

# Setting the Stage for a Quick Sale

## Choose furniture to accentuate the home's main attractions and to suit the lifestyle of the most likely potential homeowners

By Daniel Drolet, Canwest News Service  
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The two-bedroom condo in Ottawa's Byward Market is all about the view. Every window looks out onto a panorama that sweeps from the market to the Gatineau Hills across the river in Quebec. Day or night, the view is mesmerizing.

So when Tamara O'Leary of Ottawa's M.Y. Home and Carrie Dick, a professional stager and designer, were asked to furnish the empty condo to get it ready for sale, they made sure they did nothing to obscure the main selling point.

When I met them there as they were putting the finishing touches to the decor -- they did the whole place in just a few days -- they shared some of the tricks that can be used by anyone who's faced with the challenge of taking an empty space and making it come alive. These tricks apply, whether you're getting a place ready for sale, as they were, or adding eye appeal to your own home.

### **ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE**

If there's a major positive feature, be it a view, a fireplace or good architecture, do what you can to emphasize it, advise O'Leary and Dick.

Because this condo is all about the view, the pair chose a design scheme that kept the sightlines clear. That meant, for example, keeping the furniture low. There are no tall pieces that get in the way. They even chose armless sofas to keep the living/dining room wide open.

### **RESPECT THE SPACE**

The condo is just under 1,500 square feet, but when it was empty, it felt smaller.

"Everything seems small when it's empty," says Dick, adding that anyone looking at an empty apartment or home may have difficulty visualizing its real size. This is particularly important in places that are for sale, since people need to be able to imagine their own furniture in the space.

The right kind of furniture can actually make a room look bigger.

To make the most of this space, Dick and O'Leary chose pieces that respected the proportions of the rooms: a queen-sized bed instead of a king-sized one, and in the living room, they opted for a loveseat instead of a full-sized sofa.

To make the dining area seem more spacious, they brought in a clear glass table and put a mirror on one wall. All those things make the condo feel fully furnished and livable, yet open and uncluttered.

### **ADD PUNCH FOR EMPHASIS**

A room, even a beautiful one, can become forgettable if it's got too much of the same thing.

So while O'Leary and Dick used mostly neutral colours in the living room -- the wood is espresso, the upholstery off-white -- they decided to punch it up by getting red leather chairs for the dining room and adding a few red accessories.

All of a sudden, says O'Leary, it's not just a dining room; it's "the dining room with the red chairs."

### **MONEY IS NOT THE OBJECT**

If you don't have an unlimited budget (and who does?) it's best to focus on a few strong pieces of furniture or art, and let the rest of your decor play a supporting role.

Put your money into a beautiful leather sofa and play it up with accessories.

### **IMAGINE YOUR LIFESTYLE**

This condo is owned by former NHL hockey player Dan McGillis and his wife Elise. Their needs changed between the time they bought it on plan and the time the building was ready to occupy, so that's why they're selling. If you're looking at an empty house, imagine what it would be like to live there yourself. Will you be throwing fancy cocktail parties or having the extended family over for holiday dinners?

Coming up with answers will help you plan your decor. O'Leary says seating is an important part of imagining how an empty room might work. People, she says, always try to figure out where their friends or family will sit when they come over. So work it out in your mind or on paper.

### **UNIFY THE COLOURS**

Because the condo is up for sale, O'Leary and Dick didn't take any chances with the colours; they're neutral throughout.

But what they did do is unify the colours so there's a feeling of flow. This is particularly important in open designs.

If you're going to decorate an empty space, take advantage and paint before the furniture arrives.

### **DON'T FORGET TEXTURE**

The bathrooms in this condo are covered with tile. That makes it difficult to change colours. So O'Leary and Dick added personality with bouquets of branches and wicker baskets. In the bedrooms, texture comes in the form of draperies, an upholstered headboard and a touch of bling on the bed cushions.

**LIGHTING**

Many places don't have overhead lights, so an empty space can look dreary on a dull November day. Proper lighting will bring it to life, says O'Leary.

**SIMPLIFY**

Whether you're living there or trying to sell, less is usually more, says O'Leary. So get rid of extra stuff and organize what remains. It will make your lifestyle seem effortless.

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