

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT Shakes Up Orlando Home Staging Market

By Julie Evans



GIL LEVY WITH FRAMED LISTINGS

A home staged by Sipp and Systematic Home Staging, LLC.



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The job of a home stager is to inject energy into existing properties, showcase their potential, and make what has become old look young again. By embracing the entrepreneurial spirit, one young man is building an empire by bringing properties back to life and proving that age is just a number.

Since launching Systematic Home Staging, LLC in November 2016, Joseph Sipp has quickly grown his business, building an impressive portfolio and a tribe of loyal customers who rave about his eye for design and ability to help sell homes.

And he's just 17.

A senior at Bishop Moore High School in Orlando, Sipp runs the business while attending school full time, managing client needs between classes. On an average day, he finishes school by 2:40 p.m. and then heads off to a staging job. In between sizing up spaces, moving furniture, and ironing linens, he'll sit down to do his economics homework or study for a statistics test, often at a dining room table he's just brought into the home. A typical staging job will take him four to six hours, while a model home will take him about two days.

Since getting his business licensed, insured, and established as an LLC, he's staged 47 homes. Along the way, Sipp has amassed a large collection of furniture — enough to stage 27 homes at a time — and purchased a 17-foot truck to move the furniture to the homes he stages. He is currently looking at a warehouse in nearby Altamonte Springs and hopes to move into that space in the near future.

While his family has backed him financially and emotionally and has stepped in to help on occasion, he's done most of the work himself or with a team of four high school friends hired to help him on a per-project basis.

“It's so cool when we go out to do proposals and people see how this team of 17-year-olds can do this,” Sipp says. “We're not all sitting home playing video games and on our phones 24/7. And because we are the younger generation, we know different color schemes that are popular and the popular trends. We're up-to-date.”

Sipp and his team keep up with trends via Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Houzz, and a variety of other social media sites, which they've basically grown up with, as well as lookbooks from popular companies like Restoration Hardware and Pottery Barn. His team also promotes properties they stage via social media, which means extra, no-cost marketing.

Joseph Sipp



He firmly believes in the power of staging to sell real estate.

“Staging is the most important thing a Realtor® needs to realize,” he says. “It gets your home sold 11 to 17 percent higher in price, and it’s on the market 83 percent less time. It creates a totally different feeling. It’s hard to see that staging can help that much, but it can.”

His prices start at \$1,500 for a tax-deductible, three-month package with professional photos. Rates go up from there. Every property is treated the same no matter the size of the contract, and Sipp believes the difference is in the small details.

So, what exactly does that mean? It entails ironing the entire bed skirt instead of just the visible side, and making sure individual pieces of fur in a rug are all facing the same way and show no footprints. Barstools are spaced exactly the same distance apart, and even couches get ironed.

For Sipp, much of staging is about addressing awkward spaces. People have a hard time visualizing how they would use a space, but when Sipp shows them how it could look, it opens their eyes. Sales follow. In one case, a property was on the market for six months before Sipp’s team staged it. Once they did, it sold in eight days. Another property had been on the market 108 days. An offer came in 23 days after Sipp staged it.

His clients say his age is only an advantage.

Kristina Clement is an investor who found Sipp through an online search. She was impressed with his website and quick response to her inquiries, so she hired him to stage her Winter Park property. She has zero regrets.

“I could tell he was young when I spoke to him, but I was impressed by his energy and professionalism and was excited to give this young entrepreneur a try,” Clements says. “Joseph has a way of instilling confidence in his work, and I was not disappointed. We had an offer on the house just two weeks after staging. His work was impeccable in every way.”

So how did Sipp end up with a successful home staging business at such a young age?

Sipp’s always had a passion for real estate — so much so that when he first got his driver’s license at age 16, he used to drive around to visit open houses by himself just for fun. When he was 14, he convinced a family friend who was also a real estate agent to let him help at open houses.

After talking with his aunt, a home stager in the Tampa area, about the growth of home staging in the Orlando market, Sipp decided to give it a go.

“I thought this would be a good way to get my foot in the door for real estate, not thinking it would be this big of a company,” he says.

Poised and polished, it’s easy to forget he’s not even old enough to vote yet. To bolster client confidence, he’s also worked to build credentials. During spring break of his junior year, he didn’t head to the beach or binge watch a Netflix series. Instead, he spent a week in Atlanta getting accredited by the Accredited Staging Professional (ASP) Association.

“It’s very hard to say, ‘I’m 17, and I can stage your house.’ They’ll be like, ‘What?’ But when I say, ‘I’m 17 and a professional ASP

COURTESY OF SYSTEMATIC HOME STAGING



Sipp stages a bedroom for a client.



stager,' then they say, 'Let's keep talking.' It's something that makes me look more professional."

So just how unusual is it for someone this young to be a professional home stager? Pretty unusual. In fact, he's currently the youngest accredited staging professional in the industry.

Bette Vos, an ASP Master who taught Sipp during his week in Atlanta, says the average age of successful stagers is 40-50, though a lot of them hire younger people to work in their businesses. She says Sipp stands out not only because of his age and entrepreneurial spirit, but also because of his fresh and innovative thinking.

"Joe is an amazing young man with lots of drive and a unique vision for the home staging industry," Vos says. "I predict his staging company will be one to watch as one of the premier staging companies in Florida and the country."

This isn't Sipp's first business venture either. In fact, he got the money to start his staging company from a pet-sitting business he started when he was 10 and ran until he was 16.

So what's next for this young entrepreneur? After graduation next year he plans to attend a local community college while he continues to build his staging business and start his real estate career.

"With real estate, you have to start off low and work your way up. This is my way of starting low and moving to selling luxury real estate down the road and to hopefully franchise out with



A room with a view, staged by Sipp.

the staging company and take up the whole Florida region," says Sipp. "That's my goal. It's a big goal, but who knows what can happen."

Who knows, indeed. After all, he's just 17.