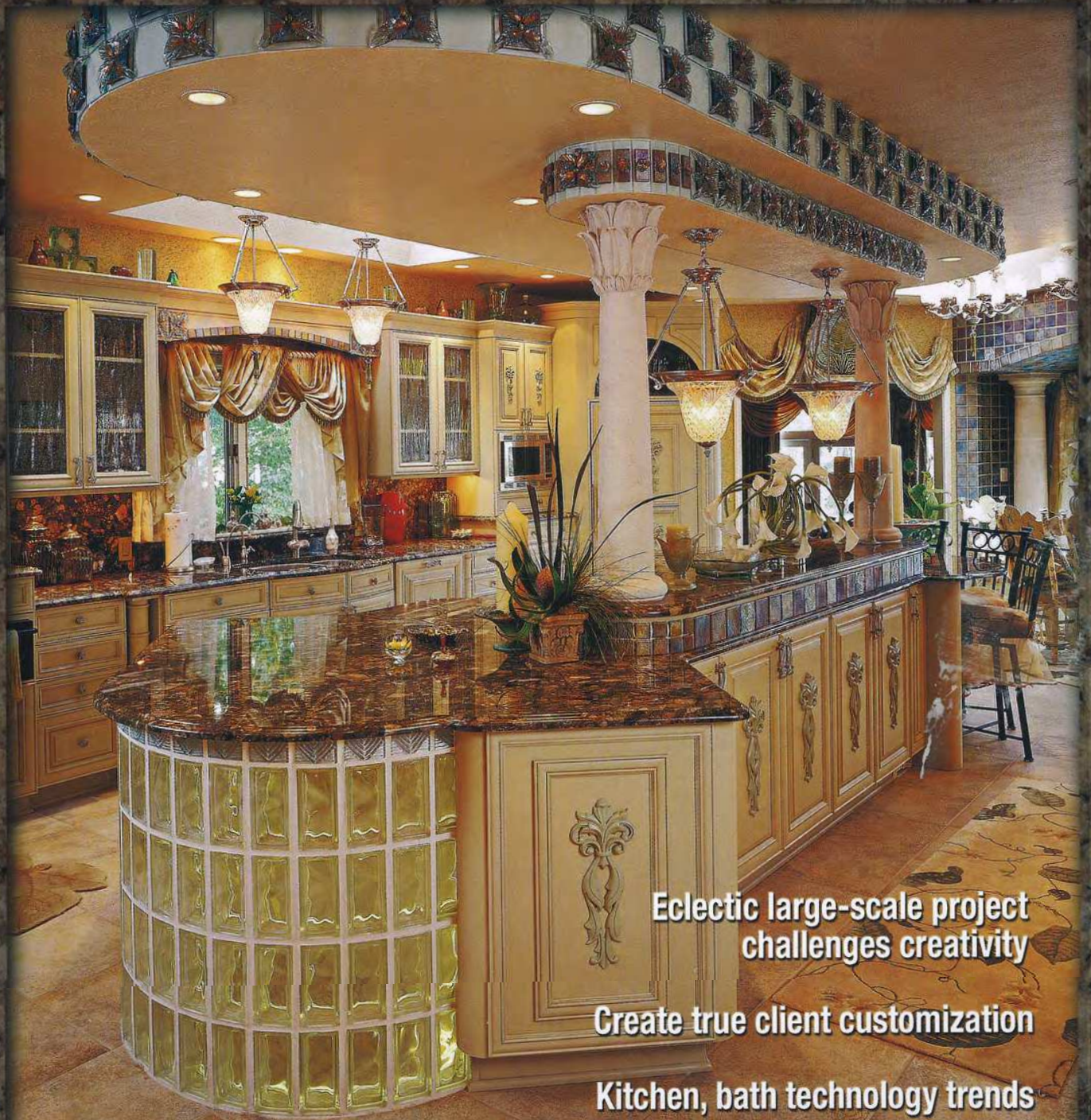


design/build BUSINESS

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**Eclectic large-scale project
challenges creativity**

Create true client customization

Kitchen, bath technology trends

Bringing It In-House

Design/build firm's growth and success is fueled by its under-one-roof service

By Joshua Lentz, Managing Editor

Orren Pickell is obsessed with quality, control and customer service. From the sales process to the design phase, through construction and follow-up, his intensely focused design/build firm, Orren Pickell Designers & Builders, is with the client every step of the way to ensure the utmost quality and design in a tightly controlled budget.

In 1975, Pickell built his first house by hand, designing the plans, pouring the concrete, framing and finishing it himself. He built subsequent homes this way and began to realize the only way to grow — to offer a better product and better service — was to delegate the process to others while he worked on growing his business. His vision was to offer a total package of design and construction services so he could design and build projects from beginning to end, offering the same quality and service he pursued when he built those homes by hand.

As the business grew, Pickell added divisions to the company to better service his clients. Orren Pickell Designers & Builders now includes a custom homebuilding group, a broker/site location group, a rough and trim carpentry group, an architectural design group, a remodeling division (which includes a maintenance service) and CabinetWerks, a kitchen and bath design firm.

In all, Pickell employs a staff of more than 100. "All of the businesses I run are synergistic," he says. Moving these services in-house helped to streamline the design and con-

struction process and increase the company's ability to meet clients' demands.

"Using a true design/build process with all of these team players in-house creates a seamless process that allows us to move the client 'through the store,' so to speak," Pickell says. Whether a client comes in looking for new cabinets, a whole-house remodel or custom home,

Orren Pickell Designers & Builders can determine their needs and service them accordingly. Furthermore, because the design and construction management is in-house, the firm controls the entire process.

Controlling the client

"Managing the client is the single most important thing to do in order to be profitable and provide the best service," Pickell says. Offering a one-stop shop from beginning to end allows Pickell to stay in control. "I believe there are two kinds of builders — one that builds on their property and one that builds on the client's property. When you build on your property, you can say 'No, that's not part of the design.' When you build on their property,

ownership is nine-tenths of the law. If you can't manage the client — your project, your reputation — will go into shambles."

Spreading out

The different people and departments at Orren Pickell Designers & Builders operate with a shared purpose and vision in mind. Because of its size and scope, the company



A sitting area with a built-in TV is separated from the 16- by 18-ft. master suite by an arched ceiling detail.

➤ *Specs*

INTERIOR

Doors:

Masonite

Locksets and hardware:

Emtek, Baldwin Hardware

Windows:

Pella

Security system:

ResTek

KITCHEN

Cabinets:

Wood-Mode

Faucets:

Franke

Range:

Viking

Refrigerators, freezers, under-

counter refrigerator:

Sub-Zero

Dishwashers:

Bosch

Microwave:

Dacor

Warming drawer:

Thermador

BATH

Cabinets:

Wood-Mode, Neff Kitchens

Faucets:

Phylrich International

Spa/sauna:

Pearl

is compartmentalized and specialized, which allows each team member the ability to do the job he or she enjoys.

"I've assembled a team of players where people do only what they love to do across all categories," says Pickell.

Architects, marketing and sales associates, estimators, craftsmen, project coordinators, superintendents and other employees do the jobs they were hired to do. In smaller companies with fewer employees, tasks are spread among fewer individuals. There is an emphasis at the company to allow employees to do the jobs to which they are suited, as well as a focus on communication among the different divisions.

"All team players talk to each other," Pickell says. "Anytime you can allow people to do what they want to do and have them communicate, you can offer a hell of a product."

The company structure also allows Orren Pickell Designers & Builders the flexibility to expand into markets outside of the typical demographic. "We have the infrastructure and the breadth to do developments in other areas," says Pickell. The company is based in Bonnockburn, IL, and serves markets across the Chicagoland area and as far north as popular vacation spots in southern Wisconsin.

Long Grove project

One of the company's more recent projects, the Long Grove Residence, is a 6,625-sq.-ft. Country French-style home designed by architect Tony Perry, AIA, vice president and head of the Orren Pickell Design Group. The emphasis on this project was to create a luxurious space for entertaining and spending time with family.

The exterior of the home uses brick, stone and stucco, combined with rockface limestone inserts and headers. Multiple chimneys and rounded forms, such as a swooped wing wall as well as swooped roofs on the turret and above the bay window add visual appeal.

The four-car garage, five-bedroom home features two guest suites, each with large attached baths. Walking through the grand entrance leads to a large foyer with circular stairs and a custom railing. Fine trim and finish details are showcased throughout the home, including traditional wrought iron lighting pieces that add Old World flair. Dark oak floors connect the great room to the breakfast and kitchen areas through



The two-story family room links to the breakfast area and kitchen at left (top). The front elevation blends brick, stucco and stone with natural cedar shake roofing (bottom).

thick archways and between painted wood columns and trim.

The kitchen design was important to the clients. Since they are active cooks and use the space as a family hub, it



Oak floors, cherry cabinetry, a stone fireplace, wrought iron lighting and painted columns and trim accent the family room.

needed to offer contemporary practicality while remaining consistent with the Old World look of the home. The synergy between Orren Pickell Designers & Builders and its subsidiary kitchen design firm, CabinetWerks, provided the solution.

"This kitchen has a huge island and a corner window that looks out onto the screen porch. The granite island looks like a piece of furniture," says Perry. The unfitted design uses elements such as cabinets that don't connect to create a warm, furniture-like feel. Hand-carved corbels and mouldings complement the island, and a natural limestone hood with faux painted finish accents the kitchen design.

With plenty of glass, the dining room offers outside views to an adjacent golf course. Just off the dining room, a butler's pantry acts as a transition to the living room. The pantry provides storage space as well as undercounter refrigeration.

The 22- by 17-ft. living room features a bay window off the front side of the home. "A lot of people don't do living rooms," says Perry, "but music was very important to the clients, and they wanted an area for their kids to play. The children use the living room to do performances." French doors that open up allow music to filter out to other rooms of the house.

One of the more interesting elements of the Long Grove residence is the library. "It's L-shaped," says Perry. "One of the reasons is that we wanted to strike a balance between a living room and an office. It's a great compromise. Since we designed it, we've done dozens similar, really starting a trend where the library isn't rectangular but L-shaped. It provides an area to create work space." ♦

► At A Glance

Long Grove Residence
Long Grove, IL

Size of project:

6,625 sq. ft.

Cost per sq. ft.:

\$250

Building/developing firm:

Orren Pickell Designers & Builders

Architectural/design firm:

Orren Pickell Design Group

Contracting firm:

Orren Pickell Builders

Landscape architectural firm:

James Martin Associates

Interior design firm:

Marsha Jones Interior Design

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