

"YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER....."

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Driving in this morning I experienced a miracle!

A radio station that played music--with melody and words, 1) I could understand, and 2) were cute and not crude! WOW!!

And on top of that, it was Frank Sinatra!!!! (if you're real young, you can Goggle for more info on him if you need to) singing "Love and Marriage". Hence the title of this piece.

Well certainly no specifications writer can dispute "love and marriage" (and chances are most of us have this combination in our lives) but so what? Well, let's look at the general principle expressed by the other words of the song.

We can all very quickly come up with many couplets where two things are so related as to be virtually inseparable. Now, I'm sure you see where this is going.

"Drawings and Specs" fits this criteria to a tee. They are, indeed, inseparable as expressed in the other applicable couplet, "supplementary and complementary"--nicht var? (that's high school German for "isn't that so").

The answer, of course, is absolutely!

But the continuing problem is not that we don't understand this, it is that all too many other folks on our projects do not. There is a normal human precipitation toward the obvious--the graphics of the drawings--at the expense of the specifications. Construction personnel, at all levels, are not a bunch of illiterates or undereducated people, so their instinct to avoid the "words" in favor of the "pictures" is understandable--but perplexing.

The fundamental issue may be, that we need to ratchet up the respect for specifications and to maximize the idea of the "couplet"--that is aggressively raise the level of confidence in specifications. Instead of "just throwing them on the table" we somehow need to create an atmosphere wherein the contracting folks look for, understand, and truly really respect what our efforts contain--and what they do both FOR them and require OF them. The inherent benefit of the specifications to the constructors needs new airing and discussion--there maybe things we can learn from the constructors that will make our specs even better.

True, this situation has been around for years, but why, then does it still exist? It appears that the point has not been "driven home", and respectfully exploited to bring the status and use of specifications on par with that of the drawings. Grousing on our part, and dissing the constructors is not going to resolve this problem--we need a very creative approach, wide ranging, simple, and quite pointed in what is presented and how.

So it remains true that "You can't have one without the other"--i.e., we can't expect better reaction to and use of specifications until we make the effort to explain, show, present, and work through (perhaps on-going) a strong effort to change attitudes.

To paraphrase--"You can't have the result, without doing the work"!