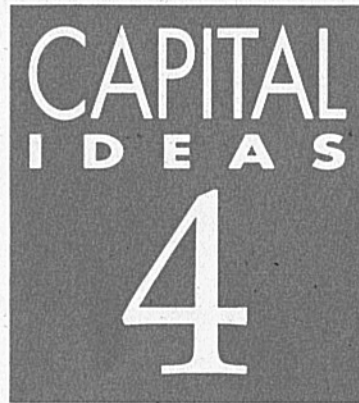


Just SPEC IT: Construction Specifications



Specifications are the centerpiece of any construction project. They are precise descriptions of the thousands of items which are purchased and installed as part of building construction. As a formal record of materials and workmanship, they critically impact the performance, function, and appearance of a building design and ultimately, the outcome of the project.

On any construction project, the architect makes the primary material decisions and chooses among a myriad of alternatives and options relevant to the project. It falls to the architect to communicate this information to the specifier, who in turn, coordinates the efforts of all primary consultants, orchestrates the production of technical specifications, and assembles the Project Manual (a booklet of Specifications.)

Whether your firm designs, builds, or provides architectural consulting services, you are already acutely aware of the need for a professional who can produce detailed technical documents. Your success and the success of your projects will hinge on the capability and expertise of

produce this critical document. Fortunately, qualified specifications consultants are available to provide this service.

The most critical reason for hiring an expert specifier is to capitalize on his cumulative experience and knowledge of tried and true application. Young or inexperienced draftsmen cannot always provide immediate answers to questions as can the knowledgeable specifier; nor can they work comfortably with the instant output of technical information available on computer software. Expertise will always remain the most valuable criteria when hiring a technical specification consultant.

What if you've never used the services of a Specifications Consultant? Where do you begin your search? It is certainly not difficult, if you know where to look.

When you have compiled a short list of candidates, take the time to interview each one of them. Investigate their reputation by calling references. Personal compatibility, cooperation, performance, and commitment to deadlines are just as important as his ability to work with your team.

project managers with master specifications for use on all projects, ones which the entire office can refer. Outline specifications can provide the best tool for each project manager to use with the production team, especially in the earlier stages of the project.

A conscientious specifier will use a check list and will conduct a "Question and Answer" session with you in order to discuss the production of the specifications, number of submittals, camera ready final product and a master

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on the capability and expertise of a professional specifier, whether he is a dedicated member of your staff or whether he is available as a consultant to your firm. Current trends demand that specifications and drawing references be produced simultaneously. This challenge falls within the domain and under the expertise of the professional specifier. Often, principals and project managers have other managerial, design, production and client demands and don't always have the time to

his ability to work with your team.

Ask to see a specimen Project Manual which he has prepared for a client of your caliber or for a similar project. Consider the degree of automation the specifier can provide. Are your systems compatible or can he offer other services in helping to automate your office?

Specifications consultants can provide services beyond the Project Manual. They can provide

schedule, to be met by all consultants. You can contract for limited services, such as a portion of the Project Manual (Civil, Structural, Mechanical, etc.), otherwise, if their expertise is broad enough you can contract for the entire manual, including all disciplines.

Remember, specifications are essential documents that provide in more finite detail the material descriptions illustrated by the drawings of the project. The specifications consultant is the expert you need. He will save you time, money, and needless headaches associated with an incomplete document.

by Paul Just

