

# OCCCSI Trade Show 2024

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this case, the USPS was very interested in using an IRMA type roofing system with several types of single ply roofing systems, one of them having no equal of any type. Obviously, this was not legally possible, so an interesting work around was proposed, accepted, and bid. The specifier wrote a section for the proprietary peel and stick/IRMA roofing system, a competitive IRMA/EPDM roofing system, and a conventional competitive BUR/IRMA roofing system. Each section was listed as an alternative to the base bid. In the final analysis, the most competitive system was the BUR and it was installed. However, each of the systems were specified and had a chance to demonstrate their competitive value. This process has been used successfully on many public and “or equal” type projects. The key for product manufacturers and reps in this scenario is the ability to write alternate specs since the specifier will often indicate they are too busy to do so.

## Installer Based Specifications

In some cases, sole source and highly proprietary products can be successfully bid by using competitive installers. The basic specification indicates the proprietary product but then lists the acceptable installers and appropriate qualities for approving installer substitutions. The critical issue for this procedure to be successful is that each installer must be able to obtain the product at the same cost, so that competition is solely based on the installer’s competitive ability. If it is not possible to confirm or mandate the product cost, using a product allowance can be considered to keep the competition based on installation cost rather than product cost. A legal opinion from the public client probably should be considered for this type of bid specification. Industry knowledge and expertise is critical for the success of this scenario and must be provided by the product representative.

## True Performance Specifications

A true performance specification is a fair way of obtaining a competitive shot at getting a proprietary product installed in an “or equal” type project. The key to success is that performance criteria must be able to be met by other competitive products within a reasonable and competitive set of limitations. Also, truly competitive performance specifications must be validated by industry recognized (ASTM, ANSI, etc.) testing procedures conducted by an independent 3rd party testing agency. This can be very time consuming and costly, but can offer a leading edge, innovative product manufacturer an opportunity to get new products designed into significant public and institutional projects. The keys to success include other product systems that can be produced to meet functionally equivalent criteria using different materials and methods. Mock-ups are highly recommended for quality assurance under this scenario. *Continued on page 14*



Speaker Colonel Charles J. Quilter



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After suffering dozens of comments from angry manufacturers and reps about having to be competitive when products are cutting edge, innovative, and solve significant owner problems, what should be done? Why spend mega-bucks on research and development while the competition just follows along. Consider the following points. First, if you are not the lead dog, the view never changes. Change and innovation are inseparable factors in any successful venture. Second, and more to the point, while low bid is certainly not good construction business, it is sound, proven public policy. Consider product specification and bidding processes for public work in other parts of the world. Experience shows that quality and innovation are not even serious considerations. Rather than complain about reasonable public policy, look for innovative ways to support public policy and creative ways to get innovative products specified. Success will be rare and require much time and energy, however the results can be significant recognition and expanded opportunities for leadership and innovation in the public sector.

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## Drunken Grammarians, Ancient Aliens, and the Wishful Mood of English by Bill Schmalz, CSI

“Pardon me, I was using the subjunctive instead of the past tense. Yes, we’re way past tents. We’re living in bungalows now.”—Groucho Marx, *Animal Crackers*

For today’s writing advice for design and construction professionals, I want to talk about English grammar, and how— Wait! Don’t go! This won’t be as bad as you think. I promise to make it at least somewhat interesting. I’ll even talk about the Mamas & the Papas, and everyone likes them, right?

Most adults get nervous when the subject of grammar comes up. They remember being taught the subject in elementary and high school, along with a lot of arcane grammatical terms (future perfect progressive tense, predicate nominatives, and—my favorite—copulative verbs). But here’s a little secret: We don’t need to know most grammatical terms, because if English is our native language, we learned almost all the grammar we will ever need before we entered elementary school. Simply by learning to speak the language (and by being corrected when we misspoke), we learned to distinguish what sounds right (generally correct grammar) from what sounds wrong (generally incorrect grammar).

I like to compare grammar to walking on a sidewalk. When the sidewalk is flat and dry, and we’re sober, we can walk flawlessly without thinking about the act of walking. That’s how we use grammar most of the time—thoughtlessly, soberly, and flawlessly. But let’s say we’re not sober. In fact, let’s say we’re sloppy drunk. Now as we teeter along on the sidewalk, we have to pay careful attention to our every step, or we might slip and fall. That’s what happens occasionally with grammar: We encounter, every once in a while, a situation where we have to think about what we’re saying, or we risk making a grammatical slip. And one of the trickiest such situations, one that can make even a grammarian seem tipsy, is the subjunctive mood.

Moods in language aren’t about being happy, bashful, or grumpy. Rather, moods are ways for speakers and writers to express their attitudes about statements. For example, I would use the indicative mood to express something I know is true (“Brick likes an arch.”) or that I think is true (“I think Brick likes an arch.”). I’d use the interrogative mood to ask a question (“What do you want,

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