

Heard You've Opened Your Own Practice! What are You Doing About Specs?

- Beg: "We just put the products on the drawings and hope that's what we get."
- Borrow: "I'm using manufacturers' specs."
- Steal: "I've got our old firm's specs on CD."

You're still sorting your stuff out of the boxes you grabbed when you got the bad news at the office you've worked at since school. You've moonlighted a little, mostly house additions, but you're not really prepared to be going it alone, yet here you are. Calling former clients, reps, and friends. Setting up books. Trying to learn about health insurance.

Got a lead on a small job the next town over – adding a meeting room on to the town hall with some stimulus money? You'll need some specs. Specs never were your strong suit, and now "you are it." If you're fortunate, you've got 70 hour weeks ahead, and now you have to add learning about specs?

Notes on drawings aren't all bad when you're doing small projects with competent friends. Manufacturer's specifications can be helpful, though they usually don't support competitive pricing. But your old firm's specifications may be old, and you may be using them illegally. Not a good start.

Here are your other options:

1. Get legal. Purchase a license for a commercial master specification system. We're MasterSpec users www.masterspec.com, but you should also check out BSD SpecLink www.bssoftlink.com, and SpecText www.spectext.com. Each has a variety of libraries to correspond to project types and sizes, with variations in content and in editing software. Learn how to use the system software, and learn how to edit specifications. Plus learn about specifications content, including bidding documents.
2. Contact an independent specifications consultant to help you on projects where you need specifications. Visit the website of the Specifications Consultants in Independent Practice at www.scip.com. See their membership directory.
3. Contact us. We're SpecGuy: www.specguy.com. We're SCIP members and MasterSpec trainers. We work with AE firms around the country. We create project specifications. We also help set up firm masters including the front end bidding and contracting documents and Division 01 general requirements. We also help firms by reviewing their project documents and making recommendations. We're LEED and MasterFormat 2004 savvy.

Or you can Beg, Borrow, or Steal.

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Phil Kabza, FCSI, CCS, AIA, has many years experience as an architect, specifier, instructor, and builder. He has served as chair of the AIA MasterSpec Architectural Review Committee, a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of *The Construction Specifier* magazine, and as founding chair of the Charlotte Building Enclosure Council. Phil is a Fellow of the Construction Specifications Institute.