

Project 4 Proposal

Writing an RFI (Request For Information)

In the Building Construction Industry

Spring 2016

RFI (*Request for information*)

The RFI procedure is used in the construction industry to confirm the interpretation of a detail, specification, or note on the construction drawings, or to get documented clarification from the architect or client that is needed to continue work.

It is common and accepted practice for a subcontractor or supplier to use an RFI to state his/her concern related to the omission or misapplication of a product, and seek further clarification of the building owner's intended use or the building official acceptance of the specified product. It is also acceptable for the subcontractor to use an RFI to call attention to an inferior product that may not meet the building owner's needs, and use his/her expertise to recommend the better/correct product

If used as described above it is a very effective tool in helping a construction project move along efficiently. There are circumstances where the use of RFIs is abused, and simply creating paper to justify unwarranted claims. Such a circumstance occurs when RFIs are continually being issued when the information is clearly shown on the documents. In this case either the person reading the drawings is working outside of the scope of their capability, or the intent is to generate paper to help support what might otherwise be an unjustifiable claim

Background

The RFI procedure is used in the construction industry to confirm the interpretation of a detail, specification, or note on the construction drawings, or to get documented clarification from the architect or client that is needed to continue work.

While working as a tile installation subcontractor in Town, OH, I gained some experience submitting RFIs via tradition and several less-than-formal methods including crayon on napkin, SMS messaging, and various other handwritten notes.

At Virginia Tech, I have had the opportunity to work on several construction projects that facilitated a dynamic understanding of *Construction Documents* and formal RFIs.

I have chosen to study RFIs as they relate to a general contractor in the building construction industry. When constructed in a coherent and organized manner, these documents can help to significantly increase a project's cost-effectiveness and overall value by reducing rework.

Areas to be studied

RFIs are used in practically every single step in the construction process. They provide a means of ascertaining information in a documented and recorded fashion. The response to an RFI can be thought of as an NFL referee's 'official ruling on the play' after a challenged play.

The quality of RFIs can dictate the quality of the information returned. My goal with Project 4 is to learn ways to create and submit top notch RFIs. Once I graduate, my first job in the construction industry will surely include a large amount of hands-on RFI experience. The more comfortable I am now creating, submitting, and interpreting RFIs, the more value I can bring to the table.

Methods of research

In junior high, I remember not being allowed to use the internet for all your sources when doing a research paper. These days, you can find entire books online, watch entire video seminars and lectures, encyclopedias, etc. There is no reason you shouldn't be able to find more than

enough information online. However, it is important to double and triple check sources to verify credibility, as *anyone* can put stuff online.

It's still an awesome idea to include other sources if you have them at hand. Talking to friends and family who are in the industry, or reaching out to professors and industry players can be helpful as well. There is always someone you can reach out who would love to help, you just have to find them.

Timetable

I like to set early timelines on project stages to pad my schedule with a factor of safety. I will set a flexible goal of April 19 to have my rough draft completed, giving me a week to edit it and spice it up a little bit. By the 26th, when the rough draft is actually due, it'll be closer to a final version.

I start papers and projects differently each time. First, I generally like to set up the layout of the paper. If I have a nice title page, page numbers, font, text and color chosen, it's easier for me to visualize the tone of the paper. While I toy around with that in the beginning stages, I am thinking about the information I want to include (questions I want to answer, writing style I will convey my ideas in), and making notes.

Between my class load, work schedule, and training schedule, it would only add stress to set concrete dates for this project. I know it will take about two full workdays to complete, and I would rather do it all at once and put it behind me than to work on it for an hour each day of April. By setting a date to complete the draft a week before the draft is due, I'm giving myself time incase something comes up.

Qualifications

Prior to beginning school at Virginia Tech, I worked as a tile installation subcontractor. I dealt with RFIs every day. At that level, they mostly consisted of emails, where I would email the project manager of our tile outfit, and he would submit a more formal RFI to the general contractor on the project.

In my major, I have been involved in several projects focused on building a solid understanding of the *Construction Documents* used in a project. Formal and informal RFIs are submitted internally and externally constantly during a project. A successful project is usually associated with a frictionless channel of communication that includes precise and coherent RFI submittals, answered with quick turnarounds.

Request for approval

I feel pretty confident that RFIs are a great area of study. Not only do they play an important role in successful construction project delivery, they are used in other industries by companies and firms all over the world.

What are my next steps? I need to create a mental image of a template I can use for all RFIs. In other words, what are items that always must be included? What are some parameters that determine whether extra information be included or excluded? Please feel free to contact me to talk about RFIs, if you have any questions about your project

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