

WHY?

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You may not be used to it, but my wife is constantly asking me questions that start with "Why", and for which I have no answers. Maybe you know the kind— "Why did he do that?", she asks when another driver does something dumb. "I don't know. Want me to get out and ask him?"

So, OK, here's the question that is the real point of this piece—Why are specifications held in such disrepute? What is so contemptible or "icky" about them that many choose to ignore, obviate, demean, or pooh-pooh them?

Going back into ancient history—the 1950s—specification writers were held in something that strongly resembled "awe". They were the seat of more knowledge than all in the rest of the office combined; they could talk fluently, coherently and insightfully to manufacturers' reps, and carried on meaningful conversations. They were really held apart and held in high esteem—well, cherished might be a bit strong, but they have an extremely strong "presence" in the office, and in the production of project documents.

Why (there's that word again) has that changed? Why (yet again) have both the documents themselves and their authors somehow been placed in a different—and apparently lower—status ?

Why (!!!) has the production of appropriate specifications become a challenge and too often a "fight" within project work? What have they done adversely of late to any project?
And, come on let's be fair—what have they done lately to save your hide, or resolve a potential problem?

Why (whew!!!) in some circles (read, minds of the "others") are specifications a necessary evil—and contributing to, dealing with and writing tasks of almost repulsive stature? Why (or for goodness sake!) are they the very last things many principals, Project Architects, and young professionals (for sure) want to deal with?

Why (oh, no you don't!!!)

WHAT can, *or must* we do to place specifications in their correct and proper context as inseparable partners with working drawings, major contributors of construction information available in no other location and the primary document utilized in the event of any trouble, problem, claim, dispute, mediation, arbitration, or litigation?

It is quite obvious that we can keep banging our heads against the wall, and let status be quo, but Why (he's at it again!) aren't we collective of a mind to break out—to create new programs, new PR, new directions, new outreach, new meetings with academics, new paths to recognition for the documents, and maybe, just maybe, vehicles of exposure so there is wider and fuller understanding of the intent and value of the documents themselves.

After all, why(oh for goodness sake!) can't we make the point that people "specify" many times each day, unknowingly, but in construction it is an absolute necessity that communication of vital information be conveyed between design professional and contractors for the best interest of all involved—including the general public.

Why not? (just *had* to get one more in)

Hey, watch it!!! Why'd you have to say that? (gotcha again!)