



NACC Case Study: **THE GENERAL CONTRACTOR'S PERSPECTIVE**



"What's attracted KA to NACC is how to evaluate qualified subcontractors. When we work in our home area, we have relationships, but as we reach out to other areas, independent certifications are a tool to evaluate competency. That's a real strong selling point."

- Michael Spence, AIA, FCSI
Kraus-Anderson Construction

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Team

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About Kraus-Anderson

Founded in 1897 and family owned and managed for over 75 years, Kraus-Anderson Construction is consistently ranked by Engineering News Record among the Midwest's Top 20 Construction Firms. An integrated development, construction, and real estate leasing and management firm with national project experience, Kraus-Anderson offers an owner's perspective while collaborating with clients, architects, and stakeholders to ensure project success.

About NACC

The North American Contractor Certification Program provides architectural glass and metal contractors with certification recognition through a professionally administered, third-party assessment, as a means of creating a baseline for competency and adherence to industry-accepted guidelines.

Knowledge is Power

Abiding by the belief that knowledge is power, Kraus-Anderson Construction (KA) established KA University. The professional development program provides employees, clients, architects, and others with technical education and leadership training. KA University is an approved CEU provider of the American Institute of Architects.

Mike Spence, AIA, FCSI, of KA provides design and construction teams with in-house technical expertise and insight in the areas of building science and quality. In three decades of professional experience, Spence has worked as an architect, directed specifications writing, and provided construction quality management. His multiple perspectives informed his recent conversations with Administrative Management Services, Inc. about the value of the NACC certification program and how contractors stand to benefit from hiring certified subcontractors.



Decision-Making Differences

"KA looks differently at subcontractor criteria than an architect," he explains. "As an architect, I was taught to focus on end results and not to specify means and methods. As a contractor, it's all about the means and methods. There is a risk profile difference between the two, but that lends itself well to labor and subcontractor certification programs. A third-party evaluation is a plus."

A subcontractor's financial strength is paramount to KA's hiring decisions. A strong safety record comes a close second. NACC certification mandates documentation for both, meaning certified subcontractors are prepared to meet the stringent requirements of a large GC such as KA.

Since launching in July 2015, NACC has gained industry acceptance and recognition for raising the bar of quality and professionalism. Yet there are still areas of the country without certified subcontractors. Spence, who expects the program to grow, suggests specifying qualifications and documentation in alignment with NACC certification in cases where specifying a certified contractor is not possible.

Specifying Curtain Wall

To assist the A/E and subcontracting communities, the KA Building Science Group developed the presentation, "Curtain Walls from the Contractor's Perspective." The presentation provides design teams with insight and understanding of curtain wall performance requirements and best practices perspective regarding curtain wall specification, detailing, and testing. According to Spence, "By understanding the contractor's perspective, you will be better prepared to eliminate waste in your design and documentation process by focusing on what's important for the owner and contractor."

Mitigating Risk

The presentation explains how potential risks can be reduced by specifying end results rather than means and methods and suggests architects and engineers, "consider NACC and AGMT criteria as a starting point." He outlines key factors that should form the basis for qualifying glazing subcontractors: business practices, safety programs, quality programs, administrative procedures, and operational procedures. Not coincidentally, all of these criteria are documented as part of NACC certification.

Level of Detail

According to Spence, the level of detail encouraged by NACC is an asset to the certified subcontractors and the design and construction community. Since curtain wall manufacturers rarely approve or endorse subcontractors, independent third-party verification provides a safeguard. From structured quality and safety programs and documented procedures for shop fabrication to field deliveries and on-site applications, the protocols documented during certification keep questions to a minimum and instill confidence in the hiring GC.

Predictable Performance

Spence says that KA encourages its design community partners to focus on defining performance criteria: how the finished application must perform and not necessarily how to get there. This has been a recurring theme in his education presentations. "The value in NACC certification is that in the procedural guide for NACC are those criteria. Certified contractors provide predictable performance. That's really important."