We provide an easy example. Make sure you are well-versed and prepared by reading it completely. Memorize the various items you will need to address with your clients.

34. Have a "signature item" to give to clients during the Staging Day.

"Give a little and you'll usually get a lot in return." While this is the Home Staging Resource mantra in our marketing tools, it also applies here as well. I will go over this more in the Anatomy of a Staging Day section since it only makes sense when a client pays for a staging day.

A signature item will be very appreciated by your clients. It should help to beautify the home and should be a memorable reflection of you. Have fun with this and get creative. A particular flower, plant, basket, scented candle or centerpiece will go a long way in your client appreciation and referral efforts. It's a nice thing to do and important to let your clients know you appreciate their business. Personally, I love the orchids at Trader Joes which cost only \$10.00 and will look fantastic in any room!

35. Bring "emotional connection point" props to liven up your client's imagination.

I'll never forget the first time I staged a home and put together a tray with a bottle of wine and two wine glasses to go on their courtyard bistro table. The home sellers asked how they should use the cloth napkins I brought. I showed them a simple way to pull at the center of the napkin and fluff them into the glasses. The collective "ahhh" by the home sellers was hysterical! They visually "got it."

It may seem simple to you, but to most people, building these emotional points is very foreign. We suggest you have a box of ready-made materials (shells, twine, towels, accessories, candles, etc.) that allow you to display creative flair. This serves to educate the client on the importance of creating emotional connection points by visually showing them how to do it.



Tip: Don't forget to view our *Emotional Connections* photo gallery for ideas. Remember, staging is visual merchandising and home marketing!

Bringing assorted pillows, throws, a plant and staging tray items serves to put the finishing touches on your "after" photos which will be sent to the real estate agent to draw in buyer traffic. The props also help to give a "visual" to the home sellers of the accessory "investments" they need to purchase to complete the look.



Note: In the **Week One>>Anatomy of a Staging Day** section, you will see the various props that were brought in for the staging day and used in each photo of the house.

36. Purchase tools to bring to your consultations so that you are always prepared.

Don't assume your home sellers will have a drill, measuring tape and picture-hanging screws readily available if you need to hang something. Have all of these commonly used staging tools handy in one place so that you're prepared for anything.



Tip: Put together a Stager's Toolbox. Home improvement centers sell tool kits with basic tools like screwdrivers, hammers and wrenches. You can add other items that will be handy during consultations. We have a list in our *Consultation Guide*.

37. Be prepared to handle objections.

Staging is still not widely accepted, so you're sure to run into plenty of objections along the way. We look at objections as "opportunities to educate." Be positive about the objections you hear and use them to your advantage by answering correctly.

We list a few objections in our Staging FAQ's on the *HSR Website*, as well as on each Member's website they personally develop, so become familiar with them and prepare to educate. It never ceases to amaze us when real estate agents and home sellers say they'll simply read a book and do it themselves. Home decorating, which staging is a form of, is a practiced art that only those with a natural skill can perform.

HSR believes that we believe you cannot train someone on the art of staging in a two – five day course! You either have it or you don't. You have been training yourself on home decoration because of your inner passion and natural skill set for years, either formally or informally. Would a novice claim to become a professional photographer after a two-day course? Could one write a best-selling novel having never written a creative word in the past? Would one become a gourmet chef having never cooked before after a two-day course? Likewise, real estate agents and home sellers who have never studied or had a passion for the decorative arts should not expect to do this with much success. ***Trust in yourself and your ability but most importantly fake it till you make it!***

Home staging is pure economics. Use an expert who stages and merchandises homes for a living to improve and market the product better. The house will sell faster and for more money. If you don't improve upon the product and the demand for it goes down, as we've seen, the price must also go down.

38. Have a process and plan to stay in control by following our 3 Phases.

We outline a specific process for you to follow when you get to *HSR Guide to Success* but it's always a good thing to keep in mind the general "order" of things when it comes to approaching occupied homes both in staging and redesign:

Phase One – Using what the client already owns to make the most of the space

Phase Two – Purchases in order of priority that serve as "investments" when staging

Phase Three – Cosmetic changes to each room that in staging will result in a sale or return on investment

These three phases to approaching both your staging and redesign clients will help to break down the process and educate your client.

39. Always speak in terms of staging or redesign potential in the home and work your magic while imparting your knowledge.

In order to keep from giving away the farm during a proposal styles consultation, focus on the architectural elements in the home and speak in terms of the potential they provide during our staging or redesign time. For instance, let's say the focal point in the living room is a fireplace that is not being emphasized. I would approach the room and say, "the fireplace is gorgeous and I can't wait to find items and rearrange your furnishings so that it really "pops" for buyers!"



Website: We discuss this approach in each one of our MLS Critiques in the Staging Videos section of the Members Area in Week Three, so refer to those videos for some great phraseology!



Important: Try and avoid speaking about phase three, “cosmetic changes” with clients in the consultation to avoid “sticker shock”! Ease your clients into the idea of spending money or investing into the sale by starting with phase one first and in your time in the home!

Consequently, in a Walk and Talk Consultation, feel free to explain all the changes your recommend in the same terms in order to educate, build your credibility and get more “buy in” from the sellers.



Website: Each Design Module was written with your conversations in mind, so read them for phraseology ideas or go to our phraseology section the HSR Library too.

We are firm believers in educating and empowering your clients every step of the way during a staging day. There are no great mysteries or secrets to staging that you should be afraid to share. Some people have the eye for detail, balance, flow, scale and warmth. These people can immediately recognize the problems in the room and change them. By the way, that should be you! Others can feel that something is off, but lack the interest and ability to recognize and change the problems. Still others will have the eye, but lack the direction and expertise to guide them.

Recognize where your clients stand in this regard. Educate and train them along the way as you walk through their house. Not only will they feel they learned some valuable things, they will better recognize your expertise for what it is and value your services more. When you give a little, you get a lot in return.



Tips: Unless the client has paid for your expertise, do not give it out freely unless you are doing an “Open House Assessment” with an agent (see my Open House Assessment section in Week 1).

40. Continually develop an eye for detail, balance, flow, scale and warmth.

There are many ways you can develop this skill.

- Make sure to read through our Design Modules in the Member’s Area.
- Take part and review all the albums in Stagers Connect and www.Houzz.com
- Follow me on Pinterest and search pinterst for pinner who are doing great work in staging and redesign!
- Make sure to check into my blog at <http://www.homestagingresources.com/>

- Subscribe to decorating magazines and read decorating and design books.
- Visit model homes or "staged homes" in your area
- Review the galleries on the *HSR Website* for decorating and staging tricks and techniques.
- Review the *HSR Library* on the *HSR Website* for recommended reading sources that should be a part of your library of learning.
- Regularly watch HGTV. It is always filled with valuable and updated decorating expertise.

41. Purchase a business portfolio to showcase your work with your clients or use any one of the many programs online to create "portfolio books."

First impressions are lasting impressions. Image is everything. We talked about the importance of image and presentation when it comes to your personal style and dress. The same is true for your business portfolio. You will need to have a beautiful, professional portfolio to show clients.



Note: We are proud to say that much of what you will want to go inside your portfolio is provided as part of your HSR Certification Training Program in our Forms section. We suggest you print them on your new letterhead and insert them in clear sheet protectors.

You will be amazed at the amount of time clients will want to spend reviewing your portfolio when you have beautiful before-and-after transformations to review.



Tip: You can use www.shutterfly.com to create inexpensive portfolio books of your work.

42. Create "before-and-after" pictures for your portfolio and website.



Important: Before you start snapping pictures *please* refer to our picture tips below and the Week 2>>>Perfect Portfolios Section for photo inspiration, tips and ideas

We rarely see well-represented before-and-after pictures on home staging websites. The most common mistakes are poor lighting, too much flash, or the room looks too sterile.

To get the right light and feel, remember to snap pictures both with the flash *and* without the flash.



Tip: Ask to stage a friend's home using our *HSR Client Action Plan in Week Three*, or go through your own home and redesign a room. This is a good way to *stage to live* while also creating a personal portfolio that gives sellers a sense of your work, style and methods.



Note: In Week Two, we will show you how to capitalize on your jobs well done by creating slide shows of your photos.

Top Ten Picture Tips for Making Every Picture Count!

Here are a few pointers to remember when taking those "After" or interior shots:

1. **Go for volume.** With digital cameras, you can never have enough photos so feel free to snap away! Plant yourself in every corner of the room and take the shot. Don't simply stand there and shoot, get low or high (on stairs or chair) in order to produce a more interesting picture that draws the buyer's eye. Never point and look down at your subject but make sure to be eye level by squatting!
2. **Turn on the lights.** Every light in the room must be on. Your blinds or drapes should be open. Indoor light has a photographic quality all its own. It adds warmth and color creating a rich effect that emotionally draws in a buyer. Ideally the light source should come from one side.
3. **Turn off the flash.** Take a picture with a flash, but *a/ways* take one without the flash. The one without the flash will usually be your first choice shot. Why? The flash adds a hard light quality. Removing the flash forces your camera to draw in full natural and artificial light adding a warm, comfortable glow to the shot that buyers can respond to. *Remember*, you must have a steady hand. Otherwise, there will be a blur. A photographer's trick is to steady the arms against the body. Specifically, push your upper arms into your chest as you shoot. At the same time, spread your legs wide, so as to have a tripod effect. Another trick is to lean against a wall or door frame to steady your shot.
4. **Always review every shot.** Digital cameras allow us to review the shot in the viewfinder after it has been taken. Make sure you do this. A camera sees quite differently than we do! We are taught to be extra critical of what the camera sees. Many times you will catch things in the picture that you wouldn't have noticed otherwise, for example, a bed sheet sticking out, or a cluttered counter top or faulty wall hanging. *Remember, the photo is the buyers "first impression" of the home, so stage for the photo AND the walk-in.*



Tip: If you have a laptop computer or iPad, bring it along when you are taking your pictures. Also, bring the cable that allows you to transfer your photos from the camera to your computer. That way, you can transfer the photos on the spot and see them blown up on your computer. You will see the photos much more clearly than just through the viewfinder on your camera.



5. **Go green.** Savvy realtors know that the trick to taking a great back yard shot is to shoot from behind some greenery back at the house at the far corner of the yard. This not only produces an interesting angle of the entire yard, but many times it adds a fringe of green leaf/plant in the edge of the shot.
 6. **Don't center everything.** Create interest by positioning focal points to the left or right rather than center.
 7. **Shoot for magic hours.** An hour or two after the sun rises and before it sets are times when lighting is softest, warmest and most flattering.
 8. **Tripod your elbows.** Rest your elbows against your body in order to stay still and keep the photo from blurring. This is especially important when the flash is off!
 9. **Avoid backlighting.** Make sure the light from windows is coming from the side or behind you to avoid glare. This tip is critical and most often the one we see people not following on www.realtor.com!
 10. **Get low and shoot from different vantage points.** Squat low or climb the stairs to take a variety of shots from different angles. It's digital, so shoot away!
 11. **It's in the details.** Look at every detail and photograph some of the emotional connection points in each room to "zoom" in on effects.
 12. **Touch it up.** Use a photo optimizer like Picmonkey (see video on this in Perfect Portfolios section of Week 2) or Adobe Photoshop to put the finishing touches on your photos.
 13. **Open Up!** If there are gorgeous views or French doors open them up for the shot to highlight the architectural detail. Remove the end chair of a dining table to invite the viewer into the space.
 14. **Emphasize the Positive.** Similar to open up, consider what architectural features are a real selling point and make sure to have that emphasized in the shot (i.e. Hardwood floors should be shown well)
 15. **Provide the vision.** You should be staging as a merchandiser using emotional connection points all along the way, so get a close-up of some of those buyer visions you've created for the photo tour. Ryan Dressel of Staged Right Design, one of our Staging Mentors does this very well in his staging album at:
<https://plus.google.com/101730031674430815018/photos>
-
-

43. Organize and label before-and-after photos to post on your website.

Choose the best before-and-after photos that you have and if you don't like what you have, create new ones! Remember, this is your first impression. Make sure your work is well represented and wait if necessary to choose your best shots.



Note: HSR does not provide any portfolio photos because we do not want to potentially mislead your clients. This is a critical aspect of your showing off your own work.

At this point, we want you to start selecting which sets of photos you will want to include in the *Portfolio* section of your website. In our Perfect Portfolios section in Week 2 I will show you how to upload each photo, clean it up and label it for your business. For Premium Website owners, we show you how to use a slideshow plugin already on your Portfolio page that displays a clean, ipad/iphone friendly slideshow on your website in the Premium Marketing Section.



Website: Go to the Member Area, Week Two under Perfect Portfolios or the Premium Marketing section.

We also discuss this in our Website WORCS section in Week One

44. Print the marketing sell sheets on your business letterhead or create letterhead using your logo (see my Bling Your Brand Section).



Website:

From the *Member Home Page*, click on Week One>>Day Five>>Forms Library.

Under "Form Usage" look for the words "Sales Hand-out" and for additional training, reference the Week-Day that form was discussed.

Download and print the handouts provided.

There are three excellent handouts included in this section:

- Top Ten Reasons You Should Professionally Stage Your Home
- Let's Talk Buyers
- 3 Keys to Selling Your Home

Go to our Bling Your Brand section in Week 2 for advanced, image techniques.



Tip: Given the high cost of letterhead, we recommend you don't bother buying it but instead use our forms and place your logo on the top in the header.

45. Edit your directory profile.

When you first paid for your package, you were taken to a *Directory Registration* page. You chose your login and password to get into the *Member Section*. The information you entered also auto-populated our *Home Stager Directory* so that real estate agents and home sellers who search the directory regularly to find a home stager in their area can find you. By now you should have chosen your company name and domain, so you need to update that information.



Website:

From the *Members Area*, click on **Week One>>Day One>>Training Overview** for video instructions on editing your profile.

Edit any of the fields that need to be updated, *especially* the url field which is where you insert your chosen domain (web address). Click Save Information.

If you can't find yourself then search for your name or email since may not have filled it out completely when you first registered!



Tip: Believe it or not, we do have new stagers who get phone calls immediately from clients even without their website being up and ready! If you are not ready for business, choose Hide Listing in the state drop down.



Important:

You are responsible for editing and managing your own profile so please do not ask us to do this! We still see people without their website link on the Directory!

Keep your email current with us at all times by also changing your profile in the regular emails you will be receiving from Audra using the link at the bottom.

We will send "expiration reminder emails" to the email you have on file but you can easily check your Member expiration by logging into your profile.

46. Create a page that explains your process and how you work.

People are visual. If they can read while you tell them about your process, it may help to put them at ease.



Website:

From the *Member Home Page*, click on Week One>>Day Five>>Forms Library.

Under 1-3 – “The Plan” is an example form for this we go over on Day 3.

Download and print the handouts provided.

As you mentally walk through your process, picture yourself as you do it. Is it too lengthy? Are you losing the client in all the rhetoric?



Tip: Practice with a friend so that the education process becomes second nature.

The more you educate the seller on the benefits of home staging and the ease of which you are able to accomplish this, the more business you are likely to receive. It is natural for some clients to have a certain amount of skepticism, since this is probably their first time home staging. Make them a believer and client for life by having fun, empowering them along the way and getting fantastic results in your changes!



Note: Day three, HSR Guide to Success training has the process all spelled out in an easy to understand format that allows you to meet every home seller’s needs, including the “do it yourselfers.” We also detail what that “Staging Day” should look like in Staging Day Videos. Take the time to watch those videos while you prepare your own process. This will give you lots of confidence!

47. Create a page about you and why clients should choose you.

This page becomes really important when you are bidding on a project and are competing against other home stagers or decorators. It will also look great in your website, so take the time to create your “bio” and have a professional photo taken of yourself to use for all of your connections.

On the public home page of the Home Staging Resource website, we have a 10-minute *Anatomy of a Staging Day* video. It highlights what makes our HSR Certified Professional Stagers special. Make sure you review this video and use it extensively in your email marketing campaigns as an educational link.

The direct link for the video is: <http://www.homestagingresource.com/pubstagingday.html>



Tip: Always assume you are competing for business when meeting with a home seller but approach the seller as if you are the only one.

The page you create in your portfolio will also help you define your staging style. Remember, the home seller is your greatest competition, because they mistakenly believe they can stage their own home.

You have to have confidence in your ability, and then be tough enough to follow through.

Rosalynn Carter (1927 -)

48. Create a pricing and service page for your portfolio.

In a previous step, you researched service and pricing models. It is now time to begin creating one for your own business although I still want you to hold off until you've gotten to Week 3, where I lay out a packaged service and pricing plan that sells best.

You will be learning more about consultations in the training, as well as services and pricing. For now, start a draft of the pricing and services page. You can modify it as you learn more. Once you finalize it, make sure you have it printed on your letterhead and in your portfolio for easy reference. I recommend you use this same page for your proposals too. Wait till you read through the Successful Pricing and Services Guide in this Training Manual to do the next couple steps. We make it very clear in this section!



Website:

From the *Member Home Page*, click on Week One>>Day Five>>Forms Library.

Under "Form Usage" look for the words "Price Sheet" and for additional training, reference the Week-Day that form was discussed.

Download and print the handouts provided.

Pricing will be critical to your success. It makes sense, rewards your efforts, encourages repeat business, as well as allows room for clients to upgrade and buy more. DO NOT simply copy and paste our example in to your website or Google will never rank it considering it to be plagiarism! Be creative and make your services your own!

49. Consider your sales process and closing.

How many times have you gotten a bid on a project or consultation, but were never closed on the sale?

A big part of your consultation is educating, a lot of listening, and taking your client's temperature during the consultation process in order to gauge whether they are going to continue to pursue staging their home.

Most clients who call you may be open to spending \$250 for the initial consultation. Where they go from there is *entirely up to how you handle that consultation*.

- Have a sales process worked into your consultation process, and every consultation will result in the appropriate amount of staging services, as well as happy, educated customers.
- Don't forget to *always* ask for the business and have a follow-up plan afterwards.
- Assume the business since they obviously have you there for a reason! Once you've gone through the paces in the Consultation and delivered a proposal, simply open up your day timer and say, "Is Friday or Monday at 9am good for you?"

50. As you develop your services and price list, consider how you want it to look on your website

You should start considering, collecting, and documenting what you want your website to say. Your HSR directory listing is at the top as a new member, so take advantage of that by getting your website up quickly and having the website link in your HSR Member profile.



Website: Fill out the basic Website Form in the Premium Section

You should have received a special link when you signed up for our program and ordered the "Premium Marketing Package"

Even if you are creating your website on your own you will want to review this section in order for you to get the most out of your website. Your website will be critical to your success because it is a marketing tool that makes it very easy for clients to find you AND find out about your business without you having to tell them! The Website Form is very basic to fill out and once we get your website up you have complete access to edit, add pages, change the photos, add a blog...the sky is the limit!



Website: Watch the Premium Website Tutorial Videos.

<http://www.homestagingresources.com/xxpremiummarketingxx/>

These videos are available for all to watch (even if you didn't purchase our Premium Website package) because I want you to see the technology that goes into our website product, as well as what your website should contain in terms of lead generation.



Note: You will become a Wordpress Guru by the end of those quick videos and no matter how "non-techy" you are, Wordpress makes it easy to edit, add pages, add a logo and blog.

In order to keep our pricing as low as we do, we ask that you do not call our 888 number for Wordpress questions on your site. We set up your site for you but if you want to do extreme

customizations, you will have to hire a Wordpress professional. We recommend www.wpdude.com for any technical help.



Tip: Google loves Wordpress but you want to make sure that your website is giving Google the right key words for your business.

We suggest using a lot of location-specific keywords in your main page content in order to naturally come up towards the top in search engine searches for your area. So, if you were a home stager in San Diego you would use "Home Staging San Diego," "San Diego Home Staging," and "San Diego Home Stager" in your text. Make sure your content flows well.



Note: Once your site is published, do not expect for it to show at all in the search engines. It generally takes *at least ten weeks* for a search engine to register your site.

Your domain and email are yours to manage. HSR manages the hosting and website. This allows you to focus on doing what you do best – transforming interiors.



Note: In Week Two, you'll learn how to regularly drive traffic to your site by running a Facebook Ad campaign, wave marketing plan, pay-per-click campaign, an email newsletter campaign and emailing your prospects with several links to your website from your email.

51. Never leave business on the table!

There should be no reason -- other than appraisal issues -- that you should walk away from a consultation with no additional business from your client. Make sure your products and services reflect this. If you find this happening quite often, then it's time to honestly review your process, pricing, and consider your sales pitch.

HSR Planning Checklist



HSR Planning Checklist:

- Complete Items # 30 - 46 of your *HSR Planning Checklist*.

Day 3 - The HSR Guide to Success – Services & Pricing



Wow, can you believe how far you've come in such a short amount of time?! Your creative juices should be flowing and your wheels should be spinning as you do a lot of soul searching about the way you work and how you structure your services, consultation process and pricing.

In this critical section we are going to outline a design philosophy, pricing and a very specific consultation process and structure that will give you credibility and confidence for ALL of your services. You will also want to login to the Members Area and watch my video to reinforce everything I talked about in the Consultation section and this HSR Guide to Success.



Website:
 From the *Member Home Page Menu*, click on *Week One>>Day Three>>HSR Guide to Success*

Many talented individuals fail in their home staging business because they lacked a *specific plan* and strategy for implementation. Just looking at all of the graduates of other programs who don't even have a website representing their business is a good indicator of why training on staging alone will *not* guarantee a successful business. In fact, nothing will guarantee success except your hard work, natural decorating talent, positive energy and strategic business plan.

Similar to the *Client Action Plan*, where you provide the expertise and the home seller provides the energy, HSR is giving you a blueprint to follow that is based upon tried and true marketing and business concepts. We give you the business expertise, but you still need to provide the energy to complete the job of making your business as successful as it can be.



Note: Reminder: HSR is not a franchise, so you can take or leave any or all of this advice if you wish. This is *your* business

to do with as you wish, so consider our advice and create your own plan that is reflective of you.

First, let's talk about your clients and how, as an *HSR Certified Professional Home Stager and Redesigner*, you are overcoming their initial objections by having a philosophy and plan that they can understand and take part in.

The Initial Mindset of Your Buyers -- Real Estate Agents and Home Sellers

To prepare to sell anything, you must first understand your buyers and be able to empathize with them. In the home staging industry this is so critical that if you can't empathize, you will fail. Why? There are some heavy emotions involved in the sale of a home.

Real estate agents have a lot of money at stake. Home sellers have a lot of intense emotions at stake. The first response to you by your buyers, particularly real estate agents, is one of distrust and skepticism, and rightly so.

Many real estate agents have viewed and slightly staged more homes than most professional home stagers. They will want to know what makes you more qualified than the real estate agent. Well ... what makes the real estate agent more qualified to sell homes than a home stager? The point is that you focus on what you do for a living and you do it well.

It would be nearly impossible for a professional home stager to be a successful real estate agent and successfully stage each home on their own. Those are *two* full time jobs and fields of expertise, both of which are difficult to obtain. Likewise, a busy, successful real estate agent should not waste their time staging their own homes when it can be out-sourced to someone whose focus is just that.



Tip: Keep in mind the real estate agent worked very hard to obtain that listing and does not want anyone to jeopardize it by offending the client or holding it up with renovations and improvements. These are two critical yet easy things to overcome when speaking with real estate agents.

Another point of distrust stems from the fact that home staging is a relatively new concept for many. There is no standard background or qualifications needed to become a home stager. Anyone can say they are home stagers and even go through training. But if they don't have an organized process or eye for interiors, their business will most likely fail in the first year.

Let's talk about your home seller's initial buying stages. Imagine that, to them, you are like going to the dentist. They are bracing themselves for criticism and the unknown. Most don't know what to expect. This might already be a difficult time in their lives. Moving can be traumatic for most people. They are already emotionally raw from the idea of leaving their home and memories. As if to add salt to the wound, a professional home stager is going to come and tarnish those home memories by transforming the space.

In all honesty, many home sellers do not have the courage to go through with the process, even though they know it will net them more money and are statistically willing to spend money to sell their home.

The Good News

Now that we've sufficiently discouraged and scared you half to death so that you can properly empathize with your clients, we'll give you the good news.

It's not hard to overcome all of these concerns when you follow a plan, educate your buyers on the plan, and over deliver on the results. What is the easiest way to over deliver on results?

Have a clear plan.

Set clear expectations and price.

Exceed expectations to build trust.

We told you about all of the common concerns your buyers (real estate agents and home sellers alike) are going to have upon first meeting you and considering a relationship with you. So why is it that many home stagers charge so much for that initial meeting when they are just starting out?



Tip: Don't assume when you get that initial phone call that you have a ready and willing buyer. You need to woo buyers with your process, pricing and products/services.

We'll give you the process and service structure with price points. First, let's talk about your plan for approaching clients with a design philosophy that covers the principles and elements of great design while reminding clients that cannot wave our magic wand and have the room transformed immediately. We follow an 8-Step, FEEL HOME process, so that we are covering all the design elements that make buyers FEEL HOME in the home we are staging...

The Importance of a Staging and Redesign Philosophy

Why have a staging and redesign philosophy and plan to follow? It gives confidence, expertise and structure to a somewhat "willy-nilly" industry and engages your clients in the process by giving them an education in decorating and staging principles. Think about it. Because there is no necessary training for stagers or redesigners, the industry is a bit ad hoc and disorganized.

Having a plan and memorable philosophy separates you from the rest and makes your clients more comfortable about what you will actually do for them. Real estate agents are big on plans. Just think of all that they have to go through to become a real estate agent. Then think of all the step-by-step paperwork they follow before, during and after escrow! By getting your client involved in the process and educating them along the way, you have empowered them, and have been given their "buy in" when it comes to additional needed staging services. Decorating, by its very nature, is ad hoc. It is more an art form than a science. However, staging is not decorating. Staging is about appealing to the masses, not customizing to the single customer. Therefore, by nature, it *should* be more science than art.

HSR's *FEEL HOME* philosophy takes scientific and general decorating principles and applies them to the home for wide appeal, in a way that people can understand. Over the next few pages, we'll show you the *FEEL HOME* philosophy and how to integrate it into your process and services so that it makes sense to your buyers and leaves them always wanting more.

The FEEL HOME Staging Philosophy

When you talk about your staging philosophy, the following pages will guide that conversation with your client if you so choose to adopt this philosophy and process. Let's go over the *FEEL HOME* philosophy for both your home staging and design clients.

HSR believes that successful staging is the art of using marketing and decorating techniques to create an environment that buyers can aspire to and say, "If I buy this house, I can live like this." We use the art of *positioning* to create several emotional connection points throughout the home so that when a buyer steps into the house they "*feel home*." We want them to think, "This is it. This is the one."

What does feeling home look like? For HSR, it's a combination of eight things we analyze in each room in order to create a lasting impression for the homebuyer:

First Impressions - We will walk through your home room by room, taking note of our first impressions, what grabs us, what glares at us, and what gives us a feeling of home.

Eliminating Clutter - The packing starts now, as we pack away a good percentage of everything in the room in order to create a more clean, open and spacious feel.

Emphasizing the positive while downplaying the negative - Finding your beautiful focal points, we will emphasize what we love about the room and hide or distract the negative aspects of the rooms.

Lighten Up - Focusing on lighting and color, we will make each room into a bright, warm and inviting space buyers can respond to.

Home Buyer's Appeal - In order for a buyer to "feel home," they need to not be reminded of this being your home. We'll depersonalize the space while retaining the warmth and fun of photos.

Obligations - Cleaning and repairs - The dirty work speaks for itself but is often overlooked because you've lived here for so long. Let's get rid of the buyer's mental repair list by doing it ourselves.

Modernizing - This involves updating your style and building simple accessories out of what you already have to create clean lines and form. In some cases, we'll recommend purchases as valuable investments in the staging process.

Emotional Connection Points - Creating the "Wow Factor" - This is the fun part and is a huge focus of our positioning strategy. We'll show you how to build in these subtleties in order to make the buyers subconsciously desire to live here and "feel home." The "emotional connection points" are where marketing strategy really comes in to play.

These eight steps in each ensure that we are considering all design elements in the space while reminding clients of our overall goal, “Getting buyers to feel at home in their home, so they fall in love with the space.” This is a process that your clients can follow and believe in...it also helps them to separate from their home and begin to see it as their most valuable commodity. When we can get our clients to “separate” then we can get them to believe in our service and follow our staging advice.

You will see that the first step, “First Impressions” is covered in the initial walk through during the Consultation by our clients. Now that you know the 8-Step Philosophy, let’s incorporate it into your Consultation process and plan.

Developing A Plan and Structure for Your Consultation

I already mentioned in the Consultation Guide that you should have a plan and structure in place for your Consultation process and it should generally look like this:




1. Pre-Appointment Form filled out and phone script used (see Consultation Guide)
2. Credit Card information is taken over the phone for a deposit on the day
Day of Consultation
3. Client interview where you are listening and taking their temperature/selling (5 min)
4. Your presentation and process (5 min)
5. Initial walk through of the home (20 min)
6. Regroup and go over the Staging Continuum making sure they are DIY (2 min)
7. Detailed walk through of the home using *Staging Report* (60 minutes)
8. Consultation Recap - Staging Report review, shopping list review, additional service check-in (10 min)

If your plan is to go with more of a “Proposal Styled” Consultation where you charge very little, do only the first 3 steps above and then upsell on a Staging Report/Day, then you may want to add a “Quick Transformation” to show them your stuff. The structure of your consultation may look differently.

Since a detailed person by nature and like to have things laid out for me, so I know the “steps” of my process, I created a “Plan” for you to tweak in order to keep you on track during the consultation and to remind you to mention key things to the client. I go over this plan in the HSR Guide to Success video but here it is below for your review:

Let’s Talk About Our Process and “Plan”

Let me tell you how I work...

-  First, I would like to sit down and discuss your home, expectations and goals. Afterwards we can talk about how we “Stage for Optimum Results” using our 8-step, “*FEEL HOME*” staging process. We will work with your home’s needs, buyer demographic and market in order to transform each room for a faster, more profitable sale.
-  We will start with a general walk-through of your home in order to get a sense of the whole space. We will note the number of rooms and the availability of furniture and accessories. We will be approaching each room as a buyer would, gathering first impressions, and noticing details. I will be taking notes of each room to assist me in my future report writing, while you give me your “first impressions” using your “Buyer’s Eyes” and a question worksheet.
-  Once we have walked through your home I will be able to prepare a proposal based upon our



-
- conversation, your home's needs, your budget, and your time constraints.
 - ☞ When we decide on a service that will fit you and your home's needs, I will make a more thorough examination of the home. During this time, I will be taking lots of photos, possibly giving you packing homework, and working off of a detailed Staging Report in order to make the most efficient use of our future staging days and your budget.
 - ☞ I will try to work with what you have but in some cases I may recommend purchases or rentals to complete the look. I offer a shopping service to assist you with this and will add this to the proposal service recommendation if we feel it's necessary.
 - ☞ I love to share my techniques and talent, so if time permits, I will try to do a quick staging of one of your rooms. This will show you what a few accessories and home staging tricks can do to transform a space and make it appealing to buyers.
 - ☞ I may be opening your built-in cabinets and closets for resources to help us create "emotional connections" and to give suggestions for de-cluttering, if needed.

Here's how I suggest we get the most from your work...

- ☞ Please don't feel self conscious about each room. We are putting on our most critical buyer's eyes so we can market your most valuable commodity to it's fullest potential. This will allow you to make more money and sell your house faster.
- ☞ Please keep an open mind and think in terms of future revenue for today's hard work. A staged home is not a lived-in home so we can discuss what would be "ideal" and what is "practical" given your current living situation. You set the boundaries.
- ☞ I suggest taking notes as we go through your home on a Staging Day, relaxing and enjoying this process as much as possible. Just think about how beautiful, inviting, and magical your home will become...and how much more profit you stand to gain!

Most of you will include the Staging Report/Walk and Talk in your Consultation (as I've suggested to do in the Consultation Guide), so below is the process I would like you to follow. Now let's look at those steps again through the eyes of our 8-step, FEEL HOME process.

The Client Interview

Most people just want to be listened to FIRST before being talked to, so your first sit-down with your client should be no different. Use those first ten minutes as an opportunity to:

- Build rapport
- Put them at ease
- Assess your client and take their *staging temperature*
- *Educate using sales forms if need be*

What is staging temperature? It's assessing how excited or conversely how miserable your client is with the idea of staging. Are they completely onboard? If so, then move on with your presentation and Initial Walk Through! If they are hesitant, holding back and generally "cold" then you've got more educating and reassuring to do! Reassure that staging is the first and best step toward the goal of selling their product.

Consider going over these different sales tools in order to better educate the seller (they are displayed below):

- A.) Merchandising Your Space for Buyers
- B.) *Top Dollar Guide – Name it anything you desire and be creative but this guide is filled with you useful information you can break apart or use in its entirety*
- C.) Top Ten Reasons to Stage – A photo and filled graphic (also in the Top Dollar Guide)

Let's take a quick look at each of these sales sheets...

Sales Hand-Outs and Educational Tools

One of my favorite new educational sheets is from the Design Modules and really helps to get the client to view this as a fun process that detaches them from the home. This sheet is entitled *Merchandising Your Space for Buyers*

“Merchandising” Your Space for Buyers

We want buyers to make the transition of *logically* deciding to visit your home (because it fits their size/location criteria) to *emotionally* “seeing themselves and their family living in your home” since we know that this transition is what will provide you with offers!

Not all buyers may even entertain, BUT they ALL envision a lifestyle of entertaining...interesting isn't it? What people *do* and what they actually *dream of doing* are two very different things. We want to create spaces that buyers can dream of or “aspire to” and position those spaces to your buyer demographic. The below chart helps you to creatively view the differences between the “vision” we are trying to create for buyers who walk through your home and the way we typically live!



Remember! We need to put on our most critical Buyers Eyes, in order to market and merchandise your most valuable product! Do not be self-conscious since people do not and should not live in “staged homes!” That’s the beauty of redecorating and redesign!

BUYER ASPIRATION CHEAT SHEET

Buyers Aspire to:	Buyers do not Aspire to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive things like paintings, wood, silver and glass • New and modern things that signify fresh and clean “updated décor” • Trends that are timeless • The good life of travel, entertaining friends, gourmet cooking, wine tasting, espresso drinking and a luxurious, leisurely lifestyle • Electronically savvy (<i>Think flat screens, surround sound and laptops</i>) • Light and Spacious surroundings • Harmonious and updated color combinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap things like plastics, particle board or aluminum • Old and dated items that signify tired and dirty • Fads that are tiresome • The boring life of 8 to 5, dreary, plain, vanilla and uninspiring. (<i>Notice this is usually how many agents stage by getting rid of any traces of life or décor</i>) • Electronically last century (<i>Tube TV’s, wires galore and big stereo speakers</i>) • Dark and Cluttered spaces • Clashing, non-rhythmic, half-hearted color choices done on the fly



Hands On Exercise – Grab one of your favorite home magazines or catalogs and flip through the pages. You will see that every photo is “visually merchandised” to create a longing in the viewer. We want to create that same merchandising vision in every room of your home!

Here is another very useful sales hand-out that you can call “The Top Dollar Guide”, “Seller’s Essentials” etc.. The following 16 pages are in this HUGE Guide, so pare it down and use the sales sheets you like the best. You can download this entire Guide in the Forms Library of Week One.

Top Dollar Guide

“People see only what they are prepared to see.”
Emerson

Selling your home is not easy. It takes time, energy, objectivity, expertise and a team of experts to help you! Luckily there are people who specialize in each step of the process like Real Estate Agents, Title Companies, Inspectors, Appraisers and Home Stagers. *What is a Home Stager?* A Home Stager is someone who is an expert at decorating and preparing a home to sell. *What is Home Staging?*

“Home Staging is using limited funds, practical creativity and extraordinary expertise to professionally prepare a home to sell so that it becomes infinitely more attractive to potential buyers, sells quickly and for more money. In turn, home staging becomes an investment for the home seller through the greater home sale earnings that are realized.”

Audra Slinkey, President of the Home Staging Resource
www.homestagingresource.com

Staging and Selling for Top Dollar Overview

Selling your home is a process and this guide is intended to walk you through the most important elements of success in that process:

- The Three Keys to Selling Your Home
- Understanding Buyers
- Top Ten Reasons to Stage Your Home
- Getting Buyers to “Feel Home” in Your Home
- Creating a Plan for Preparing Your Home to Sell
- Photo Examples – General Walk Through of Home

Three Keys to Selling Your Home

Don't worry about the idea of selling your home in a slow "buyer's market" or busy "seller's market" because when these three keys are done right, success is right around the corner regardless! Why? Because most home sellers today are neglecting one or more of these crucial steps, impeding the realization of a successful sale and leaving money on the table.

If you are serious about selling your home, here are 3 ESSENTIAL KEY STEPS you must take into consideration to make your home stand out from the competition:

1. **Marketing Your Home On the Inside** – Professional Home Staging
2. **Marketing Your Home to the Public** – Online Marketing, brochures, open houses, etc...
3. **Pricing the House Right** – Reviewing comparable homes in your area, getting a good agent, finessing your price

When each key is just right, offers will come!

First Key – Disassociate and Prepare Your Home on the Inside (Home Staging)

Most home sellers are aware of the need to spruce up their home (product) so that it sells, but often have no idea where to begin or how to prioritize the improvements. In fact, according to a recent poll of over 3500 homes professionally staged, the average staging investment that is between 1 and 3 percent of the home's asking price will generate a return of 8 to 10 percent in the sale price of the home! That means when a seller with a \$300,000 home invests \$3,000 in preparing it to sell, they will typically see a \$24,000 return!

In today's real estate market, it simply means you will be able to attract more buyers and sell your home quickly because it appeals to the broadest range of buyers. Home sellers know they need to spend; they just need professional guidance in knowing where to spend those staging dollars in order to have the greatest return on investment.



After living in a home for more than 2 years, it is almost impossible for people to "objectively" view their space and their sentimental belongings from a buyer's perspective, allowing them to focus on spending their staging budget wisely.

Elements of the home that may have annoyed us originally, we no longer notice. Our homes become very personal, filled with belongings that create memories and emotions, so that objectively altering them to fit a buyer's perspective becomes nearly impossible to do ourselves!

So what does a home seller do to view the home objectively and get the most from their staging budget?

- ❖ **Be a Buyer** – Disassociate from your home and try to see your home through a buyer's eyes. The next section in our Staging Guide will begin to walk you through this.
- ❖ **Get Professional Guidance** – Hire a professional Home Stager who is an expert at marketing and photographing the inside of a home, creating an emotional response from buyers to each space. Staging and decorating is what we do all day, so we know a bit about what looks great and appeals to buyers.



Hands On: Staging is an art form like gourmet cooking, painting and decorating, so consequently most people don't have the expertise to transform and market each room of the home correctly on their own. Would you paint your own paintings?

We'll talk a lot more about this first key in the coming pages, as well as give you a plan for your home.

Second Key – Have an Amazing Online Photo Presentation (Marketing Campaign)

Your online photo presentation is Key Number Two in selling your home fast and for the best price!



- ❖ **95% of homebuyers are ONLINE first looking at photos of the homes, before they decide to drive by and visit?**
- ❖ **84% of buyers reported the photos to be the most useful information**
- ❖ **The number ONE action taken after viewing a home online was to drive by or visit the home!**

NAR Profile of Buyers

Your home's *online photo presentation* is competing against many other homes for the buyer's attention, so make sure the listing presentation shines by following these simple strategies:

- ❖ **Use An Enhanced Listing** - If you think all agents are alike in the way they list a home and market it to the public...think again! In fact, the number one, most trafficked real estate website is www.Realtor.com. There are various options for "featuring" a home that are available to agents, so make sure your agent is maximizing that traffic potential.
- ❖ **Use Over 20 Photos** – As your professional stager, I will take plenty of gorgeous photos of those staged rooms as noted in Key Number One, being sure to focus on the best four photos first since that is what the buyer sees instantly when clicking on your listing.



1 photo = 5 views and 1.37 leads

21 or more photos = over 77 views and 11+ leads

Clearly the listings that added 20+ photos generated nearly 10 times the number of leads and over 15 times the number of views.

1 photo = 70 days on market

6 photos = 40 days on market

16-19 photos = 36 days on market

20+ photos = 32 days on market

**According to Point2.com

- ❖ **Use A Virtual Tour** – Did you know I am not only specially trained to take great photos of staged rooms but have access to creating a beautiful “Virtual Tour” to music that can attach to your online listing? Buyer’s love clicking on those virtual tours and I can create one that makes your home shine!



Danger: Make sure the photos are of professionally staged rooms! There is nothing worse than multiple photos of awful looking spaces!

- ❖ **List Only When Ready** – When an agent lists your home, buyers who have signed up for “e-mail alerts” for your area will get an e-mail of the online listing presentation. Make sure that all the staged room photos and details are in place before the listing is launched, so that buyers are instantly attracted to the home!

Remember to think like a home buyer and go online to review your listing and photos.

Does it visually have appeal and stand out among similarly priced homes in your area? If not, go back to First Key and Second Key to either increase the home’s attraction or consider pricing as explained in the Third Key.

Third Key - Price the Home Right the First Time

Your real estate agent is an expert on the marketplace and at reading and understanding comparable homes nearby. Statistically, a home that “sits” on the market loses its new listing buzz and ends up selling for a lower price down the road. In fact, according to a National Association of Realtors survey, 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 percent more than the list price; 4 to 12 weeks averaged 5 percent less; 13 to 24 weeks averaged 6.4 percent less than the list price; and 24 weeks averaged more than 10 percent less than list price.

Research the homes for sale in your area at a website like www.zillow.com and talk with your agent about introducing your home at a price that will encourage potential buyer traffic because the first two steps to selling your home will be sure to promote offers. If you plan to “shoot high and see what happens” that’s fine but be prepared to change the price in two weeks if you don’t attract buyers to your home.

Understanding Buyers

In order to understand how to sell a product, you have to understand your buyer and what makes them go from making a logical decision to visit your home, to the emotional decision of placing an offer. Here are some simple tips to keep in mind when you are staging and selling a home:

The home seller has the marketing advantage....

- ☞ **A Perfectly Targeted Audience** – Most buyers who come to your house are good prospects. They are actively shopping for the product you are selling and your house should already meet their general criteria.
- ☞ **A Captive Audience** – The buyer is in your house and will probably spend up to an hour studying it.
- ☞ **An Opportunity to Make Multiple Impressions** – Each room gives us the perfect opportunity to make dozens of first impressions. With each detail, we will move the buyer from looking at your house to evaluating whether it could be *their home*.

Homes are purchased based on emotions...

- ☞ We want buyers to think “This is it. This is the one!” We will use our eight-step, *FEEL HOME* process to depersonalize the space and create “emotional connection points” which actively engage a buyer’s mind to imagine how life could be in your house for *their* family.
- ☞ Like most first impressions, buyers will be looking to reinforce their opinion throughout the rest of the home. We’ll make those first impressions *positive in every room!*
- ☞ When a house feels like home, buyers will reprioritize their list. We’ll accentuate the positive and downplay the negative in each room. We’ll create warmth, scale, harmony and cohesion by using expert decorating tricks of the trade.

Buyers will “profile” the sellers in their buying decisions...

- ☞ Neat and organized sellers are viewed as taking care of a home. The opposite is also true. We’ll declutter those areas buyers use to profile neatness.
- ☞ Nationwide, the typical homebuyer household consists of a married couple aged 36 with a household income of \$71,300. We will target these people in our style and décor so our “profile” fits.

Buyers will view your personal things, impersonally

- ☞ If you can’t see objectively, you can’t market effectively. We’ll put on “buyer’s eyes” in each room of your house, so that you can see how to market your home everyday of the process.

Top Ten Reasons to Stage Your Home for Sale





9
THE COST OF
STAGING...
DOESN'T COST
A DIME!

When the seller spent an average of .5% of the value of their home on staging, they saw on average a 1000% return on investment!



8
YOUR HOUSE
WILL SELL
MUCH
FASTER!

In a recent Real Estate Staging Association (RESA) Survey, professionally staged homes spent 72% LESS time on the market!



7

BUYERS CAN
VISUALIZE
THEMSELVES
LIVING
THERE

In a 2017 NAR Survey, over 97% of "Buyers Agents" say that staging has at least some effect on the buyer's view of the home.



6

ONLINE HOME
PHOTOS WILL
STAND-OUT

According to NAR, over 95% of buyers are online FIRST looking at photos of the home BEFORE they go visit or call an agent!



5

HOME SELLERS
CANNOT VIEW
THEIR HOME
OBJECTIVELY

If you can't view objectively, you can't package effectively and it's nearly impossible for a seller to be objective about their home!



4

YOUR HOME'S
"FLAWS"
CAN BE
OVERLOOKED

According to NAR, almost a third of buyers will "overlook property faults when a home is professionally staged"!



3

YOU CAN
RELAX

You will have the satisfaction of knowing you have done everything possible to get a quick sale and not leave money on the table!



2

MOST AGENTS
CONSIDER IT A
CRITICAL
NECESSITY

According to a 2014 Zillow survey of real estate experts, home staging was listed as a TOP TWO necessary item for sellers!



The **FEEL HOME** Staging Philosophy

The Home Staging Resource believes that successful staging is the art of using marketing and decorating techniques to create an environment to which buyers can aspire and feel that, “If I buy this house, I can live like this.” At the Home Staging Resource, we use the art of positioning to create several emotional connection points throughout the home so that when a buyer steps into the house they “*feel home.*” We want them to think, “This is it. This is the one!”

What does feeling home look like? It’s a combination of eight things we analyze over the course of the staging process in each room in order to create a lasting impression for the homebuyer:

First Impressions – In our home assessment consultation, we will walk through your home room-by-room and take note of our first impressions, what grabs us, what glares at us and what gives us a feeling of home. Buyers will form a first impression immediately upon viewing the photos and home, so we need to make each photo and room count!

Eliminating Clutter -- The packing starts now, as we pack away a good percentage of everything in the room in order to create a more clean, open and spacious feel. In the consultation we will discuss what can be packed away before the staging day, so that we get the most from our time.

Emphasizing the Positive While Downplaying the Negative -- Finding your beautiful focal points, we will emphasize what we love about the room and hide or distract from the negative aspects of the rooms.

Lighten Up -- Focusing on lighting and color, we will make each room into a bright, warm and inviting space to which buyers can respond.

Home Buyer’s Appeal - In order for a buyer to “feel home,” it is important for them to be presented with a depersonalized “canvas” upon which they can visualize their family portrait. We’ll depersonalize the space while retaining the warmth and fun of photos.

Obligations - Cleaning and Repairs - The dirty work speaks for itself but is often overlooked because you’ve lived here for so long. Let’s get rid of the buyer’s mental repair list by doing it ourselves before our staging time together, so we get the most out of the day.

Modernizing – This involves updating your style and building simple accessories out of what you already have to create clean lines, scale, rhythm and form. In some cases, we’ll recommend purchases as valuable investments in the staging process that will go a long way in getting buyers to “fall in love” with your home.

Emotional Connection Points - Creating the “Wow Factor” -- This is the fun part and is a huge focus in our positioning strategy. We’ll show you how to build in these subtleties in order to make the buyers subconsciously desire to live here and “feel home”. The “emotional connection points” are where marketing strategy really comes into play and I’m an expert at putting this together for you!

Creating a Plan for Preparing Your Home to Sell

Now that you know what it takes to get your home sold fast and for the best price, let's get started!

As you know, the first key to getting your home sold is home staging. There are three phases to the home staging process, which will be addressed completely in my home staging services starting with a Consultation and continuing through our Staging Days:



To watch a video of all that gets accomplished during an example Staging Day go to:

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

Phase One – Maximizing What You Have, so That it Appeals to Buyers

You will be amazed at the dramatic transformations I will be able to accomplish in a single *Staging Day* using what you already have! Successful home staging must make financial sense and I am experienced and trained in making the most of your current belongings in order to turn buyer traffic into offers. We will start with a Consultation in order to assess your space.

Phase Two - Recommended Purchases as “Investments” in Selling Your Home

Working within your budget, I will only recommend purchases that will MORE than pay for themselves in the speed and dollar amount of sale. During the Staging Day, I will bring in accessories in order to get fantastic photos for your Realtor's marketing efforts and to attract Internet traffic. Over 95% of homebuyers are online searching for homes BEFORE they visit a home, so we want to make an excellent first impression and compel them to come to your home. The accessories I bring in during the Staging Day will also give you a “visual” of the simple and inexpensive purchases you can make that have a dramatic effect on each room of your home. I will e-mail you the Before and After photos, so you can see the transformations and make your shopping list. I also offer a shopping service if you need more guidance in this area.

Phase Three - Simple Yet Dramatic Cosmetic Updates and Changes

Depending on your budget and timing, we may suggest paint, electrical and other cosmetic improvements that will result in a high return on investment. I will tell you which rooms and improvements are “worth it.” Don't spend on cosmetic changes without first consulting the experts at www.homestagingresource.com



Huge directory of Certified Home Stagers!

www.homestagingresource.com

Creating a Plan for Preparing Your Home to Sell – Photo Examples

For an idea of the look we will try to achieve in your home, view the photos below:

Living Areas



Creating a Plan for Preparing Your Home to Sell – Photo Examples

For an idea of the look we will be trying to achieve in your home, view the photos below:

Beautiful Bedroom Areas



Creating a Plan for Preparing Your Home to Sell – Photo Examples

For an idea of the look we will be trying to achieve in your home, view the photos below:

Delicious Dining Areas



Creating a Plan for Preparing Your Home to Sell – Photo Examples

For an idea of the look we will be trying to achieve in your home, view the photos below:

Gourmet Kitchen Areas



Each of these sales hand-outs are useful tools to hand to clients but the good news is that these days most sellers and agents are “getting it”.



Tip: REMEMBER, if the seller is “hot” and excited at the prospect of staging, move on to the next step in your Consultation process while always taking their temperature.

Your Presentation and Process

Once you’ve done the listening and educating, it’s time to set the expectation. This is the time to talk about the 8-Steps in each room, so buyers FEEL HOME sheet I already showed you. Go over the steps and ask if they would complete step one with you when you do an “initial walk through” of their home.

We want them to put on “buyers eyes” and share some one-word, adjectives when they step into each room of what they think a buyer will “feel” in the room. We ask them to do this while we take the time to study and assess each space and its contents. This is also a good time to remind them that we see the space and each furnishing as “movable pieces” that we will be rearranging to make the most of the space and their budget. Below is a simple image/pdf we created on www.canva.com using the “card” setting that you can use to help them put on those “buyers eyes” or better yet...create your own.



Benefits to the Buyer First Impression Questionnaire Exercise

Why go through the process of having the seller walk through their home with you? Here are the many business benefits to having the seller go through this exercise:

- It lets the seller do the criticizing of their home and be the “bad guy”
- It allows you to jot down their criticisms and use them later while staging, ie “remember when you mentioned a buyer might believe this space is too dark?”
- It helps the seller begin to “separate” their emotions from the home and commit to the process
- It builds your own credibility by putting you in control of every action within the consultation
- It allows you to study and consider the space WITHOUT getting distracted by the seller

Now that we have a specific activity keeping the seller busy during the initial walk through, let’s talk about what you will be doing during the initial walk through...

Initial Walk Through of the Home

While the seller is putting on those “buyers eyes” I recommend taking out the “*Staging Report*” (shortened version or better yet, customize it yourself), putting it on a clipboard and simply use the second “First Impression” page as a worksheet. You can use it to “inventory” the pieces you will want to have the seller pack up (Discard), or move to another room (Displace) or bring into the space (Desire). Use your own shorthand to quickly make some notes while writing down the seller’s criticisms of the space in the “first impressions” column.

This may seem strange, but the Initial Walk Through goal should be to further help your client detach from their home, while building your credibility and knowledge in their eyes! How do you do that?

- Always speak in terms of staging potential!
- Complement an architectural feature and discuss how you will create a staging plan to get buyers to notice it!
- Use terms and analogies from our Design Modules liberally!
- The full report on a clipboard is a visual reminder of the work that needs to be done.
- Watch our Staging Day Videos in Week 3 where we detail these types of phrases within each home!

After you watch those videos, you’ll get the hang of it. Why do I think it’s important that you approach the walk through in this manner? **Because it reinforces you as the expert, assumes the staging process and will make it that much easier to deliver a proposal based on the home’s needs rather than the seller’s budget!**

After the Initial Walk Through you can choose to do a Quick Transformation to further exert your expertise in the home if you’re doing a “proposal style” consultation but most of you will go straight into the next step in the consultation process....



Manual: Refer to Consultation Guide in Week One of this manual for details on Quick Transformations



Initial Walk Thru – “First Impressions” Page

	First Impressions	Discard	Displace?	Desire...
Curb Appeal <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Entry Way <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Living Room <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Formal Dining <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Kitchen/Nook <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Family Room <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Main Bath <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Master Bed <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Master Bath <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Bedroom 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Bedroom 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Bedroom 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Bedroom 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Bath 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Back yard <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Porch/Deck <input type="checkbox"/> Photo				
Other:				
Other:				

Regroup and Assess the Client, Space and Go Over Staging Timeline

In most every case you will launch straight into your “Detailed Walk Through” with the seller and have them fill out your recommendations in the Staging Report. BUT there are some rare cases where you know that that is not the best way to proceed in the home.

For instance, if the seller is NOT a do-it-yourselfer (DIY) then why do they need a full report of what to do? You see, sometimes you will have a seller who just wants you to “do it for them”. This why the “regroup” moment just after the initial walk through could be valuable...you are giving your clients options while “upselling” your services. The best staging results come from your time, rolling up your sleeves doing the staging in the home.

After the Initial Walk Through, simply show the client the first page of the Staging Report where it has the “Staging for Optimum Results Timeline” and ask them, *“Great staging takes objectivity, expertise, time and energy. I’m happy to spend the next hour giving you my objective expertise and telling you how to get the best price for your home but are you willing to take the time and energy to do the work?”*

Pause...“I ask this because sometimes I have clients who just want me to work side-by-side with them and do the work together. If that is you, then it makes more sense for us to schedule a staging day, I will go back through the home taking photos to plan our time wisely while placing a sticker on items I need you to pack ahead of time. I’m happy to credit \$100 of the consultation fee towards the deposit for this service if it’s what you would prefer to do...”

Time Taken >> 1 Hour	2 Hours	Many Hours Depending on Home	Staging Refinement/Photo Day
Proposal Consultation	Walk & Talk (DIY)>>> OR Stager Plans>>>	DIY Seller Prepares Home & Shops OR Professional Stager Prepares and Shops	Professional Stager & Seller works to Refine & Merchandise Each Space
Home Assessment DIY/Budget Assessment	Verbal and Written plan outlines "action items" needed to successfully stage product for "Buyer Demographic"	Using the Objective, Expertise provided in written report, the DIY Seller invests time and energy completing the action items. OR Stager completes action items for Seller in the form of our "Get It Sold" package	Seller Can Prepare Home in 20 min Photos Capture Online Buyers Online Buyers Drive to Home Home is "Open House Ready" "Emotional Buyer Offer" is Created

Deliverable Provided = Level of Successful Staging Results & Eventual Home Sale>>

Again, this is for those clients that you can sense are not going to put the work into the staging, are too overwhelmed to begin or the home that need so much more than a report. If the client prefers to have you come back and hold their hand through the staging day process, then make sure to collect payment/save the date deposit to hold the day and do these steps:

- A.) Go back through the home taking photos from every angle of the room, so you can make a plan for your staging day (and have good before photos for your portfolio).
- B.) Place a sticker on items you want packed ahead of time
- C.) Make a shopping list and cosmetic fix list in the *Home Preparation Report*
- D.) Give the client the *Home Preparation Report* with shopping and cosmetic list
- E.) Discuss where they can shop for “staging investments” or better yet, have them give you cash in order to go shopping for them and bring accessories on staging day
- F.) Collect a “hold the day” deposit and have the sign the *Service Agreement*

Here are the forms associated with this process...

Home Preparation Plan

In order to get the most out of our Staging Day and time together, it is recommended that you follow this quick checklist to prepare your home to be transformed:

- ☑ **Disassociate yourself from your home** – Staging success starts when you begin to view your beloved home as your number one commodity to sell! It's impossible for a home owner to be "objective" with their belongings and home (that's what I'm here for) but you can start by critically assessing each room and comparing them to the photos in my "**Top Dollar Guide**." It will also help to say to yourself, "*This is not my home; it is a house -- a product to be sold much like a car or piece of furniture I put on Craigslist*".
- ☑ **Commit to the Process** – In this more competitive marketplace, there's no room for half-heartedness! You either commit to selling your home or hold it. Disassociating from your home and making sure it's the best-looking home on the market in its price range is a first step. The Staging Process can be tough, but it gets results and allows you to sell your home faster and for more money if you follow through the entire staging process for optimum results.
- ☑ **Have the home professionally cleaned (dishes done, beds are made, laundry put away, etc...)** – One of the primary goals of our staging time is to get fantastic photographs of our completed rooms, so that the 9 out of 10 buyers online first viewing the photos, drive to your home! The best way to get the most out of our time, as well as great photos is to have your home professionally cleaned beforehand. I have a recommended cleaner and discount available to you in my *Recommended Vendors List*.
- ☑ **Clear your kitchen counters of excess and unused appliances, place your best cookbooks/kitchen décor items out for the Staging Day.** – If you have appliances that you use regularly keep them out but consider packing excess glasses/dishes, so that we can find a convenient home for those items that you still need on-hand.
- ☑ **Clear off bathroom counters of any personal products, place your best towels out for the Staging Day**
- ☑ **Packing Starts Now** – Use my *3-Steps to Packing Process* in order to start packing away the items you know you won't need in the next six months. Carefully label the boxes and stack them in your locker or garage. ****Remember, it's much easier to simply get rid of unused items today, then to unpack it tomorrow!**

Do these activities if we've had a Consultation beforehand:

- ☑ **Clear the items that I have placed a sticker on from each room** – One of the primary goals for our staging time is to create a "sense of space" for the buyer and in order to do that, we need to clear out excess items that will not speak "positively" to our buyers. ****It is ideal to obtain a storage locker for excess items and I have a recommendation and discount for one in my *Recommended Vendors List*. If it's not practical given your budget to get a locker, then simply packing those items in the garage will work.**
- ☑ **Pre-move or pack anything else we may have discussed in the Consultation** – In order to insure proper handling, sensitive/valuable items or electronics will need to be moved ahead of time and will be discussed in the Consultation.
- ☑ **Repair/Update/Replace anything we may have discussed in the Consultation (or see attached list of ROI Recommended Cosmetic Improvements)** – You can use my *Recommended Vendors List* or I am happy to offer Full-Service Vendor Coordination for your convenience at an hourly rate.

Shopping List and Recommended (ROI) Cosmetic Improvements

Suggested Shopping List:

Maximum Return on Investment (ROI) Cosmetic Fixes

Considering your market, competition and current condition of your home, we will only suggest those cosmetic changes that will have a maximum return on investment (ROI) and are essential to the sale of your home in this current Buyer's Market.

Three-Steps to “Less is More” and “Loving What You Have!”

It’s very difficult for people to see the great stuff that you own when there is too much of it! Whether staging your home to sell, or redesigning rooms for yourself, the maxim *less is more* almost always applies!

Getting rid of extra stuff is not as hard as it seems. In fact, there are plenty of places that would love to have it and will give you money for it! The Internet makes this very easy for you, as well as local consignment shops of all varieties.

Here is my three-step process for finding good homes for your excess belongings while being very *Green* in the process:

1. First, grab three large plastic bins and two trash bags.
2. Label bin one as Goodwill, bin two as Resell using Craigslist, Ebay or Consignment (whichever is easiest for you to use). Label bin 3 as Storage. Label trash bag one as recycled trash (magazines, dog eared books, glass, etc.) and trash bag two as trash. I think by now you are getting the picture.
3. Now go through the room and ask yourself these three critical questions: **1. Do I love this item? 2. Do I use this item? 3. Does this item fit the style or vision I am trying to create?** If the item does not meet at least TWO of those qualifications, place it in its most appropriate bin. For those items that you “only love” or “only use once yearly,” consider placing them in storage as they don’t fit regular use and probably won’t be needed to stage your home.



Tip: If you’re finding quite a few items in your storage bin, that’s okay since it’s hard to let go, and it’s okay to simply store those items to unpack later.

Craigslist.com, ebay.com and your various local consignment stores would be happy to sell your more valuable but needless items for you. A garage sale takes time and energy while these online options are fairly painless and most efficient! ***If nothing else, simply clear space in your garage for the items you really do want to keep but have no “staging value.”***

Consider simply giving those items to those who need it. Craigslist even has a fun, free section where you can place stuff you don’t want for free and believe me, someone will pick it up at your house shortly. Amvets has an easy pickup service for most states where you can leave your stuff out front and they will pick it up. Simply go to: <http://www.amvetsnsf.org/stores.html> for your local pickup phone number. The Goodwill is another favorite because it uses all your stuff to create jobs for people in your area.



Tip: For old electronic equipment, computers, refrigerators or large appliances, make sure to dispose of them properly by calling your city to see where each piece is best recycled and handled.

Service Agreement – Not legally binding

This home staging service agreement is between _____ Name of Client _____ the owners of _____ address of home _____ heretofore referred to as the “Customer” AND _____ Your Staging Company _____ of _____ your address _____ heretofore referred as the “Service Provider”

BACKGROUND:

- A. Customer is engaging Service Provider to provide staging services to the Customer, on the terms and conditions as set forth in this Agreement.
 - B. Services agreed upon include:
-

IN CONSIDERATION OF the matters described above and of the mutual benefits and obligations set forth in the Agreement, the receipt of and sufficiency of which consideration is herby acknowledged, the parties to this Agreement agree as follows:

Engagement

- 1. The Customer herby agrees to engage the Service Provider to provide the Customer with services consisting of staging and preparing the property for sale.
- 2. Staging, although proven to be effective, is a trained professional opinion and services provided do not in any way warrant the sale of the home.
- 3. The Customer acknowledges before and after photographs will be taken during the Staging process and gives permission to the Service Provider use of these photographs in advertising and marketing materials.
- 4. It is understood that there are some risks involved in moving furniture and accessories as part of Staging/Design services as contracted with the Service Provider. Albeit rare to experience any damage or injury, it is agreed by the Customer and Service Provider to hold harmless each other. There will be no future claim against the Service Provider or any partners, associates or helpers for any injury to persons within the Customer’s property or damage or destruction of possessions or property belonging to the Customer.
- 5. It is warranted that the signers of this contract have all authority to authorize the movement of all furniture and accessories within the property.
- 6. Any work performed by third party companies recommended by the Service Provider is not in any way the responsibility of the Service Provider.
- 7. All pets should be removed from the property during services being rendered and are not the responsibility of the Service Provider to prevent escape.
- 8. Services will be re-scheduled if pre-staging recommendations in the *Home Preparation Plan* are not carried out thus preventing staging of the property effectively and the Customer will be charged a rescheduling fee of \$150.

Term of Agreement

- 9. The term of this Agreement will begin on the date of this Agreement and will remain in full force and effect until completion of the Services.

Compensation

10. For the services provided by the Service Provider under this Agreement, the Customer will pay to the Service Provider compensation in the following manner. A Service deposit of ___% will be collected at the signing of this agreement to hold the days of staging service. Further billing will not be composed until completion of services provided at which time Compensation is payable. The agreed upon amount included in the proposal for all-inclusive staging services and photography is \$_____. Accessory or furniture rental fees, if incurred will be listed separately in the Accessory Rental attachment of this agreement if applicable.

Confidentiality

11. The Service Provider acknowledges that a material term of the Agreement with the Customer is to keep all confidential information belonging to the Customer absolutely confidential and to protect its release to the public unless oral permission is granted otherwise by the Customer.

Capacity/Independent Contractor

12. It is expressly agreed that the Service Provider is acting as an independent contractor and not as an employee in providing services hereunder. The Service Provider and the Customer acknowledge that this Agreement does not create or imply partnership of joint venture.

Accessory Rental

13. Inventory remaining on the property listed on an attachment and its replacement costs 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.
14. Inventory items are for display purposes only and not to be used, including all bedding, table linens, towels, etc..
15. Any rental agreement for inventory left on the premises will commence on the staging completion date.
16. Cancellation of the rental agreement will require ten (10) calendar days written (email) notice to remove staging items. Failure to give adequate notice will result in additional rental charges. The Service Provider recommends the property remain staged until closing is completed; this prevents problems if the offer falls through.
17. If inventory remains on the property, entry to the premises must be made available to the Service Provider by way of providing a key and combination to lock box.

Governing Law

18. 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 ___STATE___.

Date stamp on the email used to forward this document signifies acceptance of this agreement by both parties.

Signed:

Customer _____ Date _____ Service Provider _____ Date _____

Okay, now let's pretend you are continuing with your Consultation process after the quick regroup...

Detailed "Walk Through" Using the *Staging Report*

As I said before, most clients will want to proceed with the Staging Report since that's what they paid for and budget is a consideration. In this next Consultation step, you are going to have the Staging Report on your clipboard (from the initial walk through), take the "first impression" page out and hand the seller your clipboard, so they can write down key items on their report.



Tip: Staples has a great clipboard with storage inside, so you can keep your client forms together in one place.

Why do I suggest that the seller write down what you tell them? Because I have terrible writing and this is their "home worksheet" to use and complete the items we advise them to do. The good news is that most stagers simply give the client a notepad, so you are working far more efficiently using a checklist styled report like the *Staging Report*.



Website: Review the *Client Action Plan Section*

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One>>Day Three>>** Client Action Plan Section

Of course it's more ideal if you had a nice, type-written report but as I stated in the pricing problem earlier...you are not getting paid enough to be able to take the time to do something like that.

Starting at the curb, begin walking through home using a blank Staging Report on your clipboard in order for you to quickly go through the checklist of items you think are most critical for the seller to perform. Use words like, "underline or star this item!" in order to get them to write things down. Don't hold anything back! They are paying you for your expertise, so give it out freely and don't be afraid to overwhelm the client. Be honest and make sure to balance critical "return on investment" items with not so critical when it comes to cosmetic fixes.

While you are telling them everything they should do in each space, make sure to keep a separate shopping list (use the "First Impression" page, Home Preparation Plan page or a blank sheet of paper) to keep a list of items that would give them the most bang for their buck. Consider putting stickers on items you would like them to pack up right away (Discard).

Use their criticisms from the Initial Walk Through to solve design issues.



Website: Review the *Staging Day Video Section* for more information on what to say and how to say it in the detailed walk through.

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week Three>>Day Eighteen>>** Staging Day Video Section

Consultation Recap & Client Sit Down/Question Time (Similar to Regroup)

You will be amazed at your ability to allow your design instincts to “kick in” during the detailed walk through but make sure to stay on top of time and not get too carried away. At the end of your consultation, go over the staging priorities, shopping list and cosmetic fix list. Make sure to ask them if they want you to come back and help them with the work. Assume more business since your time in the home always provides the BEST staging results. Remember, if the client prefers to have you come back and hold their hand through the staging day process, then make sure to collect payment/save the date deposit to hold the day and do these steps:

- A.) Go back through the home taking photos from every angle of the room, so you can make a plan for your staging day (and have good before photos for your portfolio).
- B.) Place a sticker on items you want packed ahead of time
- C.) Make a shopping list and cosmetic fix list in the *Home Preparation Report*
- D.) Give the client the *Home Preparation Report* with shopping and cosmetic list
- E.) Discuss where they can shop for “staging investments” or better yet, have them give you cash in order to go shopping for them and bring accessories on staging day
- F.) Collect a “hold the day” deposit and have the sign the *Service Agreement*

Ask them when they believe they will be finished with all the action items and if you can follow up in a week to check in on their progress. Ideally, they should have you shop for the shopping list and have you come back for a ½ day to place and tweak the work they have put in...assume this service.

I know that this may seem like a lot to do during a consultation but trust me...it's not. My goal is for you to have complete control over the consultation and process, so that you have confidence going in and exude credibility. Make sure to watch my video in the HSR Guide to Success section online for further reinforcement.



Website:

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One>>Day Three>>**
HSR Guide to Success Section

Now that we've detailed your staging philosophy and consultation process, let's discuss pricing and the various other services you can offer...

Pricing for Your Occupied Staging Services

A lot of stagers get hung up on pricing and don't charge enough. Many times we are so grateful to be able to do what we love that we are afraid to ask for money or what we deserve. It's not typically in a home stager's nature to “sell” or be firm on our pricing. Having said that, I can't say enough how important it is for the staging industry as a whole that we stick to our prices and not discount or do work for free! We are killing the industry and demeaning ourselves when we do work for free, so resist the temptation. You have invested in this training, which means you have invested in a business, so act like one and price accordingly. If you value your time then your client's will as well.

Okay, now that I got that off my chest let's talk staging pricing strategies for occupied homes. The good news is that many stagers before you have pioneered a stair-stepped pricing model that starts with a consultation and continues into staging days in the home. If you go online and

review various home stager's websites (like I asked you to do earlier), you will see that all of them have similar services and pricing models but what differs is the way they communicate their service.

Price Strategies and Pitfalls to Avoid When Developing Your Pricing

Now that you know how we recommend you begin the staging process (with a Walk and Talk Styled Consultation), let's talk about next-steps in terms of pricing. Pricing is so important in our industry because we are dealing with a very complex product (the home) that is by no means "typical" at any time! I've seen a lot of pricing and service lists on stager's website that are fraught with problems. Before we can consider pricing, it's important that you know what pitfalls you should avoid:

- **Set Clear Expectations** - Make sure the client's always know what they are getting by having detailed descriptions in your Services List!
- **Don't price too low!** You are a business owner, not employee, so price accordingly and know that clients do not choose the "cheapest stager"
- **Stair-Step Your Pricing** – Give client's on a budget and Do-It-Yourselfers options
- **Beware of Square Footage Pricing** – We've all seen the 2000sq. ft. hoarder's house that would take a lot more time than the 4000sq ft. new home!
- **Charge for Your Time and Know Your Hourly Amount** – There will always be opportunities to stay an extra hour, so make sure to have an hourly rate.
- **Package Your Services** – We are still marketers, so package your service into something enticing and all-inclusive!
- **Be Flexible** – Account for the kind of client's who want you to do everything!
- **Assume Maximum Results** – Don't settle for getting the home "half-way there" and propose the best service to sell that house!
- **Always Mention Redesign, Color and Other Services for Upsell!**

I recommended a simplified pricing approach that addresses the above pitfalls while pushing the idea of staging time in the home or "Staging Days" for maximum results. We'll look at that pricing below, but first I want to outline why it is beneficial to always push to sell your staging time in the home.

Reasons to Sell Staging Days or "Time in the Home"

There are a few reasons why *HSR* thinks it's a good idea to start your business by up selling staging days in the consultation especially if you're starting with a Walk and Talk.

Successful home staging involves working side-by-side with the client in order for them to truly "get it." A Walk and Talk Consultation is great place to start but if the client is not inclined to design, they very well may get lost, feel deflated and not be able to really do the work needed. The problem is while we can pass along our objective, expertise, the client most of the time will still need the visual.

If a talented artist tells someone how to paint, do you think the finished product would be as good as the artist's? *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.

You have a natural talent that must be watched, viewed and imitated for a home seller to begin seeing through your eyes. There are plenty of books and TV shows out there telling home sellers “how to” stage their homes. But, expertise and skill in the area of decorating is a necessary component to valuable transformations!

I recommend you start with the Walk and Talk but always offer a MLS Styling service that allows you to go back to the home for a few hours to organize their staging items, style for the photos (especially if they’ve hired a professional photographer) and put your finishing touches on the space (assuming they’ve done the work listed in the Report you gave them.)

If you look closely at various home stagers’ pricing and service list, you will see that they all look fairly similar but have creatively described and named their services...I think this is very smart and am going to give you the tools to do the same. Here’s what the typical stager’s occupied price list looks like (remember we are not talking about vacant pricing here and will tackle that in Week 2).

Typical Home Stager’s Price List

Most stagers start with a Consultation and Walk and Talk Report, so this is an “industry standard” for occupied homes. Each stager calls their *Staging Report* different names and I recommend you do the same (and I will give you some creative ideas in the following pages to get your juices flowing and help you be “memorable”).

Next, the stager usually has a ½ day or full day staging service where they roll up their sleeves and do the work with the client. Because we get paid according to our time, that’s the best way to block time into service packages and get creative with how we describe them. Since so much more goes into the preparation and research of any staging service, it’s best to describe your services differently than ½ day or full day staging (I just use those names as an example of the time you will typically spend).

At the end of the day, you take the TIME you put into each service and charge for it as a BUSINESS OWNER. Here’s an example of a basic service model:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Consultation & Staging Report and “Walk and Talk”	\$250.00
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The Staging Report and “Walk and Talk” is for homes that are well on their way to being staged and just need a little extra direction.

This customized, photo-filled report focuses on the most important things the seller should do right away to increase the value of their home and obtain a faster sale. The report is completed by the seller while walking back through the home with the stager.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Half-Day of Home Staging OR Redesign	\$450.00
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This service is for those homes that just need a little extra attention and expertise or are less than 2000 square feet. We will be working from our 8-step Action Plan we began in the Consultation, to make dramatic transformations to the main areas of the home. We will bring in accessories in order to complete the look of each room, take great photos for your agents marketing efforts, and give you a visual of what to purchase.

Full Day of Home Staging or Redesign

\$750.00

This service is for those homes that need a little more attention and expertise or are over 2000 square feet. We spend a full day making dramatic transformations to your home.

Recommended Shopping Time for Critical Staging Transformation Accessories

_____ Est. Hours

RESA Price Survey

Here's the challenge in staging...there are a few variables that can confuse our pricing and there's really no such thing as "typical" pricing since we are a somewhat unregulated industry. Variables include whether a stager offers a Staging Report (or notepad), whether a stager allows for accessory rental, etc..

To confuse you even more, here is a visual of the RESA Price list from 2015 which is all over the board but hope it helps you to see the regional pricing differences:

State	Walk and Talk Consultation	Written Consultation	Occupied Staging Staging Fee w/ Some Rental	Vacant Staging
AZ	\$250.00	\$275.00	\$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00	\$1,400.00 to \$2,000.00
CA	\$275.00	\$300.00	\$1,700.00 to \$4,800.00	\$2,900.00 to \$5,500.00
CO	\$200.00	\$225.00	\$800 to \$1,000.00	\$1,500.00 to \$2,800.00
CT	\$290.00	\$325.00	\$800.00 to \$1,200.00	\$1,650.00 to \$2,000.00
FL	\$200.00	\$250.00	\$800.00 to \$1,000.00	\$2,400.00 to \$2,700.00
GA	\$250.00	\$350.00	\$1,300.00 to \$2,500.00	\$1,500.00 to \$2,800.00
HI	\$240.00	\$420.00	\$700.00 to \$1,000.00	\$1,350.00 to \$2,000.00
IA	\$150.00	\$185.00	\$700.00 to \$900.00	\$1,300.00 to \$2,000.00
IL	\$190.00	\$270.00	\$950.00 to \$1,950.00	\$1,800.00 to \$3,000.00
IN	\$220.00	\$360.00	\$800.00 to \$1,000.00	\$975.00 to \$1,500.00
KS	\$255.00	\$290.00	\$700.00 to \$1,000.00	\$1,700.00 to \$2,700.00
LA	\$100.00	\$150.00	\$1,400.00 to \$1,900.00	\$3,400.00 to \$4,200.00
MA	\$230.00	\$280.00	\$1,500.00 to \$3,800.00	\$3,000.00 to \$5,500.00
MD	\$275.00	\$275.00	\$2,600.00 to \$4,400.00	\$2,800.00 to \$4,750.00
ME	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$1,600.00 to \$2,700.00	\$4,100.00 to \$5,300.00
MI	\$230.00	\$290.00	\$1,225.00 to \$2,900.00	\$1,225.00 to \$2,900.00
MN	\$200.00	\$225.00	\$1,850.00 to \$2,900.00	\$1,850.00 to \$2,050.00
MO	\$240.00	\$175.00	\$3,000.00 to \$2,500.00	\$1,800.00 to \$2,000.00
NC	\$220.00	\$225.00	\$1,100.00 to \$2,000.00	\$1,900.00 to \$3,400.00
NH	\$195.00	\$255.00	\$1,000.00 to \$1,400.00	\$1,900.00 to \$2,800.00
NJ	\$240.00	\$300.00	\$1,360.00 to \$2,600.00	\$3,000.00 to \$3,800.00

State	Walk and Talk Consultation	Written Consultation	Occupied Staging Staging Fee w/ Some Rental	Vacant Staging
NY	\$300.00	\$400.00	\$1,250.00 to \$2,175.00	\$2,300.00 to \$3,700.00
OH	\$250.00	\$300.00	\$775.00 to \$1,050.00	\$2,000.00 to \$3,000.00
OK	\$200.00	\$275.00	\$1,025.00 to \$1,400.00	\$1,700.00 to \$2,200.00
OR	\$175.00	\$250.00	\$1,000.00 to \$1,450.00	\$2,100.00 to \$2,900.00
PA	\$220.00	\$260.00	\$550.00 to \$1,000.00	\$1,875.00 to \$2,750.00
SC	\$200.00	\$250.00	\$475.00 to \$1,00.00	\$1,200.00 to \$1,800.00
TN	\$225.00	\$250.00	\$800.00 to \$1,200.00	\$1,100.00 to \$1,800.00
TX	\$200.00	\$300.00	\$1,600.00 to \$2,700.00	\$2,500.00 to \$4,900.00
VA	\$250.00	\$400.00	\$1,200.00 to \$2,700.00	\$3,000.00 to \$4,400.00
WA	\$250.00	\$300.00	\$1,100.00 to \$2,500.00	\$2,500.00 to \$3,400.00
WI	\$200.00	\$250.00	\$900.00 to \$1,800.00	\$2,400.00 to \$3,400.00

*Fees shown are average ranges for a property with 2,501 - 3,000 sq.ft. Fees will vary based on the sq. ft. of the house, the number of rooms, and the amount of furniture/accessories needed to complete the staging.

**Only states with adequate data submissions are shown.

*** Fees shown reflect the initial staging investment and the average monthly rental fee. Additional month(s) of rental may be required so be sure to ask your professional real estate stager about additional monthly rental fees.

To see the full report, go to: <http://resa-hq.org/pricing/mobile/index.html>

Business Owner Hourly Pricing

Remember, you are an owner now with expenses, exposure and risk. You are not comparing your old employee hourly rate to what you charge an hour as a business owner, so don't feel guilty or bad about that.



Note:

Think about the way you choose a service provider for something important. Statistically, most people pick the middle priced service provider and don't base their hiring decisions completely on price alone.

Depending on where you live across North America, your average hourly charge should be around \$100 when just getting started in staging (design has more exposure, so up that hourly 20% more at least!). Now if you live in Manhattan or San Francisco, your hourly will be higher while those of you that live in less expensive areas may flex down to \$75 an hour when getting started (I would never go lower than that now that you're properly trained). Remember that there is always prep and planning time that goes into each Staging Day, so don't discount yourself!

Many times clients won't even know your hourly rate because they will pick a "package" rather than see a timesheet, so stick to your pricing and be confident in your deliverable.

As you get busier and demand for your services increase, your prices will increase too. In order to cleverly build your occupied staging price list, **consider creative ways to describe your Staging Report, ½ Day of Staging and Full Day of Staging understanding that you spend time preparing for each service as well:**

Staging Report	½ Day of Staging	Full Day of Staging
Detailed Staging Checklist	Home Revive	Home Revamp
Home Makeover Report	MLS Refresh	One Day Home Makeover
Home Assessment Plan	Silver	Gold
Home Evaluation Plan	Power Mini-Staging	Power Maximum-Staging
Do It Yourself Plan	Mini Home Makeover	Ultimate Home Makeover

Here are some creatively done images for your newly named "Staging Report" that you can use as well:



If you want to know how I created them, here's the process:

-Go to www.canva.com and choose "eBook cover"

>Use one of their cool layouts and upload your room photo as a background changing the text to the new name of your "Staging Report"

-Go to www.myecovermaker.com, select the "book-look" you want and upload your image (there may be a charge for this website)



Below is a creative pricing sheet using key words above and the FEEL HOME process I describe in the HSR Guide to Success video and above. This price sheet should form the BASIS for your pricing and you should creatively change the wording/add images in order to be uniquely you.

Creative Services and Pricing Example

All occupied homes start with an extremely detailed Consultation and Staging Report, so we have a plan of attack and can help you sell your home fast and for the best price possible.

Consultation and Detailed Staging Report for the “DIY” with an EYE for Design - \$250

In this intensive in-home consultation, we will be using a detailed and customized Staging Report to write down everything that needs to be done to get the home the best price possible! We follow an 8-step in each room design process that ensures maximum return on investment (ROI) for every staging dollar spent. This service is designed to give you all the objective, expert advice you need to do the staging work yourself in the form of a detailed report.

The consultation can take up to 2 hours and we will cover the following:

- Detailed phone interview in order to completely understand your project
- Buyer demographic research, so we are designing for your typical buyer
- *Checklists for each room of the home*
- *Open House Checklist – Showing instructions*
- Curb appeal for first impression impact
- Recommended furniture arrangement and flow
- De-cluttering, de-personalizing and optimizing space in each room
- Highlighting architectural features and guiding the buyer’s eyes to notice high-value assets
- Lighting, window treatments and accessory arrangement
- Color advice and emotional connection points in each space, so buyers fall in love!

You will walk away with all the answers, a *Priority Shopping List* and an *Exclusive Vendor List* to help you complete the staging process.

**If the home is larger than 2500 sq. ft. with multiple staging areas there could be an additional time cost to cover the larger home and additional time spent on the project.

Power Staging and Mini-Makeover -- \$650

Feeling overwhelmed with preparing your home to sell? This staging service is all about rolling up our sleeves, following the detailed *Staging Report* and working together to start staging the main areas of the home right away. You won’t believe the difference a few hours makes just using what you already own!

This service can take up to 4 hours in the home with 2 hours planning/prep time and includes:

- Kitchen staging and organizational strategies
- Main living area staging and emotional connection point set up
- Main bathroom design
- If time permits, we will tackle other key living areas, so your home is show ready
- We will bring in essential staging accessories to give you a “visual shopping list” of what to purchase for modernizing and setting the stage for buyers to fall in love
- **You will walk away with beautiful “after” photos of your staged rooms!**

This is also a critical service for just before professional MLS photos are taken because we style each space for maximum photo impact!

Ultimate Power Staging and One-Day-Home-Makeover -- \$950

Do you have a larger home with more than a few hours of work that needs to be done? No problem! This service simply extends our time together to include a day of rolling up our sleeves, following our detailed Staging Report and tackling the main areas of the home while staging for photos.

This service can take up to 7 hours in the home with over 2 hours planning/prep time and includes:

- Kitchen staging and organizational strategies
- Main living area staging and emotional connection point set up
- Main bathroom, master bedroom and bath design
- If time permits, we will tackle other key living areas, so your home is show ready
- We will bring in essential staging accessories to give you a “visual shopping list” of what to purchase for modernizing and setting the stage for buyers to fall in love
- **You will walk away with beautiful “after” photos of your staged rooms!**

New Listing or Open House Staging Weekend -- \$1650

This service takes all the stress out of staging and is perfect to make a great first impression for the home that is just about to go onto the market or have an Open House!

A **YOUR COMPANY** consultant will spend two days prior to the “Open House” weekend transforming the house into a buyers dream. The consultant will be working with a detailed **YOUR COMPANY** Action Plan (included) that will be given to the home seller to complete the transformations at the end of the session.

To get top dollar, every home should go through our complete home staging transformation before being listed!

- We can do all the work for you and completely stage all the main areas of your home!
- We will bring in essential staging accessories to give you a “visual shopping list” of what to purchase for modernizing and setting the stage for buyers to fall in love
- **You will walk away with beautiful “after” photos of your staged rooms!**

Power Shopping -- \$75 per hour

We'll create a budget and shop for those accessories that serve as investments in the sale of your home. **I'm an expert in sourcing the best items at the most reasonable prices!**

Vacant Home Staging – Free phone estimate

Vacant homes are especially in need of staging because they tend to take longer to sell and get the lowest price. Call **OUR COMPANY** for a price estimate that gives you options and works within your budget while making your home **BEAUTIFUL!**

Additional services available based upon the home's needs and home seller's budget.

As you can see from the wording above, this price sheet follows the Consultation, 1/2day, full day and two day service structure but is worded in a way that that is not as apparent and lets the client know that planning time was a part of the process.

While the “Creative Services and Pricing Example” is one of my favorite price sheets, here are a few more similarly written pricing sheets that are also able to be downloaded in the HSR Guide to Success section.

Look them all over carefully and pick the process/look/style that appeals best to you. You’ll notice that each service simply calculates the hours spent on that package and tabulates to a \$100 hourly rate (except for multi-day projects).



Website: Watch the on-demand *HSR Guide to Success* video where I go over each price sheet.

From the *Member Area*, click on **Week One>>Day Three>>HSR Guide to Success-Pricing** section in the menu or right hand bar and watch video

Simplified Service & Pricing Sheet

Premium Consultation, Home Assessment and 10+Page Walk and Talk Report - \$250

- Research is done ahead of time to identify buyer demographic
- Detailed Walk Through of the home and a 10+page detailed report given to seller of action items to complete
- Open House Checklist, Preferred Vendor List and Organizational Strategies Provided

Power Shopping Service - \$500

(Up to 3 hours of shopping along with delivery and set-up at client’s home)

- Working off of agreed shopping list, I go to my favorite spots to identify key items that will make a huge difference in the sale of your home or style of your home
- Cash is collected up front and receipts are provided along with items to the client’s home

Market Launch MLS Styling and Photography Service - \$300

(Allow for 2-3 hours)

- Perfect for the day before an open house or professional photos, so that we can make sure items from the Consultation were completed and the home looks beautiful!
- If need be, we can photograph the rooms for you

Get It Sold Power Staging - \$750

- Design Plan is made prior to staging day, so that we get the most from the day
- Accessories are chosen and brought to the home to provide seller with a photographic list of shopping items that make a difference in the photos
- Expect to roll up your sleeves and spend a day working side-by-side staging and photographing each room
- We will start with the main areas and expand from there as time allows

Packaged Pricing and Services

In today's buyer's market, a professionally staged home makes all the difference! It's not enough to de-clutter, clear your counters and clean-up the home. Buyers want an updated home that fits their family and lifestyle. ***We work with you to transform each room for a faster, more profitable sale!***

PHASE ONE STAGING: Using What You Have to Transform Every Space

I will outline how to highlight positive architectural features, minimize liabilities, rearrange your furnishings, consider your color choices, and create a sense of space and environment that buyers will *fall in love with!*



Walk and Talk Report

\$200-\$300

(Depending on sq. ft - Up to 2000 = \$200/250, 2-3000=\$250/300, 3000+ = \$300/350)

- I will go back through the home, photograph each space to contemplate
- We can *Walk and Talk* where you take notes on the *Staging Report* OR
- I will complete a written *Staging Report* and email it within 48 hours
- You will receive a **Recommended Vendors** list of discounts and providers



Staging Refinement/MLS Staging Time

\$499-\$699

Date of Appointment: _____

- I will spend time (up to 4 hours) refining what you've started and using your newly purchased items to merchandise each space
- I provide creative, organizational solutions so that you are able to prep your home **within 20 minutes for showings!**
- I will create a gorgeous **Photo Show, YouTube Video** and **Virtual Flyer** using our updated photos for your agent's marketing efforts



Full Service Staging

\$499-\$699

Date of Appointment: _____

For BEST results I work alongside you, guiding you every step of the way through the *preparation of your home to sell* and the *marketing of your product*.

- You will receive a **Home Preparation Plan** to complete beforehand
- I will spend up to a day in the home working with you, preparing and photographing many rooms for maximum buyer traffic
- I will either shop or bring in home accessories and furnishings that you can either rent or use as a visual of what purchases you will need to make in order to update the home
- I will create a gorgeous **Photo Show** and **Virtual Flyer** using our updated photos for your agent's marketing efforts

PHASE TWO STAGING: Accessories as "investments" to complete the look.

Statistically, buyers are willing to "pay a premium" for homes with updated accessories! **Cash only up front and the receipts and change will be given at delivery.**

Estimated Shopping Time: _____ **Hours**

(Hourly Shopping Rate is \$75.00/hr)

Ideal Shopping Budget: _____

**A \$100 per room recommendation

Estimated Rental Flat Fee: _____

(For 60 Days & 30%/Month thereafter)

*10% Security Deposit Required

Estimated Furniture Rental: _____

As you can see, there are so many great ways we can describe what we do design-wise, so be creative and unique in your descriptions in order to entice your reader! You have probably noticed that the above occupied staging service list can easily be tweaked for “Styling”. We will discuss what other services you will want to consider but before we do, let’s talk about “Accessory Rental”.

Renting Out Accessories to Occupied Homes

The age-old stager question is, “do we rent out accessories to occupied homes?” The easy answer is “no” and there are several reasons why that is a wise decision:

- Sanitary Reasons
- Potential Allergen Harm
- Dust Mites/Bed Bugs...yuck
- Keeps it simple for your business
- Low stress since you’re not dealing with damaged goods

Having stated all those things above and knowing that it’s much better to get paid for something OTHER than our time, here are some ways around the pitfalls to make money renting out accessories:

- Do not rent out textiles but consider renting out artwork and accessories that cannot get contaminated
- Pick and choose your clients for accessory rentals (no kids or pets)
- Package room set ups for empty rooms ie have a little girls room accessory package for rooms unused in an empty nesters home

Consider picking and choosing your clients wisely for accessory rental and measuring your return on investment. You can create “Accessory Rental Packages” based on the RETAIL price of the accessories you leave in the home and ONLY show your Accessory Rental price list to those people who pass your inspection (no animals, clean home, persnickety, no kids)

For example, if you bundled \$3,000 retail worth of accessories into a Staging Day you could charge \$1,300 for this package. When you break it down, it’s \$300/month rental (10% of retail cost monthly) plus \$1,000 in service time cost (about 10 hours of time when you consider stocking, staging, set-up, take-down, wrap, restock)

For now, I would “just say no” to clients who wish to rent rather than buy staging accessories.

Pricing Out the Home or Service that Does Not Fit Into Our Service List

There’s always the “special situation” that does not fit into our package pricing. 99% of homes will fit into your price sheet but in the rare case a home does not, simply revert to an hourly timesheet and charge by the quarter hour. If you normally charge \$100 an hour and you have a client that wants you to coordinate vendors, shop, etc...just keep track of every activity, round up to the nearest quarter hour (.25) and turn in a time sheet weekly for payment. Basically you are charging like an attorney, so it’s not at all uncommon.

If it’s a home builder that needs full service assistance, never fear! I have detailed pricing and project information on dealing with Model Homes in Week 3.

Speaking of unique services, let's discuss other services and how you can structure them into your business...

Various Services You May Want to Consider Offering

We've talked a lot about staging and consultations in terms of staging but what about other services you may want to offer? The beauty of our industry is that staging usually follows the real estate industry which is busy during the early spring through summer months and redesign is usually busy during the fall and winter Christmas entertaining and decorating months! A well placed marketing plan that covers both sides to your business (staging and redesign) should keep you busy year long.

Marketing a service is finding "a need" and developing a solution that fits that need while creating trust and relationship with your client. Interestingly enough, there are quite a few services you will want to consider offering to clients:

- **Home Staging** – This is an obvious one that probably brought you to the training
- **Vacant Home Staging** – Creating an inventory and accessories that your clients will love
- **Rental or Vacation Rental Home Staging** – Staging and photographing rentals for property managers, landlords, www.vrbo.com, and other vacation rental websites (great for those of you in tourist areas!)
- **Redesign/Home Styling** – Making the most out of what home owners have while creating functional environments that are tailored to their needs, style and lifestyle
- **Move-In Redesign** – A bit different than traditional redesign in that it serves to help clients assess what to bring into their new home and what to get rid of.
- **Color Consultations** – Creating pleasing palettes for clients
- **Commercial Staging** – Become the stager of choice for commercial or retail stores of all kinds by helping them "merchandise" or stage their space (furniture stores, boutiques, office space, hair salons and almost any retail store could benefit from this service)
- **Commercial Seasonal Staging** – Become the stager of choice for commercial or retail stores of all kinds by helping them "merchandise" or stage their space for all seasons (especially think Christmas decorating here!)
- **Personal Shopper** – Since shopping is a part of so much of what we do, consider mentioning it separately as a service to "source" items for clients
- **Organizer** – Since organizing is a part of so much of what we do, offer to assist organizing your clients spaces



Website: For more ideas, go to *Week Three >> Alternative Income Streams* section and review the *Member Success Story* area at the front of the HSR website!



Tip: While you are researching your competitors websites, make a list of the services they offer and see if you can find an interesting niche for yourself

I find that most of my members begin with home staging because it is so easy to market and then transition into redesign/design/home styling because clients want them to help with their new homes and are more inclined to spend on those spaces.



Tip: The terms “redesign,” “Interior Styling,” “Interior Showcasing,” and “interior decorating” can be used almost interchangeably so pick the term you like the best but do not use “interior design” unless you are an interior designer.

Incorporating Interior Redesign into Your Process

The heart of both good staging and redesign is the ability to use what the client already has to transform the space -- Phase One of home staging. Creativity is the name of the game! When you're using the eight-step *FEEL HOME* process for home staging, the only aspect you will change is the "H" step. Instead of *Home Buyer's Appeal*, the focus in interior redesign or move-in redesign is on the *Home Owner's Appeal*.

Every room needs to be a reflection of the homeowner -- what they love and what makes them comfortable and happy!

Your redesign consultations can be no different than the home staging ones; if you like however, I have created a more detailed Design Process that I think will be a slam dunk with clients and an easy upsell after you've staged their home!



Web: Login to the Members Area>>Week 3>>All About Redesign

There is a two-hour video outlining a redesign client process including forms, proposals and email examples that engage your client and makes you look great!

Definition of Home Staging

Home Staging is using limited funds, practical creativity and extraordinary expertise to professionally prepare a home to sell. The goal of staging is to transform a house so that it becomes infinitely more attractive to potential buyers, sells quickly and for more money, while in turn, becoming a small investment of the home seller in the near future greater home sale earnings it retrieves.

Definition of Interior Redesign

Interior redesign is using limited funds, practical creativity, and extraordinary expertise to transform a home so that it becomes infinitely more attractive, comfortable, and reflective to the needs of the home owner, while in turn, becoming a small investment of the home owner in the future greater home sale earnings it retrieves.

Home staging and interior redesign are very closely related, but the preparation strategy is different. Home staging is preparing the home for *buyers*, whereas interior redesign is preparing the home for the *home owners*. Both strategies should incorporate an eye for future resale value and strong organizational skills. They both also require a keen understanding of exactly who you are preparing the home for by interviewing them to discover their needs, demographics, and preferences.



Website: To learn more about how to improve a home's resale value, refer to the *Real Estate Wisdom* section of the HSR website.

From the *Member Area*, click on **HSR Library**.

Click on Real Estate Wisdom.

The FEEL HOME Design Philosophy

HSR believes that successful design is the art of using organizational and interior styling techniques to create an environment that is comfortable, stress free, beautiful and personal to you. It allows home owners to say, "I love and feel at home in each room of my house!"

At HSR, we artfully use what you already have in new and fresh ways, while incorporating tried and true decorating rules throughout the home, so that when you step into your house you "feel home." You'll say, "This is it. This is the home I envisioned that is a perfect reflection of me." What does feeling home look like? For HSR, it's a combination of eight things we analyze in each room in order to create a home you will love!



Note: You will see that the *FEEL HOME Redesign Philosophy* is almost identical to the staging version. This version has been customized to focus on *home owners* rather than *home sellers* which makes a *HUGE* difference in the outcome!.



Website: We have a specific plan for your Redesign that we've outlined in Week 3>>All About Redesign in a video and forms, so refer there for much more on this topic.

First Impressions - We will walk through your home room by room, taking note of our first impressions, what grabs us, what glares at us, and what gives us a feeling of home.

Eliminating clutter - The packing starts now, as we pack away a good percentage of everything in the room in order to create a more clean, open and spacious feel.

Emphasizing the positive while downplaying the negative - Finding your beautiful focal points, we will emphasize what we love about the rooms and hide or distract the negative aspects of the rooms.

Lighthen Up - Focusing on lighting and color, we will make each room into a bright, warm and inviting space buyers can respond to.

Home Owner's Appeal - In order for you to "feel home," you need a home that is a wonderful reflection of you, your family, your life and what you love. We'll have you fill out our lifestyle questionnaire, so that we can create a tailored space for your family.

Obligation to yourself - Cleaning/Repairs - The dirty work speaks for itself but is many times overlooked because you've lived here for so long. These mental "to do's" can be draining. So, let's get rid of them by incorporating an organizational plan that is easy to perpetuate.

Modernizing - Updating your style and building simple accessories out of what you already have to create clean lines and form. In some cases, we'll recommend simple purchases to complete the look.

Emotional Connection Points - Creating luxurious, personal spaces throughout your home that you can emotionally sink into, and reflect your family's lifestyle. A glass bowl of your favorite soaps by the tub, a tray for your coffee pot and favorite mug on the kitchen counter, a cozy reading space, an entertaining friendly yard -- whatever fits your lifestyle and needs, we'll go the extra mile.



Note: All of the forms you see in this Guide can be found in the HSR Guide to Success Section in Week One>>Day Three

The forms are also all listed in the Week One>>Day Five>>Forms Library

Many of the other services I listed above are detailed in other parts of this training, so far now take a break and congratulate yourself for getting through this tough Guide!

Day 3 - Client Action Plans



All of our Action Plans are in Word in order for you to save to your computer and customize to your company and staging style. Use them as a starting point, mesh them together or create your own. HSR offers four different types of action plans for you to use during your consultations and staging days:

1. **Staging Report OR Staging Report (Shortened)** – Perfect for the Walk and Talk, these are similar and easy Action Plans that you can fill out and provide to a client in lieu of time in the home or a Staging Day.
2. **HSR Client Action Plan** – The 10-page plan that corresponds to the FEEL HOME philosophy and is recommended to use as a Worksheet for your Consultation and Staging Day. Using the *HSR Client Action Plan* is an excellent way to decide how you will focus your attention during your staging day. It can also be used to give the client homework to complete prior to the staging day.
3. **General Walk Thru Action Plan** – The 12-page plan is for those of you who choose not to follow the FEEL HOME philosophy and want a great tool that you can fill out and give to your clients.
4. **DIY Manual** – This is a very large and detailed action plan that you may consider offering to clients later on in your business. While it's good to download and read through in order to get a feel of how to incorporate the FEEL HOME philosophy in each room, I don't recommend offering it right away. It's advanced Word and takes A LOT of time to get the hang of filling out.



Website: From the *Member Area*, click on **Week One>>Day Three>>Client Action Plan** section in the menu or right hand bar

Day 4 - The Art of the Walk and Talk



Now that you've had a look at the home, it's time to do the Walk and Talk with the client using the Staging Report. I recommend this report/action plan for the Walk and Talk because I think it's easier to fill out and has example photos for them to follow (feel free to swap those out).



Website: Review the *Art of the Walk and Talk Section*

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One>>Day Four>**

Open the Art of the Walk and Talk section

I recommend you start at the curb and work your way through the front door as a buyer would during this walk through. Remind them that according to a 2014 Zillow survey of Realtors, enhancing curb appeal was the best thing a seller could do to invest in their home...the second best thing is hiring a professional home stager, so they are killing two birds with one stone having you there to review the curb appeal!

I also recommend you hand your clipboard with the Staging Report over to the client and have them take their own notes (or not) while you can do the same (optionally) on another Staging Report to hand to agent (or keep for reference).

Here are some things to keep in mind as you move through the walk through...

- 🔗 Ask for permission to move things and open cabinets and cupboards for accessories to use.
- 🔗 Put colored stickers on items you think they should start packing to clear out the space



- ☞ Make sure to remind the client that it's far easier to clear the items today (and possibly dispose of them, see my Less Is More hand out) than it is to unpack later
- ☞ Remind them that often with a quick sale, they only have 30 days to pack, so getting started on it now, will save tons of stress later
- ☞ Remind them that you have the mutual interest in a fast and well-priced sale.
- ☞ Let them know that "they can do all or none of your recommendations but you wouldn't be doing your job if you didn't advise them what the buyer demographic is looking for and ways to make the most from the sale."
- ☞ Remind them that "taking a price reduction does not "fix" the problem"
- ☞ A key phrase to repeat during the walk through is that you are looking for "price eroding" items to remove – these are items that the buyer over estimates the price of changing (like paint).
- ☞ Another key phrase is that, "we are in the game of removing objections to buyers." Repairs, improvements and modernizing shopping items will be essential
- ☞ Ask them to keep an open mind as well as consider the financial benefits while we make changes to the home.
- ☞ Let them know you will be extra critical because that is exactly what buyers are like, but that you only have their best interests in mind. A good analogy to use is going to the dentist. It's a painful process but needs to be done in order to have good teeth. Another good analogy is putting money away for retirement. You would much rather have the money now, but know you are making an investment in your future...that is exactly what home staging is like, but you don't have to wait 40 years to reap the benefits!
- ☞ Let them know you will only suggest those changes that you think will have a dramatic effect to their bottom line and most of those changes can be done simply using what they have. That's phase one of home staging.
- ☞ Remind them that if they go with a MLS Styling or Staging Day, you like to take lots of photos, because you will be studying them prior to the staging day in order to make the most of your time. You will also be taking lots of "after" photos so that their real estate agent can use them in their marketing, as 90% of homebuyers are online first.

In Conclusion

Once you've done a thorough Walk Through, make sure to sit the client down and have them review their notes if need be while you take photos. Remind them that it seems like a lot of work (that will be done anyway when they move), so getting a head start for fast and high-priced sale will be worth it. Sympathize and let them know you are there to help, so if they would like you to review the plan and come back for some MLS Styling or a day of staging if it's a big job, you're happy to help. By this time, they are sold on your expertise and will be more inclined to just have you do the staging work yourself. In Week 3, I have packages that correspond with that idea outlined for you.

If you followed the phone scenario I outlined above, you should have already gotten paid, but if you only got a deposit, make sure to get their credit card for the remaining balance right then and there! You do not want to "chase money".

Day 4 - Anatomy of a Staging Day



If your client decides to have you do the work that is outlined in the report, then your detailed walk-through list and services and pricing should guide you along the way in terms of what needs to be done and what next step to take.



Website: Review the *Anatomy of a Staging Day Section Videos*

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One>>Day Four>**

Open the Anatomy of a Staging Day Section to watch videos on staging days I worked on, what we did and how we did it

In fact, once you have settled on a service, there is not really a conclusion to the consultation at all, but rather a beginning of a full staging project. Here's what you'll want to do...

☞ Make sure you receive an adequate deposit up front in order to hold the staging day (20+% is standard).

☞ If there is quite a bit of heavy furniture that will need moving ask who will be at the home to assist you during the Staging Day or better yet, have them move it ahead of time as home work.

☞ Make sure there is plenty of help and most importantly have both spouses there to provide "boundaries" during the staging time, so you don't move a critical item.

☞ Have clear expectations established for the staging day and make sure to give them a Home Preparation Plan which will outline how the home is to be prepared BEFORE the Staging Day.

If you plan on bringing in accessories as a “visual shopping list” for your clients during the staging day, make sure to let them know this.

Work with the seller’s schedule and deadlines when making follow-up sessions, depending on the service requested.

After any service make sure to ask if there is anything else you can do for them. Remind them that you are available for fine-tuning and move-in redesign services. Email them a *quick request for a testimonial* and ask for referrals to be listed on the bottom of the form. Make sure to use those testimonials on your website and printed materials!

Collect complete payment at the conclusion of any service. You are not a real estate agent who gets paid in escrow! Your services are complete and payment is expected like any similar vendor (painters, handyman, electricians, etc.). Agents will always ask if they can pay you at close of escrow because they compare your service to theirs, which is not the case. They get paid at close of escrow because their services are final then. Likewise, you should get paid at close of your service, in person like other vendors in your field.

Ask when you might be able to pop by for additional “after” photos to use as a reference. Realtors will also be VERY impressed with your conscientious follow-up in this regard!

Don't forget to encourage follow-up and questions while letting them know you are available to them. It should be apparent that you have a genuine interest in helping to work with them to get the most for their home in the quickest time possible. **Remember, it's much easier to sell to existing customers than get new ones, so go the extra mile ESPECIALLY for new clients!**

Day 4 – “Quick Start” Your Business

Similar to our various staging day videos, I had the pleasure of interviewing one of my longtime veteran stagers, Sherry Castaldi about her staging process. What intrigued me the most about her process is how she took the HSR training, pared it down and made it her own.

I think you will really enjoy her presentation, photos and simplified “quick start” method for those of you who already have business coming in...



Website: Review the “*Quick Start Your Business*” Section Video

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One>>Day Four>**

Day 5 - Valuable Vendor Partnerships



Creating strong relationships with common vendors you will refer work to frequently is the lifeblood of our business. I walk you through some tips on developing these relationships and want to remind you that they add to your value and currency to clients. Part of your expertise is knowing “who” to use and creating reciprocal relationships with those vendors.

I provide you a spreadsheet of common vendors to start researching along with my tips for each in that online section, so go to Week One>>Day 5>>Valuable Vendors to watch my video.

Vendor Type	Vendor Name	Phone Number	Website	Bonded and Insured?	Reviews, etc.	HSR Tips
House Cleaners						Hard to find since mostly word of mouth. Recommend a weekly cleaner ideally
Carpet Cleaners (I like http://www.zerorez.com/)						Ask if they give free estimates. Make sure they use hot water extraction or steam cleaning. How long will it take carpets to dry. What is separate cost for stain/pet stain removal? Is the work guaranteed? Look for companies close to you on Google. Ask for price of typical pricing of 10X10 and get coupons for clients.
Storage Company						
Moving Company - Getbellhops.com ?						Ask if they give free estimates. Guarantee their work?
Landscaper/Gardener						Ask if they give free estimates. Guarantee their work?
Handyman						Typically paid by the hour. Ask for a guarantee. Many times they are also General Contractor's so this is a huge plus!
Painter						Ask if they give free estimates. What kind of paint do they use? Guarantee their work?
Electrician						Ask if they give free estimates. Guarantee their work?
General Contractor						Ask if they give free estimates. Guarantee their work?
Professional Photographer						Research local real estate photographers for the best price and skillset. A wonderful real estate photography company near me is www.previewfirst.com which will give you an idea of quality and price. Search Houzz for photographers, use search term "real estate photography" or virtual tour on Google to find these folks in your area. Another good idea is to search local colleges for photography majors who need extra work. Network locally with your BECA chapter or search the

Day 5 - Staging and Redesign Forms



Did you know that we have over 100+ Staging and Redesign forms in Word for you to use for your business in the Week One>>Day Five>>Forms Library? We do this because we never want you to reinvent the wheel! We have marketing forms, email examples, action plans, order sheets, agreements, hand-outs...you name it and we have it! Don't feel like you need to use them all but review and download those you like and think will work well for your business!

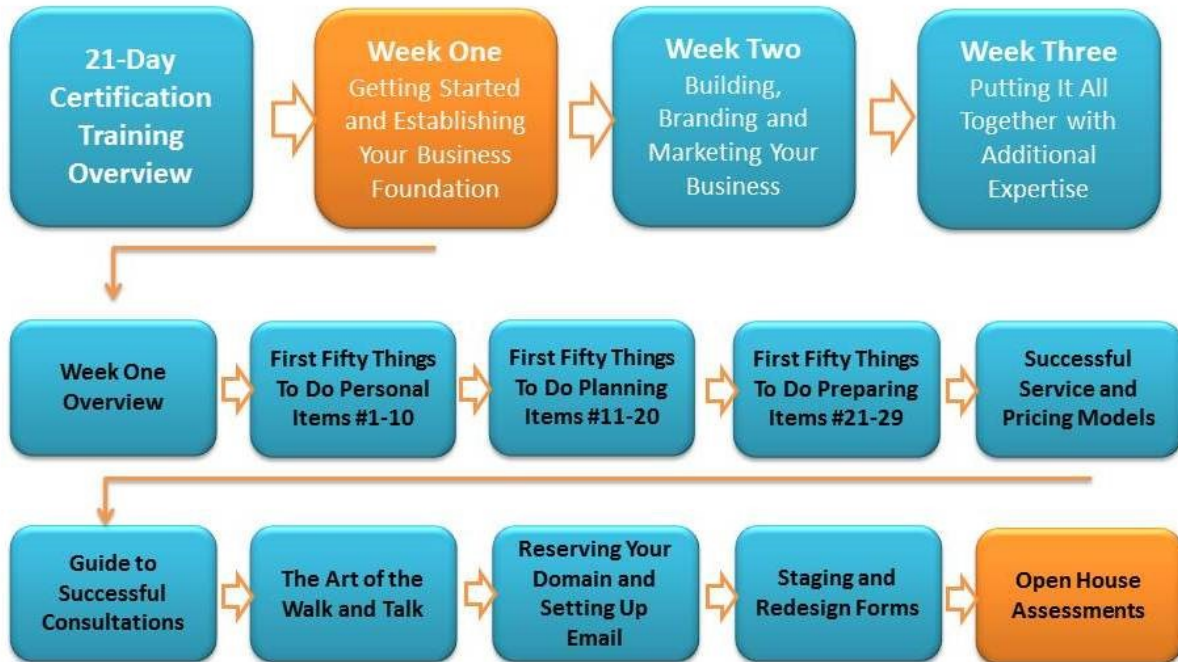
We have many of the forms in this training manual under each specific training section in the Members Area but we thought it would be best to simply provide you with a Forms Library, so you can quickly scan for the form you need and go to Week 1 >>Forms Library to download it!



Website: Review all the Forms for your business
 From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One>>Day Five>>Forms Library**

Better yet, as you go through a section the forms for that section will be available for download under the "Resources" area below!

Day 5 - Open House Assessments



Homes are unique and complicated, so one of the best ways to prepare yourself for what to expect is to view homes online and in person as a form of training. I've always said this, but only recently thought of a fun and innovative way for you to do this while possibly developing a Realtor Partner in the process...are you ready?

On-Demand Training – Open House Assessments



Website: Watch the *Open House Assessments On-Demand Training* video.

From the *Member Home Page*, click on **Week One>>Day Five**.
 Scroll down to Open House Assessments Section

In this section, you'll get an easy to fill out form or "assignment" that I want you to bring to the open house and use. I call it the *Pre-Appointment Research Sheet* and it's a great tool for both Open House Assessments and real consultation scenarios when you've been called into a home and want to know what you're getting yourself into.

Watch my video and use my approach. Most importantly, respect the agent's time and NEVER distract or take their time away from a potential buyer walking through the home. If they are alone (which is VERY common), offer up some staging strategies to create rapport and before you know it...you may have a future realtor partnership. Keep it light and conversational.