

Naming Your Competition

Naming your competition? Yes. A powerful way to increase your credibility as a product representative - and to achieve more frequent, defensible placement in project specifications - is to ask your specifier clients to list your product in the company of your product's peers.

Experienced product reps understand that specifiers avoid writing sole source specifications. The design professional's obligation is to maximize owner value at competitive costs. The product rep that tries to undermine this obligation by offering specification documents or advice that may "lock out" their competition may be compromising the integrity of their specifier client.

The best position the representative can achieve in a multiple proprietary specification is to be named first and named accurately. Ask to be indicated as "basis of design" if the specifier uses this method. Offer the addition of two competing manufacturers' names to solidify this position. With some product lines, SpecGuy recommends providing the competing product names or model numbers as well – to avoid the possibility of a lesser product by a listed manufacturer being submitted following contract award.

The representative has now accomplished several things:

- Established or maintained a valued relationship with a specifier
- Been properly included as the first listed product in a specification
- Established a fair and accurate field of competition

The specifier is more likely to seek the product rep's comments on substitution requests that follow during bidding or construction if the industry has not given the specifier negative feedback on the specification prepared with the product rep's help. Don't embarrass the specifier by urging inclusion of "lock-outs" such as "must have 17 year's continuous experience" or listing inconsequential detailed requirements. And don't deliberately list competing manufacturers that are not active in the project area. Have some confidence that diligence on your part as a product rep will pay off as you invest your knowledge and time. We've seen it work over and over.

SpecGuy® is a consulting group assisting building product manufacturers and industry groups with continuing education and specification programs, at www.SpecGuy.com. SpecGuy is an Authorized MASTERSPEC Trainer.

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