

Plumbing Engineer's
2015
**Manufacturer
Spotlight**



Montana's Mickelson: One-Man Commercial Controls Company

In Big Sky Country, cattle outnumber people. By a lot. Rush hour typically consists of bison or big horn sheep crossing the road. Along Route 94, even speed limits are lenient; locals call it the "Montanabahn." This is Andy Mickelson's world.

The young entrepreneur and hydronic craftsman thrives there. Mickelson brings mechanical wisdom and experience beyond his years to the western side of the state.

In 2011, he started Missoula-based Mickelson Plumbing and Heating. During his apprentice years with a large mechanical firm, Mickelson learned his way around big boilers.

Today, about 60 percent of his work is commercial –



Andy Mickelson makes a final inspection of the Taco iWorX control station at First American Title Co. in Missoula, MT.

now growing through his experience with Taco's iWorX modular controls platform. "I can't compete with controls companies," he said. "That is, unless I have something they don't."

Commercial challenge, solved

"Our building was hot in the summer and cold in the winter," said Kim Serba, VP of First American Title in Missoula. "We had a big heating company try countless times to fix the problems, but nothing worked. When the manufacturer of the original controls went out of business, there were no more replacement parts. So it was time to start from scratch."

Word of mouth brought Mickelson to the scene; he easily won the bid to fix the problem. When he arrived

at the 13,000 square foot building, Mickelson inspected the entire two-pipe fan coil system. Sure enough: the old controls were never right from the beginning.

"Taco's iWorX controls are different from other systems because you don't need special tools or software to do the installation or commissioning," said Mickelson. "You just push a button on the controller, and it identifies itself on the network."

"The chiller was running non-stop though the cooling season, whether or not one of the air handlers was calling," explained Mickelson. "With the new controls, we're monitoring which zones are running, discharge temps, and indoor feedback. Now the unit stages its operation just as it should."



They have plenty to be happy about now that comfort systems problems are solved.

"Since Andy completed his work here, we've been saving \$300, sometimes \$400 on our electric bill each month," said Serba. "There's no telling how much we're saving on maintenance costs. The company we had trying to fix the old system was here at least once a week. Now, Mickelson just shows up when there's preventative maintenance to be done. I couldn't recommend him highly enough."

"Now that I'm able to do controls, my company truly is a full-system solutions provider," said Mickelson. "Plumbing, heating, cooling; you name it, I do it. iWorX ties it all together. I learn about and fix an issue that comes up long before the building owner even realizes there's a problem. With that kind of service, nobody's looking for another contractor."