

PROPER V. PREDOMINANCE

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Drawings and specifications--alphabetically correct!

Plans and specs--easily said.

Agreement, drawings and specifications--correct alphabetically and perhaps in order of importance (to some people).

What is the precedence of the documents?

Complementary and supplementary!

But what, truly, is the correct disposition for specifications for construction projects?
Where do they fit in the hierarchy, and in the alignment of documentation and information transfer?

In looking at this we first need to understand that there is an inherent stigma connected with specifications. Their mere existence is imposing, and threatening to many parties involved with construction projects. The mere fact that they are "words" is stigmatizing, and threatening especially since the specifications are the first document considered in negative situations of claims, disputes, arbitration, mitigation and litigation; attorneys are "word people" and hence are drawn, first and foremost to the specs!

Therein is the inherent, but undeserved, stigma and threat!

In addition to being words, specifications "suffer" from their preparation and the attention paid to the level of detail, specific particulars, and depth of information they contain. They can, of course, be made quite restrictive, if and when necessary for very special results, which only adds to the perceived imposition on and threat to those who must perform the work to meet them.

While we, specification writers, can be and are rightly conscientious in our work, our sincere and well-intentioned efforts too often come off as predominant documents--overwhelming, punitive, restrictive, intrusive, without recourse, and either so convoluted or so extraordinarily imposing that it is better to void, ignore or even violate them (and then beg forgiveness). Of course, these perceptions are incorrect and askew of our intentions, but nonetheless prevail in the minds of all too many people.

In our sincere work, there is an air of dominance that we do not intend and it may well be an aspect of our work, and of specifications per se, that needs to be dealt with. But how do you do that?

Education!

Through free, open round-robin discussion; sincere exchanges of information: reconsideration of practices, formatting and wording: and a "bigger umbrella" to enclose more of the organizations, groups and individuals involved in construction--and the use of our specifications.

Might not be bad to look at ourselves for signs of haughtiness, pompousness, single-mindedness, and attributes that undercut sincere effort and well-founded professionalism in trying to do our work well and PROPERLY (and hopefully with better understanding on the part of others). "Firm, but fair" is a criteria often used within code administration (a similarly maligned profession). This is not a bad guide for

specification writing, where we are trying to communicate the necessities of the project, in a straight forward manner--we seek to no retribution.

In all this, it strongly appears, we need to "unrecluse" ourselves, and reach out to a good many others, not so much to "sell" ourselves and our products, but to inform and educate others and bring understanding as to what we are about, why, and how we do what we do? We need to remove the stigma on specifications, and replace it with understanding and, well, respect for what they are and what they are intended to do.

Predominance is NOT our charge, and in fact, any such attempt will severely undercut our true intent. Contractors seek, predominately, to make a profit on a project; we seek, predominately, to ensure that owner (our client!) gets full value for dollar paid. Sure we want a profit, too, but we have allegiance to others even before profit. In that, we need to *properly* provide needed direction, guidance and information.

Apparently that is a point too often misunderstood or perhaps never realized by others, because it too well masked by the ill-founded but prevailing stigma.