# Initial Introductions over the Phone

Let's assume your first contact with the home seller or agent is the initial phone call during which they are just trying to "get some information." While this may seem like a prospect, I want you to consider this a *client* and be very intentional with your interaction. Here’s a great way to answer a phone call (my notes/reasons are italicized):

**You:** Company Name, how can I help you?

**Client:** I wanted to find out about your staging/redesign services.

**You:** Wonderful! Which of my clients has referred you?

*(Do you see how this builds your credibility instantly in that it assumes you have many clients referring your business regularly?)*

**Client:** Actually I found your website on the Internet while searching on Houzz. I’m putting my house up for sale on a limited budget and I’ve never worked with a stager and needed to know how it works.

*(We’ve learned two important things: how they heard about you which will be critical to where you spend your marketing dollars and whether they have ever worked with a stager.)*

**You:** Great. I’d love to help you with your staging project. I specialize in creating a priority list of staging changes that have BIG IMPACT on your home price, give you a great return on investment while being gentle on your wallet. Since I know you don’t want to spend a lot on the home you are moving out of…we focus on using what you already have to create a vision or lifestyle that that buyer will aspire to and want to have. My customers can live and show their space easily, so that the hassle of selling is minimized tremendously. Does that sound good?

*(Notice how I inserted what should be your mission/about you philosophy which helps them to understand a bit about why you’re different and how you can benefit them?)*

**Client:** Yes it does. Since I have no idea how this works, can I ask what you charge?

**You:** Of course, fees are important to discuss. Each staging project for a home that is not vacant begins with a phone interview and a two to three hour, onsite design consultation, home assessment and written Staging Report, for which the fee is $250\*. Here’s what you can expect to gain from that working session: I will research your market in order to determine the typical buyer demographic that will be viewing the home, I will review your existing furniture layout, color schemes, lighting and accessories and make suggestions for better traffic flow, modernization and online photos. I will repurpose some of what you already own to create “emotional connections” for the buyers. I will identify “price eroding” items that buyers believe will cost more to change than not. I will also make shopping and cosmetic recommendations that will greatly improve the sales price of the home while eliminating elements buyers will likely disapprove of. I do all of this in a 10-page, Staging Report that we fill out while we walk through the space together, so that you can refer to it regularly. At the end of our consultation time, you will have a thorough plan for the work and how to get the most from the sale.

*(Do you see that I immediately link the fee with the value of what is provided during that time? This is important because it sets the expectations right away)*

**Client:** $250 for a consultation? I didn’t realize there was an initial charge for that meeting and was hoping to interview a few stagers in the area.

**You:** Some stagers will come to your house for free but let me tell you how that typically works and why I don’t think it’s in your best interest. In a scenario where a stager is not paid for their time, they usually don’t provide any worthy ideas to move your staging project forward and their agenda is to upsell your rather than giving you the expertise. In contrast, when you hire me for a consultation, we actually work the entire time and I give you all the ideas you’ll need to get the quickest sale and best price for your home in the form of a photo filled, checklist Staging Report customized to your home. Since we’re working together the entire time, you’ll be better able to judge my expertise and the merit of my ideas. I know you’ll be pleased with what you learn during the consultation, plus you are able to keep the customized, Staging Report we generate to do the rest of the project yourself or have me handle the project for you. I’d love to work with you and have some availability on May 3rd or 5th at 9am. Shall I book that staging consultation now?

*(Do you see how I educated the client on the alternative, without bashing my competition? I used the question as a way to further advance my credibility/expertise while closing the sale with specific dates…never letting a client if I have an open calendar)*

**Client:** Yes, thank you.

**You:** The consultation fee is $250 and I accept Visa or MasterCard. How would you like to pay?

*(Getting the money up front is always easiest for both you and the client…if you are uncomfortable with up-front payment, then you should at least do a 50% deposit to “hold the day”)*

**You:** Okay, do you have a few moments for me to get some critical information in order to prepare for our time…

*Here’s where you can take out your handy* ***Seller or Realtor Pre-Appointment Order Sheet*** *and gather the beginnings of the information you’ll need to research the home and buyer demographic, as well as build rapport with the client (forms are below).*

Being confident and unwavering in your service offering, pricing and expertise is essential! Agents are expert negotiators and will try and negotiate with you automatically, so stand by your talent. If you waver or bend, it gives them the edge and hurts your credibility. Know that what you have to offer (once you are through this training) is WAY BETTER than any other non-HSR stager in your area…trust me on this.

Do you see how easy it would be to tweak this conversation for a design client or agent? It won’t change a lot since the crux is communicating the value, credibility and expertise you provide to the target market you are speaking to. Go ahead and create a similar dialogue for an agent or home builder who calls or a prospective design client.