

# Event Life!

Friday, April 28,

Ready to sell  
your home?

You may want to de-clutter  
and neutralize your colours

Also inside:

- ◆ Hot summer fashion
- ◆ Dream Street trippin'

# main event

By Jude Campbell

With a quirky twist to the old song *Take This Job and Shove It*, the popular TV show out of Britain, *Take this House and Sell It*, has a loyal following of home sellers.

Each week, viewers are introduced to a home that is on the market but isn't getting any serious offers. Worse yet, the beloved homestead reaps negative comments that put off potential buyers.

Too much stuff, too small, wild colours, flowered bathrooms, old and junky, just plain yucky.

Sound the bugle and call in the cavalry to save the day: Professional home stagers with tricks up their sleeve to make your house into a castle that'll tempt buyers to loosen their purse strings in a hurry.

That's where Barbara Katnich of Visionary Redesign steps into the picture and begins the home staging process.

"Staging is not just redecorating," Katnich explained. "It's actually a series of researched and proven techniques developed to make a home more appealing to a buyer."

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The staging process was developed in the United States and has been well-accepted and well-used south of the border for 30-plus years.

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It's finally gaining wider appeal in Canada, with Kelowna realtors and homeowners jumping on the bandwagon as the knowledge factor expands.

Katnich is an accredited staging professional trained under the tutelage of the founder of the home staging concept.

"It's not just a coat of paint and a good scrub down of the floors," she said. "The way we live in a home and the way to market a home are two completely different things."

Most people can turn a blind eye to the daily clutter customary to an active family.

"The mess" — whether it's several pairs of sneakers and sports gear blocking the back door, teenagers' bedrooms strewn with piles of clothes,



Chris Stanford/eVentLife photos

Home staging could mean living with temporary furniture to suggest the feel a potential home buyer will be looking for, says Barbara Katnich (above) of Visionary Redesign.

nicks and gouges in the stairwell or tired carpeting in the family room, we "live with it."

Prospective buyers don't see it that way.

In fact, most can't see past the rubble, the odd colour in the bathroom or rooms stuffed with too much stuff, to see the intrinsic possibilities of the home.

"What they tally up is the cost of fix-up to them," Katnich added. "And they automatically take it off the asking price. How much to replace the carpet, how much to change the light fixtures, repainting, landscaping.

"It's all money out of your pocket."

Bottom line is, "people want homes that are move-in ready," she said. "And they want to instantly see how easily

their furniture, their pictures, their couch will fit in the space."

Three rules of thumb prevail in making that happen:

"De-clutter, de-personalize and neutralize," Katnich explained. "I get the homeowners to start packing earlier. They're moving anyway, why not start now? Less really is better."

"I look at the home with a fresh pair of eyes. What would entice a buyer? Is there an architectural feature that's not being properly showcased — a view or a fireplace?"

"I know you love all the pictures of the family and grandchildren, but let's make it a small collage, not 20 on one wall. Neutral — not necessarily white — paint to show how spacious the rooms are, update blinds and fixtures, remove pieces that don't work together," she listed.

The curb appeal of the home is also part of the selling package, so overgrown landscaping is made tidy, driveways are power-washed, front entries are made welcoming, fresh and appealing.

A new mat, a fresh planter overflowing with colour, perhaps some shutters on the windows, all help.

Since her company has its own inventory of furniture, artwork, tables, silk plants and more, Katnich sometimes suggests that the owners place their belongings in self-storage.

"Often, using my inventory or renting updated furniture and accessories is the answer to help buyers see the potential in a home," she added.

She also has work crews on hand to help with sprucing up the property if homeowners can't, or don't want, to tackle the job themselves.

"I make the property psychologically appealing from the moment the potential buyer pulls up to the home," she added. "Inside, each room is showcased to its potential."

Besides lived-in homes, she also stages vacant homes with the same purpose in mind — a quicker sale, with maximum return on investment.

"Home staging is not an expense, it's an investment with a huge return on your time and money," she said. "It could mean an extra \$20,000 for your dream vacation, or a college or retirement fund."

"When you sell a home, it becomes a house. A product competing with all the other products on the shelf. I help by taking the emotion out of it, and put the sell-factor into it."

Katnich also offers quick one-day home makeovers or room redesigns using the clients own pieces.

Clients are asked to leave for a few hours, and come back to a new-to-them room/house, done with a professional touch.

"It's fun to transform a room just by angling furniture or taking one piece from here and moving it there," she said. "It's like hiring an interior designer without the designer price tag. I love the challenge and the response when they see the results."



It's often the little things like this arranged table top that create a great impression.