



The Added Value of Using a Roof Consultant, from a Roofing Contractor's Perspective

By Kevin Kennedy

“Without a professional designer you may have a 15-year roof warranty, but it may not meet local building codes, the insurance carrier's requirements, or have the required FM or UL rating.”

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operations. Mr. Kennedy has authored three *Interface* articles and was a presenter at the 1999 North American Conference on Roofing Technology and the 2000 RCI 15th International Convention.

The Evans Companies have been working with roofing consultants for our mutual customers since the early 1980s. The consultant's role on the team has added value to roofing projects by providing an independent professional responsible for proper design, bidding documents, code compliance, contractor pre-qualification, safety, coordination, inspection, and an overall quality roofing experience for the owner.

We respect the professional relationship our company has enjoyed with roof consultants. Their knowledge and experience adds an additional perspective to the roofing team that helps eliminate problems and results in a better project. Roofing contractors must work in concert with the consultant to understand the requirements of the specifications and design to collectively provide the owner with a quality roofing experience.

The roof may provide owners with a warranty, but there is no guarantee the roof will meet code or be a quality application. Simply put, every roofing project requires proper design, the right materials, and a quality application. There are no substitutes for these three elements. Roofing contractors are applicators, not licensed professionals responsible for structural integrity and roof design.

Having well-designed bidding documents and a pre-bid meeting is the first step in ensuring a successful project. It is

beyond bidding apples-to-apples and leveling the contractor playing field. Without a professional designer, the owner may have a 15-year roof warranty, but it may not meet local building codes, the insurance carrier's requirements, or have the required FM or UL rating. This happens frequently and can be eliminated by having a design professional on the front end, creating accurate bidding documents with specifications that will meet all requirements.

On many industrial buildings, roofs are platforms for mechanical equipment. Consultants are aware of this and use functional designs that allow roofers to properly flash, and later, maintain the roof system by complying with recommended clearance endorsed by the NRCA (National Roofing Contractors Association). Otherwise, the customer may get a roof that is impractical and expensive to maintain.

Drainage is a critical roofing design element. Drains, gutters, scuppers, and roof slope must be properly designed to provide adequate drainage, minimize ponding water, meet code, and comply with the selected roofing material manufacturer's warranty.

Code compliance is also beyond a roofing contractor's expertise. An independent professional source should be responsible for meeting state and local codes, which may include requirements for:

- Wind uplift.
- Thermal insulation.
- Energy Star® and reflectivity.



Apparent ceiling leak. (Photo courtesy Fincastle Engineering.)

- Fire resistance.
- Dead and live loads.
- Slope.
- Overflow scuppers/drains.
- Screens for rooftop equipment.

Choosing the roofing contractor is an owner's third major decision after choosing the material and design. The owner should take responsibility for pre-qualifying bidders and making a selection in concert with the consultant's suggestion. Owners should consider the following:

- Financial strength of the contractor, which can be independently verified with bonds and financial statements.
- Three-year safety performance, OSHA 300 log, and documented EMR (Experience Modification Rate) submitted on the insurance carrier's letterhead.
- Contractor experience with the selected manufacturer's system or specialty project experience (i.e., deck replacement, asbestos, etc.)
- Level of management, support, and service.


- Opinion of the roofing consultant.

Consultants can play a vital role in the overall safety of the project and the finished roofing system. Consultants can help the owner pre-qualify contractors so that only safety-conscious contractors are allowed to bid on the owner's work. Consultants also ensure that the new roofing system complies with requirements of the relevant fire code to ensure the safety of building occupants after construction. Further, consultants will often specify minimum safety practices to be followed by the contractor during construction, based on the consultant's knowledge of the building occupants and examination of the site.

Coordination is critical on complicated re-roofing projects, especially over occupied buildings. There are continuous decisions that must be made regarding insidious conditions in the re-roofing process. For example, deteriorated decking is sometimes discovered when the existing roof is removed. Should the deck be repaired, overlaid, or replaced? What is the effect

on the building occupants? Having a consultant direct, document, communicate, and coordinate daily activities with the owner is critical to the construction schedule and process.

A full-time inspector can be the difference between an average, good, or great project. His or her role often goes beyond making sure the design and specification requirements are met. Inspectors will often act as the owner's representative and address the everyday issues that occur on difficult projects such as communicating daily roofing activity with the building occupants and addressing needed design changes.

Getting roof consultants involved early in the process of a re-roofing project can save a lot of time, money, and heartburn. A professional roof consultant will add value to the entire project by doing things correctly the first time and leveling the field with professional bidding documents. Their third-party responsibility creates credibility and provides the owner with a quality roofing experience. As contractors, we endorse roof consultants' involvement and have witnessed their benefit to the owner and the level of quality added to the roofing project. 



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