WebFormat™

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Despite its promise, **Internet product research is still enormously time-consuming** and frequently unproductive.

Creating a Common Language© is a mission of the CSRF. WebFormat is our recommended layout for construction product websites. WebFormat is intended to be a starting spot for manufacturers' web designers, not a limiting document. By demonstrating a simple and effective website, manufacturers will be able to show their web designers what architects want and make their website more effective.

Web designers, not typically familiar with the design and specification requirements of the construction professional, have designed most product websites. Many websites are little more than electronic representations of ads or product literature and do not provide ready access to all the desired design information. Worse yet, the design information may not even be available online. The fundamental purpose of this article is to assist the manufacturer to provide more design data, less junk graphics and not waste a construction professional's time.

The home page, or first page displayed, should load quickly and the user should promptly know what products the company makes. The HardKnox sample page below shows a fictitious company's products and shows how a simple web page can be very effective. You can find a full-scale page online at: http://www.4specs.com/hardknox/

This sample home page demonstrates that a simple page can be effective:
1. The user quickly knows what products the company makes and provides easy access to all the design data.

2. The total of all the images and text on the HardKnox sample is 35,000 bytes, which will load in total of 12 seconds on a standard modem connection at 28.8.
3. You can find the company address and know how to contact them by email and phone.

The product information is accessed in two ways - by type of information (specs and CAD) and by product or CSI section.

Using separate product pages for each product or product group, the user can quickly know what information is available online. The objective is to provide the architect and specifier with easy and logical access to all the information they need to incorporate your products into their design or into the construction project.

A sample product page can be accessed online by visiting one of the product pages at the link above. Typical information to include on a product website for each product is:

- Product Description - a brief description of the uses for the product
- General Product Information, including basic uses, limitations, sizes and grades
- Product Selection Guide
- Photographs
- Technical Data
- Product Data Sheets
- Finishes and color selection guide
- FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

- Competitive Analysis
- 3-part specification-We recommend that the specifications be provided using the CSI 3-part formatted specifications using Word, Word Perfect and RTF formats. RTF is rich text format. We recommend against using style sheets within the document as most specifiers will have their own stylesheet they want to use for the project.
- CAD Details
- Product Submittal Sheets (in a PDF format to be printed and submitted by the contractor)
- Code Approvals - ICBO, NER, BOCA
- Test Reports - UL, Omega Point, etc.
- Case Studies
- MSDS Sheets
- Installation Instructions
- Maintenance Instructions
- Warranty
- Product Availability

The final list will vary with the type of product, and items should be omitted when not appropriate. Additional information can be added as appropriate. Each of these should link to a page with the additional information.

For construction professionals, if you like this proposed website design, give a copy of this article to manufacturers you meet with. Tell the manufacturer you want information presented in this way in a fast and easy to use website.

Comments and suggestions are appreciated and will be included in future revisions of this article.

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