

Fenestration

Beyond the Hard Sell *Getting the Most Out of Reps*

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What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of a manufacturer's rep? A necessary evil? A person to be avoided at all costs? When that individual shows up at your office and asks for you, do you find yourself suddenly behind schedule or in a meeting?

Calling on architects and designers is, for many manufacturers, either viewed as an entry-level position or as part of the responsibility of the local dealer's sales personnel. Many manufacturers view this person's responsibility as updating your library, sort of like delivering newspapers. Either way, if that person gets in front of you, your time is likely going to be spent listening to a novice attempting to learn the ins and outs of selling or sitting through a "hard sell" approach by a sales person intent on making a commission. Does it really have to be that way?

Manufacturers are starting to change their approach, and practitioners need to know how to get the most out of their reps. The right reps can be the key to unlocking a wealth of resources that often go untapped.

For example, Jeld-Wen has recast their most experienced sales representatives as architectural consultants. Their primary focus is to become valuable partners to design teams.

Jeld-Wen consultants are required to join CSI and pass both the CST and CCPR exams. Both of these exams require extensive knowledge of the *Manual of Practice* (MOP), the bible of commercial construction practice and protocol. Additionally, each consultant is required to become LEED accredited and to become an expert in the latest innovations in fenestration installation.

However, this training means nothing if a consultant doesn't know how to be the

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resource the design professionals need and want. A good consultant should be available when needed, provide quick and accurate information, suggest solutions to window and door challenges, and, most importantly, stay on task and be respectful of your valuable time. Based on our experience with reframing the relationship between architects, product specifiers and reps, here are a few questions we recommend asking in your next meeting with a

consultant to help get the most out of this interaction:

What training have you completed? This question will separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. The consultants who represent the most value to your practice are those who have knowledge of the MOP and standard specification guidelines.

What support services are available during the design process, and who is the point person? Make sure you know whom to call when questions inevitably arise and you need product options that will help solve a design challenge. When you know you're talking to the right person at a manufacturer, one call can save hours of research.

Who is the certification "guru"? Demand for LEED certification, as well as the high level of interest in using sustainable building products, means a new body of knowledge is needed for product specification. Manufacturers are getting savvy about this too, and the right consultant can be an invaluable resource for recommending products that are certified and qualify for LEED innovation credits.

What online resources are available? Manufacturers are moving beyond simply posting product specs in text form. Find out which suppliers are offering free 2D and 3D CAD templates, such as Revit and AutoCAD, that can speed along construction documents.

In your next meeting with a consultant, try these questions on for size. I bet you will uncover information that will save time, money, and resources on your next project. 