



TOP 10 QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK A HOME STAGER:

1. **Have you received any designations or certifications?** Because there are no industry wide standards for the Home Staging industry, this means that anyone can hang out a shingle and call themselves a stager. Beware of people saying they are certified - it really is not regulated and you should check online to see what kind of training it is. Some are fly-by night, 2 hour tutorial online and voila, you are now "certified." You can check out Accredited Staging Professionals by checking online, www.stagedhomes.com, and click under "Find an ASP®." Individual skills vary but this can help protect you against unscrupulous persons. ASP®/ASPM® is the only recognized designation by the National Association of Realtors.
2. **What type of continuing education do you receive?** The core courses for home staging are for just that, home Staging. A professional who loves and is serious about their career in Staging will continue to learn about it so they will a) differentiate themselves from other Stagers, b) stand out as an expert, c) grow in the field, d) stay ahead of the trends in color and design and e) continue learning new and up-to-date information so they bring more value to their clients.
3. **How long have you been staging?** Home staging core courses are GREAT! However, nothing can replace experience.
4. **Is there a charge for bids?** (before the gas price hike, charges for bids were rare, although I do see a lot more charging...)
5. **May I see your portfolio of before and afters?** Ask if they are pictures that they have staged or if they are pictures downloaded from someone/somewhere else.
6. **May I call some of your clients and/or realtors who have used you?** A professional Stager with happy clients will usually ask permission to use them as a reference or for a letter of reference. If a stager seems uncomfortable with you asking...well...proceed with caution!
7. **What is the aggregate value of properties successfully staged?** An increasingly common statistic. A newer stager may well do great work, but it can be reassuring to know that a prospective stager has experience with say helping to move over 10 million in value. (If they specialize in only million-plus dollar homes, this may not amount to much but if you see their portfolio is a mix of smaller and larger multi-million properties, it's saying something!)
8. **What are your statistics? What are the average days on market after staging the property before it sells?** (Professionals should be able to recite them to you in their sleep, they keep numbers and safeguard their statistics)
9. **How much does it cost to stage this house?** (trick question, a professional never quotes their rates over the phone as it is impossible to do so...just as it would be hard for you to give a homeowner a LIST PRICE of their home over the phone just based on neighborhood, square footage and their description of their home.)
10. **What is your specialty as far as staging goes?** (It could be that they do mostly consultations or they only do occupied home stagings, and others have a whole warehouse full of furniture who only opt to do vacant home stagings.)

Marcyne Touchton, ASP, ASPM, IAHSF, is the founder and principal stager for Domaine Staging LLC. Domaine Staging is a world class home staging service provider. She is located in Charlotte, NC, and has expanded her services to the DC metro area.

To date, Domaine has assisted 60+ Charlotte and Washington, DC area home sellers and agents, with over \$20 m worth of property. 75% of all Domaine's properties have sold in 23 days or less.

I hope this helps as a guideline when you are interview home stagers in your local area. I'd appreciate any feedback you have as to whether or not this has helped you. I suggest you interview and find 2 or 3 home stagers you feel comfortable with, and put a star by the one you are going to use as your "primary" stager. There comes a time, when stagers may not be able to fit you into their schedule, especially as a lot of the calls I receive are "last minute, needed it yesterday" stagings.

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