

Home Staging in

Written by Daniela Kuzmova



I've worked as a real estate agent in Prague, Czech Republic for seven years. My background is in marketing, and I know that professional presentation of the product is key to success. I knew I needed to do things differently as an agent so I searched for professional and international staging training, and I found CSP.

It sounded crazy and challenging for me to go to all the way to Florida to take this intensive course. But it's now been one year since I did my CSP training, and I know it was one of the greatest things, that I have done, in my life.

In Czech Republic, home staging is mostly reserved for luxury properties. The real estate market is very hot right now. The prices are very high, supply is limited, and demand is very large. Ninety-nine percent of agents here say, "Why do home staging? The property will sell anyway." And that is the truth. But, why not ask for an even higher price if you have something unique to offer?

I wanted to find out what home staging could bring to a seller in our market, but I wasn't sure where to test it. In order to have full control of the process, I decided to sell my investment apartment. The apartment was renovated in 2000 when I bought it. It was steadily rented, so when my tenants left I had the opportunity to do something exciting. I decided to paint the walls, renovate the bathroom, renovate the wood flooring, change the interior doors, and update the lightning. The kitchen would be too costly for me to change, so I decided to leave it as it was. But, I cleaned the kitchen properly.

After the renovation, I had a nice, clean apartment but it was empty. I updated a few existing pieces, but I needed more. In Czech there aren't any companies that rent furniture, so I needed to buy the furnishings.

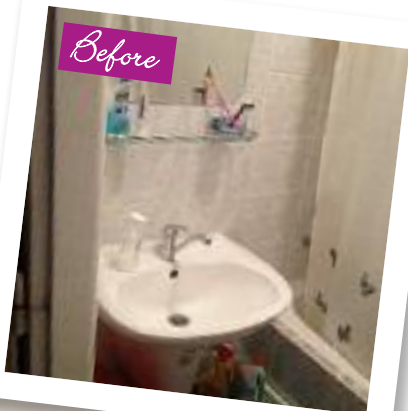
I worked with a professional photographer who specializes in real estate because high quality photos are absolutely necessary to have, because 97% of buyers are looking on the Internet first. And let me share one secret with you: for the photoshoot, we moved all the furniture and decor just slightly so it would look best in the pictures.



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When the photos were ready I listed the apartment on the market. A very similar apartment was sold in the same building two months earlier for the sales price of 3.3 Million CZK (approximately \$182,820 CAD). Within three weeks, I sold my apartment for 4.08 Million CZK (approximately \$226,032 CAD). Unbelievable. The woman who bought it commented: "I know that I am paying you more than the real market value, but I do not have time and energy to even paint the apartment. I appreciate a move-in ready apartment." She even bought some of the furniture for an extra price because it was new and already looked great installed.

**WOW! HOME STAGING
REALLY WORKS!**



With this reference I gained extra confidence in my abilities and my business. When I tell this story, I usually convince the clients to list with me and I have them do the necessary maintenance and cleaning of their properties. I have also found, I can translate my staging knowledge to preparing apartments for rent. If I "help" the property a bit, I am able to increase the rental price by 20-30%. So I am utilizing this tool, designing and furnishing investment apartments for rent, for a few clients.

It seems I started my staging business at the perfect time in Czech. I currently offer home staging as an extra service for my real estate clients and then charge a higher commission, but I know the time will come when I will have to separate these two businesses. I am aware of the fact that it is quite difficult to open the minds of other real estate agents, but I am in contact with them and I share my experience with them.

On the Czech market you can see some attempts at staging here and there, but it is very weak in comparison to what I can do with the properties. I staged approximately twenty apartments last year, and the most difficult part was convincing the owners that it is worth it. The owners who acquiesced, were pleased and are giving me great references.

My photographer recently asked me, "Why are your properties always so nice?" The answer is simple: I know how to *make* them nice. And we all know that nice, move-in ready properties create the best emotional reactions which lead to fast sales without price reductions. ■