

COMMENTARY

Move Managers Can Help Realtors Speed Up, Smooth Sale Process

By Lynn Falwell
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AS REALTORS, ONE OF THE MOST challenging and rewarding scenarios you encounter may be that of the older seller who has been in their home for 30, 40 or even 50 years. When doing a current market assessment at such a residence, you may find any or all of the following situations: a house that is tired and showing signs of deferred maintenance; spaces that are dark with dated furnishings; or a home that is in need of a good cleaning and may be too cluttered to even consider showing or listing without significant help.

Older sellers, especially if they are downsizing their living space, often are overwhelmed by the process before them – and that amplifies the obstacles. The unspoken emotions that may present barriers to moving forward are often the elephants in the living room; namely, that there is anxiety about the future and resistance to change and the unknown. In addition, Realtors may find that older clients are physically frail, confused or alone. Even if they do want to start preparing their homes for sale, they may need assistance to do so.

Those conditions create challenges for even the most seasoned real estate professionals, but they're not insurmountable. With the right strategies and partners, Realtors can help older sellers prepare their homes to sell more quickly in a competitive market and command higher prices. For listing brokers, the ability to leverage such strategies offers promising new opportunities to help the growing senior population transition to the next stage of their lives by rightsizing to a smaller living space and simplifying daily living.

How do you start the process

of getting older sellers ready to put their homes on the market?

One important strategy is to involve not just prospective sellers, but their families as well. Family members may approach you with concerns about their loved ones who are alone in a large home. They may bring up issues of safety, proximity to family, access to services and assistance, even familial peace of mind. Moving to a congregate living environment of any kind may offer greater ease of living, a less stressful lifestyle, more socialization and a greater amount of independence. If family members don't bring up those issues, you may wish to address them as you discuss how a new listing will be handled.

Involving the family can sometimes be a tricky affair, but there are lots of good reasons to do so. For example, cooperation strengthens the family fabric, lending emotional support to the parent(s) involved. You may find that you will enjoy improved communication, clearer expectations and better decisions. With the family on your side, you can also help an older seller who's on the fence make the choice to start preparing for a move, or speed up the de-cluttering process.

Enter Senior Move Managers. Senior Move Managers can help you work with families, ease the concerns of reluctant sellers and ultimately speed a listing and final sale. It is their job to involve all family members who are willing and able to participate in any way, and help them all work toward one simple goal: the calmest and happiest possible relocation of the senior whose home you wish to list and sell.

Senior Move Managers specialize in helping seniors plan, orchestrate and execute a move. They partner with seniors and their families during every phase



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of the moving process – such as getting a home into market-ready condition; sorting, organizing and packing; working with appraisers, charities and auction houses; supervising movers; helping clients settle into their new homes, and even unpacking boxes and displaying artwork. They also make deep emotional connections with their clients and their family members – bonds that Realtors can leverage in helping seniors begin getting their homes in top condition to show.

Move Managers can make the difference between persuading a senior to start preparing a home

for sale or delaying for another year. Realtors often suggest that Move Managers visit seniors and their families even before the decision to list. Often, meeting with people who know how to navigate the complexities of moving from a lifetime home is just what prospective sellers need to sign on the dotted line. Seniors and their family members have a chance to openly address concerns and learn what level of help is available – and find it a relief to have partners in the downsizing and moving process that they can absolutely trust.

Move Managers are helpful in de-cluttering a home, too. When a house is in need of face-lifting, many Realtors automatically engage the services of home stagers, who are an enormous help for many sellers who need their talents and creative touch. But often, it's a mistake for them to call home stagers before bringing in Move Managers.

A recent client example provides an illustration of how Move Managers can help. The client was an older couple preparing to move to a CCRC not far from their condo community. Their broker had already had home stagers in to help sell the property. It was now under agreement, and the couple was frantic because they couldn't find many of their valuable and favorite items. Their large basement had rows of unsealed boxes full of all kinds of household items ranging from candles, to family photos, to silver and books. None of the boxes was organized by contents, labeled or properly packed. Now, the couple was about to pay Move Managers to handle, again, the same items that had already been handled once by the stagers. Had the Move Managers been there ahead of the stagers, all the "clutter" would have been

sorted with the client's input, complete with decisions about whether or not each item would be kept, given to family or friends, sold or donated.

With Move Managers, as sorting progresses, the packing and labeling is done on an ongoing basis so that things are only handled once. This is not only more efficient, but it allows the client complete control over the process and decisions. Cluttered storage areas are cleaned out and replaced with clearly labeled and neatly stacked boxes ready for moving, shipping or donating. Unwanted furniture can be picked up for donation once the sorting has been completed, leaving space for those possessions that will accompany the seniors to their next home. Fragile items are well protected from damage and the living areas are now more spacious and ready for the home stagers to address.

One of the ways in which one might look at the different professionals involved in supporting the Realtor is to say that home stagers, since they are the design professionals, are focused on items – what to remove, add or change to make a home more attractive. Senior Move Managers instead are focused on the client, the family and the process of transitioning from a long-time home to a new, simpler living environment. It's their goal to honor and address the many treasures that are meaningful to their clients while getting their homes ready to list. Both partners help sellers and Realtors to show their homes in the best possible light so that new buyers can picture their own families there. And in a competitive selling environment, it's that power to excite buyers' imaginations that makes the difference between a long listing and a quick, profitable sale. ■