

Stage My Space

Hamptonite Donna Dazzo truly knows how to seal a deal—her company, Designed to Appeal, shows homeowners the benefits of decking out their houses before they sell them. by Susan Waits

A SELF-PROCLAIMED “HGTV ADDICT,” Donna Dazzo left her high-powered job in finance in search of a more creative outlet. In early 2007, she turned her television obsession into a lucrative career, launching Designed to Appeal, a full-service home-staging firm that emphasizes the importance of first impressions when selling property.

The main focus of Designed to Appeal is to allow homeowners to reap top dollar on their investments. “Staging helps sell your home more quickly and for more money,” Dazzo explains. “The cost of staging will almost always be less than the first price reduction”—that is, the amount you’ll lose if you *don’t* bother staging it first, and then can’t sell it.

DONNA DAZZO'S 6 QUICK STEPS TO RESTAGING

Thinking of restaging (or just simplifying your living space) on your own? Try these helpful hints:

DE-CLUTTER. This is the first and most important rule: The less congested the home is, the better.

FIND A FOCAL POINT. Highlight one main piece in every room—such as a fireplace—then build from there.

ACHIEVE BALANCE. Furniture and accessories should not all be on one side of a room—think of a boat, for example, and follow the same principle.

CONSIDER “COHESIVENESS.” Concentrate on making sure the style, texture, and color of items in the room work well together.

ADJUST THE LIGHTING. Let in as much natural light as possible, then supplement with artificial lighting.

ARRANGE THE “FLOW.” Make sure you can walk from one room to the other without bumping into furniture.



Designed to Appeal offers all levels of home-improvement needs. Personalized packages range from minor interior redesigns (basically day-long sprucing sessions) to full-on vacant home stagings, during which Dazzo’s team transforms a bare space into a buyer’s dream.

The key in closing the sale is giving a potential buyer an idea of what it would be like to live there. “I actually don’t design with the homeowner’s style in mind; I design with the buyer’s style in mind,” Dazzo says. “That’s the difference between interior design and home staging. Prospective buyers need to imagine themselves living in your space and ultimately fall in love with it.”

Dazzo says she’s been decorating her friends’ (as well as her own) spaces since she was a teenager. Now, as a certified professional home stager and current student in advanced studies of interior space planning at Parsons, she continues to flourish artistically. And of course, when dealing with the delicate financial nature of the real estate industry, her MBA from Fordham University doesn’t hurt either.

Most of this redesigner extraordinaire’s business is on the East End (she owns a house in East Hampton), though she also services the Manhattan area, where she owns an apartment as well. However, it’s not Dazzo’s location but her passionate hands-on approach that draws clients in.

“This job gives me a great deal of satisfaction and pride,” she says. “I love taking a blank slate or a room that’s a ‘mess’ and transforming it into something beautiful. There’s nothing more satisfying than a homeowner saying that I really made a difference.” Call 917-297-1528 or visit designedtoappeal.com.