

Influencing Product Decisions
specification and beyond

Barbour Index plc

Barbour Index is a leading supplier of specialist information services to construction industry professionals, to facilities managers and to those responsible for health and safety at work. The company publishes technical and product information using a range of delivery media, including hard copy, CD ROM, on-line and via the web.

Barbour employs more than 150 people and has an annual turnover in excess of £15m.

The company has an ongoing programme aimed at improving existing services and developing new ones. Since the acquisition of Barbour Index by Havas in 1999, there has been an increased level of investment in the development of market-leading electronic services across the range of markets that Barbour serves.

Barbour Index has a long term commitment to meeting its customers' changing information needs and delivering them in the formats they demand.

Lychgate Projects Ltd

Lychgate is a marketing, market research and lead generation company, offering a specialist service throughout the construction market. Its services are supplied across the full breadth of the building industry, from design professionals to product manufacturers, main contractors, sub contractors, developers and end users.

The company's nation-wide field force of interviewers is highly experienced in the challenges of identifying and interviewing decision-makers within business environments. Applying its skills, research expertise and market knowledge, the company specialises in providing tailored solutions to meet clients' specific information needs.

Influencing Product Decisions

Specification and Beyond

Foreword *page 2*

Michael G Ankers, Chief Executive, Construction Products Association

1. **Introduction** *page 2*
2. **Report highlights** *page 3*
3. **Research sources and definitions** *page 4*
 - 3.1 Research sources
 - 3.2 Definitions
4. **Approach to construction procurement** *page 6*
 - 4.1 Clients' approach to recent projects
 - 4.2 The impact of industry initiatives
5. **Current specification policies and practices** *page 8*
 - 5.1 Specification policies
 - 5.2 The extent of branding in specifications
 - 5.3 Specifiers' expectations when stating brands
 - 5.4 Circumstances when brands are more likely to be stated
6. **Product information sources** *page 11*
 - 6.1 The search for information on specific products
 - 6.2 Libraries and hard copy information
 - 6.3 Use of the web or CD ROM for product information
 - 6.4 Next steps after searching for information
7. **Specification preparation** *page 14*
 - 7.1 The Client's role
 - 7.2 Consulting Sub-contractors
8. **The process of suggesting alternatives to the specification** *page 16*
 - 8.1 The extent of the practice of offering alternatives
 - 8.2 Reasons why alternatives are offered
 - 8.3 Reasons why alternatives are accepted
9. **Tracked specification and product selection processes** *page 19*
 - 9.1 Client involvement
 - 9.2 Type of specification made at detailed design stage
 - 9.3 Summary of parties involved in the selection of a manufacturer
10. **Importance of product-related features in choice of brand** *page 23*
11. **Assistance required and received from manufacturers** *page 24*
 - 11.1 Important aspects of manufacturer support
 - 11.2 Satisfaction with the support received
 - 11.3 Main reasons for choosing a manufacturer
 - 11.4 Features of an 'excellent' supplier
12. **Improvements required to manufacturers' performance** *page 30*
13. **Case studies - some examples of brand selection** *page 33*

FOREWORD

Michael G Ankers, Chief Executive, Construction Products Association

The second half of the 1990s was undoubtedly a time when the industry began to rethink construction. Whilst many people thought that this was focused on what happened on site, in reality the process of specification and product selection has an equally important part to play in ensuring the cost, time, and quality improvements that the industry and its clients desire, are achieved.

Against that background, this report provides a very interesting insight into what influences product specification and selection. It identifies one of the problems that has long frustrated product manufacturers in obtaining a specification only for somebody further down the line to select a different product. This is invariably a waste of time for all those involved, and whilst the practice is often justified on cost grounds, as the report makes clear, the consequences of working with the cheapest product available may prove to be more expensive for the project overall.

Another feature of the changing construction industry is the increasing influence of each member of the construction team on product selection. As a result, it is more important than ever for the manufacturers to establish links with all relevant parties at an early stage, and to be a genuine partner in the process throughout. Taking up this theme, the report provides a detailed insight into the importance that Clients, Contractors, and Specifiers attach to the different services that manufacturers offer, their level of satisfaction with these and, critically, where they believe manufacturers can improve their performance.

There is much food for thought in this report for all those who appreciate the growing part that manufacturers have to play in driving forward 'Rethinking Construction'.

1. INTRODUCTION

Robin Wiltshire, General Manager, Manufacturer Services, Barbour Index

It became clear from our early consultation with product manufacturers that the subject for the 2000 Barbour Report is one of the major areas of concern for the industry.

This research returns to areas covered by the first Barbour Report published in 1993 'The Changing Face of Specification'. Although market conditions have altered since then, many of the challenges faced by building product manufacturers, relating to product specification, remain much the same.

How to get a product specified, and then protect the specification through all the subsequent processes, is the real challenge to management operating in the competitive industry we work in today.

A clear understanding of the people, practices and policies which influence specification is fundamental for the design of effective marketing and sales strategies across the industry.

Barbour Index has again made the significant investment in this research to ensure that our services are in tune with the major forces affecting this changing market.

Sharing this information with our Customers through The 2000 Barbour Report allows us to provide you with information which will support the creation of marketing initiatives, by delivering quantifiable answers to some of the most important questions relating to current specification practice.

2. REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The incidence of including brands in specifications is higher than anecdotal evidence suggests. Around four in ten Specifiers have a policy of including brands.
- In over 7 in 10 specifications examined, a brand or brands were stated - typically with 'or similar approved'.
- When stating a brand, half of Specifiers are benchmarking the quality which they expect the Contractor to achieve; only four in ten expect to see their choice used.
- Brands are more likely to be stated where product performance is critical and where appearance is important.
- Hard copy literature continues to be the main source of information. 88% of respondents have libraries and three-quarters of Architects said that the information in these influenced manufacturer choice.
- Past projects are referred back to when specifying and result in repeat specifications.
- Directories are the preferred source of third party information.
- Access to electronic information is now high, but actual use of manufacturers' electronic information on projects remains low.
- After the initial information search, over three-quarters of Specifiers make direct contact with manufacturers who then have the opportunity to capture them with support services – not all do this effectively.
- Clients and Sub-contractors are consulted during specification preparation. 85% of Clients have standard specifications and half of these contain product brands. Sub-contractors have design input to 40% of specifications.
- 8 in 10 Contractors believe they have more influence on brand specification now than they did three years ago. This influence lies largely in suggesting product alternatives.
- Two-thirds of specifications received by Contractors have brands in them. Contractors try to change over 60% and succeed with two-thirds of their attempts.
- The change process is a consultative one, involving discussions with the original Specifier and the Client.
- Alternatives are predominantly proposed for cost reasons, but not necessarily for the lowest price.
- Alternative products must match performance criteria to be accepted. To secure specifications, manufacturers must ensure that product characteristics are not easily replicated in cheaper form without identifiable loss of performance or quality.
- There are differences in opinion between Specifiers and Contractors on responsibility for product recommendation and decision-making.
- All parties agree that product performance is most influential on brand choice. Availability and past experience is placed ahead of initial cost by all but Contractors.
- There have been many industry initiatives designed to improve the construction process. Although many have had an influence, such as environmental considerations and sustainability, the research shows that the most influential have been cost in use and value assessments.
- There is a clear call for representatives to become technical problem-solvers. Attention to the speed of response to queries and after-sales service is also suggested.

3. RESEARCH SOURCES AND DEFINITIONS

3.1 Research Sources

Method

As with previous Barbour Reports, information has been compiled from a number of different research sources.

Group discussions

To guide the main interview programme, two focus groups of Specifiers and Contractors were held to debate the product decision-making process. Involving a mix of Architects, M&E Engineers, Quantity Surveyors and Contracts Managers within construction companies, a number of issues were discussed, including practices affecting brand specification, the processes involved, the influence of Contractors and Sub-contractors on the brands selected and satisfaction with the service received from manufacturers. The issues identified were subsequently included in the telephone interview programme for investigation in the wider market.

In-depth telephone interview programme

Brand decision-making, the parties involved, their influence on the process, and the services required of manufacturers, were examined in more depth in a programme of 364 telephone interviews. Each interview lasted, on average, half an hour. Part of this process was the investigation of actual brand decisions. Specifiers and Clients were asked to relate their answers to recent examples of products they had been involved in specifying. Wherever possible, the Contractor and Sub-contractor involved in working with that same product were also interviewed for their understanding of what had taken place.

The Client companies interviewed were major organisations frequently procuring construction projects, including leading manufacturers, banks and building societies, retailers, Government departments, NHS Trusts and property development companies.

- Number of interviews

ALL	364	100%
Architects	127	35%
M&E Engineers	46	13%
Contractors	113	31%
Sub-contractors	38	10%
Clients	40	11%

Barbour Index Building Product Compendium User Survey

With the publication of the Building Product Compendium each year, Barbour issues a questionnaire to all 22,000 recipients. These professionals cover the full spectrum of involvement in building, from Clients at the briefing stage, through those involved in design, specification and construction. The opportunity is taken to include questions related to the topic of each year's Barbour Report.

The first 5,000 questionnaires received, typically within a 3 week period after distribution, are independently analysed by Lychgate, providing the largest sample covering the full range of professions in all major sectors of the industry each year. Selected results, illustrating the information needs of construction professionals, have been included in this report.

Case studies

Eight projects were chosen from the detailed interview programme to illustrate the different influences on the brand decision process. These are presented in a consistent format as a series of case studies.

Previous Barbour Reports

Within this document, reference is made to previous Barbour Reports. The topics for this programme of research reports, published annually since 1993, have been chosen to define specification and communication practice and identify trends in the industry. Since 1993, Barbour Index has commissioned more than 3,500 in-depth interviews and has analysed some 40,000 detailed questionnaire responses from industry professionals in the preparation of these reports. Many of the issues identified in earlier reports remain relevant today.

The series consists of the following titles:

The Changing Face of Specification
Contractors' Influence on Product Decisions
The Influence of Clients on Product Decisions
Communicating with Construction Customers
Electronic Delivery of Product Information
The Building Maintenance and Refurbishment Market
The Sourcing and Exchange of Information
Influencing Product Decisions – Specification and Beyond

3.2 Definitions

Throughout this report, reference is made to the following parties:

Specifiers

Mainly Architects and Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) Engineers who are preparing designs and specifications within their particular area of expertise.

Clients

Representatives from Client organisations who are purchasing construction on a frequent basis and have developed skills and experience as a consequence.

Contractors

Main Contracting organisations responsible for the fulfilment of contracts under the Traditional, Design and Build or Construction Management formats.

Sub-contractors

Manufacturing, and/or supply and/or installation organisations who provide construction products and services, typically through the Main Contractor.

At various points in the research, respondents gave answers related to products included within different parts of a building and these have been analysed to identify possible differences. To achieve this, products were categorised into five broad areas as follows:

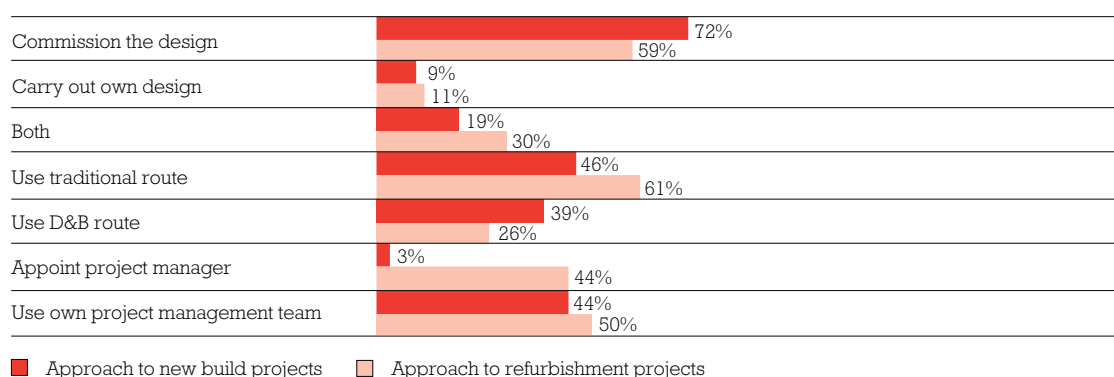
1. Sub-structure and structure; below ground works and above ground structure
2. External envelope, including windows, doors, roofs, cladding
3. Fit-out and finish, including internal walls, floors, ceilings, fittings
4. Services: mechanical, plumbing and electrical and other cabled systems
5. External works: hard landscaping, fencing, security.

4. APPROACH TO CONSTRUCTION PROCUREMENT

4.1 Clients' approach to recent projects

To set this detailed look at current specification practice in context, and to gain a better understanding of the procurement routes through which major Client companies are now acquiring construction services, forty Client organisations were included in this research to provide an insight into the approach taken on recent projects. Property Directors, Heads of Estates, Building Directors and Facilities Managers were prominent amongst the titles of those interviewed at major banks, retailers, manufacturing companies, property groups and others. They were asked a series of questions profiling their current approaches to various aspects of construction procurement.

- Clients' approach to recent projects



Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Few Clients are carrying out all design services internally. However, levels at 9% for new build and 11% for refurbishment are higher than identified in the 1995 Barbour Report ('The influence of Clients on product decisions') when 5% were carrying out design work using internal teams.

The lower levels of external design commissions for refurbishment projects might be explained by the use of Clients' internal skills, including the involvement of maintenance and facilities management resources.

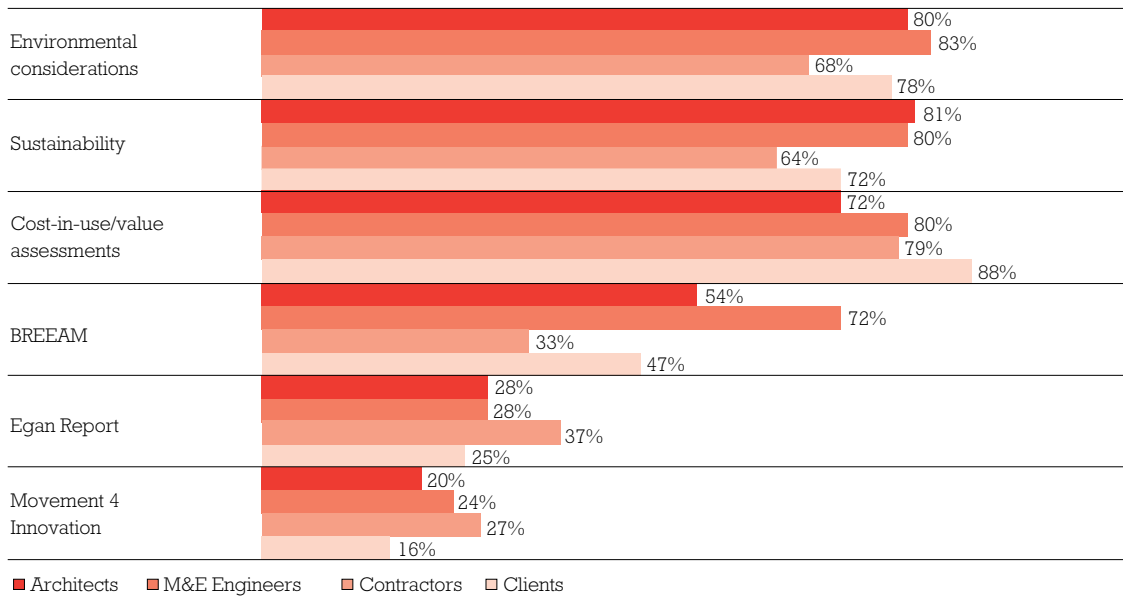
The levels of procurement under the traditional contract have fallen, particularly for new build. In 1995, 66% overall were using this form, this has now fallen to 46%. However, the levels of Design and Build do not appear to have risen accordingly. 45% were using D & B in 1995 with 39% now saying they use this. These figures suggest that Construction Management and other variants are used more widely.

4.2 The impact of industry initiatives

There have been many new initiatives within the construction industry designed to increase construction and design efficiency, reduce energy consumption and improve the value experience for Clients.

The following chart shows the proportion of respondents who considered that these initiatives have influenced product decision-making to some extent.

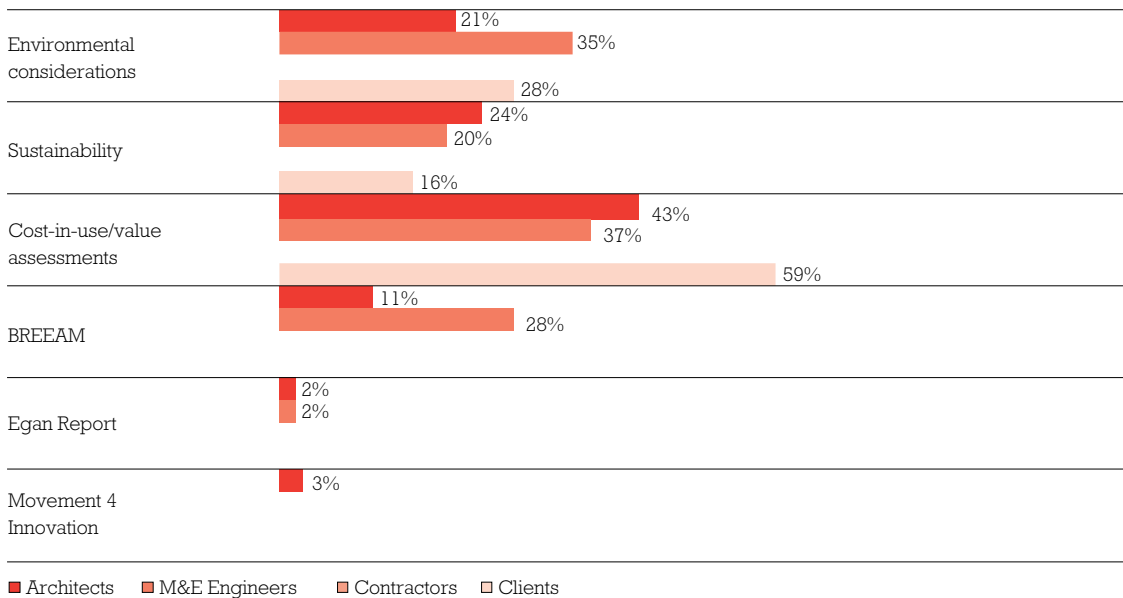
• The influence of industry initiatives on design and product decisions



Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The chart below indicates the initiatives that respondents thought have been most influential on design and product decision-making.

• The most influential initiative



Note: 28% of the respondents mentioned 'other' initiatives that mainly related to the impact of Health and Safety legislation and the introduction of the CDM regulations.

May add to more than 100% where more than one answer given.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

It is clear that some initiatives have had a bigger impact upon design and product decisions than others: environmental considerations, sustainability and the cost in use and value for money judgements are being considered across all parties in the process. Manufacturers must therefore ensure that information covering the performance of their product in all these areas is freely available.

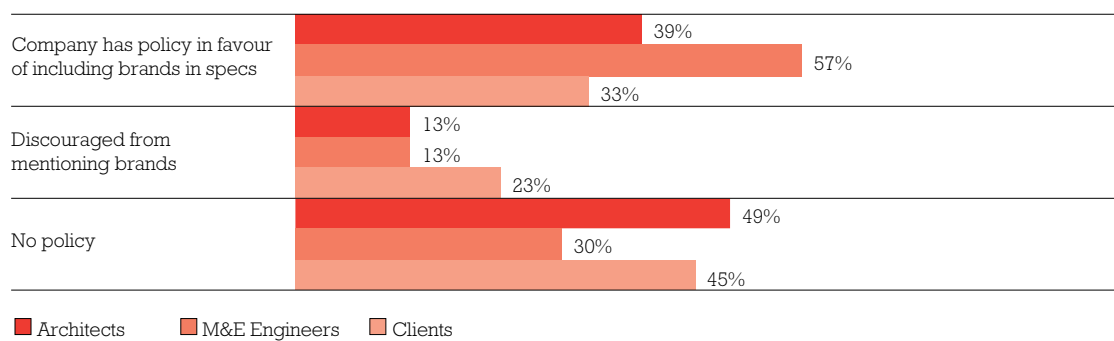
The BREEAM ratings, the findings of the Egan Report and the work of the Movement 4 Innovation have had less direct impact on product decision-making.

5. CURRENT SPECIFICATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

5.1 Specification policies

Current approaches to specification, and the practices and policies which affect this, were debated during the group discussions. Differing attitudes to the inclusion of product brands within written specifications were described, both from personal perspectives and those of employers and Clients. For example, some Specifiers spoke of policies against the use of any brand specification within their organisations. Others suggested that, for them, the exact opposite policy was applied. Some Clients give detailed comprehensive guidance which must be adhered to whilst others have no input at all.

- Existence of brand specification policy



Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The research found that amongst Architectural organisations, four in ten have policies which favour brand specification but 13% actively discourage this practice. Half have no firm policies.

The picture for M&E Engineers and Clients is a little different. Almost six in ten M&E organisations have policies favouring brand specification, whilst almost one-quarter of Clients discourage the practice.

The reasons behind the existence of policies in favour of including brands were investigated. Respondents across the sample indicated that they had, either currently or historically, researched product performance thoroughly and were therefore confident to continue to specify the researched brands. The other main reason mentioned is the need to set a standard for the project through the naming of specific products of a known quality.

Amongst those having a policy against the inclusion of named brands, supporting comments mainly attributed this to high percentages of work for the Public sector where the practice is discouraged. Others described a perceived need to get value for money by not limiting the choice of product, allowing the cost and availability factors to be fully exploited by others later in the procurement chain.

5.2 The extent of branding in specifications

Overall, almost six in ten still identify a single brand but accompany this with words such as 'or equal and approved' (46%) and 'or equivalent' (10%). Others give a longer list of acceptable brands but almost three in ten simply give information which defines the performance criteria they wish the product to achieve.

- The types of specifications completed across a range of professionals during 1999

	Single brand plus 'equal and approved' 'or equivalent'	List of brands	Performance criteria only
ALL	56%	16%	28%
Architects	60%	15%	25%
M&E Engineers	58%	26%	16%
Building Surveyors	57%	17%	26%
Interior Designers	57%	19%	24%
Quantity Surveyors	55%	19%	26%
Civil and Structural Engineers	48%	9%	44%
Facilities Managers	46%	16%	38%

Source: Barbour Compendium User Questionnaire 2000 (Base: 5095)

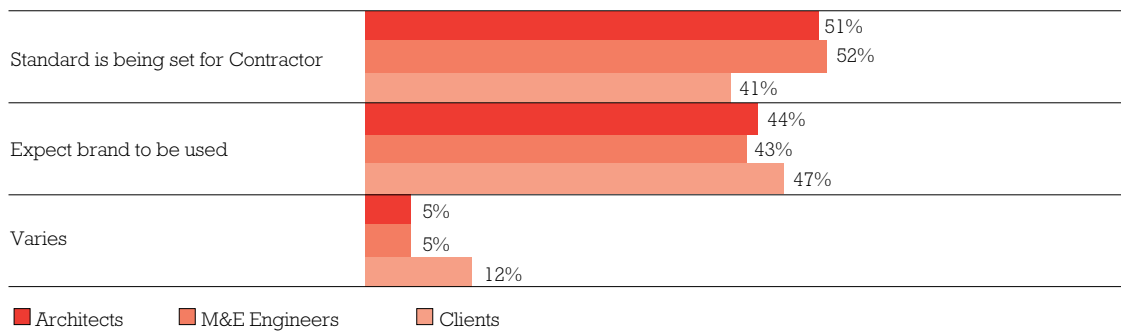
5.3 Specifiers' expectations when stating brands

Further investigation of the occurrence of single brands being stated without phrases such as 'or similar approved' was conducted to see how often professionals are saying 'this is the product I want used, and nothing else will do'. The levels are relatively small; Architects said that this occurs in 18% of specifications, M&E Engineers in 13%, and Clients 12%.

Just under half of Specifiers who include a product brand in the specification, do so with the expectation of seeing it within the completed project. However over half are using a brand name as an illustration of the standard, type, or quality of the product they anticipate being used by those selecting the actual product for construction. There is an acceptance that an equivalent product may be used in these cases.

As one Architect at the group discussion explained: 'Designers define a brand to set the quality, suggesting that this is the benchmark'.

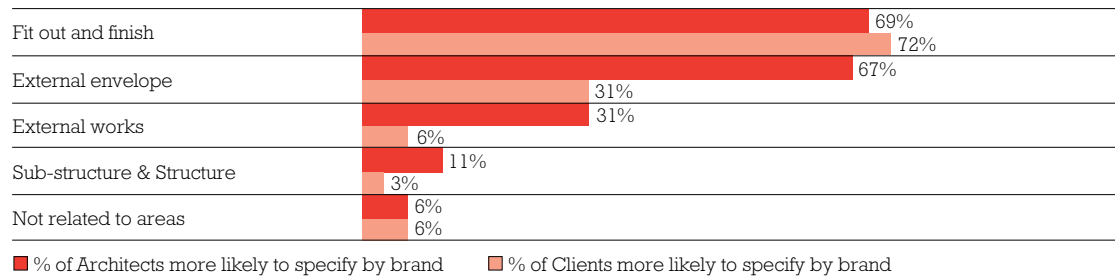
- Expectations when stating brand



Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

5.4 Circumstances when brands are more likely to be stated

- Areas of the building where brand more likely to be specified



May add to more than 100% where more than one answer given.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Previous Barbour Reports have shown that the likelihood of a brand being stated in a specification is greater if the product is visible within the completed project. This year's findings again confirm this. Products in the fit-out and finish and the external envelope of the project are most likely to be specified by brand.

Respondents were asked to illustrate the circumstances under which they would be more likely to include a brand within their specification. From the analysis of respondents' comments, the three main drivers appear to be the Client, the quality of the project and the unique or complex nature of a component. If the project has a requirement for matching existing styles or linking into existing systems, this is also likely to increase the incidence of brands being stated. Respondents identified the fit-out and finish processes and the visibility of products in the completed project as important factors.

Respondents were asked to identify the circumstances under which they would do their utmost to ensure that a product which has been specified is the one which actually gets used. The table below summarises the main responses.

- Circumstances when Specifiers insist on stated brand being used - unprompted

Where fitting/finish is unique/aesthetics important	31%
Where performance is critical	14%
Client has specified or agreed to product	10%
If have stated brand, want it used	9%
If alternative proposed of inferior quality	9%
If product is unique/very high quality	7%
Specialist/prestige building	5%
If want quality standard maintained	5%
Planning reasons	3%
If manufacturer has assisted with design/spec	2%
Rarely/don't insist	5%

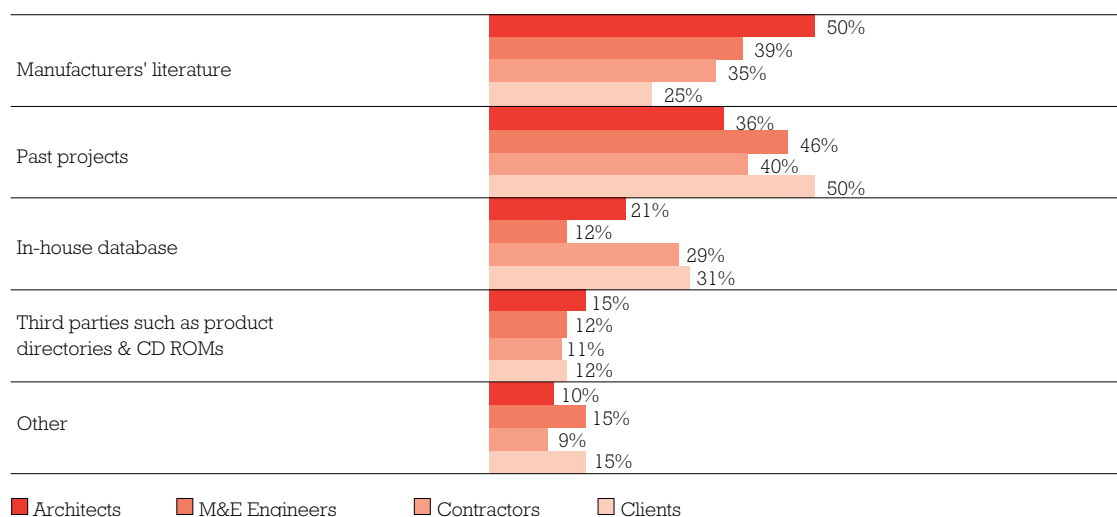
Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

6. PRODUCT INFORMATION SOURCES

6.1 The search for information on specific products

When the search for information on specific products commences, the value of details gathered during past projects can be clearly seen. A product successfully specified and perhaps used in the past has a high chance of being re-specified in the future.

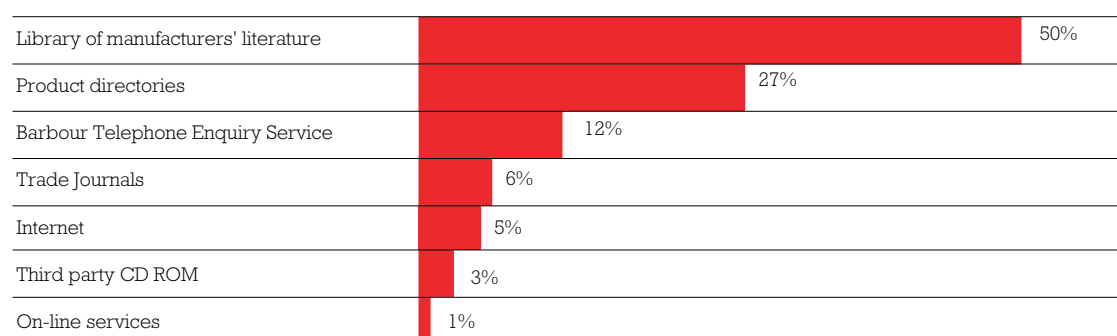
- How did the product information search commence?



Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The importance of third party sources in the product information search is clear. Whilst past project information may provide the details to allow a manufacturer to be contacted directly, new literature will only be requested from manufacturers whose contact details are readily available in product directories and other reference sources at the time the Specifier needs them.

- Third party sources of product information ranked by usefulness (% ranking each first)



Source: Barbour Compendium User Questionnaire 2000 (Base: 5095)

Differences affecting products in five broad areas of the building have been examined in greater detail.

- Sources used by Specifiers when information search commenced by building area

	Sub-structure/ Structure	External envelope	Fit-out and finish	Services	External works
Manufacturers' literature	33%	47%	53%	38%	64%
Past projects	33%	43%	33%	46%	18%
In-house database	11%	25%	19%	13%	18%
Third parties such as product directories & CD ROMs	11%	10%	20%	13%	27%
Other	33%	9%	8%	10%	0%

Note: May add to over 100% where more than one answer given.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Specifiers appear to rely more heavily on past experience where components are more complex and where the impact of a product's failure would significantly affect the performance of the completed building.

6.2 Libraries and hard copy information

Libraries show little sign of disappearing. The 2000 Building Product Compendium User Survey shows that 88% of organisations have a hard copy library and this research confirms the importance of their role.

• Did literature held in-house influence the products considered? (% saying 'yes')

Architects	76%
M&E Engineers	54%
Contractors	47%
Clients	53%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Libraries, hard copies of manufacturers literature as well as publications such as product directories, all influence the products being considered.

6.3 Use of the web or CD ROM for product information

General day-to-day use of CD ROMs within the industry built up rapidly in the late 1990s, and the current levels suggest that the point at which almost all have availability is rapidly being approached. In 1998, 63% were using CD ROM, this jumped to 79% in 1999 and the 2000 Barbour Compendium User Research has found levels now at 86%.

General use of the Internet in construction offices is still on the increase. The rate is growing sharply: up from 29% in 1998, to 47% last year and now stands at 61% in early 2000. The launch of more widely available broadband and single tariff services by the many competitors in the telecoms market can be expected to fuel further growth in the future.

• Use of Internet and CD ROM (% using)

Internet	61%
CD ROM	86%
Internet at some time for product information	37%
CD ROM at some time for product information	54%
Internet for product information on this occasion	7%
CD ROM for product information on this occasion	11%

Source: Barbour Compendium User Questionnaire 2000 (Base: 5095) and Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The numbers making use of product information taken from the Internet or CD ROM within their projects is much smaller than those who have access to it. In the 1999 Barbour Report: 'The Sourcing and Exchange of Information', 11% of Architects had accessed information on the web and used it for a particular project being examined. This year, in a comparable question, the level has fallen to 7%.

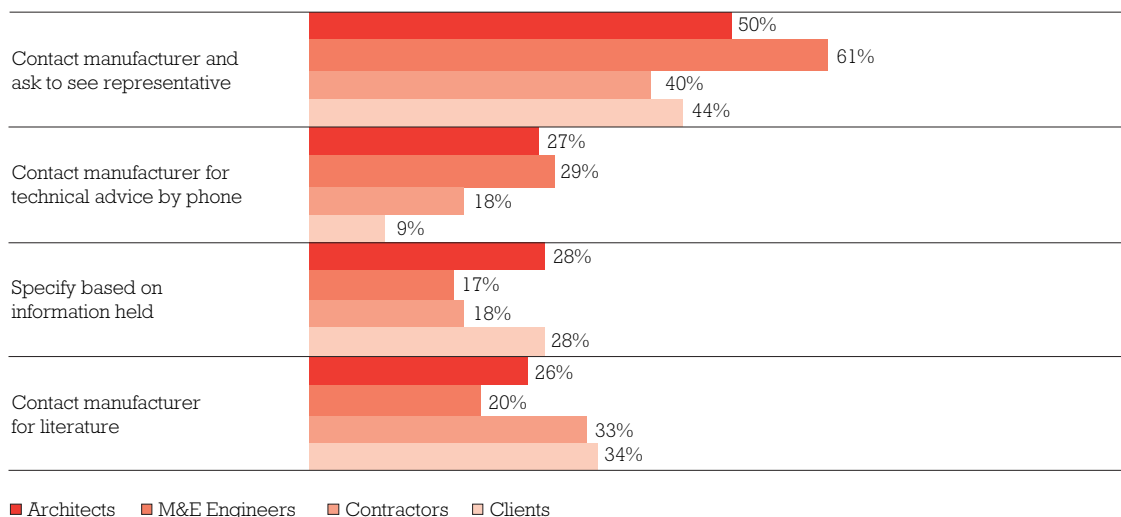
This decline points towards manufacturers failing to provide Specifiers with usable information via the Web which they can incorporate into their project specifications. Use of manufacturers' information delivered on CD ROM has also fallen from the levels recorded in 1999. This supports the suggestion that there is a reaction against the manner in which manufacturers are making information available electronically.

Evidence taken from the group debate amongst Architects confirms this. Few could identify examples of electronically delivered information which they felt were usable and met their needs. The general impression of the quality of electronic information that was being published was one of inappropriate content.

6.4 Next steps after searching for information

The predominant outcome of all these various routes to gain information remains the same; Specifiers subsequently make direct contact with the manufacturer for further advice.

- Next step following initial information search



Note: May add to over 100% where more than one answer given.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The clear message for manufacturers from the above is that Specifiers are making direct contact. Consequently manufacturers must ensure that support services are effective and efficient in meeting enquirers' needs.

Some Specifiers believe that not all manufacturers are maximising the opportunity offered by an unsolicited external enquiry. As one Architect put it 'manufacturers are very poor at following up opportunities. We can ring a manufacturer for advice on a project, but you never hear anything else from them'.

7. THE ROLE OF CLIENTS AND SUB-CONTRACTORS IN SPECIFICATION PREPARATION

7.1 The Client's role

The research has shown that the role the Client and their internal teams play in influencing specification is significant. 85% of Clients have in-house standard specifications and, on average, these account for 48% of their specifications.

Whilst around four in ten of Client specifications define the performance criteria only, almost half state a single product brand, with or without 'equal and approved'.

- Analysis of Clients' specification practice in last year

Single brand plus 'equal and approved'	34%
Single brand without 'equal and approved'	12%
List of brands	12%
Performance criteria only	42%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

In some cases, Client organisations might not have access to information or expertise to make brand choices without seeking external input. Where this is sought, it is typically the members of the professional team who are consulted about issues associated with choosing product brands. Just under half however turn to the main Contractor for this input. Over half of Specifiers discuss their choice with the Client on almost all occasions.

- Party most often consulted by Clients about brands

Architect	78%
M&E Consultant	53%
Main Contractor	47%
Sub-contractor	22%
Project Manager	19%
Other	19%

May add to more than 100% where more than one answer given.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

- When brand is not specified, how often is the choice discussed with the Client?

Never	3%
Less than 50% of the time	25%
Between 50% and 90% of the time	15%
Over 90% of the time	53%
Client specifies all brands used	3%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

7.2 Consulting Sub-contractors

Sub-contractors are playing a part in providing input to Specifiers and the two graphs which follow highlight the extent of their role across the broad areas of the building. In particular, they appear to be active in providing information for products for the external envelope and the services within a project.

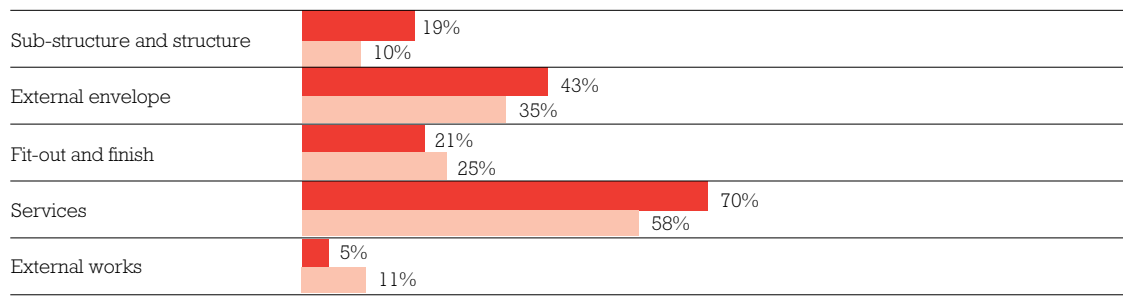
- Frequency which input from Sub-contractors is sought by Specifiers

Occasions when Sub-contractors involved in design	Architects: 40%	M&E Engineers: 19%
Occasions when Sub-contractors involved in brand choice	Architects: 19%	M&E Engineers: 13%

■ Architects ■ M&E Engineers

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

● Areas of building in which the Sub-contractor is particularly involved in providing advice to Specifiers and Contractors



■ % of Specifiers saying Sub-contractors have more input than other areas

■ % of Contractors saying Sub-contractors have more input than other areas

Note: Adds to over 100% where more than one answer given.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

8. THE PROCESS OF SUGGESTING ALTERNATIVES TO THE SPECIFICATION

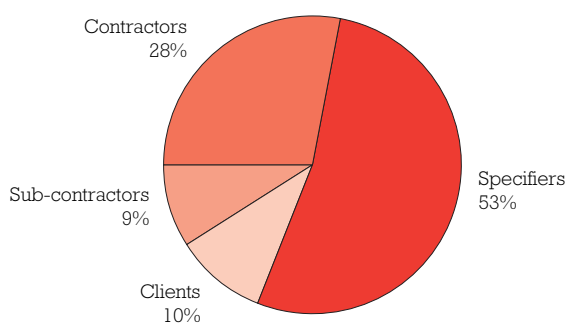
8.1 The extent of the practice of offering alternatives

82% of Contractors believe they are more involved in the choice of products now than they were three years ago. They exert most influence by suggesting alternatives to specified brands.

According to Contractors, two-thirds of the specifications in the invitations to tender they receive have named products or manufacturers stated within them. The remainder only define the performance criteria. Contractors estimate that they try to change 63% of those specifications with brands, and succeed on about two-thirds of occasions.

Contractors attribute half of brand decision-making to Specifiers, 10% to Clients, 9% to Sub-contractors and just over one-quarter to themselves.

- Contractors' estimate of parties making brand decisions



Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The view of Architects and M&E Engineers does not vary significantly from that of Contractors, with both groups considering that over half of specifications have alternatives proposed by the Contractors or Sub-contractors.

When a brand has been specified by the Client in the first instance, the designer or Contractor will suggest an alternative in 43% of specifications, normally offering a cost saving as the justification for this. 77% of Clients said that they discuss this with the proposer.

According to two-thirds of both Architects and M&E Engineers, they also believe that alternatives are almost always discussed, and the Contractors concurred. 82% of Contractors believe they always discuss their suggested alternatives prior to taking the decision to use them.

On this evidence, offering brand alternatives is a consultative process.

8.2 Reasons why alternatives are offered

Why do those who become involved after the original Specifier simply not follow the direction which has been given? Why do they apparently consume valuable time and effort in researching alternatives, proposing them, discussing and obtaining approval for them?

One Contractor in the group discussion explained his company's view: 'One of the reasons we object to named materials or Sub-contractors is control and risk. If they are under our remit and we've been able to qualify the risk, we'll take it on board'.

● **Specifiers' and Contractors' perceptions of the reasons behind suggestion of alternatives**

	Architects' perceptions	M&E Engineers' perceptions	Contractors' perceptions
Cost	91%	98%	95%
Availability/delivery	52%	33%	45%
Better relationship with alternative supplier	25%	9%	16%
Alternative easier to install	21%	11%	43%

Note: adds to over 100% as more than one answer given

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

In the view of Architects, the drive to make cost savings or to increase margins is undoubtedly the main reason for the suggestion of alternatives; all parties agree on this. Being able to meet the programme, through acceptable availability or delivery, is a clear secondary reason.

However, when Contractors propose alternatives to meet these requirements, it appears that reasonable availability, ease of installation and familiarity with the product are more important than the lowest price. This supports evidence from Contractors in the group discussions who described the need to reduce the risks of working with a product as well as purely the costs of procuring it. The consequences of working with the cheapest product available may prove to be more expensive for the project overall.

● **Important elements in choice of alternative (average score out of 10 for importance): Contractors**

Reasonable availability	7.9
Easier to install than original	7.8
Familiarity with product	7.7
Reasonable price, not necessarily cheapest	7.6
Prompt technical assistance from manufacturer	7.5
Lowest price possible	7.0
Personal contact with manufacturer	6.6

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

8.3 Reasons why alternatives are accepted

Specifiers and Contractors indicated the reasons why particular product alternatives were accepted by others in the project team. Specifiers identified two main reasons: that the alternative has 'equivalent' performance and there is therefore no reason to reject it, or that there is a cost saving which is sufficiently attractive to justify using it.

● **Reasons why alternatives are accepted - unprompted**

	Specifiers	Contractors
Performance of alternative matched the requirement	50%	17%
Cost	44%	39%
Better availability or delivery	6%	22%
Better buildability	0%	10%
More familiar with product	0%	10%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Contractors appear to have a slightly different agenda to the Specifiers. To a significant degree, their primary reason for suggesting alternatives is cost, with availability as the second most common reason. Alternatives may also be suggested purely because they have better or equivalent performance to the specified product, are better to work with or are known and familiar to the Contractor and his team. A preference for working with known products was explained by Contractors in the group discussion as a process of reducing risk.

The reasons given by the Specifiers for rejecting proposed alternatives endorse the Contractors' view. Products have to match the defined requirements in terms of performance and quality, or should offer a significant cost saving which will be considered advantageous for the Client, by the Specifier.

The challenge for manufacturers is to ensure that products have characteristics which are not easily replicated in cheaper form without an identifiable loss of performance or perceptible lowering of quality. They must educate Specifiers to ensure that they can identify the critical characteristics and make informed assessments of them within alternative products. Specifiers will need to justify their position if they are to reject cheaper, more readily available alternative products on performance and quality grounds.

9. TRACKED SPECIFICATION AND PRODUCT SELECTION PROCESSES

173 Specifiers and 40 Clients from the overall sample were interviewed in greater depth and were asked to refer to a project, currently at the construction stage or recently completed, where the total project value exceeded £500,000. They were asked to select a material or product type used on that project, and a number of questions were asked to profile the actual specification and decision-making processes used and the factors which affected the brand choice in that specific instance. A number of these specification examples were tracked to the Main Contractor, and in some cases, the Sub-contractor. The influence of the service received from manufacturers was examined in this part of the research.

In the product examples described by the Specifiers, 45% were to the Traditional form of contract, 37% Design and Build and 11% Construction Management. 73% were new build, 18% refurbishment of an existing property and 9% had an element of both.

The product examples were broadly categorised into one of the following five groupings of products within a building:

1. Sub-structure and structure; below ground works and above ground structure
2. External envelope, including windows, doors, roofs, cladding
3. Fit-out and finish, including internal walls, floors, ceilings, fittings
4. Services; mechanical, plumbing and electrical and other cabled systems
5. External works such as hard landscaping, fencing, security

9.1 Client involvement

The process started by examining the extent to which Clients had been involved, both at the outset of the project and later, as the decision-making progressed. The table below shows the extent of involvement across each of the product areas.

- **Involvement of Clients in brand choice**

	Total	Sub-structure/ structure	External envelope	Fit-out and finish	Services	External works
Client nominated brand(s)	7%	8%	2%	15%	9%	0%
Client nominated material only	3%	0%	8%	0%	0%	0%
Client provided performance specification	8%	31%	6%	8%	5%	0%
Suggestions discussed with Client	60%	54%	66%	60%	50%	73%
Client had no involvement	24%	23%	21%	18%	34%	18%
Other	6%	8%	6%	8%	5%	9%

Note: may add to over 100% where more than one answer given, eg Client nominated material and suggestions discussed with Client.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The table above shows that, for example, Clients nominate the most brands within the fit-out and finish of their buildings and are more likely to set the performance criteria for the sub-structure and structure than for other areas. For all areas of the building, suggestions for brands are discussed between Specifiers and Clients in the majority of cases.

When Client companies who had issued specifications were asked about the nature of these, 6 out of 10 described them as internal standard specifications applied to the examples they had selected.

9.2 Type of specification made at detailed design stage

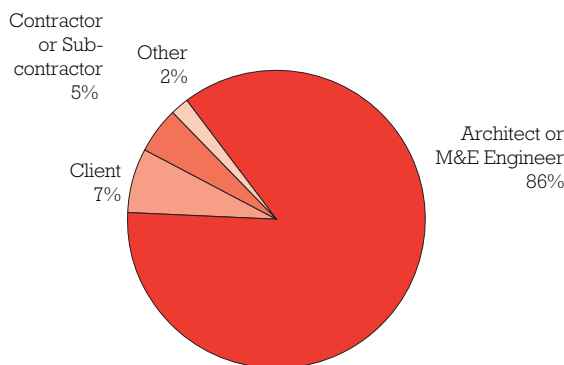
87% of specifications, made by the time the detailed design stage has been completed, have some brands named within them. However, in four out of ten specifications, the words 'or similar approved / or equivalent' were not included. This practice appears to be particularly prevalent for products incorporated in fit-out and finish and external works of a project, suggesting that Specifiers feel there are more products without 'equivalents' in these areas.

● Specification at detailed design stage

	Total	Sub-structure/ structure	External envelope	Fit-out and finish	Services	External works
Performance criteria only	12%	31%	15%	10%	11%	0%
Overall some brand(s) specified	87%	69%	85%	90%	89%	100%
Single brand with 'or similar approved'	31%	31%	37%	30%	23%	27%
A single brand with 'or equivalent'	6%	8%	3%	8%	9%	9%
A single brand without 'or similar approved'/'or equivalent'	39%	31%	35%	48%	34%	64%
List of brands	11%	0%	10%	5%	23%	0%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

● Responsibility for defining the performance specification



Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

According to the Architects and M&E Engineers interviewed, they were responsible for drawing up the performance specification on 86% of occasions for both Traditional and Design and Build projects. Further analysis by type of product shows only small differences in this pattern. Contractors and Sub-contractors are more likely to draw up the performance specification for products installed as part of the structure and sub-structure.

With almost nine out of ten specifications containing a brand, the respondents were asked what their intention was in naming a product in this way. 70% said they expected the brand, or in the case of a list – one of the stated brands, would actually be used. This particularly appears to be the case for products used in the fit-out and finish.

● Intention where brand stated

	Total	Sub-structure/ structure	External envelope	Fit-out and finish	Services	External works
That the brand or one of listed brands would be used	70%	56%	68%	81%	67%	64%
That standard was being set which Contractor should use	30%	44%	30%	19%	33%	36%

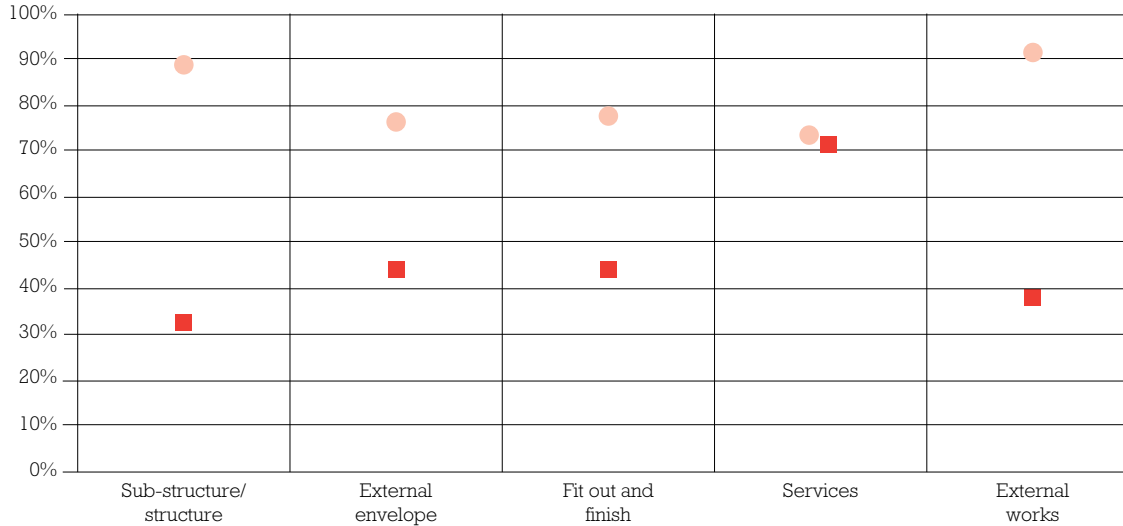
Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

9.3 Summary of parties involved in the selection of a manufacturer

Anecdotal evidence from product manufacturers has suggested that many encounter difficulties in identifying the actual parties recommending their products or taking the final decision to use them. Sales personnel have given illustrations where they have identified a party who claims to be responsible for writing the specification, or choosing a particular product, only to find that the actual decision is taken elsewhere.

These apparent contradictions have been confirmed by this research. Specifiers and Contractors were each asked to identify the extent to which Architects/M&E Engineers recommended a particular product, and took the final decision to use it.

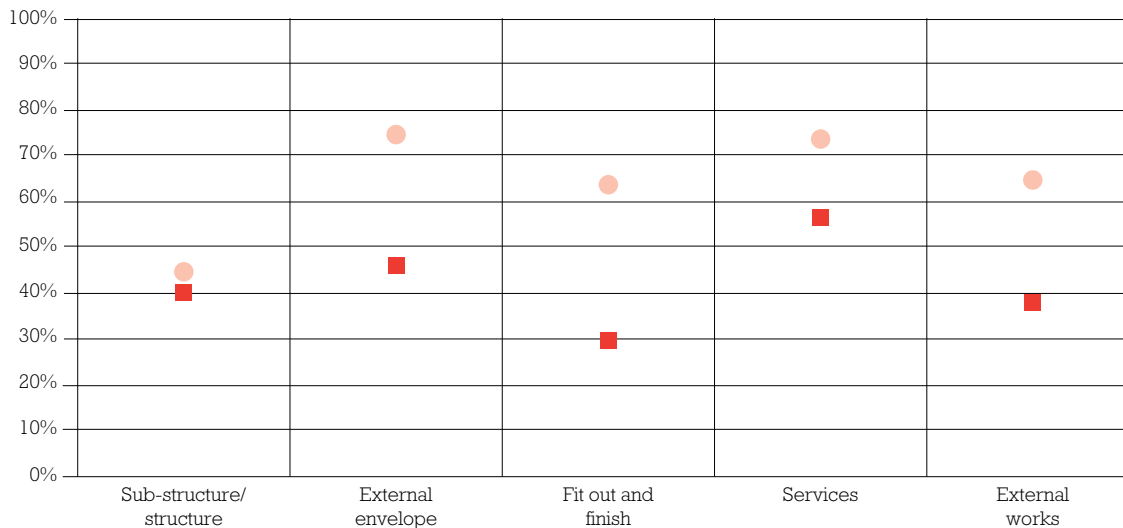
• The Specifier's versus the Contractor's view of who recommended the product



● Architect/M&E recommended according to Specifier
 ■ Architect/M&E recommended according to Contractor

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

• The Specifier's versus the Contractor's view of who made the final decision



● Architect/M&E made final decision according to Specifier
 ■ Architect/M&E made final decision according to Contractor

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

It should be noted that not all parties were relating their answers to the same product in each building area. Nonetheless, the graphs highlight differences in opinion about who took responsibility. According to the Specifiers (Architects/M&E Engineers) they recommended almost 90% of the products and materials for the sub-structure & structure. However, according to the Contractors, they recommended a little over 30%. The views on who made the final decision also differ, although to a lesser extent.

The graph below summarises the Contractor's view of the extent of each party's responsibility for making the final product decision across each of the building areas.

• The Contractor's view of parties making final decision



Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

10. IMPORTANCE OF PRODUCT-RELATED FEATURES IN CHOICE OF BRAND

The following tables give average ratings out of a maximum of 10, as awarded by Specifiers, Contractors and Clients, to indicate the importance of a range of product features in the brand decision-making process. In each case ratings close to 10 are very important, those close to 5 are considered to be of less importance.

- Importance of product features in brand choice: Specifiers (average score out of 10)

	Total	Sub-structure/ structure	External envelope	Fit-out and finish	Services	External works
Performance	9.2	8.9	9.2	9.0	9.3	9.4
Guarantees or warranties	8.2	7.2	8.4	7.9	8.2	8.5
Availability	8.0	8.2	8.1	7.5	8.2	7.8
Past experience	7.9	8.7	7.9	7.4	8.0	8.3
Initial cost	7.6	7.2	7.8	7.7	7.3	7.5
Cost-in-use	7.4	6.9	7.5	7.4	7.1	7.7
Appearance	7.3	7.2	8.0	8.0	5.1	9.0
Environmental credentials	6.4	6.0	6.2	6.1	7.4	5.7

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

- Contractors (average score out of 10)

	Total	Sub-structure/ structure	External envelope	Fit-out and finish	Services	External works
Performance	9.0	8.9	9.1	8.8	10.0	9.0
Availability	8.4	9.0	7.9	8.8	10.0	8.7
Initial cost	8.4	8.9	8.2	8.2	8.3	8.3
Guarantees or warranties	8.2	7.5	8.3	8.6	8.7	8.3
Past experience	7.5	7.9	7.6	7.0	6.3	8.3
Cost-in-use	7.1	6.0	7.2	7.0	7.7	8.0
Appearance	7.0	5.4	7.4	8.0	5.7	8.0
Environmental credentials	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.9	7.3	5.3

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

- Clients (average score out of 10)

	Total
Performance	9.4
Availability	8.4
Past experience	8.2
Appearance	7.9
Initial cost	7.6
Cost-in-use	7.6
Guarantees or warranties	7.5
Environmental credentials	6.7

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Overall, performance of the product is ranked highest by each of the three respondent groups, but there are differences thereafter. Whilst Specifiers place guarantees and warranties ahead of availability, Contractors and Clients have ranked availability in second place. Initial cost is rated third by Contractors but in fifth place by the other two.

Interestingly, earlier in the report, from a list of industry initiatives, environmental considerations were thought to have had the greatest impact upon the specification process. However, when other features such as performance, cost and availability are taken into account, the environmental credentials of the product are placed well down the list.

11. ASSISTANCE REQUIRED AND RECEIVED FROM MANUFACTURERS

Giving answers related to the specific product examples they had elected to talk about, respondents were asked how the assistance received from the particular manufacturer contributed to the choice of brand.

11.1 Important aspects of manufacturer support

The table below gives the percentages of Specifiers who received each of these support services from manufacturers.

- Proportion of Specifiers receiving service from manufacturers

	Sub-structure/ structure	External envelope	Fit-out and finish	Services	External works
Up-to-date literature	46%	58%	63%	66%	64%
Advice on using product in given situation	23%	58%	63%	70%	45%
Visit from representative	15%	60%	55%	73%	64%
Design and detailing assistance	8%	45%	45%	48%	45%
Assistance with wording of specification	15%	23%	35%	16%	9%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Specifiers were then asked to rate the importance of each of these five features of manufacturers' support, across the broad building areas, by rating them out of 10. The following graph gives the average ratings received.

- Importance of services to Specifiers (average score out of 10 where 10 is most important, based on those receiving service)

	Least important	Most important
Up-to-date literature	9.0	
Advice on using product in given situation	8.4	
Visit from representative	8.1	
Design and detailing assistance	7.8	
Assistance with wording of specification	7.6	

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The results show that Specifiers' main requirements from manufacturers are up-to-date literature supported by project-specific advice on using the product. Discussions with the representative are particularly important where the component is a more complex one, such as those which might be included in areas such as the external envelope and services for the building.

The table below gives the percentages of Contractors who received each of these support services from manufacturers.

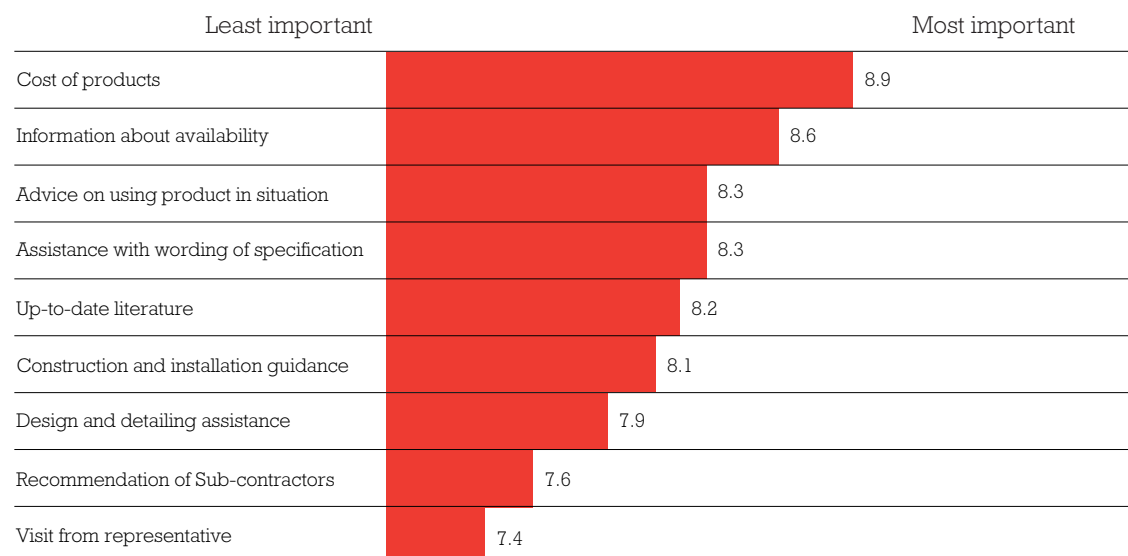
- **Proportion of Contractors receiving service from manufacturers**

	Sub-structure/ structure	External envelope	Fit-out and finish	Services	External works
Cost of products	86%	46%	39%	100%	100%
Information about availability	79%	46%	44%	67%	100%
Advice on using product in situation	57%	43%	33%	33%	33%
Assistance with wording of specification	14%	17%	0%	0%	0%
Up-to-date literature	71%	60%	50%	100%	100%
Construction and installation guidance	43%	43%	39%	67%	100%
Design and detailing assistance	29%	34%	39%	33%	67%
Recommendations of Sub-contractors	7%	23%	33%	33%	0%
Visit from representative	79%	51%	44%	100%	67%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Contractors were also asked to rate the importance of each of these five features of manufacturers' support, across the broad building areas, by ranking them out of 10. The following graph gives the average ratings received.

- **Importance of service to Contractors (average score out of 10 where 10 is most important, based on those receiving service)**



Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Contractors place greater emphasis on cost and availability information for the product than Specifiers do.

- Proportion of Clients receiving service from manufacturers

Up-to-date literature	58%
Advice on using product in given situation	43%
Visit from representative	50%
Design and detailing assistance	33%
Assistance with wording of specification	18%

Note: Based on all Clients, whether specifying brand or not.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

- Importance of service to Clients (average score out of 10 where 10 is most important, based on those receiving service)

	Least important	Most important
Up-to-date literature	9.0	
Advice on using product in situation	8.7	
Assistance with wording of specification	8.6	
Visit from the representative	8.6	
Design and detailing assistance	8.2	

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

11.2 Satisfaction with the support received

Having given their ratings for the importance of these features, respondents were then asked to rate their satisfaction with each aspect as it had been delivered to them in their recent experience.

The following scores are based on those receiving these aspects of manufacturers' service, ie if any aspect was not received and this caused dissatisfaction, this is not included here. Ratings were given from 1 to 10 where 10 indicates very satisfied.

- Satisfaction with service received (average score out of 10)

	Specifiers	Clients	Contractors
Up-to-date literature	8.7	8.1	8.4
Visit from representative	8.5	8.1	7.9
Advice on using product in situation	8.4	8.3	7.9
Design and detailing assistance	8.1	7.7	8.0
Assistance with wording of specs	8.4	8.7	7.9
Costings			8.1
Installation guidance			7.8
Recommendations of Sub-contractors			7.4
Information re availability			8.2

Note: Specifiers and Clients not asked costings etc.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The respondents were invited to give a rating out of ten to indicate their satisfaction with the levels of responsiveness and helpfulness they received from all the companies they had considered during their recent experience. Average marks were around 8 out of 10. This means that potential customers were 'satisfied', not necessarily 'very satisfied' with the response. Manufacturers who can deliver excellent service have the opportunity to differentiate themselves further in this way.

The responses from Specifiers and Contractors are given separately for each of the broad product groupings.

- **Satisfaction with responsiveness of the companies considered by building area Specifiers**

Sub-structure/structure	7.9
External envelope	8.5
Fit-out and finish	8.2
Services	8.1
External works	8.1

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Contractors

Sub-structure/structure	8.1
External envelope	7.6
Fit-out and finish	8.4
Services	8.3
External works	8.0

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

11.3 Main reasons for choosing a manufacturer

Finally, the respondents were asked to indicate the main reason why they decided to select one manufacturer over another.

- **Specifiers' main reasons for choosing manufacturer - unprompted**

Past experience - tried and tested product	35%
Met performance requirements	10%
Met performance requirements at good price	10%
Appearance	8%
Good service from manufacturer (see comments)	6%
Guarantees	4%
Quality product	4%
Client choice	3%
Manufacturer's reputation	3%
Unique product	3%
Availability	2%
Better for installation	2%
Durability	1%
Other	9%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Experience of the actual performance of the product carries significant weight with over one-third citing this as the deciding factor. Over half suggested their reasons were related to the performance of the product or their experience of it in use.

A number of Specifiers made comments about the service they received from manufacturers and some of these are reproduced to further illustrate the reasons for choosing one manufacturer over another.

"We have a master specification around that manufacturer."

"We had past experience of them and they were very good."

"Track record, warranty, technical back-up and their site service."

"This was a new product which incorporates the environmental requirements, and it's a big company with good back-up."

"Their technical literature, and the product is only available from two companies. They seemed to be the best for supply."

"Good representation, high quality product, good service in the past."

"Because of their experience of working with us in the past and getting representatives who understand our needs."

"They are the only ones who make this product. We could have used a different roofing system but this one beat them on availability, guarantees, cost."

11.4 Features of an 'excellent' supplier

To give further guidance on the impact of the features of the support and service which manufacturers provide around their products, Specifiers and Contractors were asked to give their views on what differentiates an excellent supplier from an ordinary one.

- Specifiers' unprompted views of what makes an excellent supplier

Prompt technical advice and information	54%
Good product availability	16%
Good representatives	12%
Reasonable price	6%
Good service	5%
Good product range	5%
Performance of product as described	4%
After sales service	4%
Other	2%

Note: adds to over 100% as more than one answer given.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

- Contractors' unprompted views of what makes an excellent supplier

Delivery on time	32%
Technical support	17%
Keeps promises/reliable	16%
Good price	16%
Prompt response to requests for information and quotes	11%
Consistent quality	5%
Quality product	3%
On-site back-up	2%
Works as a team	2%
Other	3%

Note: adds to over 100% as more than one answer given.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

These results largely reinforce the earlier findings that prompt, appropriate technical information and support is likely to have a big impact upon Specifiers, and that good distribution and reliable availability carry considerable weight with Contractors.

Some of the comments about the features which make a supplier 'excellent' are reproduced below.

Specifiers

"A good product – quick response time from the representatives, help in design and detailing and a quick response time for information on this."

"Readily available information. Approachable/helpful company, product living up to its claims, value for money."

"Good product information. Good assistance in specifying and detailing proposal."

"Quality of the goods and the response time to queries. Quality of their representative – personality can influence me."

"One that gives you technical suggestions when a representative comes in. Someone who is proactive rather than a salesman, and good clear literature."

"Published proven data – with all green, technical and performance details ie validation/verification of claims for product."

"Local representative – very helpful who can get samples very quickly – to show Client – if can't we move on to another manufacturer."

"Where I can get personal contact on the phone quickly and technical department to refer to without leaving my desk for advice."

"They have a good product – good literature with clear design guides – good technical representatives who know their stuff."

"Providing product against well known benchmark. Technical installation – most suppliers use registered fixers and they vary a lot in terms of quality. Problems tend to arise from installation rather than quality of product itself."

Contractors

"Deliveries on time, right price, all round service, good technical assistance."

"One who is pro-active, offering service and solutions."

"Prompt deliveries, consistency of product, technical support."

"A good individual contact – to build a personal relationship."

"First class service. Efficient costings and technical information. Working as a team is very important."

12. IMPROVEMENTS REQUIRED TO MANUFACTURERS' PERFORMANCE

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with a series of statements which address issues relating to products and services and the support provided by manufacturers to promote them. The statements were drawn up following the discussion groups and were designed to provide guidance on areas of the relationship between construction professionals and manufacturers that might be improved.

- **Extent of agreement with suggestions for areas of improvement for manufacturers**
Average score, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

	Specifiers	Contractors	Sub-contractors	Clients
Representatives should be problem-solvers, with an ability to understand the technical issues of their product	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.6
Manufacturers should develop a relationship with the Contractor as well as the designer	3.8	4.3	4.2	4.0
More collaboration is required amongst manufacturers of inter-connecting components	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.4
Products which are unique are less likely to be substituted	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.0
More cost-in-use information is needed	3.9	3.8	3.5	4.1
Warranties should ideally cover installation	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Manufacturers should have more active involvement at the construction stage	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.8
The speed of response from manufacturers in sending literature and answering queries could be improved	3.8	3.8	4.0	3.7
More specification clauses are required from manufacturers	3.5	2.9	3.1	3.4
After-sales service generally needs to be improved	Not asked	4.0	4.0	4.1

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

- **Which are the most important for manufacturers to improve?**
% stating each

	Specifiers	Contractors	Sub-contractors	Clients
Representatives should be problem-solvers, with an ability to understand the technical issues of their product	69%	66%	53%	38%
Manufacturers should develop a relationship with the Contractor as well as the designer	13%	39%	18%	10%
More collaboration is required amongst manufacturers of inter-connecting components	20%	8%	5%	15%
More cost-in-use information is needed	17%	11%	8%	23%
Warranties should ideally cover installation	15%	13%	13%	10%
Manufacturers should have more active involvement at the construction stage	12%	12%	5%	3%
The speed of response from manufacturers in sending literature and answering queries could be improved	31%	19%	32%	20%
More specification clauses are required from manufacturers	14%	4%	3%	5%
After-sales service generally needs to be improved	20%	32%	32%	35%

Note: may add to over 100% where more than one answer given.

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

The main area for improvement, according to all parties, is the knowledge of representatives and their ability to act as problem-solvers. There is also agreement that the speed of response to queries, requests for literature and general after-sales service could be improved.

When Specifiers were asked to offer their own suggestions about what manufacturers could do to improve the support they provide around their products, the main responses focussed around the better delivery of technical information.

● **Specifiers' unprompted suggestions for improvement in manufacturers' service**

Faster response to requests for information	17%
More information on the internet or CD ROM	8%
Representatives with better technical knowledge	6%
Better presented information/easier to follow/concise	4%
Educate us - seminars	4%
Improve product availability	3%
Improve after-sales service	2%
More help with design	1%
Keep promises	1%
More advice on use in-situ	1%
Take to site to show products in-situ	1%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

● **Contractors' unprompted suggestions for improvement in manufacturers' service**

Better/faster access to information and assistance	12%
Improve after-sales service	12%
Deliver on time/keep promises	8%
Representatives with better technical knowledge	6%
Improve relationship generally	4%
Make installation process easier/better instructions	2%
Be more flexible	2%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

● **Clients' unprompted suggestions for improvement in manufacturers' service**

Better/faster access to information and assistance	18%
Improve understanding of our needs	8%
Deliver as promised	8%
Improve availability, prevent need for us to hold spares	5%

Source: Telephone programme (Base: 364 interviews)

Some of the comments from Specifiers, Contractors and Clients are reproduced verbatim to illustrate their views on how manufacturers may improve.

Specifiers

"Educating us – give us a seminar to explain how products are used. Not just a flash person but someone with experience – for about an hour."

"Some can learn from others. We are finding it more and more useful that stuff is web based although we are finding it slow to come through. If not available on the web, when we telephone for literature, it can also be slow to come through."

"Come and look at individual situations when required – they are not all run of the mill."

"Ensure information is A1 quality; it varies. If it is good it helps our job greatly, if too vague, we move to another manufacturer."

"Speed of response and technical help from the representative – if he comes to see you, clueless technically and you don't hear from him for 2 weeks when the time is limited, you move on to another."

"Make on site support readily available."

"Making sure Internet information is available."

"We have difficulty in getting information from some of the big companies, we don't seem to have any contacts. The small companies are fine."

Contractors

"Provide maintenance and running costs, it's not always easy to get this information."

"Costings; they operate a two tier pricing structure with specified products 20% higher."

"Big companies should focus on the customer. Smaller companies are better on service but poorer on delivery."

"Bigger manufacturers could be less arrogant and more helpful when orders are placed."

"Keep up the good service after they have the order."

"A quicker response to queries, you can wait for days to have a call returned."

"Send out representatives who know their product."

Clients

"Operating manuals and cleaning schedules are slow to come."

"The installation side should speak to the maintenance side."

"Improve the speed of manufacture so we do not have to store large quantities on site."

"Keep us abreast of user developments."

"Ability to access information electronically."

13. CASE STUDIES - SOME EXAMPLES OF BRAND SELECTION

During the course of the telephone interviews for this year's Barbour Report, Specifiers were asked to think of a project currently at the construction stage or recently completed. They were asked to think of a material or product type used on this project, and a series of questions was asked to understand how the product had been specified, who was influential in the choice of manufacturer and why the chosen brand was selected. Where possible, the Contractor and Sub-contractor were also interviewed to verify the process. These case studies demonstrate just a few of the examples given.

	Case study 1	Case study 2
Product type	External cladding	Brick
Project type	Cinema/public house/restaurant complex	Supermarket
Contract type	Design and Build	Traditional
New build or refurbishment	New build	New build
Responsible for performance specification	Architect	Architect
Client involvement	Colours and flatness of panel only discussed with Client	Suggestions were discussed with Client
QS involvement	None	Costed alternatives
Others involved	Contractor	Planners, Contractor, Sub-contractor
How was brand specified?	Single brand 'or similar approved'	Single brand without 'or similar approved'
Specifier's intentions	Setting a standard for contractor	That the brand be used
Why was that manufacturer specified?	Specifier was familiar with it	Product met the requirements - particularly appearance
Did literature held in-house influence the decision?	Not on this occasion	No
What did the specified manufacturer provide?	Literature and gave advice over the phone	Literature and visit from representative
Was electronic information used?	Yes - manufacturer's CD ROM	No
Was an alternative suggested?	Yes - cost reasons, Contractor had previous experience, and range included required colours.	Yes - Planners wanted brick to match existing buildings. Contractor suggested alternative based on availability, familiarity, cost.
Was alternative used?	Yes - it fitted the requirements re performance, guarantees, colour	No - original better at meeting the performance criteria
Contractor's view	Sub-contractor recommended the alternative	Agreed with Architect's description
Sub-contractor's view	Agreed with other parties - alternative suggested for cost reasons	Not interviewed/ no involvement

	Case study 3	Case study 4
Product type	Raised access floor	Lighting
Project type	Offices	Offices
Contract type	Construction management	Traditional
New build or refurbishment	Refurbishment	Refurbishment
Responsible for performance specification	Architect and Client	M&E Engineer
Client involvement	Nominated a brand but suggested alternatives should be considered	Suggestions discussed with Client
QS involvement	Yes - suggested alternatives based on cost	None
Others involved	No others	No others
How was brand specified?	Single brand 'or similar approved'	Single brand 'or similar approved'
Specifier's intentions	Setting a standard for Contractor	That the brand be used
Why was that manufacturer specified?	Client had previous experience of original manufacturer	Past experience and knowledge of the product
Did literature held in-house influence the decision?	Yes	Yes
What did the specified manufacturer provide?	Literature, samples, information, advice and design assistance (no representative visit)	Representative visited and provided design and detailing assistance
Was electronic information used?	Yes - third party	No
Was an alternative suggested?	Yes by QS	Yes - Sub-contractor
Was alternative used?	Yes	No - The quality wasn't up to the job, but had to convince the client of the quality versus cost argument
Contractor's view	Agreed with Architect	Not interviewed
Sub-contractor's view	Not interviewed	Agreed with M&E Engineer's description

	Case study 5	Case study 6
Product type	Paving	Drainage pipes
Project type	Leisure facility	Shops and offices
Contract type	Design and build	Design and build
New build or refurbishment	New build	New build
Responsible for performance specification	Landscape Architect	Architect
Client involvement	Suggestions were discussed with Client	None
QS involvement	Yes, costed alternatives	None
Others involved	Contractor and Sub-contractor	No others
How was brand specified?	Single brand 'or similar approved'	Single brand 'or similar approved'
Specifier's intentions	Setting a standard which Contractor should aim to achieve	Setting a standard which Contractor should aim to achieve
Why was that manufacturer specified?	Cost reasons	Availability of up-to-date literature in library
Did literature held in-house influence the decision?	Yes	Yes
What did the specified manufacturer provide?	Literature, the representative visited, provided samples and advice on using the product	No assistance required - already had literature
Was electronic information used?	No	No - product was straightforward
Was an alternative suggested?	Yes, by groundworks contractor	No
Was alternative used?	Yes, Sub-contractor could use buying power to buy another cheaper	-
Contractor's view	Not interviewed	Contractor agreed with product proposed
Sub-contractor's view	Not interviewed	Not interviewed

	Case study 7	Case study 8
Product type	Boiler	Lift
Project type	Rugby stadium	Offices
Contract type	Design and build	Design and build
New build or refurbishment	New build	New build
Responsible for performance specification	Client	M&E Engineer
Client involvement	Requirements stated, suggestions discussed with Client	Suggestions discussed with Client
QS involvement	Costed alternatives	Yes - assessed cost-in-use
Others involved	Sub-contractor	No others
How was brand specified?	Single brand without 'or similar approved'	Single brand 'or similar approved'
Specifier's intentions	That the brand would be used	Setting a standard for Contractor
Why was that manufacturer specified?	Tried and tested brand	Availability, cost, overall performance, guarantees, past experience
Did literature held in-house influence the decision?	No	Yes
What did the specified manufacturer provide?	Representative visited, provided literature, gave advice on using the product	Literature, representative visited, provided advice on using product and design assistance
Was electronic information used?	Yes - manufacturer's web site	No
Was an alternative suggested?	No	No
Was alternative used?	-	-
Contractor's view	Not interviewed	Not interviewed
Sub-contractor's view	Not interviewed	Not interviewed

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