

Influencing Specifications: The 5 Costliest Manufacturer Mistakes

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Building Relationships through Education

The following is a quick summary of the web presentation provided in partnership with ARCOM SpecAgent "The intelligence behind specifications" at www.SpecAgent.com

Mistake No. 1: Marketing to AEs without understanding their specification process

Know your AE firm. Know product decision makers for tracked projects. Know who writes specifications, what they need, and when. Expand your product representative's role to encompass skilled specification support.

Mistake No. 2: Targeting the pre-recession specifier in the post-recession market

Recognize that the AE professions have been deeply affected by the recent recession. Unemployment; retirement; firm changes; and role changes will change project decision makers. Building Information Modeling/Management, Integrated Project Deliver, and Sustainability are now center stage in most practices. Younger, internet-savvy, specification-deficient practitioners will be selecting products and writing specifications; they will be more dependent on manufacturer specification support.

Mistake No. 3: Using expensive shotgun marketing instead of targeted marketing

Marketing budgets will be under scrutiny and pressure as manufacturer resources stretch in advance of anticipated increases in sales coming out of the recession. The specifier is a small target with significant impact on product procurement, therefore is economical to target with the resources they need for product selection, evaluating, and specifying. Marketing investment should emphasize formatted technical data sheets compatible with BIM incorporation, project-ready professional guide specifications that are easy to edit, and accessible technical support to use these tools.

Mistake No. 4: Providing specifications that meet your needs but not the AEs' needs

Specification knowledge is specialized and requires study to understand and apply. Manufacturers' efforts to provide usable guide specifications often fall short as their internal interests in shutting out competition take the place of fulfilling AE's specification needs. Guide specifications with quality professional content are more likely to be used on projects, and more likely to result in building of trust with the AE. Added marketing benefit can be gained by providing accessible specification support through staffing of hot lines and online chats with specification-savvy staff, and by offering specification peer review services.

Mistake No. 5: Providing small specifications and expecting big projects

Many guide specification services offer preparation and hosting of limited-application specifications that list the manufacturer's products in detail but include little project coordination, quality assurance or field quality control enforcement language. These small specifications may be adequate for smaller or negotiated projects where the owner will require your products. However, for larger scale, institutional, and public projects, full length, fully coordinated specifications are needed. Some public projects restrict the use of named products; for those projects, the reference and descriptive content of manufacturer guide specifications needs to be well developed and properly edited.

Turning mistakes into opportunities

Opportunity No. 1: Understand AE specification process

Opportunity No. 2: Target the new post-recession specifier

Opportunity No. 3: Use specifications as part of targeted marketing

Opportunity No. 4: Provide specifications that meet AEs' needs

Opportunity No. 5: Provide specifications targeted to firm and project size

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