

Business

Realtor uses Web to sell

Offers virtual tours of homes on Internet

By Nick Miller
Post staff reporter

Cindy Brouillette prefers being first to following the pack, so it shouldn't be surprising that her Northern Kentucky real estate firm could be the tri-state's first to offer panoramic, three-dimensional virtual home tours on the Internet.

"There is no one else in Greater Cincinnati, in terms of real estate firms with their own domains, doing this," said Ms. Brouillette, a former top seller for Coldwell Banker West Shell who started her own firm, 1st Residential, in February.

"I'm not in any way, shape or form a follower," she said.

It was only a few weeks ago that Ms. Brouillette had her first meeting, on a Friday, to discuss the possibility of featuring virtual home tours. By that weekend the first panoramic digital camera photos were being shot. The tours went on the 1st Residential Internet site the following week.

So far, she has three homes featured through the Internet virtual tour. Armed with her tripod-mounted digital camera, it won't be long before all of her 35 or so listings are on the site, <http://cindyb.com>.

A former marketing executive for the Kroger Co., Ms. Brouillette brings a strong business and marketing background to the real estate arena. Her Fort Wright office includes a team of five other real estate professional she brought with her from her previous job.

Known as a perfectionist when it comes to offering personal service, advising clients on preparing homes for sale and implementing her marketing plans, Ms. Brouillette said the virtual tours are an extension of the heavy marketing emphasis in her business.

But when she talks about the advantages of the virtual tours, it's clear they have the ability to give her firm an edge, especially since much of her business comes from clients relocating to Greater Cincinnati from other parts of the country.

"Most people don't walk into a house and say, 'let's make an offer,'" said Ms. Brouillette. "They go through a house two or three more times. With the virtual tours, this will help people make quicker decisions."



Cindy Brouillette, founder of real estate firm 1st Residential, with a panoramic digital camera that she uses for Internet virtual house tours.

Firm's founder was West Shell sales leader

■ **While with West Shell**, bought by Coldwell Banker in 1997, Cindy Brouillette was the sales leader in number of homes sold and dollar volume in Kentucky from

1994-1997 and second among 850 associates in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana.

■ **In 1997**, she sold 99 homes with a sales performance of \$14.2 million.

The tours also eliminate the marketing limitations of a Sunday afternoon open house. The Internet allows potential customers to convenience of 24-hour, seven-day-a-week open house.

Assembled for 1st Residential by Resource Marketing, virtual tour visitors can get a look scan an entire room, from the walls, floors and ceiling to focusing on a

corner or light fixture. The tours include exterior shots that allow potential buyers to even get a front door glance of the neighborhood.

Internet tours of homes are not new to the real estate business.

But most feature flat photo views, which Ms. Brouillette said she refused to use.