

Making it happen

By Susan Y. Dyer Photos By Bill Colburn



“I am my mother’s daughter. I know how to get down in the trenches and work.”

- Courtney Dixon

I was told just after meeting Lauren Dixon that the interior decorating of the company reminds some of “Pee Wee’s Playhouse.” The comment refers to the vibrant color schemes and monumental pieces of sculpture, as well as paintings, which fill both the lobby and the surrounding offices. Yet, there is no doubt that Dixon Schwabl is a highly successful Advertising / Marketing / Public Relations company. Waving high above the Mosely Road entrance, in Victor, are a half a dozen banners proclaiming their status as one of the best small company to work for in America. Too, after I first arrived and sat sipping my served glass of diet coke, I quickly scanned copies of both Rochester Business Journal and Advertising Age that were displayed besides a fresh bouquet of lilies on an elegant coffee table. The significance of presentation, of color and design, is evident in every detail of this company’s corporate self-portrait.

Hanging on one of the walls in Lauren’s office, is a large portrait of her and her husband, Mike Schwabl. “I started my business August 25, 1987. During my first week of operation, I landed 3 major accounts. I needed help. I placed an ad in Buffalo News for a writer and a producer. Shortly after I offered Mike the job and after we had dated for a while, I asked him to marry me and he did,” Lauren tells me with a delightful grin. I asked her if she applied the same type of assertive confidence to her business and she answered, “When you know what you want, you don’t compromise. My father used to say that a no is a yes in disguise.” His sentiments resonant in the company’s tag line, “We make it happen!”

When I asked Lauren who were her mentors, she replied that the one individual that truly impacted her life was her father. “It did not matter to my Dad if it was raining or snowing, he was never in a bad mood. I got my sense of optimism from him. He was a man of the 2000’s in the 1950 and 60’s and so forth. He was a Renaissance man with his way of thinking. I was the only girl in my group of friends who was told that I could do anything. The other girls were encouraged to become nurses and teachers, if they in fact wanted an occupation.”

Lauren’s father owned a trucking company and in the summer she would occasionally hop into the passenger seat and ride along with him. “My father was one of the wisest businessmen I have ever met. He knew that one day I would become an entrepreneur. He advised me to hire people who are smarter than me and to motivate and excite them to come to work”.

My interview was both with Lauren and her daughter, Courtney Dixon, who works at Dixon Schwabl as an Account Manager. Courtney is the oldest of Lauren’s four children. She has two sons, Jordon and Connor, and a second daughter, Madison (or Maddy), who is the youngest. Courtney looks across at me and says with a smile, “I grew up with a fifth sibling... the company. Technically, I have been working for the company since I was four years old. I would lick the stamps and was paid via trips to the toy store.” She continued, “I am my mother’s daughter. I know how to get down in the trenches and work. I wasn’t handed this job. I had to earn it. Actually, I have to work a little harder than everyone else as I am under the microscope because I am Lauren’s daughter. After