

Why To Consider Using a Consultant

by Elise Crain

A decorative concrete consultant, according to *Concrete Decor*, can help with product and installation procedures, assist with selecting qualified installers, and provide preparation and enforcement of specifications.

Architectural Concrete Consultants' Jeff Potvin is an engineer who looks at a project with the technical eye of an engineer and the practical eye of a consultant with many years experience in development, education, and installation of decorative concrete. Alternative Finishes' Wes Vollmer brings the eye of the artist and the experience of a contractor with many years of teaching the development and installation of decorative concrete. Both radiate enthusiasm for the decorative industry and the desire to help the industry grow.

"We wanted it done right the first time!" reports Mike Allen of Drath & Allen, a decorative contractor in the Atlanta area. They employed Vollmer on a chemical stain restaurant project. Bret Henderson in Waterloo, Indiana, asked Potvin to be apart of his project in order to reduce the learning curve. "We saved several months in learning and learned more than we expected," says Henderson. Jose Bello, a multi-media artist in the Tampa area wanted the artist's-eye training from Vollmer. Vollmer says, "My love for stained concrete helps because I am always striving for perfection, I feel that I am able to convey the 'language' of decorative concrete easily, I am a contractor too and can understand the problems that occur on a daily basis."

As an architect, engineer, or property owner, hiring a consultant provides guidance in the early stages of design. A consultant can deliver ideas, define costs in time and money, establish and safeguard the sequence of construction events and assure proper preparation and protection of the concrete.

Making use of a consultant can expand the range of projects offered. In Potvin's words, "Contractors can receive advice on product selections, layout, and scheduling. On-site training and troubleshooting gives the contractor the



confidence they need to complete projects or just get started in the industry."

Sometimes a decorative project doesn't work out right... the color or finish is not acceptable—a consultant will provide solutions to these problems and insight on how to make necessary changes to the job. Potvin's combination of engineering and contracting "gives me a broader understanding of how products work, I continually educate myself on products and procedures to save my clients time and money." Vollmer states "I treat every project as if it were mine."

With decorative concrete, in particular, customers are often seeking the most unique finish imaginable. Discerning customers may often leave the contractor scrambling for ideas. In such cases, a consultant brings knowledge of both new and existing products and finishes, colors and patterns and can propose options compatible with a project's time-line and budget. Consultants should open doors and windows of creativity. They normally do not promote a particular line of products

but rather, variations of several. Their experience provides knowledge of the value and strength of many kinds of products.

Consultants can train workers and supervise daily operations, freeing other professionals to focus on what they do best. In the event that legal challenges occur, a consultant's credentials can facilitate a solution to conflicts.

Knowing that mistakes within concrete applications can be a costly affair, the value a consultant offers to a project's design and specifications, management, training, and/or application makes them a tremendous resource. Plan to properly compensate your consultant, paying for experience and knowledge as you expect to be paid for your experience and knowledge. Potvin says "Peace of mind" is the service provided by a consultant.



Editor's note: See Concrete Decor magazine's Classified section on page 52 for information on Consulting Services.