

# CFR The Commercial Flooring Report

For the Commercial Floor Covering Industry

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## Working Together to Ensure Successful Flooring Installations

The objective of a team is to work together toward a common goal to achieve success. Merging the goals of all parties on a commercial flooring project to encourage as much collaboration as possible (even before Drawings and Specifications are produced), for the most ideal outcome possible. The purpose of this issue is to help put together a template for success that can be used as a guideline for all new construction and renovated building projects. The template somewhat mirrors the old Carpet and Rug Institute “Areas of Responsibility” which offered guidelines to all parties involved in a carpet project from the manufacturer to the installer and what they were responsible for. The objective is to share this template and information with all the parties involved, the Architect, General Contractor, Facilities Director, and Flooring Contractor, and even encourage other trades to take a similar approach.

The idea and information for this issue comes to us from Gary Roberts, VP and shareholder with Tucson Commercial Carpet who has engaged General Contractors and Architects they’ve worked with for input and information. At LGM we work with a lot of general contractors and architects, none of whom have ever wanted to have a problem but because they often must follow a set of directions, they find themselves in the line of fire the same as the flooring contractor does. We often ask the question, “why was this done this way” and hear “because the architect or owner or consultant said that’s the way they wanted it done or that’s what the budget would allow”, which is often the cause of the problem.

The proposed “template for success” can be used on a more proactive basis, for the front end of a project, to help avoid claims and liability brought on via hindsight. It could also be shared with the local manufacturer representatives as well (to get them thinking about construction, not just pretty products), and for GC’s while onboarding new superintendents. Topics could include – identifying qualified bids and/or scrubbing bids, partnering with “professionals”, product selections, pre-construction checklist, and even post construction follow through considerations. Some of this would involve input from the flooring contractor early on in a new project for how the concrete substrates should be finished, what additives may be in the concrete that have the potential to compromise the flooring and the installation, and conditions that must be in place for the successful installation of the flooring material. One of the most important being that the space must be conditioned to comply with the manufacturer's installation guidelines, something that increasingly is not happening. Also, to ensure that the right products and



systems are used that will work appropriately together without causing a flooring failure. We often fail to consider how important the flooring is to a project because nothing is completed until the flooring is installed. Flooring is the finishing touch to a project – the canvas on which everything else rests. If the flooring fails, it will compromise the use of the space it is installed in. It's not like some of the office doors not closing properly or a few toilets not working as they should, those are simple fix issues. If the flooring fails, it may keep the entire space where it's installed from being used whether one room or an entire floor of an office building, hospital or whatever. Replacing flooring and fixing the problem is disruptive, invasive, expensive, contentious, and unnecessary if all parties follow appropriate guidelines and specifications.

Here are some of the tests as they apply to a flooring installation that should be covered prior to installation, ASTM E1745, ACI 302.1R-15, ASTM F710, ASTM F2170 & F1869, ASTM F1482, as well as installing Floorcloud to monitor conditions for the flooring guys and the GC...as soon as the building is reasonably closed in.

- **Cover Site Preparation** – Water evacuation / drainage away from the building, & irrigation considerations. An important aspect since we find too often infiltration of water moving laterally under the slab will create moisture related flooring failures. Especially in older buildings or new ones with a moisture vapor retarder improperly placed, breached or value engineered out of the design.
- **Show how collaboration** would minimize the risks that Architects and General Contractors take on, by utilizing trade experts during the design process.
- **Demonstrate clear goals** and expectations, from concept to completion of the project.
- **Material Selection** – Evaluate the appropriate materials for the project, type of traffic that the floor will receive, maintenance requirements, and even budget restrictions. Making sure to install the right product in the right place, properly installed.
- **Maintenance** – Cover maintenance requirement at the same time material selections are made, rather than just turning over maintenance paperwork at the end of a project (which often doesn't make it to people doing maintenance work). Even presenting training opportunities from the manufacturers. Manufacturers are much more inclined to agree to training when their products are about to be specified for a project.

As we referenced earlier the Carpet and Rug Institute Areas of Responsibility here are the areas of responsibility on a flooring project.



**THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT**

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*"When No One Else has Answers,  
We Do"*

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Page Layout By: Anita S. Drennon

## Goal of a Commercial Building Owner

- Find the right location for the building.
- Size the building - Based on the number of people who will be using it, and the type of activities that will take place in the building.
- Hire an Architect.
- Design of the Building – Make sure the design of the building is functional, aesthetically pleasing, and in line with their branding, and sometimes geared towards sustainability.
- Getting quotes from General Contractor(s).
- Budget – Determine a realistic budget, with adequate contingencies, and stick to it as closely as possible.
- Financing of course.

## Goal of an Architect & Designer is to meet their clients needs

- Understanding the clients' requirements and translating them into a design that meets those requirements. Another factor is staying within budget and meeting the project schedule.
- Creating a beautiful and functional building that enhances the surrounding environment.
- Ensuring that the buildings they design are safe and accessible for everyone.
- Needs assessment / Design Brief - outlining client requirements and their proposed design.
- Working with the contractor to ensure that the building is built according to plan.
- Navigate the permitting process, to ensure the building is built to code.
- Building Process – Stay involved in the construction process, to make sure the building is being built to specification. This includes reviewing plans, visiting the construction site, and approving materials.
- Making sure you understand the products specified, how they should be installed and what you should and shouldn't do.
- Follow the manufacturer's latest installation and specification guidelines.

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Certified Product Testing - Insurance Loss Evaluations

Dispute Resolution, Litigation Assistance and Proffered Expert Witness

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**"WHEN NO ONE ELSE HAS ANSWERS, WE DO"**

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Here's a link to an excellent article that was in Construction Dive about What Architects Want GC's to Know. <https://www.constructiondive.com/news/what-architects-want-gcs-to-know/>

### **Goal of a General Contractor, to achieving a successful project**

- Ensuring a safe construction site.
- Building a quality product – A building that is well-constructed and will last for many years.
- Complete on time, on budget, as well as identifying potential risks and challenges.
- Manage projects effectively.
- Client communication
- Communicate with the flooring contractor.
- Making sure a potential flooring failure doesn't get out of hand.

### **Goal of a Flooring Contractor**

- Provide excellent customer service – Being responsive to client needs, resolving issues, and ensuring that the client is satisfied with the final product, installation and performance. Providing quality work.
- Staying up to date on flooring trends – With constant evolution, providing the best possible flooring solutions.
- Providing high-quality materials and meeting budgets.
- Ensuring that specified flooring materials are installed within industry and manufacturer guidelines.
- Meeting the project schedule.
- Communicating with clients throughout the project, to ensure expectations are being met, potential problems are being addressed, and everyone is happy with the work.
- Bringing any product or site related concerns to the GC when noticed so they can be properly dealt with, corrected, or resolved before it's too late.

Here are some of the challenges faced by the Architect and General Contractor

### **Architect Related:**

1. **Tenant Improvement** and Remodel Work (Existing Slabs with or “without” a vapor barrier) – Architects are struggling with flooring selections as it relates to remodel work, and often run into problems when picking vinyl plank and carpet tile (and adhesives systems). The best case scenario is for the flooring company to look at the existing concrete, make sure it has been tested for moisture, that any compromising conditions are properly dealt with, and then guide the Architect with acceptable finish options. Architects hire electrical engineers, civil engineers, structural engineers, and mechanical engineers..... why would they not want a “flooring engineer?” The architect also needs to read the product information, understand the flooring product they're specifying, and the installation guidelines the manufacturer provides.
2. **Shower Systems** – Drain Selections (location, height, slope), Backer Board Type, Taping Requirements, Mortars, Grout Type, & Metal Trim for tile work – It's difficult for us to keep up with all the waterproofing options, and metal trims out there.... which makes it even more challenging for Architects to keep up and adapt. For this reason, they often use boiler plate specifications with generic terminology. As a flooring professional we should be guiding them towards the best waterproofing systems and metal trims for each application. As the industry continues to move towards Large Format tile, cove tile base and tile bullnose pieces are often not available. We need to be helping Architects with specific part numbers, shapes, and metal finishes that coordinate with the desired tile, and the correct thickness of each part. Boiler plate specifications are no longer relevant and up to date with all the changes that have taken place recently. It's time to get specific.

3. **Concrete Related** - We have one Architect that started putting this on the Cover Page of their drawings, because they were tired of all the misinformation about adhesives and vapor barriers (and it seems to be working for them).

**“General Contractor Shall Follow ASTM F710-11, ACI GUIDE FOR CONCRETE SLABS THAT RECEIVE MOISTURE-SENSITIVE FLOORING MATERIALS 302.2 – LATEST EDITION PRACTICE FOR PREPARING CONCRETE FLOORS TO RECEIVE RESILIENT FLOORING.”**

**General Contractors Related:**

1. **“I did it per plan!”**. They understand why subcontractors might bid per plan, while trying to keep their bid number as competitive as possible. However, wouldn't credibility and reputation be more important (they ask)? Are we offering add options if applicable when things are missing from drawings? Are we offering deduct options when it's in the best interest of the Owner..... or only while trying to provide a lower bid number.
2. **GC's find themselves** fighting Architects and Owners over problems that could have been avoided, had the subcontractor just shared some of their knowledge early on. For example: If we were installing a backup generator at a hospital, but the plans didn't show it tying into the Hospital itself, would we just say, “I did it per plan”? Or would we be professionals and provide them with an added option to do the project correctly? (This has happened).

We want to thank Gary Roberts for providing this information as a guide to help all of you who it affects on a commercial flooring project.

If you have any questions, need help on any aspect of a flooring project, contact us. We have the knowledge, experience, and expertise with our LGM team to keep you out of harms way.



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