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SUMMER 2007

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ORREN PICKELL BUILDERS



BUILDING A BRAND

by Anita R. Paul

Many companies build a brand around a logo design and a slogan—elements that can change over time or with the trends of the day. Orren Pickell Designers and Builders, however, fashions its brand around a lifestyle—one of quality and uncompromising taste. For 34 years, the Lincolnshire, Illinois-based builder has established a reputation for creating luxury custom homes for CEOs throughout the Midwestern United States. Over the years, Pickell has created a following of people who value the ethics and quality upon which the company was founded and for which it

has come to be known.

That reputation is due in large part to the people who make Orren Pickell Builders what it is today. With over 110 employees—some of whom have been with the company for upwards of 20 years—and eight separate companies that comprise the Pickell dynasty, the company is well-positioned to manage most every aspect of custom home building and high-end remodeling. The limited liability companies that fall under the Orren Pickell family specialize in land development, home

maintenance, design, cabinet work, trim carpentry, rough carpentry, remodeling, and custom home building.

One key person on the Pickell team, who has helped build the brand and direct the company into expanded arenas, is Lisa Pickell, the company's director of marketing, and daughter of the founder. Having worked in the family business off and on for the past 14 years—leaving at intervals to hone her skills as an estimator, draft person, and site manager—Lisa Pickell's industry and marketing background is an ideal combination to help solidify the reputation of Orren Pickell Builders and propel the group of companies into

exponential growth in coming years.

"I love the industry, and I'm extremely lucky to be surrounded by so many amazing people on a daily basis who want to see this company succeed," said Pickell, who holds a business degree with a minor in architectural history. "We create an experience for people while we build or remodel their homes. We engage our clients, kill them with kindness, and make the process exciting so they stay motivated."

It's no wonder the company creates repeat business, with custom home clients returning for remodels of vacation homes or design and build of second homes, some of which are more extravagant than the clients' primary residences, according to Pickell. In 2006, the company did a brisk business building 30 new luxury homes averaging 5,000 square feet and running

“IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT ORREN PICKELL BUILDERS; IT'S ABOUT DELIVERING GREAT SERVICE AND CREATING A LIFESTYLE.”





A MESSAGE FROM JAMES MARTIN ASSOCIATES, INC.

James Martin Associates, Inc., a full-service landscape architectural firm has been "Enriching Lives Through Beautiful Landscapes for 30 Years". As a premier firm, creating award-winning landscapes on the North Shore and in the Chicago area, we offer landscape architecture and design, installation, residential and commercial maintenance, commercial snowplowing and horticultural services. We pride ourselves in partnering with extraordinary builders such as Orren Pickell to provide clients an exceptional experience in the development of their custom landscape that compliments and enhances their new custom home. Martin Associates offers multiple conceptual designs and preliminary budgets providing an array of aesthetic options that demonstrate the potential of the site and allow the client to make appropriate financial decisions. We appreciate partnering with custom home builders who help us to create award-winning landscapes while providing unparalleled value and outstanding service. For more information go to www.jamesmartinassociates.com or call Pat Julien at 847-634-1660.

about \$1.6 million. On the remodel side, the company did 45 remodels last year, ranging from single bathrooms to whole house redesign at a cost of \$300,000 to \$1 million.

While most clients Pickell builds for are located in Illinois, some live out of the state—Wisconsin, Michigan,

and Florida—and even out of the country, which poses a challenge for sharing specs, design ideas, and updates. However, a fresh approach to technology helps the company excel in client communication. Through the company's Web site, clients can log on to a password-protected personal Web page to view design selections and changes, schedules, pictures, and more, in real time. Implementation of Primavera scheduling software drives the heart of business operations to track time and money and stay abreast of what each employee is doing on a project at any given time. This adoption of technology gives Pickell Builders a competitive advantage and demonstrates its adeptness at developing and perfecting processes that drive efficiency and customer satisfaction.

"Being the best at what we do flows through every aspect of the company," says Pickell, "from our integrity to the value we create for our customers to the amazing team we have." With

the ability to build new homes or remodel existing homes, Pickell has remained competitive regardless of market fluctuations. "We're not afraid of change. We know we have to embrace it to stay ahead of the curve," Pickell says.

While spec homes were a hot item in years past—even for some high-end builders—Pickell cites a 24-month slowdown of building on spec in the northern Illinois market, a reflection of buyers' demand for and ability to afford custom homes. A great opportunity for Pickell Builders, but not so good for the competition, who Pickell predicts might begin to move into remodeling as a strategy to remain profitable. Yet experts note that last-ditch efforts to survive in the building space often meet with little success. Oftentimes builders that try to expand to areas in which they have less than stellar skill find their efforts short lived.

Pickell's commitment to being the best and being positioned to meet market demands is reflected in its comprehensive approach to servicing clients well beyond the completion of the home. Through its home

maintenance company, Orren Pickell Builders offers a lifetime warranty to custom home clients along with a home maintenance program that provides a semi-annual "tune-up"—from plumbing and electrical to paint and cabinets. With almost 100 percent of clients signing up for the program, Pickell sees it as a benefit worth investing in for clients who seek to gain long-term value from their homes. "There's a lot to be said when you offer a lifetime warranty," says Pickell.

It is that kind of value that creates long-term stability for Pickell Builders, and has positioned the company as a leader in the marketplace. With a vision of long-term success, Pickell is expanding its land development arm and emerging as a contender in that space. "In the past we've been the builder that works

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the community will be completely sold out by mid-summer 2007.

With leads for new buyers coming in from past clients, as well as the numerous marketing efforts the company employs—including advertising, public relations, direct mail, parties, and charity events—Pickell is positioning itself to handle what it hopes to be a surge of new business. Its recently completed Imagine Showroom offers a variety of ideas for home buyers. The 4,000-square-foot design center in Northfield, Illinois features 10 room settings, including a bathroom, kitchen, library, and wine cellar, offering new home buyers, remodel clients, and the general public a vision to help them imagine what they want in a custom home.

It is this kind of attention that has created a loyal following of Pickell fans. “We have a lot of people who are fans of our company and come up on a regular basis to say they’ve been to every one of our homes,” Pickell says. “There’s something to be said about building a brand. It’s not just about Orren Pickell Builders; it’s about delivering great service and creating a lifestyle. We want a client for life.” ABQ

“WE ENGAGE OUR CLIENTS, KILL THEM WITH KINDNESS, AND MAKE THE PROCESS EXCITING SO THEY STAY MOTIVATED.”

on your land. Now we’re looking for amazing pieces of land that can be delicately subdivided and taken care of,” Pickell says. And as any land developer knows, the three keys to success are location, location, location.

Enter “Tarns of the Moor,” a 30-acre development located in the Scottish-style village of Bannockburn, Illinois. With 10 wooded lots on a minimum of two acres each, the exclusive community will feature walking paths, unique landscaping elements, and several small bridge-covered lakes—*tarns* is Scottish for lakes. The design of the estate homes is inspired by a Scottish manor, with first- and second-floor master suites and several other unique design elements. Starting price for the lots is \$1.2 million, and at the writing of this article the community was 50 percent sold out. Pickell anticipates that