

Article published Nov 20, 2006

REAL ESTATE PROFILE

Web designer makes properties come alive

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SARASOTA -- Debbie Zaroba of Marketing & Design Services in Sarasota seems to have carved out one of the most lucrative graphic design and marketing segments of the local real estate scene while working out of her home office.

Zaroba, who is self-taught and a self-described workaholic, says her professional marketing philosophy is "grounded in the basic premise that in order to be successful, you must stand out from the crowd," by creating custom, professional image marketing to propel her clients to "top producer positions."

After becoming a real estate broker in Sarasota in 2000, Zaroba realized that she liked the marketing and design aspects of real estate more than pushing properties for a commission.

She says she recognized "the tremendous need for marketing assistance" in the real-estate community.

"There was no manual for successful Realtor marketing in a high-demand area of multimillion-dollar residences with a rapidly increasing Realtor base," she says.

So she decided to try to bridge the gap by utilizing her marketing expertise along with her real estate experience.

Some clients refer to her as "their secret weapon," she says, and her award-winning marketing and design projects are recognized by top local real estate brokers as "the best."

"Zaroba is a tremendously talented visionary with high standards, strong convictions, and an abundance of passion and enthusiasm for her business assignments," says Steve Bailey, general manager of Premier Properties.

He calls her "candid, accessible and responsive."

Zaroba has her own idea of how she wants things, Bailey says, and brings strong viewpoints that on occasion need to be fully hashed out with the client before a decision is reached.

She "fervently believes that communication goes far beyond the facts and figures, to the point of compelling a human emotional response."

Zaroba says real estate is "an emotional business, with our life's memories, personal triumphs and love-lines tied to our homes."



[STAFF PHOTO / DAN WAGNER /](#)

Debbie Zaroba found that she liked the marketing and design aspects of real estate more than selling. She and the team at her company have designed custom Web sites for several luxury properties.

SAMPLES OF ZAROBA'S WORK

Debbie Zaroba has designed custom Web sites for several luxury properties, including:

www.BayviewsonLongboatKey.com .

www.Belcastello.com.

www.BellaVitaFlorida.com.

www.VillaAzzura.com.

www.WhitakersLane.com.

"Every home, like the individuals who reside there, has a story, unique characteristics and individual charm," she says

Zaroba, former marketing director for SKY Sotheby's International Realty, has expanded her client base to encompass real estate brokers from a range of local firms.

"Setting each Realtor apart in a highly competitive marketplace of over 4,500 Realtors is accomplished with focused precision," Zaroba says.

"Whether a listing presentation or a comprehensive Realtor Web site, it's about consistently conveying expertise, market knowledge, professionalism and integrity."

One of her clients, Lenore Treiman, says Zaroba "is integral to my successful business plan," and describes her as a "consummate professional ... She is the best marketing professional that I have ever worked with."

Her corporate clients include Premier Properties, SKY Sotheby's and Michael Saunders & Co. She also has "development clients," including Hacienda El Pelon in Costa Rica; Deer Run Estates in Grand Rapids, Mich.; and The Palms Condominiums in Sarasota.

Zaroba has also designed custom Web sites to market luxury properties on Longboat Key, Casey Key and other locations.

"Our couture approach to marketing and image are not for everyone." says Zaroba. "It is a very personal process and our clients must share the vision and embrace the multi-faceted marketing philosophy we employ."

Besides Web site creation, Marketing & Design Services also offers marketing communications planning, advertising and brochures, posters, logo design and other services.

The 52-year-old Augusta, Ga., native's achievements are all the more impressive given that she has neither formal training in her craft nor a college degree.

"I never took a class in anything," she says. "Learned it all on the job."

Zaroba, a mother of two, moved to Sarasota seven years ago specifically so her 19-year-old daughter Asheley, a special needs student, could attend Sarasota's highly regarded public Oak Park School.

In her previous school in Virginia, Asheley was "mainstreamed into an algebra class," Zaroba says, "when she can't tell time."

Zaroba says she's delighted with Oak Park,

"It's great and it's free and Asheley can attend until she is 22 and will graduate with job skills," she says.

Before forming Marketing & Design Services in 2001, Zaroba was marketing director for five years with an aerospace engineering software firm in Blacksburg, Va.

Zaroba does not do it alone. She regularly calls upon a team including photographer Matt McCourtney, of McCourtney Photographics, who Zaroba says creates "stunning photographic masterpieces of Southwest Florida's most distinctive properties."

Zaroba also works closely with Sheila Brannan Longo of Thomas & Brannan Communications, who has 25 years of creative, copywriting, publishing and public relations experience.

And Tina Darling of Innovative Agent Services offers "a totally new concept in client services" to real estate professionals in the areas of administrative, technological and mailing services, Zaroba says.

Although each member of the team has a distinct corporate identity, they market themselves co-operatively as the Nu Image Group at www.nuimagegroup.com.

The team's impact and success has not gone unnoticed. In 2005 and 2006, two of the top 10 Realtor Web sites in the state were theirs, according to Florida Realtor Magazine.

So far in 2006, they have won 10 ADDY awards, a top advertising industry distinction, and an additional seven ADDYs in 2005.
