

## **All Apples are Not the Same**

### **--- How to pick the right roofing contractor**

by Scott Kuykendall, Vice-President, Olsson Roofing

*"I just want to make sure that we're bidding apples for apples"...*  
*"Your proposal makes sense, but I need to compare apples to apples."*

When comparing estimates from roofing, or any contractor for that matter --- all apples are not the same.

Even though the specifications are the same and the systems and materials are the same, unfortunately, all contractors are not the same. This variable puts enormous pressure on the property manager or building owner to pick the right contractor --- the first time.

What it comes right down to is who's bidding the project, who's scheduling the project and who's installing the project. And even when all specs and materials are the same, the people and company behind the installation can make the difference between proper installation and aggravating leaks and callbacks.

Even though there may be a "consultant" on site to supervise the installation, he or she can't keep an eye on every person, or perform tests on every product being installed.

According to Scott Kuykendall, VP of Olsson Roofing in Aurora, IL, here are five tips to follow when trying to find and select the right roofing contractor:

#### **1. Consider the experience level of the contractor.**

Ask about their length of time in business, their awards and achievements from manufacturers and organizations, and the resume of foremen, superintendents, and top management. Also be sure to view a list of at least several references of similar type projects, and contact some of them, if you think it is important.

#### **2. Schedule a pre-job conference.**

This way you will ensure that you know who will be in charge on site, who is the project manager, and who do you call if there is a problem? Things sometimes happen, but as unfortunate as that may be, it's how well and how quick the problem is handled that can be the most important thing.

#### **3. Ask a contractor to give you an example.**

Ask the contractor to give you an example of a problem that has occurred and how he handled it. If they say they never had any problems, be wary...either they haven't been in business long enough or they are hiding things. If not, why would liability and workmen's compensation insurance be so expensive and difficult to get in the roofing and construction business? And speaking of insurance, make sure they carry proper insurance, and that policies are in force and up to date!

#### **4. Go out and look at a similar project.**

Visit a similar project that has been installed by the contractor and maybe even one that is in progress, similar or not. You can get a lot of information on how your project will run by stopping out at a job site.

#### **5. Consider alternative options.**

Kuykendall advises owners and building managers not get caught in the middle. "Let an Olsson Roofing Company service professional discuss simple and inexpensive options to maintain your roof system, and its integrity. Not only will it keep the manufacturers happy, but it will help maintain **or even extend** the life of your roof system, and possibly head off major catastrophic problems."

When you complete your due diligence on the contractors, even if you do get what you believe to be an "apples for apples" bid, you will more times than not be satisfied, and maybe even happy in the end. Remember, it only takes one bad apple to spoil the whole barrel...