



## IICRC Certified Firm Spotlight

Diana Rodriguez-Zaba  
ServiceMaster Restoration by Zaba, Chicago

### How did you land in this industry?

My husband and I combined our professional experience and business interests. He was a union carpenter, and I had a solid background in real estate investments and rehab projects.

### How are you involved with the IICRC?

All of us here at my firm are IICRC-certified. It's a strong selling point for us, especially with first-time customers.

### What do you do to market your business?

We do a lot of digital marketing, and we stay involved in the community through volunteer partnerships. Our network includes solid relationships with insurance agents, adjusters and property managers. We're also members of BOMA Suburban Chicago, and that's been a great marketing resource

**What's one unique thing about cleaning and restoration in your area? Any specific challenges you face due to your location?** Our area is becoming home to more and more millennials. They're into healthy living, so we've seen a big increase in demand for green cleaning services. As for challenges specific to our location, we face a lot of competition, but that keeps us sharp.



Traffic has become our latest concern. Uber and Lyft have had a serious impact on scheduling jobs. We had to change our work hours to squeeze in more time on the road.

### Your firm specializes in water and fire restoration – how did you end up in this particular area of the industry?

We started out as a construction company, but many of our customers wanted us to remove damaged areas in their home and then rebuild. We decided to focus on restoration and formalize our expertise through IICRC-certification.

This business reorganization happened in the middle of a recession. We were determined to move forward, so we decided to franchise and represent a trusted brand. That's why we chose ServiceMaster.





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**Is there a Disaster Restoration job that you are particularly proud of?**

We recently handled a job for a very large, popular retailer here. The property suffered extensive smoke, soot and water damage after a bad fire. The owners wanted the work done right away, but the fire was ruled an arson. Everything had to wait for an investigation, and that can be a lengthy process.

We immediately stabilized the property, but the adjuster said it would take eight weeks to get the store back open. We got the entire job done in four weeks. Our teams worked seven days a week, and we got it done. That success turned a huge clothing store chain into a steady client.



**If you could give one piece of advice to a young professional starting out in the business, what would it be?**

Do your research, and expand your network. I write a lot of content about our industry, and people actually read it. I get so many calls from people all over the country who are just getting started in the business.

They're looking for advice and insight, and I'm always happy to share. Looking back, I know reaching out more would have made my start-up experience much easier.



**What do you like best about your job?**

I love it when our clients say great things about our staff. The women and men who work for me are amazing. I'm lucky to have such an incredible team. I'm never surprised by the wonderful feedback I get from customers, but I never get tired of hearing it. We're all like family here, so it means a lot.

**What is the most rewarding thing about owning a cleaning/restoration business?**

You learn so much about everything! The best part is talking with our clients. We learn so much about them and the kind of work they do. It leads to many interesting conversations at the office, and it also helps us appreciate how special our customers really are.

It's also rewarding to mobilize when a natural disaster strikes. Our teams have responded to a number of disasters across the country. We recently traveled to

North Carolina for Hurricane Florence. Last year, we were in Texas for Hurricane Harvey and then Florida for Hurricane Irma. It's the kind of work that makes us proud of what we do, and it brings us closer together.



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**Can you talk about a Disaster Restoration "horror" story or anything funny you have encountered during your career?**

We recently helped an elderly lady with her flooded basement. We arrived at 8 a.m. sharp ready to work. She had tea and cookies for our technicians and insisted they sit and eat first. She made them stop working at noon for a hot lunch. She'd fixed meat loaf and biscuits. That afternoon, she surprised them with homemade snacks.

The next day, she was just as sweet. My team said she was the nicest lady ever. After we finished the job, my project manager took her a big bouquet of flowers to thank her for her amazing hospitality.

**What would you like everyone to know?**

I love seeing more women coming into the business. This is still a male-dominated industry, but we're enjoying more acceptance every day. It's all so encouraging especially for younger women looking for unique career paths that are really challenging and rewarding.