

Flooring

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The right resin flooring specification

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In previous issues of *Flooring Magazine*, we've spoken a lot about the comprehensive approach to resin flooring called the Five Rs and the five elements it comprises.

Much of the coverage on these five elements have been in relation to past flooring projects in order demonstrate how they apply and the positive outcomes they help achieve. Now we want to drill down deeper into some of the specifics – starting with specification.

In this article, we'll review the objectives of the specification process from a resin flooring perspective and provide insight into some pivotal considerations that go into forming the so-called right specification.

Specification Objectives

It must be said right from the outset that many projects struggle because the specification doesn't accomplish what it should. A common mistake many make in this regard is falling into the trap of trying to find a single product "X" that is the complete solution to whatever challenges the project is throwing up.

Not only is this approach unrealistic from a product capability point of view, it also has the unintended effect of actively encouraging manufacturers and suppliers to exaggerate the selection criteria and capabilities of their products to exclude others. The fact that some specifications are cut and pasted from previous projects provides even further incentive for competitive stretching of the truth.

In contrast, the aim of a good specification isn't singling out THE perfect product, but rather to paint a bigger picture for everyone involved – the project conditions, performance requirements, and customer expectations on the floor.



Above: Commercial Flooring Specification

Focusing on the context rather than the detail in this way establishes guidelines that allow the project to stay on the right track no matter what. If you only specify a product and fail to define the bookends, you can get into big trouble if something changes along the way. In these cases, those involved are forced to cross their fingers and press ahead with the original product because there's no clarity about what could or should be used instead.

To get that invaluable clarity, the right specification can be seen as an exercise in mapping out two parts of the project we'll look further into now.

The Floor Specification

The aim of the floor specification is to understand what type of floor the client needs by defining what they're trying to achieve, and what the expectations, conditions and restrictions of the project are.

To get the right floor specification, there are up to 13 elements that should be considered

on every project, ranging from preferred flooring design through to the budget a client may have at their disposal.

While some are relatively straightforward to address, like slip resistance requirements and UV exposure, there are a few that can catch people out and are worth highlighting here:

1. Main Function – While it may seem like an obvious thing, some specifications never factor in the most fundamental question of all: What is the main goal of the new floor? Is it to repair damage, get a fresh look, improve safety, protect against traffic? Looking to refresh a property before sale is an entirely different proposition to protecting a warehouse floor from heavy vehicle traffic.

2. Shutdown – Shutdown periods can have a major impact on the system used. Speed is typically a key factor here, however it can also encompass issues such as sensitive worksites or work outside of normal hours. Whatever restraints are in place, you need to make sure the products are going to be suitable.



Above: Busy Worksite

- 3. Cleaning** – The question of how a floor will be cleaned is perhaps the most overlooked of all specification issues. The frequency of cleaning, as well as the chemicals, temperature and equipment used must all be considered to make sure the floor can be cleaned effectively without suffering damage.



Above: Abattoir Floor

The Subfloor Specification

In addition to the type of floor needed, the choice of flooring product or system will also be affected by the type of floor the client already has.

The aim of the subfloor specification is to understand the condition of the existing floor and the treatment required to make it suitable for resin flooring. In some cases, selection will be heavily influenced by what can or can't be done with the subfloor.

To get the right subfloor specification, there are up to 12 elements that should be considered on every project, ranging from removal of the existing floor through to crack repair and even coving requirements.

Unlike the floor specification, however, there are rarely simple answers to the questions that get asked in this process. Substrate assessment is arguably the most challenging aspect of all flooring projects and in many cases a successful outcome will hinge on the decisions made during this task.

While there are many tricky elements, once again we'll take a quick look at three common ones that are often overlooked or underestimated:

- 1. Joints** – The desire to have a beautiful seamless finish with resin flooring can lead to some bad decisions when it comes to the different types of joints on a floor. Understanding which joints can be filled and covered over is one thing, but a lot of work can also go into making sure the joints kept are strong, functional, and in line with aesthetic goals.

- 2. Slab Flatness** – A concrete slab that isn't flat can cause many headaches, including patchiness in non-slip floors and design issues with decorative flooring due to pigment pooling. The reality is, most slabs aren't perfectly flat and the impact this could have on a flooring system should be checked.



Above: Entrance Mat Well

- 3. Transitions** – The biggest mistake made in this area is not identifying all the transitions on a floor. Regular retail flooring features such as mat wells at front entrances, electrical data boxes and drains can leave many projects in the lurch with how to handle them. Can they get them flush with adjacent surfaces? Should transition strips be used?

While a full examination of all the floor and subfloor considerations is beyond the scope of this article, hopefully the advantages of focussing on context with resin flooring specifications are starting to become clearer.

By taking the time to develop a full profile of the project demands, expectations, conditions and even peculiarities, not only can the most suitable product be selected at the start, but any unforeseen challenges arising during installation can be more easily dealt with. ▲



Above: Concrete Slab Flatness