

Open for business

6D twincities.com St. Paul Pioneer Press

Sunday 6-26-2011

Open for Business > In View Fotos LLC

Owner: Nina Nelson

Type of business: Real estate photography

Number of employees: One

Location: Burnsville

Contact information: 612-414-7829; inviewfotos.com

Tell us what your business does. In View Fotos provides real estate agents with an eye-catching portfolio of photos to help enhance a buyer's online experience. I work with both the agent and the homeowner to capture images that best showcase the features of the property.

Why are you launching it now? In today's competitive real estate market, first impressions have an even greater impact as more consumers search online for listings, creating a subjective experience based on what they see. Buyers have at their fingertips the ability to view thousands of homes, served up through the online Multiple Listing Service. High-quality images provide a more clear representation of the property, benefitting all parties in the transaction — the agent, seller and buyer of a property.

Where did you get the idea for your business? I have more than 15 years of experience with portrait and landscape photography. I enjoy creating and capturing stellar images that are crisp, straightforward and honest. A longtime friend and agent, Jason Koenig, encouraged me to pursue my own business helping agents and sellers enhance their listings with higher-quality images that showcased the best assets of the property. As an experienced member of the Odd Couple Team with Keller Williams Integrity, he knows about the strategic and interactive requirements of selling a home today.

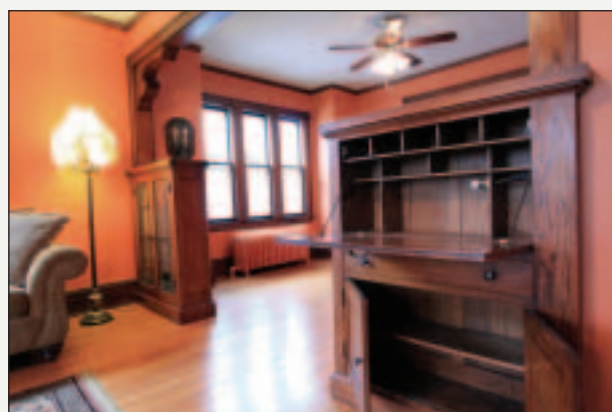
In View Foto's concept is rather simple but if you search online for a home, you'll quickly discover that many listings are poorly represented by underexposed and irrelevant images.

How did you develop your business plan? I started with a simple concept: provide agents with an affordable offering that has maximum impact for sellers



ABOVE: Nina Nelson is a photographer who provides real estate agents and home sellers with visual aids for selling property.

RIGHT: Real estate photos by Nina Nelson call attention to attractive details of a home.



PIONEER PRESS PHOTO BY BEN GARVIN



PHOTOS COURTESY OF IN VIEW FOTOS, LLC

and buyers. I researched what other local photographers were marketing and found an opportunity within real estate, specifically the online market. I met with agents about what competitive tools they use and need to help expedite the sale of a home in a

buyer's market. Based on my initial research, I designed a plan around offering a straightforward photography service that is simple and affordable. I built an initial portfolio of images before launching my website, inviewfotos.com.

How are you financing

your business? Self financed.

How do you see current economic conditions affecting your business? Everyone is impacted by the current housing market. As a buyer, seller or even an owner concerned with their future housing

opportunities, people are aware of the new challenges and obstacles that we now face. Home sellers need an edge in a buyer's market, a way to stand out and showcase their assets. My business will provide tools to sellers and agents to help overcome one of the biggest

obstacles of a first impression.

What makes your business unique? I have a background in both counseling and photography. It's important to listen to the stories each homeowner has to tell and to include some part of that story within the images of their home. Our homes are part of us and it is an emotional and bittersweet process for many people who are selling their homes. However, it's important to find a balance between what the seller values and what the buyer wants to see in a home. I gravitate toward people and their stories. I want to know how to help each property show its full potential.

What was the biggest obstacle you had to overcome to get this business going? The prospect of finding a client base in a depressed market.

How did you overcome the obstacle? Through my own research and working with agents, I've found how to connect to that market. I believe in my skills as a photographer and highly value the benefits of working with a small, individual business. There are large real estate photo firms in the Twin Cities that offer agents a subscription-based photography service, but I don't think it can match the personalized attention of meeting with each client/real estate agent prior to a photo shoot, listening to the history of their home and illustrating and highlighting what they love about their home. I spend considerable time at each property, and will shoot more images than what are offered with the larger photography companies.

What will tell you the business is successful?

When I hear real estate agents tell me that the photo portfolios I created helped to secure a showing, or piqued buyers' interest in the listing, I know that my goals and their needs were met.

Interested in taking part in Open for Business? If your business is less than one year old, email us at businessnews@pioneerpress.com.

REVISITING > Magma PC LLC

Business: Magma PC LLC

Contact information: 612-424-0854; magma-pc.com

Location: Rosemount

Owners: John Hallquist and Gregg Poindexter

Originally featured in Open for Business on: June 6, 2010

What does your business do? At Magma PC, we solve all sorts of computer problems. People have come to us with broken laptops, desktop computers, computer viruses and just about any other computer problem that a PC could get.

We don't just solve problems, we also aim at educating our customers about the world of technology. We give free advice to people based on our expertise. Usually questions are in regard to which software product to choose for their needs, or whether they need to upgrade to a new computer.

We also have been helping people with their websites and setting up search engine optimization.

Recently, we have decided to start a new side to our business. We have decided to start an e-commerce website and sell products online. The type of products we are selling will be custom computers, keyboards, mice, monitors, head sets and anything that would complement a custom-built computer.



Customers will be able to log on to our website at magma-pc.com and choose the different parts they want in their computer. Then, we will assemble it and ship it out to their location.

How's business? Since our feature was in the Pioneer Press, we have gained a lot of attention. I think our business did considerably well vs. most businesses in their first year. Business has been growing slowly but steadily and we are at the place where we are ready to take on

more repairs.

What have been the biggest changes? The biggest change in our business has been our education. We have learned a lot about our customers, their needs and why they come to us. We learned that the customers who come to us are tired of hourly rates and hidden fees. They like our flat fees and up-front honesty about the costs listed on our website. Our customers also like being talked to simply and not in tech lingo.



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: CHRIS POLYDOROFF

John Hallquist installs a video card in a computer as his business partner **Gregg Poindexter** provides extra light. They own Rosemount-based Magma PC LLC.

We have also learned things about our business and exactly where we like our focus to be. We like to help people who don't have the time or skill set to solve complicated tasks which computers routinely encounter.

Do you have any advice for others launching a business? Keep your costs low. There may be a lot of tempting ideas that you may want to spend money on to improve your business, such as advertising. Also remember to save time for family, friends, and yourself. Spending too much time working can burn you out and leave you dissatisfied with your work.