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In This Issue

BIM in Boston
Updated Tile Standards
Spec File Names
Spec Directory Names
LEED Scorecards
Fastest LEED Certification
Spec Futures

BIM In Boston

Richard Fitzgerald, Executive Director of the Boston Society of Architects put a notice in the chapter newsletter to see if there was interest in forming a new BSA BIM Committee (Building Information Modeling). As a surprise to some, over 40 people attended, consisting of architects using BIM, BIM consultants, building engineers and contractors. What was startling was the commitment of resources by the design firms to adopt building modeling software as soon as possible.

There was actually consensus that BIM software will radically change the way architects handle building information, and the rush for the entire team to get on board was evident. For specifiers, BIM offers the promise of better coordination between the drawings and the specs, and embedding spec and cost information within computer files. The hope is to be able to explore more design options effectively, improve communication within the team, and reduce the need for last minute value engineering which tears many projects apart.

Updated Tile Standards

Many specifiers have a copy of the TCA Handbook for Ceramic Tile Installation handy. If you're using an older edition, time to get the 2006 new copy from the Tile Council of North America (yes - they changed their name) at www.tileusa.com for \$9., or even their new 2006 CD-ROM version with hyperlinks to ANSI A108/A118/A136.1 standards for \$15. However the hyperlinks are to the 1999 ANSI standards, and not the current 2005 standards (what were they thinking?). The CD-ROM has CAD files for the installation diagrams we've become familiar with but as specifiers we haven't seen any architects use them yet.

Spec File Names

The computer file name for your specifications can be used to improve your sorting and searching of previous specs. In our practice, a perfect file name is as simple as "08210-Wood Doors" for spec files or "08210rev3.doc" for a file we're working on with a client together. The revision number is advanced one number for each issue.

In the first case, we can search for the number or name and when searching throughout different directories, the files sort together. In the second case, the revision number is critical to prevent updating outdated files. If several people are collaborating on updating a file, you can use the 'Track Changes' feature of Word, which will show where the changes have been made.

When engineers send us files with their project number first, such as 1006-2006-03300, we have to modify the file name so the document will sort in correct sequence in the project file which may have as many as 150 sections. If you aren't careful how your file

sorts in the computer directory, and you email it off to print, the printed copy will likely be out of order.

Spec Directory Names

If you're keeping track of many projects, we've found sorting your prime directory by client, then project name and then spec issue is the most practical way to do it. The specs are all in one directory, with the names of the client firms in subdirectories, and then with the name of the project in a sub-subdirectory. Within the sub-subdirectory for the project we use 00 for administrative tasks (01-proposals, 02-transmittals, 03-correspondence, 04-email, 05-client comments), then 01 for the first issue of the spec for our sections and 01a for any sections by consultants, 02/02a for the second issue of the spec and so on. This way the files sort properly.

LEED Scorecards

It is critical to determine under which LEED program you intend to certify your building. LEED Credits vary significantly between the different LEED programs: LEED-NC (new construction), LEED-EB (existing buildings), LEED-CI (commercial interiors), LEED-CS (core and shell), LEED-H (homes), LEED-ND (neighborhood development). A checklist from one rating system will vary greatly from another rating system. Never assume you've 'learned it all.'

Fastest LEED Certification

In a hurry to have one of your firm's LEED projects certified? Typical buildings take several years, however several projects seeking UGBC LEED-CI (Commercial Interiors) certification have achieved certification in well under a year. The fast pace of design and build-out makes it possible.

Spec Futures

I presented two seminars recently in Boston. One called 'Specifications for Small Projects' where 90 people attended; a second for 30 project manager/specifiers for a public agency responsible for 200 school projects a year. In the first seminar, only one person in the audience was a CSI member and only 40 percent of the audience had heard of CSI. In the second seminar, there were no CSI members and only 10 percent of the audience had heard of the CSI. Skip the jokes about CSI meaning Crime Scene Investigation instead of the Construction Specifications Institute. Draw your own conclusions about the future of specifying ... for me this means that spec systems must be written for project architects and designer to use - there aren't enough full-time specification writers or spec consultants to go around.