

# The Commercial Appeal

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## MY PROFESSION: CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGER

# Many hats to wear

*He knows all sides of business*

By Lesley Young  
Special to The Commercial Appeal

Chris McDermott compares his career to a three-legged stool.

He has worked as an engineer for a large engineering firm, a senior project manager for FedEx, and now as a senior project manager for Grinder-Haizlip Construction Company.

"I've worn an engineering hat, an owner's representative hat, and now I play contractor," he said. "I'm like a three-legged stool. In the business, you have to have all three, and I know all three sides."

With Grinder-Haizlip, McDermott, 47, oversees the development of commercial projects, some of which include the Dobbs Nissan building on Hacks Cross, Trust One Bank on Wolf River Blvd., and many projects for FedEx.

One of his favorites was FedEx CEO Frederick W. Smith's briefing room, where he gives his media interviews and financial reports.

"That was a neat project. It was very high-end, with a lot of finish -- a lot of wood and flat-screen TVs," McDermott said.

In some ways, McDermott said he sees his job as more of a sales position.

"I market our company," he said. "I sell our services to clients. Then I give them an estimate, find the right vendors, and manage it to the end of its construction."

He enjoys working with people in the various aspects of construction, including the architects and fellow engineers, as well as the variety of clients he has the opportunity to serve.



Chris McDermott, project manager at Grinder-Haizlip, oversees development of commercial projects.

### CHRIS MCDERMOTT

**Profession:** senior project manager for Grinder-Haizlip Construction Co.

**Age:** 47

**Personal:** Married with two sons and one daughter

**Education:** bachelor of science degree in engineering from the University of Oklahoma

"The engineer in me says I'm trained to solve problems," he said. "I find the right people, and get everything in the right columns and rows and properly lined up."

When he's not solving problems, McDermott stays heavily involved

in his community.

He's on the board of the Ronald McDonald House, runs the annual golf tournament for the Rotary Club of Memphis East, volunteers as an assistant Boy Scout leader, and helps run the annual Rotary Youth Leadership Conference in Olive Branch.

His goal at Grinder-Haizlip is to carry on the legacy of the owners once they retire.

"You're always living for that phone call five years from now, and I want it to be one that says, 'We want you to run the company in the way Greg (Grinder) and Henry (Haizlip) have for 16 years.'"

That shouldn't be too hard for McDermott. He has the right attitude.

"I enjoy it. Somebody has a vision," he said, "and I get to fulfill it."