



## In This Issue...Why Use A Consultant? – Part 2

### Why use a roof consultant?

In the last issue we began a discussion on the merits of using a professional roof consultant for advice as opposed to other sources such as architects, roofing contractors and roofing manufacturer's representatives. Our focus last month was on architects. This month we will focus on roofing contractors. By way of review and to reinforce the point: The single biggest reason to use a professional consultant as opposed to any other source of advice is experience. We pointed out that in just the last two years the author of this newsletter has been on over 330 roofs that he had never seen before, in addition to the dozens and dozens of roofs that he sees regularly for his clients. While it is true that a roofing contractor would likely see many more roofs than an architect, the typical roofer still won't see nearly as many roofs as the typical consultant might. But there are other reasons why using a roofer is not nearly as advantageous as using a consultant.

Having a good roofing contractor is an important asset to any organization, but no matter how comfortable you might be with that contractor it is easy to lose sight of the conflict of interest issues that arise. Roofing contractors are, almost universally, highly biased. They have opinions-often strong ones-about how certain roof problems should be addressed. Often enough their solutions are not necessarily the best. Too often, way too often, a contractor's solution to your problem is "you need a new roof", when the reality is far, far from that.



The roof shown in the picture above and in the next column is failing. The wall flashings are bridging, which is a very common failure mode for ballasted EPDM



(rubber) roofs. The roof's condition is consistent with its age. The roofer who was "taking care" of this roof for the owner had told the owner that it was time for a new roof and he provided a price to do the work of \$104,000. The owner decided to involve us. We gave them two options to consider. The first was to repair the existing roof, which would have extended the life of the roof for 5-8 years. The cost for this we budgeted at \$20-25,000. The second option was to install a new roof. We gave them a budget of \$70,000-\$75,000. The owner elected to install a new roof and asked us to write specifications and take bids. We designed a solution that was different than the roofer had used and had a longer warranty by 50%. (It was also the solution that this owner has used regularly with good results. It wasn't anything unusual, exotic or unproven.) The final contract amount was \$65,000. (The roofer who provided the initial quote bid the work at \$80,000).

The owner decided it was a good thing he didn't listen to his roofer! The magnitude of difference in dollars we have illustrated here is not uncommon! The original roofer here wasn't suggesting anything illegal, unethical or improper. He was simply acting out of his biases. He would have done a fine job at \$104,000 (or at \$80,000). But why waste that money! If you are using a roofing contractor for your "advice" on your roofs you are risking wasting large amounts of money. This type of difference does not just extend to examples of installing new roofs, it also extends-perhaps even more often-to making basic repairs.

Next month we will explore using a roofing manufacturer to get your advice.