

# WHAT I DO: INTERIOR CONTRACTOR

## Creating an environment

I specialize in commercial interior construction. I don't build buildings from the ground up. Instead, I focus on construction projects that take place within existing structures or in a new building shell that needs to be finished on the inside, or an existing space or build-out that needs to be remodeled or reconfigured.

All of my work is done in commercial properties specifically in these categories: restaurants, retail environments or office space.

My staff of four and I oversee everything that is needed for these projects, including hiring subcontractors for pouring concrete, doing electrical, plumbing and heating, ventilation and air-conditioning work, to tearing down and/or building walls, to flooring and wall coverings and everything else in between.

I also provide design services, as well as pre-project planning, budgeting and project management.

I've always had a need to be in a line of work where I could see and touch the end result of my efforts. What better place for that than in construction?

While the road to owning a construction company has had lots of twists and turns, every job I've had as an adult has led to it in its own unique way.

From building custom cabinetry in a small shop in New Jersey, to working with excavators in Minnesota, to a long stint purchasing materials and services for a company in Chicago, to overseeing the design and installation of custom-made components for various kinds of retail environments, to construction management.

I didn't know it until relatively recently, but all roads were leading to CIC, which I opened on June 1, 2005.

While some people have experience in the trades



JOSEPH W. JACKSON III - State Journal

Dani Michels, president of Commercial Interior Contractors, is shown at a work site in Fitchburg. Her company specializes in interior construction and remodeling projects.

**Name:** Dani Michels

**Age:** 41

**Occupation:** Owner of Commercial Interior Contractors, Middleton

**Web site:**  
[www.cicbuildsout.com](http://www.cicbuildsout.com)

and some have degrees in construction management, I don't really fit either of these molds.

I majored in journalism at UW-Madison and earned my MBA from the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business.

I helped to transform the old Cleveland's Diner on East Wilson Street into Plaka Taverna, a Greek restaurant.

I also helped to create Sucre, a dessert lounge from the former McDonald's location on the Capitol Square. Many of our clients are just starting their own business and this is something they've been dreaming about and planning for years. Others are realizing their desire to grow or expand their existing business. I can think of few things more gratifying than playing a small part in a person's dream coming to fruition.

What I Do invites people to tell in their own words what they do to make a living. The column runs every Tuesday. To suggest someone to feature, contact Jill Carlson at [jillcarlson1957@gmail.com](mailto:jillcarlson1957@gmail.com).