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The Bigger Picture

Happy New Year—welcome back. Welcome to CSI in 1997. I hope all of you had the opportunity to enjoy the holiday season with family and friends. We all needed the rest to recover from 1996. Economic forecasters expect the second longest peace time expansion to continue through this year. Good news for the building industry in Kansas City, and around the country. Riding the crest of this economic expansion was the theme of my first article in September. The wave of capital expansion that drives the building industry will provide more work for all of us. CSI will continue to support your efforts at successfully riding the wave of economic good fortune throughout 1997 and beyond.

I will resume my extended discussion of the advantages of the product representative/product specifier relationship that appear each month in this article. Please continue to send your comments to me.

The product representative/ product specifier relationship is a very critical relationship to the building industry. Critical to realizing the design intent in built form. The realization of the building design in built form succeeds only when the appropriate product for the building application is used. The best method of insuring that success is with honest, credible, relationships between specifiers and product representatives.

This relationship is essential for the transfer of timely, accurate, and appropriate product selections. Without this type of product selection process the realization of design intent in built form is often difficult, protracted, and costly.

The bigger picture in which this rep/specifier relationship operates is changing. I noted in the November article that customer expectations are demanding that design and contracting services be provided faster with less resources, in spite of increasing building complexities. Down sizing, right sizing, multi-tasking, out sourcing, team centered decision making, bottom-up organizations, partnering, are all management strategies implemented to respond to customer demands. It has worked. National productivity indicators have risen while employment numbers have remained constant. We Americans are doing more with less. We are building faster and more efficient than ever before.

My statement of change was underscored by a report in a CSI publication



reporting on goals for the building industry formulated by a number of construction industry organizations including CSI and the major federal building agencies, supporting initiatives to create technologies and practices to meet the following goals by the year 2003.

1. 50% reduction in delivery time.
2. 50% reduction in operation, maintenance and energy costs.
3. 30% increase in productivity and comfort.
4. 50% fewer occupant-related illnesses and injuries.
5. 50% less waste and pollution.
6. 50% more durability and flexibility.
7. 50% reduction in construction work illnesses and injuries.

The goals were developed for and endorsed by the cabinet level National Science and Technology Council.

The value to the US economy and the cost savings to public and private owners will be substantial. We need to consider new strategies for critical decision making and information transfer of building technology if these goals are to be realized. The optimization of current building procurement strategies, design decision making and documentation, and delivery of building technology to the marketplace will not achieve the goals. More effective procurement strategies, more creative methods of design decisions documentation, and faster delivery of building technologies to the marketplace will be needed.

In the December article I described the design/build procurement process as one notable response to client expectations and its pressure for change on the product representative and product specifier. The design/build building procurement method formalizes a process of contractor selection of product and manufacturer. The contract document that fixes scope and price between the Design/Builder and the Owner is specific to function and need, but allows contractor leeway in selecting the final solution to achieving the desired results. What may evolve will be two distinct job descriptions for specifiers. One performance and building engineering based to assist the Owner and designer in setting the program and design parameters of a building in a scope document. The other job description, manufacturer and product based, will interpret the scope documents, selecting products and manufacturer solutions for bidding by trade contractors. This procurement process and the twin roles of the specifier will continue to be refined and formalized as one strategy to meet the goals set out for 2003.

Other design and procurement methods will be developed to respond to the changing priorities of the owners and industries that buy buildings. Development and delivery of new building technologies in response to changing priorities reflected in the 2003 goals will be required. The introduction of new design solutions will provide opportunities for the specifier and representative for growth and partnership.

In the last four monthly articles before the summer recess I will share with you my vision of what



has to change in the industry, and what has to not change in pursuit of the 2003 goals. In particular the pressures for change on the design and contracting entities with special focus on the product representative and the design specifier.

What can not change is the basic responsibility of the manufacturer and the specifier.

A construction specifier must be able to rely on data published by construction product manufacturers and the associations those manufacturers establish. The specifier must also be able to rely on the interpretations of the data made by individuals who represent those manufacturers. The specifier must decide who to believe and who not to believe, and on that judgement rests the quality of the final product, the building.

What will change is the way specifiers and representatives interact and share design and contracting information and responsibility.

How it might change and in what ways will the industry respond to anticipate the changes will in large part determine the success of the industry and the people who ply their skills in it

Wendel Chamberlin President, K.C. Chapter C.S.I.