

TOP AGENT MAGAZINE



GIUSEPPE S. ZERILLO

Inspired by the process of purchasing his first condominium, Giuseppe S. Zerillo earned his real estate license 2008. And then the market crashed. Giuseppe, however, was more inspired than deterred. "A lot of people were leaving the business and I was busier than ever," he says. "My sponsoring

broker said that when the market turned around I was going to be slammed, but I was already slammed!" While closing short sales before most of the public even knew what a short-sale was, he couldn't imagine being busier. But nearly nine years later, the business Giuseppe built now employs four licensed agents with more coming onboard soon. Steady growth, he says, is the result of his customer-focused approach.

As Managing Broker and Owner of Zerillo Realty, based out of the northwest Chicago suburb of Park Ridge, Giuseppe says 100% of his business is referral-based. "I don't buy leads," he says. "I don't believe in that. My business and my reputation were built from previous clients and referrals." Those clients return for the 24/7, 365-day service Giuseppe provides along with an attitude that he and his agents will do anything for clients. "If someone calls at 10:45 am and wants to see a house at 11:00, we will make it happen."

The same goes for communication. "When someone calls, I'm going to answer. If for some reason I miss the call, they'll get a call back immediately. That call will come from me, not an assistant or a secretary," says Giuseppe. "We have a reputation for being very involved with our customers." He extends this thinking to his team members, as well, offering training and unlimited opportunity to each agent who joins his brokerage. "I have one broker who had been licensed for three years with another office but wasn't selling. She didn't have the support. With me, she sold five homes in her first five months and listed another four."

Giuseppe's reputation feeds his 100%-referral pipeline, but also believes his community involvement contributes to referrals. "Giving back is key," says Giuseppe, who sits the boards of directors for the Italian American Executives of Transportation and the Italian Cultural Center, among his other outreach. "I like to support needy children and the disabled. Our main focus with the transportation organization is to raise money for scholarships for needy children. And with the cultural center, we raise money to keep the Italian culture strong in Chicago."

The ability to help change people's lives fuels both Giuseppe's career and his continued outreach. "A perfect

example is a couple this summer who closed on a house in Norridge," he says. "They were living in their car last year and never would have dreamed of buying a home, especially one in Norridge. But they got with me and I found them a home within their budget." In addition to helping people in need, Giuseppe is Sergeant at Arms for the Village of Harwood Heights and writes a monthly real estate column for an Italian newspaper in Chicago.

If that isn't enough, he even serves on the board of the local Little League. "I've coached basketball, baseball and soccer through the Norridge Park District since 2009 and I don't even have kids in the program!" Within a few years, however, Giuseppe may have a child in the program. His first baby daughter, born this summer, is the light of his life. His free time is spent relaxing at home, going to White Sox games when possible, and dedicating still more hours and resources to the community outreach that has earned him several local honors including the Illinois State Crime Commission's award for community outreach in 2012.

At Zerillo Realty, the future calls for sustained, controlled growth. Giuseppe also hopes to expand his development work, moving from rehabs and distressed properties into building new homes. "But at the end of the day I don't want to get so big that I lose my relationships with clients," he says. Having time for people and community will always remain his greatest priorities.



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