INTERVIEW

For this specifier, QCP’s assurance of quality functions like a low-cost insurance

David Axt spoke with AWI about why he’s believed in QCP for the last 20 years
David Axt is a Specifications Consultant and owner of Axt Consulting, LLC, based in the greater Seattle area. He began his career as a licensed architect before transitioning fully into specifications. His focus is writing architectural, structural, building envelope, and interior specifications for large multi-family and complex public work projects. He spoke with AWI about his personal experience, history with QCP, and why he includes QCP in every project involving extensive casework.

AWI:
Can you tell us about yourself and your background?

David:
I’m currently an independent specifier. I started my own consulting business nine years ago. Previously, I worked for a few large architectural firms. I write specifications for many schools and multi-family projects but I also write for fire stations, community centers, libraries, museums, and, oh gosh, I have written specifications for just about every type of project, except for hospital work and prison work. I predominately write architectural specifications, sometimes the structural specifications, and sometimes building envelope sections (roofing and waterproofing). I am also very active in CSI and am currently the Puget Sound Chapter president.

AWI:
What led you to become a specifier instead of an architect?

David:
I’ve always been interested in how things are put together, and I really enjoy the research of products. It just seems to go more with my personality — I tend to be detail oriented. I like organization and processes, but I think the biggest thing is the constant learning. The industry is a moving target, so it’s always a challenge to keep up with new innovations and products.
AWI:
How long have you been specifying QCP?

David:
About 20 years.

AWI:
That’s a long time. Why have you continued to specify QCP in projects?

David:
I really like standards to back me up. If I tell an architect something it can seem like it is just my opinion. But if I can go back to an ASTM standard or an AWI Standard, then it’s got a little more bite to it and it’s an industry standard.

AWI:
When you spec a project, what do you tell the architect or owner about why they should include QCP?

David:
I tell them to think of it as cheap insurance. The biggest complaint is, "It’s expensive." And I respond, "How much is it going to cost to fix the casework if there is a problem?" By specifying QCP, you know you’re guaranteed a high level of quality. Whereas without QCP, you don’t know what you’ll get. Plus, I’m certainly not a casework expert, the architects I work with are not casework experts. Many times we could look at a piece of casework and we would not know what we were looking at, other than it looks pretty. We are not inspecting the quality of the construction.

I also try to encourage the architects to use QCP because it takes some of the burden off them during construction administration. Especially if you have an on-site inspector — then you have somebody else looking at it that is a casework expert. Whenever there’s a dispute, you can default to them. The architect is no longer the bad guy. We default to saying, "Well, this is what the inspector said." It’s like a building inspector looking at code items; they’re just trying to do their job, and make sure everything is up to code.
AWI:

Do you recommend QCP across the board, or are there any types of projects that you think require QCP more than others?

David:

Well, I definitely recommend QCP for public works projects or projects where there is a lot of casework. Definitely for any project such as K-12 schools, high schools, projects with laboratory casework, receptionist casework. On big projects like these, with a lot of casework, a small problem could become a huge problem just because there’s so much casework.
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