

# Setting The Stage

As the property slump rolls on, Sinéad Considine is hoping that more vendors will turn to her for home staging, writes **RÓISÍN O'SULLIVAN**



**Sinéad Considine: found her business idea in Australia**

**W**hen Sinéad Considine tells you that she has been interested in all things artistic from a young age, it is not hard to believe. Her office groans under the weight of the magazines, brochures and cut-outs that she has collected to inspire and inform her work as an interior designer. Her company Upstage's niche is advising on how to best present a home for sale, an idea she got in Australia.

According to Considine, 34, houses down under are bigger, brighter and, as she puts it, "years ahead of us". In Australia she worked in a company that specialised in home staging. This meant that when a house was being sold, either as a new property or as a pre-owned residence, whoever was handling the sale would approach the company to 'stage' it.

The interior designers then came in armed with paint rollers, furniture and accessories to make it more appealing to buyers. After the house was sold, they came back, took their furniture and accessories and moved on.

Says Considine: "In Australia most people wouldn't even think of selling a house without getting it staged. Back in Ireland, I thought that, since so many houses were coming on the market, it would be very interesting to see if vendors wanted such a service here too."

The main challenge was getting the word out about a concept that is still novel in Ireland, even among estate agents. She said: "We started working with a couple of estate agents and gradually we got some houses and worked on de-cluttering and repainting and

## Home Staging: The Estate Agent View

**Wade Wise**, director, Savills Hamilton Osborne King

"Every property is different and we certainly don't recommend home staging to every vendor. It is important to try and create the 'wow factor' people are now looking for when it comes to buying a home. Having an independent person review a property really does help ensure that the property looks its best and therefore helps it sell more quickly.

"We recently de-cluttered and staged a home in the Dublin area. They invested around €9,000 and this provided for a mixture of

removal of existing furniture, storage of some personal items, short-term furniture rental and changing the use of one reception room. All this work was undertaken in two days with a minimum of disruption for the family. This house sold within three weeks and the owners achieved considerably more than they expected."

**Felicity Fox**, principal, Felicity Fox

"Purchasers' expectations have gone through the roof and many purchasers will only buy when the property ticks all the boxes. All

properties need to be sparkling and fresh smelling, while the better quality properties need to be well-furnished and show a lifestyle. Prospective purchasers will always multiply the size of furniture in their heads i.e. beds, dining tables, settees etc. So it is important that when a viewer comes to have a look at your house they don't go away with doubts, such as 'that bedroom will never fit a double bed' or 'a dining room table will never fit in there'. Sellers have one chance with a prospective buyer so it's important to make every best effort."

**Castle  
Company  
Formations**

**Assisting your Business from Conception to Realisation**

- Company Formation
- Company Secretarial
- Company Care
- Compliance Issues
- Mergers & Acquisitions
- Business Brokers

www.castle.ie 15 College Green, Dublin 2 Tel: 6793580 Email: info@castle.ie

re-flooring. We eventually got a small stock of furniture that we moved around from house to house and that just made such a difference. So we started doing one at a time, and then two and then as jobs came the furniture mounted up. Now we have quite a lot."

Upstage employs Cosidine and three others and she said that the company has not yet felt the effects of the downturn in the property market. "It hasn't affected us yet which is great. What I'm hoping is that the harder it is to sell property, the more people will need our services because they'll want their house to stand out above the rest," she added.

In Cosidine's view, preparing a home for sale is about de-personalising it. "If you keep the house as neutral as possible, then when people come to view there's nothing loud to distract them, the rooms look peaceful and they fall in love with the furniture and the house. If people come into a house or apartment with no furniture, they don't stop to look at each room. They just poke their heads in and say 'looks like a bedroom'. But if you have the room done up really nicely, then they'll stop and have a look and they'll say 'hmm I can see my bed here!'"

The price of home staging varies but for the staging of a three-bedroom home with furniture and accessories, Upstage charges between €7,000 and €10,000. If needed, the company provides add-ons such as landscaping, painting, tiling and re-flooring. They can manage a total



**An example of how Cosidine's Upstage can take a shell and dress it up for viewing**

overhaul and redesign of your house, but most properties just need a bit of jazzing up. This usually just means introducing a few focus pieces, such as a stylish couch or two and a sprinkling of accessories.

Despite the stress and financial ups and downs that come with funding and

managing a startup business, Cosidine says that she would not change a thing. "I couldn't go back to working for other people," she said. "If you're working for someone else you're making them money so I'd rather focus my energies on making money for myself."

## The Technology Check-up for Small Businesses

Boost productivity and profits by planning and implementing the right small business technologies

Tech-Check is the independent technology check-up service for small business by independent experts

For more information please contact your local County and City Enterprise Board or visit [www.techcheck.ie](http://www.techcheck.ie)

