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Realtor podcasts to promote properties

Susan Stabley

From the South Florida Business Journal

Miami Beach Realtor Zahara Mossman is pioneering the use of the latest Internet rage to promote her properties - podcasting.

"I am really a computer geek disguised as a Realtor," Mossman said. "I am my own webmaster."

A podcast is an audio broadcast that can be downloaded to any computer or digital music player, including the popular portable Apple iPod. Podcasts are distributed through Web syndication, such as Really Simple Syndication (RSS), Atom and others feeds. Yahoo offers updates to members' My Yahoo service; Apple's iTunes recently added the capability for podcasting.

Mossman reads off her real estate listings over the phone to an automated robot program - or "bot" - that then uploads the three- to four-minute recording to her Web logs (blogs) at www.podcastrealty.com and www.zaharaproperties.com, which offer feeds. Subscribers are notified each time Mossman adds a new property or listing, which can also be heard directly from one of the Web pages.

"Podcasting is beginning to take off. It allows everyone the ability to broadcast," said Marcus P. Zillman, an Internet consultant in Marco Island who helped Mossman set up her podcasting platform. "The neat thing with Zahara is that, via her cell phone, she can walk through a property and do a live podcast. It automatically goes to the Internet and into her blog."

45 to 50 downloads a day

Still under development, Mossman's main site www.podcastrealty.com gets 45 to 50 downloads a day, she said. Twenty-two days into July, the site had 13,816 "unique views," which she said are more valuable than an ordinary "hit."

"It's actual eyeballs. People went to the site and clicked on a link," she said. "Hits can be just bots scouring the Internet for e-mail addresses."

\$7 million in seven months

Even popular podcast site iPodder.org carries her listings, though "it's so new and cutting edge, they don't even have a real estate category yet," she said.

Mossman is new to real estate, but hopes to be just as cutting edge. In just seven months, she has sold more than \$7 million in properties, she said.

As many as 30 percent of Mossman's clients are investors in the Northeast who she e-mails private podcasts with digital photos.

"Many buyers don't even look. They just buy," she said. "These people don't even have to get on a plane anymore. I am their eyes and ears."

The daughter of a Guatemalan mother and Cuban father, Mossman attended school in Latin America and has lived in the Miami area for 18 years. Before entering the real estate market, she was involved in fundraising for philanthropies.

And she still is, working with promotions for cultural events in North Beach. Her company, Zahara Properties, was also recognized by the North Beach Development Corp. for Mossman's marketing and research work for the condo conversion of 75 S. Shore Drive.

Zahara Properties - founded in 2004 and a division of Aventura-based Beachfront Realty - sells luxury and commercial properties in South Florida and Costa Rica. Among them are a \$9.2 million penthouse at the Canyon Ranch project in Miami Beach, a furnished oceanfront condo on Millionaire's Row in Miami Beach, a condo conversion on Normandy Isle and a finca in Costa Rica.

"We're excited about it. Everybody who is innovative seems to be successful," Beachfront Realty owner Ed Roberts said. "Somebody has to be the first. We had one of the first computers in Miami Beach. Then we got a mouse and everybody was afraid of it."

A podcasting pioneer

When it comes to podcasting, Mossman was the pioneer, he said. "This is an innovation strictly from her imagination."

Mossman may be the first in the state to pitch real estate through a podcast, a spokesman for the Florida Association of Realtors said.

"With so many Realtors on the road, podcasting makes so much more sense," said Jeff Zipper, FAR's VP of communications.

Tom Dixon, 2004 president for the Realtors Association of Greater Miami and the Beaches, said Mossman is taking blogging to the next level.

"It's a wonderful new medium," he said. "As someone who has had to produce a newsletter every month for the past 10 years, I can say it's extremely difficult to talk or write about a subject of general interest. Can someone keep a podcast informative and interesting? It's wonderful if they can do it."

E-mail Miami-Dade real estate writer Susan Stabley at sjstabley@bizjournals.com.