

Ten Key Points for Writing a Smart Specification

specification

,spesɪfɪˈkeɪʃ(ə)n/

noun

noun: specification; plural noun: specifications

1. an act of identifying something precisely or of stating a precise requirement.

"give a full specification of the job advertised"

This guide provides 10 key points to writing a smart specification, whether it's for a ceiling, partition, floor or any other element within the finishes and interiors sector that you are planning to specify.

When starting your next project, don't be tempted to cut-and-paste from the last project; take a fresh look and see for yourself the benefits of following this simple guidance:

1. Talk to the manufacturer
2. Performance is king (fire, sound etc)
3. Consider the interface with other elements
4. Understand the use now and in the future
5. Understand the budget
6. Understand the programme and site conditions
7. Understand the vision and client aspiration
8. Ensure the performance and workmanship requirements and standards are clearly included
9. Understand the implications of maintenance
10. Understand the environmental implications and what will happen at end of life

Do not be wary of specifying new products.

1	Talk to the manufacturer	Manufacturers have the expertise to interpret your designs to the most cost-effective solution to meet all aspects of the brief, and they can help develop solutions to meet specific requirements.
2	Performance is king	Performance is probably the most important aspect of a specification (fire, sound etc) so performance is key to getting a smart specification. A product may look great, and be under budget, yet it will be useless if it can't perform in the way you want.

		It's important that you convey that performance requirement unambiguously stating what standard the product should have been tested to, and specify systems not individual products that may not have been tested together. In AD B it states that the person specifying a product is responsible for ensuring it complies with this building regulation.
3	Consider the interface with other elements	It has been said that the edge is the most important element of a construction project, and therefore the interaction of elements is crucial.
4	Understand the use now and in the future	As operational and work practices are changing rapidly to accommodate a new agile workforce; flexibility may be required from some products like partitioning to accommodate change. The wall may require shelving or ceramic tiling to be added, or may even have security requirement.
5	Understand the budget	As budgets will vary greatly from project to project, with varying performance levels required depending on the installation in question, specifiers can make their budget work harder for them by speaking to a specialist, experienced contractor who should be able to suggest where cost savings can be made without compromising the end result.
6	Understand the programme and site conditions	Of course, whilst careful planning and budgeting can account for most things, the availability of the selected system can hold up the operation of the facility.
7	Understand the vision and client aspiration	This can be in terms of aesthetics, and in terms of how the space works, for example; can I hold a private meeting or can my teams work collaboratively, is it a good acoustic space?
8	Ensure the performance and workmanship requirements and standards are clearly included	Specifying a product is only halfway there if you don't state the standard of workmanship and quality that's expected at handover, this is particularly important where you are specifying finishes. There are several British standards that refer to workmanship on site, and we always recommend asking for a benchmark to allow the rest of the work to be measured against.
9	Understand the implications of maintenance	A product in a high traffic area will undoubtedly require a different maintenance regime to say a boardroom. Products that can meet the need with minimum maintenance and cost should be a first choice.
10	Understand the environmental implications and what will happen at end of life	Specification considerations may in some cases be steered by the company's CSR or environmental policy statement. As a result, the need to meet these requirements can result in a very specific solution being needed – meeting a good BREEAM or SKA Rating for example can impact the initial specification process.
And	Do not be wary of specifying new products	This is how new products are developed.
	Remember products must be Equal and approved, not Equal or approved	Remember that the person specifying a performance product to meet the requirements of the building regulations is responsible for ensuring they comply; so any alternative should be equal and should be approved by the specifier.