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Raising the Standard

Last month I wrote about how important long term relationships with satisfied customers are to a successful business plan. How successful relationships are founded on honesty, integrity, and credibility. The article included a list of ways CSI can help with your business development and training for success. A challenge was issued to the reader to take advantage of all that CSI has to offer.

The Kansas City Chapter of the Construction Specifications Institute offers programs that help local building industry members succeed. This year's programs are centered around a theme. The theme will run through all of the chapter activities. The theme will be "Raising the Standard" of the specifier/product representative relationship. Profiling and promoting the tremendous benefits that exists with this very essential, critical relationship will be the goal this year for the chapter. This relationship, and the decision making that takes place, is where the design and contracting efforts of our industry mesh.

It is similar to the nerve endings between the two hemispheres of our brains that must "fire" and create an impulse to transfer information between the two hemispheres. Likewise with the product representative making successful contact with a specifier. The contact is important for the transfer of timely, accurate, appropriate product selections between the design hemisphere and the contracting hemisphere. Without a successful relationship the transfer of information is difficult and costly.

The realization of the building design in built form succeeds when the appropriate product for the building application is used. The best method of insuring that success is with honest, credible, relationships between specifier and product representative who have integrity.

That is the goal that CSI defines and promotes to the industry. The standards set by CSI and its members measures the performance. Standards to my mind are nothing more than shared expectations with a customer, or a benchmark with a peer or competitor. Standards are important to a business plan.

Athletic standards and achievements are so admired and remembered because of the one dimensional beauty of the challenge, and the ease of measurement and comparison between challengers, even among challengers from different eras.

The standards for the construction industry are difficult to measure



because the expectations are always changing. However the goal must remain constant. What are the expectations that establish the standards for successful specifier/product representative relationship?

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.

The most important factors influencing a specifier's decision about who to trust should be the reputation of the product, the reputation of the manufacturer, and the reputation of the manufacturer's representative, in that order. Performance of the product is after all the bottom line of the specifier's task.

CSI promotes the value of the product representative as the most effective way of evaluating product and manufacturer performance when selecting products for a building application. I firmly believe local representation of a product by a trusted person is a must when follow-up with bidders, suppliers, and installers is critical to achieving the expected performance of a product during bidding, contracting, award, and installation.

The relationship between a specifier and a product representative is essentially one of trust. The trust between a specifier and a product representative is based on mutual respect for the important job each person has in the building industry, and working knowledge of the others role to continue to build on the successes of the relationship.

How does the specifier and product representative demonstrate the honesty, integrity, and credibility needed for a trusted relationship so critical to the building industry? By meeting the expectations of the other. By adhering to the standard.

CSI has the standard for specifiers and product representatives. The minimal standard is the training and testing that happens every spring for certification of CDT, CCS, CCPR, and CCCA.

Committed specifiers in the industry know the value of the Certified Construction Specifier credential and work to achieve and maintain this status.

Committed product representatives in the industry know the value of the Certified Construction Product Representative credential and work to achieve and maintain this status.

Committed construction administrators in the industry know the value of the Certified Construction Contract Administrator credential and work to achieve and maintain this status.

Committed architects and owners in the industry know the value of the Certified Documents Technologist credential and work to achieve and maintain this status.

These credentials are the baseline expectations of the building community in CSI, in Kansas City, at Ellerbe Becket, and at every organization that wants to demonstrate its commitment to raising the standard of our industry.

The baseline standard of credential will certainly help your company open doors to new relationships and contacts, but how do you continue to win the trust of a valued customer? By raising the



customer expectations of your service and establishing a higher standard that differentiates your service from others.

Don't let your competition and peers create your customers' service expectations and set the standard. Promote your own level of expectations as the standard to your customers and peers.

CSI will support your efforts at raising the standard by continuing to refine and clarify the expectations of the industry and owners.

Take advantage of all that CSI has to offer. Your business can use it.



Mission of the Institute

The mission of the Construction Specifications Institute is to advance construction technology through communication, education, research and service.