SPECS "R" !

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"C" has come to be a dominant indicator in the world of specification writing, what with the "four Cs" as the major guide posts for excellence in spec writing.

But may we suggest that at least one other letter has a good deal of Relevance, credence and import in spec writing. We Refer to the "R".

Required: There is little dispute about this, although some clients think otherwise. It certainly is ill-advised for a project to be pursued without specs, or perhaps just with "engineering standards", since enforcement is questionable, and content is not all-encompassing.

Reliable: Undoubtedly, no firm is going to issue a Project Manual that is ambiguous or vacillating, and which can be varied at will by any party. The matter of Reliability adds strength and firm consistency to the project and its procedures. In addition, Reliable content provides a level or accuracy and correctness that avoids confusion and hassle and aids the Rapid and direct procurement of materials, systems, and equipment.

Reasonable: Opinions vary here with some contractors feeling that the specs are patently unreasonable. But the core issue is that they are intended to present the project Requirements as deemed correct and necessary by the client. Usually this will not involve outlandish Requirements, commitments, or procedures, but at the same time it does Rein in free-lancing and open-endedness--to say nothing of controlling costs that will escalate where extraordinary elements are Required.

Rational: There should be inherent logic in the specifications, both in how the project is to be built, and in how the work is to be executed. This is directly tied to the concept of Reasonable, but combines that with a logical and seemingly obvious methodology.

Readable; Contrary to some thinking, this is a crucial aspect of specifications. Both Readability and assimilation are critical to quick understanding, comprehension and implementation by the trade workers. While specifications need to have a certain degree of a legalese direction and wording, this can usually be somewhat isolated from the directly used technical information--i.e., Part 1 is, by format, isolated from Part 2 and Part 3, the "what" and "how" of the work.

Reviewable: Being in written form, there is a Risk in specifications--i.e., the proverbial "Well, here it says............" But written text can be **R**eviewed even after formal issue, and **R**evised to adjust inaccuracies, inappropriateness, and to close gaps, or **R**epair glitches (notice all the "Rs" in this). Verbal information is far more easily misunderstood, forgotten, or misinterpreted. This all also goes to Reliability.

Rudimentary: Specifications are not and should never be produced in any semblance of a thesis, white paper, or academic prose. Narrative mode in specification writing is wrong, (specs are NOT novels and their bland covers at the least verify that!) and has given way to the clipped language common in specifications--but of course, this vernacular needs to be understood by all users. Specifications are NOT theoretical, but are directive, instructive, and communicative.

Well, with all this, we can say, too, with definitive accuracy, that "specs ARE"!!! If you don't believe that, check with your local pirate, who will surely agree with an "AAAAAARRRRRR"!