

Stick to the Spec

Why building contractors should use a standard project specification



Straying from project specifications can have a ripple effect, especially on energy management. It's important that you work from a standard spec sheet. In this article, we'll explore why spec integrity and following industry guidelines are not just best practices but necessary.

The Importance of Prepping Precise Specifications

As the building automation industry evolves, so do the expectations placed on contractors. One aspect that gets overlooked is using a standard design or project specification sheet – otherwise known as a spec sheet.

What is a spec sheet?

A spec sheet is a document that outlines a product or project's features and properties in detail. The spec sheet defines the project's scope, covering aims, standards, materials, deliverables, budget and timeline.

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Whether you're an experienced contractor or a newcomer to the field, working from a standard spec sheet can make a world of difference in project outcomes. A complete and accurate project specification helps you

- Understand what your customer needs
- Improve communication across teams
- Establish a framework for stakeholders to follow

Why Sticking to Spec Matters

During its lifecycle, a project can shift for various reasons. One example: a contractor may want to change product specs to cut costs. But you may face pushback when fiddling with the budget.

“Little adjustments won't hurt,” you might think. But consider this: even small changes to specification can lead to unforeseen issues down the line.

Maybe that decision to use cheaper kit affects system compatibility, visibility or maintenance. Skimping on control and monitoring equipment now could limit a building's total energy management capabilities.

Worse, the impact may not be clear until months or years later. Decisions must weigh short-term wins against long-term losses. It's about making smart decisions. Smart decisions start with a solid plan – which is why defining clear specifications upfront and sticking to them helps you avoid bigger issues in the long run.

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Industry Standards and Guidelines You Should Know

Along with a standard spec sheet, you can support your project by following industry standards. In the UK, this is driven by a series of regulations, particularly for new builds and commercial spaces.

Part L of the Building Regulations

A prominent standard that drives consideration of long-term building project impacts is Part L of the Building Regulations.¹ Part L of the Building Regulations requires that non-domestic new builds emit at least **27% less carbon** than those constructed to current standards.

The UK Government is also set to introduce the **Future Buildings Standard** in 2025, further emphasising the need to reduce carbon emissions.²

While a spec sheet acts as a guide for your project's development and delivery, you can go a step further by assessing your building through third-party certifications. Being awarded a certification proves your commitment to building sustainability. Sounds great, right? Let's dive into a few of them.



BREEAM and LEED certifications

[BREEAM](#) is the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method. According to BRE, it is the “world-leading sustainability assessment method for the built environment and infrastructure.”

[LEED](#) – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – is the most widely used green building rating system. LEED certification, according to the U.S. Green Building Council, “provides a framework for healthy, highly efficient and cost-saving buildings, which offer environmental, social and governance benefits.”

The main difference between the two standards is the certification process. LEED takes a simpler approach, awarding points for various green building strategies. More points equal a higher rating.

BREEAM takes what can be considered a more rigorous approach. A BREEAM certification is delivered by a licensed organisation, using trained assessors who have the experience and authority to evaluate the sustainability of a building.

Both certifications are nationally and internationally accepted and suitable for many different buildings. Either way, earning a certification shows a building meets a certain level of environmentally conscious design.

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Everyone could use a good NABER

Alongside BREEAM and LEED, we've seen the introduction of the NABERS UK programme. On 2 April 2024, CIBSE was announced as the new administrator for NABERS UK.³

[NABERS UK](#) – a natural extension of the BREEAM certification scheme – zeroes in on energy performance. While BREEAM casts a wide net from energy use to materials, NABERS delivers a targeted assessment of energy efficiency.

Contractors will mainly come into contact with this certification through its NABERS UK Energy for Offices rating, administered by CIBSE.⁴

NABERS UK Energy for Offices rates the actual energy performance of commercial spaces based on metered energy consumption. Ratings range from one star (poor

performance) to six stars (exemplary energy use), based on performance over 12 months.

Once successfully certified and registered with NABERS UK, BREEAM or LEED, your building can gain market recognition for its achievements in sustainability.

Specifying the Future of Building Standards



New standards are shaping the market. Clients want rock-solid investments. Customers expect equipment to work every time and energy to be managed with precision. Commercial offices and buildings must be good for the environment and the community.

So, where does that leave you?

Back to the spec sheet

Let's circle back to the project specification – right back to the humble spec sheet. In support of market-leading standards, building managers and contractors must work together. That starts with a standard spec sheet.

By preparing and sticking to specifications, then engaging with reputable certification programmes, we can support quality standards across projects.

Consistency in the spec sheet translates to more consistent communication and performance, whether it involves HVAC, lighting, security, or sustainability.

Trend can help you

At Trend, we're all for teamwork and collaboration. We believe it's a key to building smarter, more sustainable buildings. Our BEMS can be found in BREEAM and LEED-compliant built environments across commercial, healthcare, hospitality, data centre and education sectors.

Beyond the spec, we engage with professional groups like CIBSE and Controls Committee. Plus, for all the engineers out there who like to network, we host events across the UK & Ireland.

Ready to navigate building standards and spec sheets?

Explore Trend [CPD and BEMS training](#)

Courses are tailored from beginner to advanced levels. Opt for a personal session or team workshops at your location. You'll walk away with in-depth materials and a CPD Certificate of Attendance. Don't miss this opportunity to build your expertise.

And remember this last tip for your next project. . .

Stick to the spec sheet!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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