

Elevator Specifics

by Vijay Dahiya

The way architects previously worked and the way they work today has seen little change. Architects are given a brief of the project, areas (namely in terms of sq. ft.) and number of floors they can build, then work begins on a design. The number of elevators required is based on past experience (or gut feeling). When an architect returns to the client, the number of elevators probably gets reduced by 20-30%. Then one takes the initiative, meets a few elevator vendors and analyzes the data for the number of elevators required. Surprisingly, there are varying views on this matter.

The quantity can vary from four to nine elevators. Then the tendering process starts. The number of elevators specified in the tender is always less than the actual number. The capacity and speed of the elevator is also reduced to make it more economical. How can we change this? We need more elevator experts in the present scenario. Today, 90% of the designing is done through an architect or client's office. Can the industry do something else about this?

The type of elevators, especially the interiors, are important. From a company's perspective, what do you want a customer to see in an elevator? The lobby, which is designed by an architect, might be at its opulent/minimal best, then there is a cage made of stainless steel in which you experience a ride that may be less than satisfactory. One can spend a lot of money on it, but it's what the customer sees that matters. The company provides a standard elevator. If a customer needs any changes, the elevator will cost more, possibly double what has already been paid. So, rather than relying on an architect to do the interiors (which is typical) the client should have more options from elevator companies. This happens only in 5% of cases, as 95% of the designs remain standard. Interior design should be the primary initiative for elevator companies, because that is what the customer sees. The elevator company should seek professional help from major industrial and product designers. This should be done for 95% of the elevators; as for the niche markets, architects will usually do the interiors, too. The interior design choice is compounded by the fact that people get impatient while waiting for an elevator. They wait for hours to take a flight and will spend long hours in a traffic jam, but when it comes to waiting for an elevator, they get impatient. This is a constant handicap faced by the entire elevator industry. When a small space (namely an elevator) is occupied by a few strangers, it's usually a quiet ride and the occupants end up staring at the interiors, which are usually unattractive.

More than 50% of buildings are residential. Moreover, there is a lot of focus on developing lower-income and affordable housing. Such buildings rise up to 20 floors with elevators. The problem is not the housing cost, but the recurring cost for maintenance. The question is, will they be able to maintain the elevators? It is sometimes difficult for building owners to afford maintenance, and it is likely to become more challenging five years from now. So, something should be done for low-cost sectors. They should be given elevators that are easier to maintain by local professionals.

It is important to educate people on lift specifications and what the equipment entails. Developers, architects and especially lift manufacturers should jointly conduct training sessions or workshops. These should be held across the country. The sessions should explain what lifts are, what pit depth means, ARDs, what type of elevators to select, etc. There is much confusion on these topics, and many people who specify an elevator think they know everything about it, which is not the case. There are few experts who can shed light on the issue.

It is recommended that whenever a training session or workshop occurs, it be made clear that the companies providing the elevators are not the ultimate contact to answer all questions. The data required to calculate the number of elevators is much more than a one-page calculation given to companies. Training sessions and workshops will eventually benefit the industry at large.



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