

Who to see before calling the Realtor

By Anna Marie Kukec | Daily Herald Columnist

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When GraceAnn Simoni started her interior redesign and home staging business in 2001, her Web site was the only calling card she had on the Internet. It still is.

"There are no directories online or even a Yellow Pages category for us," the Naperville resident said.

Yours Redesign (www.yoursredesigned.com) offers information on her services to help people re-arrange furniture, change color or do other beautifying measures to help make their homes more attractive for selling, especially in this tough real estate market.

She also operates Midwest Staging Redesign Institute (www.msritraining.com), which provides training to others in her profession. She has trained about 140 people since opening the institute in 2005.

She also is a member of the Interior Redesign Industry Specialists, which has about 1,000 members nationwide.

Redesigners and stagers help homeowners use furniture and other décor to make the home more attractive and valuable for listing on the market.

Some of the biggest challenges she and others in her profession face is getting homeowners ready to sell, even before a Realtor puts a price tag on the home.

"We help to fix things before a Realtor comes in," Simoni said. "A lot the pricing of a home is based on its condition and perceived value. We help to boost that."

She has clients around DuPage and Cook counties and in Chicago.

"We need to education the public on what to put into the Internet in order to find us," she said.

Surfing: Sara Lee Corp. (www.saralee.com), which has operations in Downers Grove and Chicago, has renewed its infrastructure outsourcing services contract with HP (www.hp.com) for an additional seven years and has extended management of operations in 10 countries to more than 35. A spokeswoman declined to provide the value of the deal but said the agreement will enable Sara Lee to improve operational efficiencies and cost savings. HP will supply Sara Lee with infrastructure outsourcing services, including central and local end-user support services. HP also will provide Sara Lee with data center and network services in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Latin America and Asia.

- U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters has launched Fast Lane, the agency's new blog. Accessible at <http://fastlane.dot.gov>, Fast Lane offers an online community for all those interested in the nation's transportation system and its future. It includes a blog by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley.

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