SHAFT WALL: A MARKET FOR THE ASKING

It can increase your contract share—but you do need to sell it

By T. D. MacQueen
Gypsum Association

Gypsum shaft walls are still relatively new, but they have been around long enough so contractors who haven’t actually used them on a job are at least aware of their availability. As a wall and ceiling contractor you are also aware of some of the advantages gypsum shaft walls provide in high rise construction: economical fire and sound control, much lighter weight and more usable floor space and it minimizes clean-up problems.

It’s an outstanding new product—one that provides definite advantages to all those who use it—including a larger slice of the contract for you.

So, all you have to do is sit back and wait for the orders to roll in, right?

Wrong!

That old saying of “Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door” simply doesn’t apply any more, if, indeed, it ever did. The world has to be made aware that you can build a better mousetrap, how much better it is, and the advantages of using it.

Many contractors are already telling clients about the many virtues of gypsum shaft walls, of course, and manufacturers, too, are spreading the word. But, this is still a relatively new product and, as with most new products, people have to be convinced that the change is for the better.

There are individuals who have been doing something one way for years and just don’t like the idea of any kind of change. They have to be shown that gypsum shaft wall enclosures can do the job better than the products they have been accustomed to using. This includes builders, architects, designers, general contractors, building code officials and your own employees.

Cite Examples

The fact the gypsum shaft walls have been on the market for awhile is a decided plus at this point. It enables you to cite successful examples of its use in all sections of the country.

Bear in mind that if shaft walls for

The increased advertising by masonry interests in the electronic and print media brings added competitive pressures upon our industry and our companies that requires immediate attention.

Each of us—owner, manager, employee—must effectively communicate the advantages and benefits of the products and systems that we install. Each of us—as representatives of our industry, and as representatives of our firms—must join with the product manufacturers in selling the decision makers on our products and on our work.

This article appeared in the March 1975 issue of Construction Dimensions Magazine and is presented by the Foundation of the Wall and Ceiling Industry. We gratefully acknowledge the update of the article by its author, Don MacQueen, Vice President, Gypsum Association.

It will be valuable to every member in your firm—and is an excellent sales primer on gypsum shaft wall systems and projects the positive attitude that will help our industry and our firms meet and overcome competitive challenges.
Bear In mind that if shaft walls for elevator hoistways, stairwells, and chase walls are Included In the project, our share of the construction contract will be larger.

elevator hoistways, stairwells and chase walls are included in the project, your share of the construction contract will be larger. So seize every opportunity to impress on decision-making people the advantage of using them.

And don’t forget those who have access to other decision-makers. You may be surprised at the number of people who hear second hand about the concept and come back to you, the wall and ceiling contractor, for more information.

The increasing number of high rise buildings that will be constructed in the future represents a tremendous potential market for gypsum shaft walls. There is a great demand for maximum usable space on expensive, limited, land space; thus a need for light, economical, durable and dependable construction material and systems. Gypsum shaft walls meet all of these criteria.

Everyone involved with high rise construction (building code officials in particular) should be made aware that gypsum shaft wall enclosures are especially designed to provide increased fire resistance. They have been tested by accredited laboratories.

Test references are available from each manufacturer and you would do well to have a copy of the Gypsum Association’s FIRE RESISTANCE DESIGN MANUAL on hand for your information and use as an authoritative reference (Also available through AWCI). This publication, which is referenced in the model codes promulgated by Building Officials and Code Administrations International (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) and the Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI), contains test data and references on numerous systems with ratings from one to four hours.

In addition to satisfying fire resistance requirements, gypsum shaft wall enclosures can provide improved sound control over other conventional enclosures.

**Key Advantages**

Because of its light weight, ease and speed of erection, and cost savings, the gypsum shaft wall enclosure offers advantages of key interest to architects, designers, builders, general contractors and other trades.

To begin with, consider the weight factor. The gypsum shaft wall weighs approximately 10 to 13 pounds per square foot compared to masonry enclosures weighing from 20 to 45 pounds per square foot. So your gypsum board shaft wall can weigh as little as one quarter as much as the masonry wall.

Space saving is an important factor, too, a money maker for the builder-a major selling point. Since gypsum shaft wall enclosures physically take up less space than masonry, it means there is that much more usable space, increasing the sale and rental value of the building. And don’t forget the savings bonus gained by eliminating tons of dead weight in structural steel that would be needed to support masonry walls.

These are specific examples of savings which can be passed along to the
Eases Clean-up

Some of the systems have individual panels which can be removed to allow for maintenance within the shaft. In the case of the elevator hoistway it is not necessary to wait until the walls are completed before installing the elevator; clean-up within the shaft is reduced to practically zero. It takes less manpower and less time to erect, and there is no wait for curing or drying.

Such easy clean-up is a strong selling point. At least one enterprising gypsum drywall contractor has used it in a positive fashion. He coordinated clean-up for the entire job and handled it himself, further expanding his share of the contract.

The pioneering of gypsum shaft wall construction is now past—you are dealing with a proven product. Here is a sampling of buildings which have incorporated gypsum shaft walls in their construction:

First National Bank of Oregon, Portland, Oregon; First Valley Bank Building, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Hilton Office Towers, Pasadena, California; IDS Building, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Marine Midland Center, Buffalo, New York; Mechanics Bank Building, Worcester Center, Massachusetts.

Other buildings enjoying advantages of gypsum shaft enclosures are: Sears Administrative Office Building, Alhambra, California, Sears Tower, Chicago, Illinois; Standard Oil Building, Chicago, Illinois; 222 Riverside Plaza Building, Chicago, Illinois; United California Bank Building, Los Angeles, California, Wilshire Doheny Plaza, Beverly Hills, California; World Trade Center, New York City.

Success Stories Help

Don’t hesitate to mention them as successful examples, particularly if they are in your general area—or find some other examples closer to home and use them. There is nothing like a success story to help promote a product or a concept.

The new, more economical gypsum shaft wall systems are replacing standard masonry installations in high rise buildings. There is no question about that, and contractors are making profits as a result. The reason is simple: These products perform. They provide savings in time, money and space. They meet building codes at minimal cost.

The potential market for shaft walls is currently growing with their recent introduction as air supply and return shafts. This is another area that can further increase your share of the contract.

The market is there; the more you sell the idea, the greater your chance of increasing your share of the contract and thus your profit.