

What architects need to see in manufacturers' architectural specifications

According to Morag Evans, CEO of BuildConnect, a division of Databuild, manufacturers that fail to improve the quality of architectural specifications provided online, risk not being specified in architects' projects.



Image by Kobu Agency

Source: Supplied

“As the construction industry claws its way back to recovery, architects are under immense pressure to source building materials and products for their projects and want the most efficient, accurate means of doing so,” she says. “According to feedback BuildConnect has received, however, online specifications that are provided by manufacturers are often incomplete and inaccurate, or the product featured is no longer in use.”

This sentiment is echoed by Anneke Anker, architectural product specialist for BuildConnect. “The term ‘specification’ is widely misunderstood. While most manufacturers’ websites allow for specifications to be downloaded, unfortunately the information provided is not a true architectural product specification. Merely listing the technical specifications of a product does not mean it meets the criteria for an architectural specification.”

So what do architects want to see in an architectural specification?

According to Anker, there are seven categories of information that architects require.

“Start by providing a product name and description,” she explains. “This may include any information that describes the product, such as the thickness, colour or material used. The architect may need a generic specification (compulsory for government projects) which describes the product in detail but excludes the product name.

“Next, describe the product’s main features, for example, if it is used in high-traffic areas and whether it is a heavy industrial or residential product. Also mention any unique applications. Can it be used in extremely hygienic or sterile rooms such as operating theatres? Is it eco-friendly?

“List any certifications obtained by your company and/or the product. These could include a BEE certificate, GreenTag rating, SABS approval, or specific SANS 10400 regulations.

“Explain in detail whether the contractor or installer is required to carry out any preparation before installing the product. If so, must a specific methodology be followed, either on the installation surface or the product itself?

“Elaborate on any specific installation requirements, such as approved installers.

“State whether any warranties are offered on the product and what the requirements are to obtain warranties.”

Finally, says Anker, it’s important to include how the contractor can request pricing on the product and acquire it.



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“Architects do not have the time to call or email manufacturers for specifications,” Evans concludes. “They want the information they need to be a few mouse clicks away. Companies that ensure their architectural specifications incorporate as much relevant information as possible will significantly improve their chances of becoming the specified choice among architects.”

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