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FULL STORY Engel & Völkers launches new Longboat Key office, division

by: Robin Hartill | City Editor



Ray Alexander, owner of Engel & Völkers Anna Maria Island/Longboat Key said he has always been interested in the vacation market. File photo.

Although the sluggish economy has impacted tourism, it has also created opportunities in the industry. Ray Alexander, owner of Engel & Völkers Anna Maria Island/Longboat Key, finds that many people locally are taking östaycationsö at beaches within driving distance rather than traveling to far-away destinations.

öMore people are going to drive to locations instead of getting on a plane and going to an exotic location,ö Alexander said.

Thatö one reason for the formation of the companyö new division, E&V Vacations International, which is headquartered out of its new, but temporary, office at Mediterranean Plaza, 595 Bay Isles Road.

öThis is really a start-up line,ö Alexander said. öIöve always been interested in getting into the vacation market.ö

The division will allow owners who want to rent their units to list and sell them through the Engel & Völkers international brand. It will also serve as a öone-stop shopö concierge for visitors at the local, national and international levels. Alexander hopes to expand the operation to Gulf Coast communities throughout Florida.

Although the temporary office gives the company a launching point for its new division, Alexander hopes to find a permanent Longboat Key location during the first half of 2012. From there, Alexander hopes to transform the office to look like the companyö other locations, which have features such as contemporary décor and ambient lighting and are designed to blend in with retail space. The company refers to its locations as öproperty shopsö rather than offices.

Engel & Völkers Anna Maria Island/Longboat Key absorbed the 60-year-old Wedebrook Realty Co., which had Longboat Key and Holmes Beach offices, in 2009. The company's office at 6350 Gulf of Mexico Drive remained open under the Engel & Völkers name until early 2010. Since then, the company's Longboat Key agents have operated out of the company's Holmes Beach offices.

Tina Rudek, an agent who worked for Wedebrook before it became part of Engel & Völkers, said she was excited to be based on Longboat Key again.

“We currently have four agents and strong interest from several others waiting to join our global network, once we regain our presence in our permanent location on Longboat Key,” Rudek wrote in an email to the *Longboat Observer*.