

Meet Andrea Nilsen Morse of Nilsen Landscape Design in Marblehead

Today we'd like to introduce you to Andrea Nilsen Morse.



By BostonVoyager Staff JUNE 26, 2017

So, before we jump into specific questions about the business, why don't you give us some details about you and your story.

I graduated from Tufts University in 1998 and went to work for a healthcare technology and service start-up company in Waltham. I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but being part of a start-up exposed me to every aspect of building and running a business. I ended up staying with that company for twelve years and held a variety of roles, from professional services to product design and consulting.

I realized that I really loved design. But, I didn't love the field I was in. So, I researched different design fields and discovered the world of landscape design. It

seemed to meld my interest in design with my love of nature. I started taking classes at the Landscape Institute (then of Harvard University). I quickly decided to pursue their Design Certificate which combined the fields of design, drafting, construction, history and horticulture.

I went to school at night while I was still working full time. I finished the program in 2010 after four years. At that time I didn't expect to start out on my own, but I had a number of opportunities to work on landscape designs for friends and colleagues. At some point I realized I couldn't do both jobs well and I had to make a choice, so I took the leap, left the corporate world, and started out on my own.

Has it been a smooth road?

It has been a fairly smooth uphill road! What I mean is that building and running a business is constant work, and constant learning. In the early days I didn't have enough work to sustain me (mentally or financially) through the whole year. I was fortunate to work as a consultant for my old company during the winter months for the first three years. That helped take some of that financial pressure off while letting me focus on my business during the busy months.

I also went from working in a busy office environment to working at home on my own. It takes a lot of discipline to get into a routine and be productive, but now working from home is great. It was also a challenge to build a network of resources. I work with a number of great contractors and builders, and I'm always networking and seeking new companies I can partner with on projects.

So let's switch gears a bit and go into the Nilsen Landscape Design story. Tell us more about the business.

My company provides residential landscape design and project management services. We work with each homeowner to create a plan for their property that fits their unique needs. We then help assemble the right team for the installation and manage the project every step of the way.

I think what sets us apart is my view of landscape design as a service industry as well as an art. While it is important to have a beautiful and creative plan, it is just as important to communicate effectively, meet deadlines and follow up. I want to offer creative ideas to my clients to help them love, and use, their outdoor space. And I want the process to be enjoyable!

How do you think the industry will change over the next decade?

I think the landscape design industry is poised to grow. People are more interested in, and appreciative of, the design fields. Maybe that's a result of resources

like HGTV and Houzz. I feel like homeowners are educated about the field in general, and many realize the value of investing in the landscape.

I also think, as technology continues to permeate our lives, people are looking for places of respite. Nature provides that, and if you can create your own space where you can enjoy being outside, that is a great thing.

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