

# From Ceiling to Floor, There's Nothing This General Contractor Can't Do

**Woman-owned renovations company differentiates itself with quality service and professional standards.**

**K**athy Pierce has always been a processes person, someone who believes in the power of a to-do list and who enjoys routines and set procedures and policies. So of course when she left her job in big banking in the late 1980s in favor of starting her own contracting business specializing in finishing, she saw a multitude of opportunities to make positive, professional changes.

Today that same business, Designer Walls, Inc., has evolved into a well-respected, full-service general contractor specializing in office build-outs and the renovation of hotels and schools with Pierce as President and Owner. The company is a rarity among its peers, with an enlightened management team and associates who treat their work sites like they'd treat their own homes and who recognize the value in the business principles and practices Pierce instituted some 30 years ago.

"I was surprised when I started Designer Walls to learn that the construction industry had no formal procedures, schedules, or strategic sequencing of work," she says. "In addition, the industry had no idea what professional sales and marketing principles were, which actually left the door wide open for me. I came in bright-eyed and ready to revolutionize the business. It took more time, blood, sweat, and tears than anticipated, but here we are today, thriving."

## Business Practices and Principles

During her early days with Designer Walls, Pierce worked hard to master every aspect of



Kathy Pierce

the industry, laboring in the field alongside her team and learning all she could, taking classes on estimating and reading blueprints. To this point, the company was performing as a subcontractor, and to rise to the level necessary to be considered for general contractor jobs, some of the gaps she observed would have to be remedied.

Pierce took on the challenge and introduced to her team corporate business practices and principles, with an emphasis on processes and team-building. She insisted the same steps be executed in the same order on every project and that those steps included the consistent cleaning and organizing of work sites.

Not everyone was as enthusiastic as Pierce about the changes, however, and many of the long-time tradespeople on her team found themselves unable to adapt.

"I work with many wonderful, experienced, and professional tradespeople, but there were

also those who were determined to resist. Ultimately, I came to understand that to move forward I needed to hire people who were less set in their ways," she explains. "I started hiring a lot of younger people, especially college students, who—while they may not have been experienced or skilled at the time of hire—were teachable and embraced the innovations I brought to Designer Walls. After that, the culture of the company shifted vastly."

In fact, the company's two top leaders have been with Pierce for more than 10 years and started when they were only 20 years old. Others return year after year to work for her.

"It may have taken a while to get here, but today we all share a 'my success is your success' perspective," says Pierce. "We're known for unique systems and processes that allow us to complete projects quickly, and we've built a reputation for providing excellent service, skilled workers, and professional communication. I could not be prouder of this company or my amazing team."

As a result of Designer Walls' now long-term success, Pierce has recently launched a new division, FF&E Installers, which focuses on the installation of furniture, fixtures, and equipment in new hotels throughout Northern Ohio and beyond.



**Designer Walls, Inc.**

14150 Industrial Avenue N.  
Maple Heights, Ohio 44137  
216-662-3764 | [designerwalls.com](http://designerwalls.com)