



# The Construction Specifications Institute

Salt Lake City Chapter

[www.csi-slc.org](http://www.csi-slc.org)



Accredited Continuing  
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- Questions related to specific materials, methods, and services will be addressed at the conclusion of this presentation.

Thank you!



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# AVOIDING SPECIFICATION PITFALLS!

*4 ways to improve your specifications!*



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Understanding the role of specifications in verifying the quality of construction.
- Providing concise, clear, complete and correct specifications.
- Manufacturer's specifications and what might need to be done to assure that they meet the architect's needs and the owner's best interests.
- What Owners need to know about the Architect's specifications.



# Why Are Specifications Necessary?



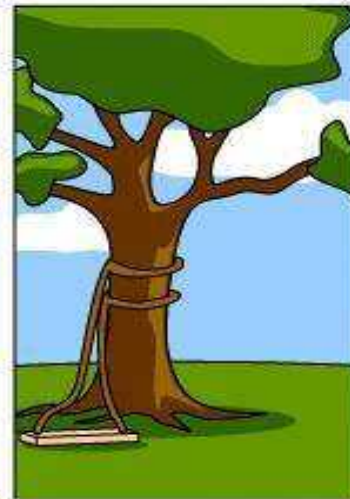
How the customer explained it



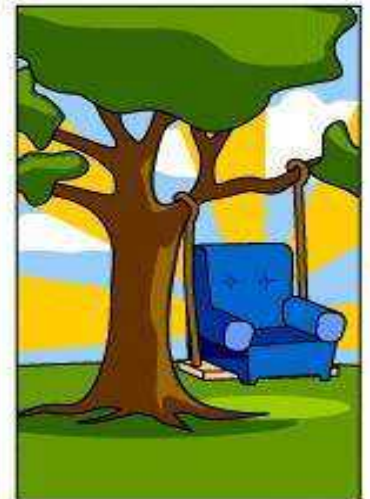
How the Project Manager understood it



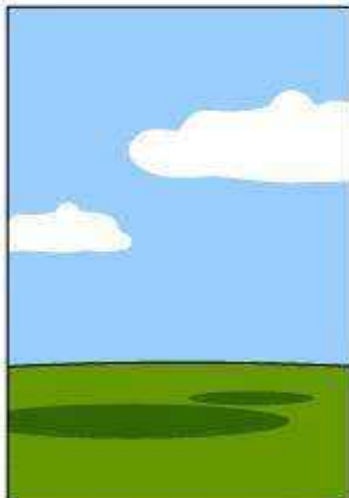
How the Designer designed it



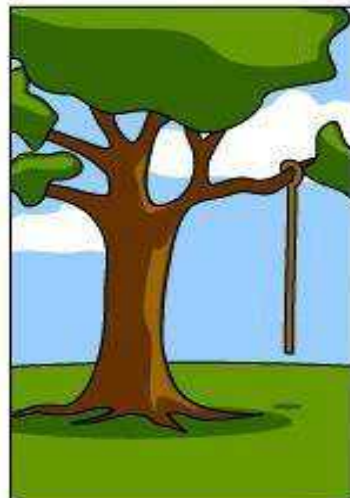
How the Cadd Operator drafted it



How the Salesman described it



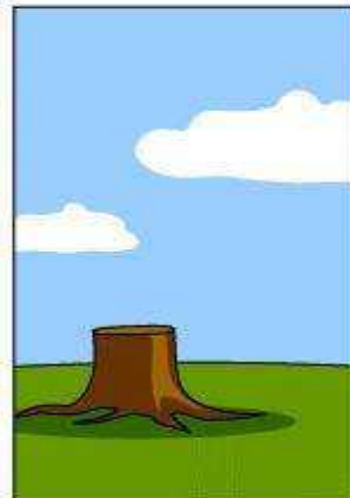
How the project was documented



What construction installed



How the customer was billed



The warranty that was offered



What the customer really wanted



## Understanding the Role of Specifications

- What are specifications?
  - **Communicating Architecture:** *The bridge between your ideas and the contractor's understanding.*
    - Drawings: Best way to show what you are thinking.
    - Specifications: The only way to express quality requirements.



## Understanding the Role of Specifications

- Specs are more than product information.
- Verifying quality in construction: What is missing when we do not provide specs?
- Looking out for the Owner's interests.
- Looking out for the Contractor's interests.
- Establishing the Architect's construction administration methods and requirements.
  - Division 01 sections





“It may be industrial strength Crazy Glue®,  
but substituting it for welds isn't  
the way to be low bidder.”



## Providing Concise, Clear, Complete and Correct Specifications

- Why?
  - Speeds up communication.
  - Avoids mistakes and misunderstandings that can cost money and delay the schedule.



“Whatever the heck it is,  
it's built exactly to specifications.”



## Providing Concise, Clear, Complete and Correct Specifications

- Correct specs:
  - Edit out everything that does not apply. Review specs after writing them.
  - Leave no room for misinterpretation. Coordinate specs and drawings.
  - Do not leave anything out.
- Concise specs:
  - Use few words
  - Avoid repetition.



## Providing Concise, Clear, Complete and Correct Specifications

- Concise specs (cont.):

*“All the carpet for this Project shall be the responsibility of the General Contractor and shall be provided, furnished and installed by the General Contractor.” (25 words)*

- Articles. like *the* and *a*. often are not needed and can be removed.
- Words like *all* and *every* often are unnecessary. If you say it applies to carpet, it applies to all carpet.



## Providing Concise, Clear, Complete and Correct Specifications

- Concise specs (cont.):

*“Carpet **for this Project** shall be responsibility of General Contractor and shall be provided, furnished and installed **by General Contractor.**” (20 words)*

- The whole spec is assumed to be *for this Project*.
- Restating contractor’s responsibility is not necessary.
- The entire spec is assumed to be addressed to the **General Contractor**, not to anyone else (not even to sub-contractors).
  - Everything in the spec is the General Contractor’s responsibility.
  - It is the General Contractor’s responsibility to decide who will construct what.



## Providing Concise, Clear, Complete and Correct Specifications

- Concise specs (cont.):

*“Carpet shall be provided, furnished and installed.”* (7 words)

- *Provide* means *furnish and install*. (Define in Division 01.)
- Avoid the word *shall* when possible. We are not lawyers. We are communicating to the contractor what we want done.

*“Provide Carpet.”* (2 words)



## Manufacturer's Guide Specifications

Why not use manufacturer specs “As Is?”

- May be too proprietary, affecting competitive bidding.
- May be illegal (publically funded projects)
- Might not comply with CSI's 4 “**C's**” (*correct, complete, concise, clear*).
- The owner hired the architect to look out for owner's interests.
- This does not mean to not involve a manufacturer!



## Manufacturer's Guide Specifications

- Common issues with manufacturer specs:
  - Nonstandard organizing of spec.
  - Custom terminology. Use industry standard names for products.
  - Addressing wrong audience
  - Inappropriate “legalese”, overuse of “shall”.
  - Incomplete systems





## What the Owner Needs to Know About the Specifications

- Owner's Contribution:
  - Front end documents.
    - Architect may be asked to provide these. If so, the Owner still must sign off on them and assume full responsibility for them.





## What the Owner Needs to know about the Specifications

- General and supplementary conditions
  - May conflict with Division 01 specs, but are not intended to replace Division 01.
  - Owner's Documents Address:
    - *What the owner wants from the architect and contractor.*
  - Division 01 Addresses:
    - *What the architect wants from the general contractor.*
  - Specifier's must always compare Division 01 to General Conditions



## What the Owner Needs to know about the Specifications

- Owner's master specs or standards:
  - Require constant reviewing and updating.
  - Architects cannot distinguish between extremely important requirements and unimportant mere suggestions.
  - Publicly funded projects require competitive bidding. Owner standards should explain why a proprietary product is needed and should have appropriate approval.
  - Owner specs should use the latest specification standards.



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# Questions?