



The Owner's Perspective on the Role of Roof Consultants

By Joe Saldarelli, P. Eng.

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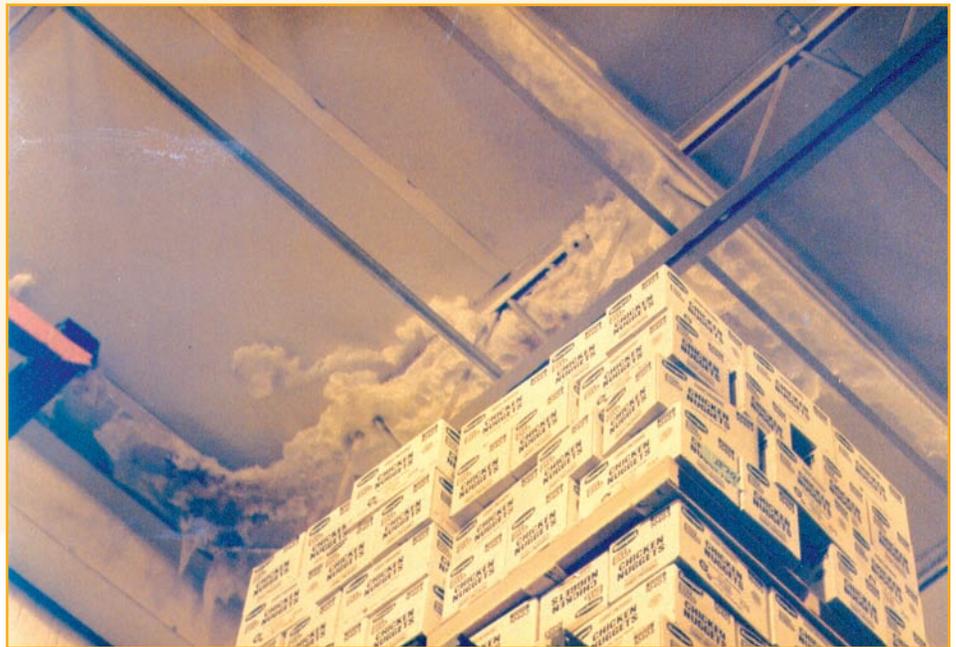


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Roofs represent a critical building component for building owners. A leaking roof can inconvenience, interrupt, or even shut down the core business taking place within the building and can result in collateral damage to interior finishes, equipment, and products, as well as create a host of health and safety concerns including mold growth in walls and ceilings that may not be readily evident. The services of

a roof consultant can be very beneficial to a building owner, especially those who have numerous buildings.

For owners to effectively manage their buildings or any component of their buildings, they first have to know how much roof area they have, what it consists of, and its condition. A roof consultant can inventory and develop a numbering identification system for all of the owners' roof sections, keeping in mind that the roofs on many buildings will be made up of various sub-



Chicken nuggets or gold nuggets? The former will feel like the latter if a preventable leak damages stock and building components to the tune of expensive repairs and damages. A roof consultant before the fact might have saved this building owner an arm and a leg (if not a breast and a thigh). (Photo courtesy of Fincastle Engineering.)



A roof consultant may take samples to determine that specified materials are being installed in compliance with the project specifications. You will know you are getting what you bargained and paid for. (Photo courtesy of INSPEC.)

roof areas or sections. From there, the roof consultant will determine the square footage and construction of the roof sections and evaluate their condition. If a particular section has problems, the roof consultant will recommend a repair or reroofing and estimate budget cost. This information is essential in developing a long-term roof replacement and maintenance plan that will yield the most benefit from the financial resources the owner has available and will also help the owner better understand the consequences of different funding levels.

With this information, the roof consultant can assist the owner in developing a long-term roof replacement and maintenance plan and review and update the plan annually or as required. Many consultants own or have the rights to roof management software that can be made available to the owner so that critical roofing data, complete with photographs, can be quickly accessed and reviewed to support better decision making and to ensure roof warranty obligations of contractors and manufacturers.

The services of a roof consultant are especially beneficial to the owner in the implementation of roof replacement and maintenance projects. The quality of a roof replacement or major maintenance project

is dependent on the appropriateness of the remediation and quality of the specification, the products used, the workmanship and quality control of the roofing contractor, and site inspection by the consultant to ensure the end product meets the specification.

Starting with the information collected in the condition investigations and reports, the roof consultant can recommend appropriate repair or replacement, as well as the life cycle/cost benefit of different decisions. When the owner, with help from the roof consultant, decides on the treatment to be used, the consultant will develop the specifications and drawings and prepare documents required to tender the work to quali-

commences work on a project, the roof consultant will inspect the work as it is being completed to ensure that the installation satisfies the specifications and to deal with any unforeseen issues that may arise through the course of the project.

While owners will readily understand the value of the above-named services, they may be worried that these services will place an additional burden on their limited budgets. The competitive tendering process overseen by a qualified roof consultant can yield benefits that can more than offset the fees charged to the owner by the consultant. Besides the obvious competition created at the contractors' level, a good tendering

fied roofing contractors. The competitive tendering process based on clear specifications and drawings is an extremely important step in the owner getting a high quality roof from the dollars expended. The roof consultant will recommend a list of qualified contractors to bid a project and oversee the tendering process to ensure a fair process for the contractors and owner. It is important to recognize that the owner is the roof consultant's client and with specifications and contract documents prepared by the consultant on behalf of the owner, the owner is determining the "rules of the game." This is not the case with contractor- or manufacturer-prepared specifications. When the contractor

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process will create fair competition at the product manufacturer's level.

Roof consultants are knowledgeable on a wide variety of roof treatments and products and are not limited to the products of one manufacturer. Access to the full range of roofing manufacturers and their products means owners are not limited to the options available in getting the roofing solution that best meets their needs.

With the roof consultant preparing specifications, tendering, and inspecting a roofing project, it is unlikely that the owner will face roof performance problems with the new roof; but if any problems arise, the consultant is well positioned to protect the owner's interests in getting the problem corrected. The roof consultant will make the owner aware of the warranty advantages and disadvantages of various products and the specifications and contract documents will be very clear on the warranty obligations of both the contractor and product manufacturer as well as the owner's obligations relative to the warranty.

The benefits a roof consultant can deliver to an owner are not limited to existing buildings and their roofs. Some of the problems owners face in maintaining roofs are inherent in the original roof design. One of the most proactive things an owner can do with respect to managing his or her roofing portfolio is to make sure that any new buildings have properly designed and constructed roofs. Owners readily recognize that their architect needs the services of structural, electrical, and mechanical engineers in designing and constructing a new building. The roof is as critical to a building's performance as the aforementioned components and a wise owner will insist the architect uses the services of a RRC in the

design and construction of the new building's roof. This decision will yield great benefits in ensuring a better performing building for the owner's core business and in reduced maintenance costs.

Preventive maintenance (PM) is another area where the roof consultant can deliver value to an owner. Owners can easily recognize how mechanical components require PM service to ensure that the components do not fail ahead of their potential life cycle. Roofs also require PM service in order to maximize their life. An RRC can assist the owner in developing and delivering a roof

PM program that targets certain roofs at critical times and can also ensure that the PM program takes into consideration long-term warranty periods.

Registered Roof Consultants (RRCs) are certified as possessing expertise in their field by RCI, Inc.. Owners are wise to set the RRC designation and RCI membership as a prerequisite in selecting a consultant to help manage their roofing portfolios. 



A consultant checks a wind uplift chamber on a roof to determine the system's uplift resistance. (Photo courtesy of Roof Engineering Inc.)



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