

GET SPECIFIED:

TIPS FOR BUILDING PRODUCT MANUFACTURERS AND SUPPLIERS

Kendall Jones

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OVERVIEW

As a building product manufacturer (BPM), trying to get specified by architects may seem like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be. The key is to focus less on selling your products and focus more on building relationships with architects and specifiers. Position your company as a leading expert on the types of products you deliver and provide them with all the information they need when researching and selecting products to specify on their product.



HOW TO GET SPECIFIED

Competition for getting specified is fierce. If you aren't proactively providing resources and information about your products to architects, you're facing an uphill battle. Architects tend to specify products they know, products requested by clients, and tend to focus on a manufacturer brand over just a reference standard. While architects are growing more open to change, they still tend to stick with manufacturers they know or who are leaders in their industry.

Here are some helpful tips and tricks on how to get specified on future construction projects. These ideas can be implemented to put you ahead of your competition and position you as the first person architects and specifiers turn to when they need technical advice on specifying the right products for their projects.

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UNDERSTAND YOUR MARKET

This requires a bit of research. The first step is to understand the types of buildings your products are used in and then identify the leading architecture firms designing them. You want to market to segments that are right for your products.

Talk with architects and specifiers to get an understanding of their specification process. Find out what's most important to them when selecting products to specify. This can vary among architects and even between the different projects they design. Aesthetics and quality may be the top priority at one firm where the cost and lead time is more important at another. Use your research to create buyer personas so you can effectively market your products.

Don't overlook other members of the design team or key decision makers such as the architect's



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PROVIDE SOLUTIONS

If an architect contacts you, they aren't looking for you to sell them something. Chances are they're looking to solve a design problem and need more information on your product category or a specific product you offer.

They don't want to talk to a salesperson. They're looking for an industry expert and a technical advisor. If they are asking about a specific product you offer but you have something else that better meets their needs, speak up and let them know.

Authenticity matters. Be upfront and honest about your products and their capabilities. If your product doesn't meet an architect's needs, tell them. You may not get specified on their current project, but you've just established yourself as a trusted advisor who they will turn to on future projects.



As Seen at



Last year CONSTRUCT offered timely educational sessions, including "AIA 2019 Documents: Understanding the Changing Roles of the Construction Manager" presented by Lane Beougher, Ohio Facilities Construction Commission, and Robin Banks, Goldberg & Banks P.C. Participants learned how to properly allocate risks and responsibilities to achieve a successful project to the benefit of all project stakeholders.

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OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBSITE

Architects and specifiers are looking for information about your products on your website. Make it easy for them to navigate and search your site to conduct research. If your website is clunky, hard to navigate, or slow to load, it's going to turn off architects and specifiers. Make sure your website is optimized for search engines so architects can find your site when they start searching.

Each product you offer should have its own page. At the very least, the product page should have downloadable specifications, high-quality images or video of the product, product descriptions,

downloadable digital models such as CAD and BIM and CSI formatted specifications.

Additional information you should consider adding to your product pages includes building code requirements, information on meeting requirements for certification programs like LEED or BREEAM, building product declarations such as environmental product declarations (EPDs) and health product declarations (HPDs), and quantity calculators.

Case studies, video testimonials, and how-to installation or application videos are all

resources you should be providing about your products. Make it easy for architects to order free samples of your products and locate local suppliers and distributors of your products.

Don't forget about the power of social media. This is another place, in addition to your website that architects and specifiers will turn to as they research building products. All of the information you provide on your website can be broken down into smaller and easily digestible content that you can share on your social media accounts.

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PROVIDE CONTINUING EDUCATION

Architects are required to obtain a certain number of continuing education units to maintain their licenses or fulfill their American Institute of Architects (AIA) membership requirements.

Webinars, lunch and learns, and other continuing education offerings are a great way to get in front of architects and build brand awareness. These presentations should help educate architects about your product category or provide other information to expand their knowledge base. They should not be glorified commercials about your specific product offerings.

Again, the goal is to establish your company as an expert and be a go-to resource of information for your product category, not just your products. This keeps you top of mind when decision makers are choosing who gets specified on a project. Make sure your continuing education offerings have been registered and approved by the AIA through their Continuing Education System (CES).



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At CONSTRUCT, participants can choose from over 50 interactive sessions featuring relevant topics presented by AEC industry experts. As an added bonus, sessions qualify for continuing education credits with AIA, BOMI, CSI, GBCI, IIBEC, and NARI.

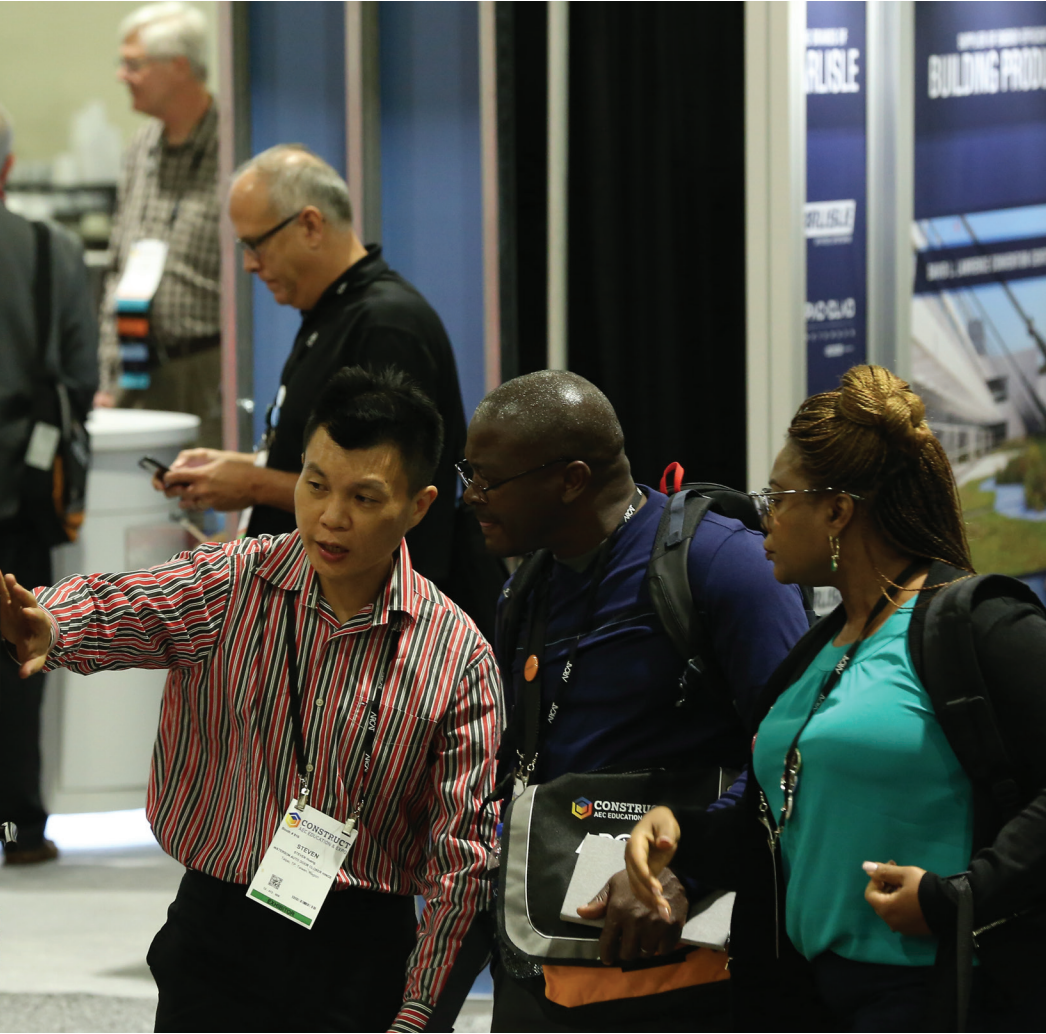


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MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE

These days, manufacturers are competing more and more for influence over architects with contractors, consultants, and interior designers during the specification process. When an architect reaches out to you for advice or more information on your products you should be responding as quickly as possible. If you don't, you run the risk of them turning to someone else be it a competitor or a third-party and losing your voice.

During the specification process, offer to help architects review, edit, and revise specifications of your products. The more support you provide to architects, the more likely they will turn to you first when working on future projects.

As Seen at



AEC industry professionals working together to tackle challenges and solve problems in an open environment are anticipated at the NEW Content and Connections Lounge on the show floor where featured CONSTRUCT speakers will host mini educational chat sessions on trending topics affecting the industry today.

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RELATIONSHIPS ARE KING

This is hands down the best way to consistently get specified. Architects will rely on existing relationships when determining what products to specify on a given construction project.

Part of that will be based on trust from experience with products that they know they can rely on. The other part is in building relationships through some of the various methods discussed above, like offering continuing education courses or establishing your company as a trusted technical advisor.

You want architects and specifiers to turn to you when they need help solving problems. Your product might not be the right fit for every project they design, but if you build the right kind of relationships with architects, you'll be the first company they think of when they start specifying products.



As Seen at



At CONSTRUCT there are networking lounges and social events to help attendees stay connected with friends and meet one-on-one with AEC professionals that spec and source building products.

ABOUT KENDALL JONES



Kendall Jones is an experienced Editor in Chief at ConstructConnect. He has been writing about the construction industry for years, covering a wide range of topics from safety and technology to industry news and operating insights. He has strong media and communication skills with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) focused in English Language and Literature from North Carolina State University.

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