

MANN REPORT

PRE-SALE CONSULTING AND STAGING

April 2014

"It's not only the additional outlay of money to ready an apartment, but it's the time, energy and know how to get things done that buyers shy away from. . ."

In 2003, when Barbara Brock started in the industry, no one had even heard of staging. "I was the first home stager in Manhattan," said Brock who now runs Sold with Style, a top New York staging firm (along with Co-Principal Jay Hart) that helps owners and brokers close the deal and get the highest price when a property hits the market for sale.

At Sold with Style, veteran stylist Brock calls herself a "pre-sale consultant" who does much more than bring in modern sofas, bright pillows and colorful art work to stage a property. Their unique staging firm focuses on the condition of a home: updating fixtures, walls, floors, plumbing, etc. – as well as the aesthetics and furniture placement. Brock explains that today buyers want "ready to live-in" properties. "It's not only the additional outlay of money to ready an apartment, but it's the time, energy and know how to get things done that buyers shy away from," added Brock. "The less a buyer has to do, the quicker they will buy a property."

Most of the old conversations around staging and selling have changed drastically, says Brock, like those who believe:

- The buyer will renovate or the property doesn't need to be staged.
- Some sellers want to test the market before they do anything to prepare the property for sale. "That is so wrong," said Brock. "Put your best foot forward first."
- When selling real estate, there needs to be a transition from living to selling. "How you live in your home and how you sell your home are two very different presentations."
- "If a seller can afford to do only one thing, it should be focused on cleaning and downsizing one's stuff," said Brock, who cautions that buyers can't imagine what a property will look like empty. Most people can never see past the clutter of other people's belongings.

While styling and furniture still remain a vital piece of the puzzle in how buyers perceive a property, today's "savvy sellers" want answers to these questions:

- At what point am I most likely to get my best price?
- Is it worth it financially to renovate/improve/repair a kitchen, bathroom or a basement?
- If I do renovate, what style is mostly likely to attract buyers?
- What can we do to preempt buyer objections before they happen?

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Today Brock's clients include many of the top brokers like Prudential's Dolly Lenz, Corcoran Senior Vice President Pat Palermo and Brown Harris Stevens' Linda Stillwell Team.

Other star-studded clients include a famous Emmy Award winning television actress, actors Jamie Fox and Ally Sheedy, famous cookbook author Sheila Lukins of "Silver Palate" fame, among others.

Longtime real estate guru Barbara Corcoran uses Sold with Style for many staging needs. When Corcoran became the real estate correspondent for NBC, she called on Brock to help pitch a staging segment titled, "Staging for \$50, \$500 and \$5,000."

"What did we do for \$50?" recalled Brock. "A can of paint makes a wall what it ain't." "So we painted, added pillows and it looked fabulous!"

In New York where she is looked up to as the city's top staging guru, Brock serves as president of RESA NY, the local chapter of the Real Estate Staging Association, which she started in 2007.

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