New Blood For An Old Trade

The manufacturer, contractor and plasterer must work together to strengthen the exterior insulation field of construction.

During the past few years, the construction market has been flooded with many exterior insulation systems such as Cota, Dryvit, Settef, Finestone, and others. These systems have offered the industry a fresh, new, artistically pleasing alternative for achieving energy saving, cost efficient exteriors. These products combined with steel framing systems have made great in-roads into conventional construction application. Products like these will continually pump new and needed blood into the construction industry.

At present, a good share of this work is done by the lath and plaster trade. However, actual jurisdiction over these new products has been left up in the air. The amount of work these products generate will be tremendous as energy prices continue to soar. It is important that both the manufacturer and the contractor realize that there is a large, skilled, tool and trowel work force (lathers and plasterers) available for this application.

Manufacturers want their material to be skillfully applied so that the finished product will become a selling point for a continuous influx of new jobs. One well done job can sell a dozen new ones. Some manufacturers have offered training and licensing programs to assure a certain quality in application, but have often licensed the unskilled worker, overlooking the people trained to use the tools needed for their product application resulting in poor jobs and bad selling points. It is important for the manufacturer to recognize and promote the use of the skilled tradesman, a labor force which is readily available.

Many contractors have experienced problems in their first jobs with these products because they believed the sales pitch that “anybody can apply this product.” While it may be true that anybody can apply it, the results will probably be far from satisfactory. Contractors employing lathers and plasterers will rarely be disappointed with the end product. Using skilled workers with years of trade experience is to a certain extent practically a guarantee.

Also, plasterers in some cases have been reluctant to realize and accept the impact these exterior insulating systems are having on their jobs and the market in general. This pumping of new blood into the industry could create a direct artery into the trade if these plasterers seize the opportunity and go with it. It will be important for the plasterer to shake off some of the old ways and new skepticisms and take advantage of the natural opportunity placed before him.

The decision of the manufacturer, contractor, and plasterer to work together will definitely strengthen this new, growing field of the construction industry. Through this type of cooperation, the quality needed to broaden this untold sales market can be and will be achieved.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: AWCI is addressing this very problem by bringing the unions and manufacturers together to exchange valid information and instructions.