

Highline Partners Builds Bridges between Developers and the Public



Kathryn Orlowski and Brett Posten are the co-founders of a new development-focused advertising and PR firm Highline Partners.

Highline Partners might be the new kid on the block, but the combined experience of the company's co-founders would have you thinking they've been doing this their whole lives.

Brett Posten and **Kathryn Orlowski** have teamed up to launch Highline, a creative new PR and advertising firm geared directly toward the development community. With decades of combined creative experience under their belt, the duo is seeking out developers, architects and attorneys to help communicate the vision behind a project to the greater public.

We sat down with Posten and Orlowski to discover how they plan to tell those stories, and what drove the pair to form this new venture.

THEIR BACKGROUND

Commercial real estate and design runs in Orlowski's blood. The daughter of long-time local commercial real estate broker **Debora Field**, she remembers riding in the backseat of her mom's Saab as she would talk on her bag phone about square footage and finding potential tenants. Her father's work as a sports architect also heavily influenced her, helping spark a sense of appreciation for spaces.

"My dad's eye for design and interiors was definitely an influence on me and how I perceived spaces and thought about both inside and outside. It just rubbed off on me, naturally," Orlowski said.

With a journalism and communications degree from **Kansas State University**, Orlowski landed at **VML**, where she worked her way up the ranks and boasted a client list including **Honeywell** and **US Soccer**. She also spearheaded **TEDxKC** events, which led her to Posten.

Posten, son of **Cushman & Wakefield's Mike Posten**, worked at **Dimensional Innovations** at that time. Soon, DI became a sponsor of **TEDxKC**, and the two future business partners were introduced.

Posten's love for design and aesthetics started at a young age as well. He always wanted to become an architect when he grew up, despite the fact that every architect he met told him not to go into the field. His first transformative brand experience began when he worked at the Polo store on the Plaza.

"When you walk into the Polo store, they want you to feel a certain way," he said. "The whole goal was to create an experience and I think that was the first time it was really pronounced on me."

Posten then went on to intern for Ralph Lauren on Madison Avenue in New York, where he was awed by the way Mr. Lauren -- as Posten calls him -- introduced the world to placemaking in the world of retail. After his time with Ralph Lauren, Posten went into advertising at **McCann Erickson** in New York and then started his own firm with a partner in Southern California, where he was for ten years.

After his return to Kansas City in 2010, Posten became the Chief Brand Officer at Dimensional Innovations, where he and Orlowski re-branded DI.

LAUNCHING HIGHLINE

With extensive backgrounds in digital marketing and a combined passion for brand strategy, Posten and Orlowski knew their personalities would work well together.

"We're both very curious and driven and like to think of ourselves as visionary and open to new ideas, so it was a natural partnership between us," Orlowski said.

The two recognized that the real estate market needed their help. While consumer marketing and branding has evolved and become sophisticated over time, real estate marketing and branding is in its infancy, making it ripe with opportunity.

"The more we worked with developers, it became clear to us that the gap between what the developer can see and what the public understands is huge," Posten said. "The developer will have a great team; they'll have architects who will do beautiful buildings, they'll have attorneys who will help get things approved, but there's still this gap where there's no story being told."

IT'S CALLED GEOBRANDING

Here's where Highline comes in with a new concept they're calling geobranding. Essentially, the team wants to bring a given space to life by carefully creating intentional, unique experiences.

Every developer has a brand, Posten says, but few effectively communicate their visions. And without a clear message, a gap often forms between developer's vision and the public's understanding of a project.

"When it's not built yet, a lot of times the public assumes the worst. They can't imagine what it's going to be and they fear it's going to upset the status quo, especially in Kansas City," Posten said. "We're not anti-public -- we're pro-story. We like to see visionary developers and the public work together to transform spaces."

When someone walks into a space that's been intentionally thought through, whether it sparks a sense of joy, surprise or curiosity, they are affected and may not even realize it. But for those who live for that experience, like Posten and Orlowski, that feeling is special.

"Kathryn and I walk into a space and immediately analyze it," he said. "Just as consumer brands are intentional about their message and their story, we want to help developers be intentional about their message and their story. You have a brand, period. Whether you're intentional about it is up to you."

According to Posten, this gap between developers and the public stems from a lack of certain tools and expertise needed to do the job well.

"We have all of those tools in our toolbox because of our backgrounds in ad agencies and design firms. So depending on the needs of the developer

or whoever the partner may be, we can pull out the right tool for the job," Orlowski said.

The firm specializes in graphic design, web and interactive, 3D rendering and animation, video, PR and advertising, email and social media, brand



Generation Park, in Houston Texas, credits its first successes and sales to the brand messaging created by Posten and the Highline team. "There's no chance we could have done this without them," Ryan McCord, President McCord Development . www.generationpark.com

activations, and public affairs.

CURRENT CLIENTS

Highline Partners are doing all branding and marketing for Generation Park, a 4,000-acre development in Houston.

Price Brothers Development has already tapped Highline to help tell the story of BluHawk, a new 300-acre mixed use project underway in Johnson County. The project includes two key partners: a satellite of the Smithsonian-affiliated Cosmosphere museum and a civic center that will be used to host youth sporting events, graduation ceremonies and entertainment events.

While a development as large as BluHawk might seem daunting, Highline is already comfortable handling large-scale projects. Since 2010, the team has been working for a Houston developer to tell the story of a massive 4,000-acre project called Generation Park. Coined as the largest and most important development in Houston in the past 25 years, Highline has assembled a 20-person team to handle branding, marketing, video, PR, events, and interactive messaging.

Posten and Orlowski believe in structuring a team of trusted, expert freelancers for each project. While the pair are the face of Highline, their extensive team of creative partners spans the nation and even the globe. Orlowski says the team's ability to look outside of their local network and tap into their database of creative experts from Miami to Argentina allows for them to assemble to right team for each job.

"The partners and the clients we are working with know they are going to get Brett and I on the team, they're going to get us driving the strategy and the vision and being the glue throughout the project," Orlowski said. "In that sense, we're in the weeds getting work done as well as overseeing our team, and I think there's a big benefit in that. We have our heart and our soul in it, too," said Orlowski.

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