



Gregg Zysman, VP, All-Rite Construction Company, Garfield, N.J., Gregg@all-riteconstruction.com

Spotlight on Retail Construction

Building stores requires a particular type of expertise on the part of the contractor. *Chain Store Age* spoke with Gregg Zysman of All-Rite Construction Company about what retailers should look for when hiring a contractor.

What are the most important factors retailers should consider when selecting a contractor?

The most important factor is to select a contractor that specializes in retail construction. Look for membership in associations like the Retail Contractors Association and a list of recognized retail clients.

Next, is the contractor's reputation for delivering projects on time, in budget and with requisite quality. An indicator is a company that has a long-standing client base and is growing in the retail segment.

Finally, the contractor must have a strong business and ethical commitment. This is reflected in responsiveness and resolution to problems and ongoing support after the project is complete. Look for ready access to senior management, a trained staff of professionals and ongoing maintenance indicating the work will be done right and a desire to support the client for the long run.

What is it about retail build-out that necessitates the contractor have specific retail expertise?

Retailers are under extreme pressure to complete projects on compressed schedules with firm completion dates, often linked to advertising and merchandising programs. Also, retailers often require renovations be conducted after hours with no interference to store operations. Working under these conditions requires years of experience and carefully honed procedures to ensure success.

Retailers are also under significant budget pressures, with little tolerance for cost overruns. The selected contractor must properly bid the project and bring it in for the bid price without cutting corners or generating unexpected change orders. Again, a retail contractor with a reputation of delivering quality projects for the bid price is essential.

The retail environment requires the contractor to be sensitive to many factors other construction professionals never deal with. Store management and employees, mall management, nearby store customers/merchandise and other factors can be pitfalls to a non-retail contractor. Having years of experience in retail construction is the only way to avoid these pitfalls.

Are there any advantages in using a regional contractor versus a national one?

Yes, regional contractors are highly focused on their territories. They build close and continuing relationships with building officials, suppliers and subcontractors through repeated projects. These relationships provide the retailer an edge on completion time and budget by leveraging this local knowledge.

The proximity of projects allows senior management and project management staff direct access to the job sites, enhancing performance and developing relationships through face-to-face meetings. Regional contractors are still large enough to have the necessary resources to ensure delivery so there are no drawbacks to their use.

What is the biggest mistake retailers make in hiring a contractor?

Some retailers base their decision solely on price with some contractors offering a "low ball" price to win. Those retailers can end up with an inferior product, headaches along the way and often a final cost exceeding other reasonable bids due to unexpected change orders. The best solution is an experienced retail contractor that offers a fair and competitive price based on a complete bid, which will limit change orders and still deliver a quality product.

Tell us a little about All-Rite Construction Company.

All-Rite Construction is a full-service regional general contractor working from Maine to South Carolina specializing in the retail industry. We offer build-outs of all kinds including ground-up, mall, strip, street, remodel, roll-out, retrofit and maintenance services when the project is complete. We also offer energy conservation solutions.

All-Rite has been servicing the retail industry for nearly 30 years and is a long-standing member of the Retail Contractors Association (RCA). We choose to stay regional so we can provide the highest level of service. We utilize advanced technology to improve our performance and take old-fashioned pride in every project. Many of our clients have been with us for decades.