



Robert Piken

By Sena Schmidt

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On an average weekday in this city, you can most likely find many Angelenos wedged behind the wheels of their cars in 405 traffic, crammed into cubicles the size of apple boxes while dressed in stiff business attire, or noticeably struggling to stay at the top of their game just to make ends meet in the competitive city that is Los Angeles.

But amongst the chaos of living the city life, one businessman sits comfortably in a casual collared shirt on the second floor of his sunlit Studio City office - a bustling and energetic workplace - full of hard working and forward-thinking staff members right outside his door, willingly attending to his requests.

With a seemingly carefree spirit and sarcastic sense of humor, it is no wonder why Robert Piken has so many talented people vying for the secret behind his savvy. He is certainly your atypical success story, in that he has been as successful at staying grounded as he has been at running his companies.

Piken seems to have ridden the wave to entrepreneurial success bereft of attitude or arrogance, securing his presidential position at the Piken Company, one of the most prominent and successful real estate companies in Southern California.

Born in Culver City and raised mainly in Studio City, Piken attended the prestigious Harvard High School before attending the esteemed Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. There, he excelled and played number one on the tennis team. Later, he transferred to UCLA where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa and *magna cum laude* in 1989 with a degree in political science.

Although his father, Herbert, was developing real estate while Robert was growing up, the enterprise wasn't something of which he had instinctively expected to become a part. After college, in addition to achieving success via a very successful private tennis instruction practice, Piken began collecting rent for various shopping centers. In the mid-90s, he earned his real estate broker's license and focused on leasing retail, restaurant and office spaces. He eventually took advantage of his knack for marketing, convincing numerous landlords to list their properties for lease with the Piken Company.

From there, he continued to spearhead the company's marketing efforts, from billboards, print ads and apparel to television shows. In 2002 he formed Newport Entertainment, which produces television shows featuring shops, restaurants, salons and other businesses. Sponsors have included Rockstar Energy Drink, Smashbox Cosmetics, Venus Swimwear and others. The Piken Company also sponsors each show.

"I love the marketing aspect of the business," Piken emphasizes.

At this point in Robert's career, the Piken Company offers a colossal blend of real estate services. The firm handles sales, leasing and property management for a long list of satisfied owners of commercial real estate. The Piken

Company also represents buyers and tenants. Robert is proud to have made the Piken Company a brand, and in fact, a household name in Los Angeles.

Piken is appreciative of his father's expertise. "He continues to be a great mentor and source of knowledge and insight," Piken says fondly. Herbert still works at the Piken Company headquarters on a regular basis, and Robert cherishes his ability to walk down the hall to seek advice.

"We want to continue to grow as a company," he explains. "We have many great agents and continue to grow territorially. California is so vast with so many opportunities." According to Piken, future ventures include handling more large shopping centers and office buildings, lifestyle centers, mixed use developments, industrial buildings and apartment properties, in addition to the smaller street retail and office properties. The leasing and sales components of his brokerage continue to grow steadily out of his Valley and City offices. He also intends to continue producing TV shows, as they have been very effective in promoting the Piken Company.

He believes that his company is set apart from other real estate competitors because of its more personable, flexible and less corporate environment. Piken feels this atmosphere enables his agents and staff to better adapt to and meet their customers' needs.

"This is why we have such consistent repeat business," Piken comments. Piken is also very much focused on recruitment. "Earlier in my career, it was difficult to attract great agents," he explains. "Now, we have put together a large team of very skilled salespeople. We regularly interview other prospects." He continues, "There's great interest in joining the company and we're very selective about who we bring on board."

In his limited downtime, Piken enjoys playing tennis, lunching at the Beverly Hills Hotel pool and dining at nice restaurants. He modestly adds that he "gets a kick" out of visiting the ritzy Hollywood hotspots such as Les Deux, Blowfish, Katana, Koi and Hyde Lounge, the latter of which he brokered, of course. In the past he has enjoyed escaping to far-off destinations such as Monte Carlo, London and other European cities. Although he hasn't found the time to travel as much recently (except to Santa Monica, he jokes), he plans to do so in the future.

When asked what his advice to young real estate hopefuls would be, he responds, "You can't be afraid to spend money to make money. Besides, I consider marketing to be investing rather than spending."

Like most entrepreneurs, Piken derives tremendous enjoyment from his business. "I love what I do," Piken says proudly. "I don't really consider it work."

Piken has lived in Los Angeles for virtually his whole life and he wouldn't have it any other way. When you happen to run your own real estate and entertainment companies, what better place is there to reside?

"I love LA," he concludes. "It doesn't get any better."