

Why consult a consultant?

The concrete repair industry boasts many highly experienced contractors and materials suppliers, most of whom are ACRA members.

Put any good contractor together with any good materials supplier and surely you have all the expertise needed to cope with every repair *without* adding a consultant to the know-how mix!

No so, even according to the contractors and materials suppliers themselves, most of who strongly advocate the use of a specialist consultant to ensure that the repair strategy is as appropriate as it can be.

In fact, it is likely to be the less experienced contractors who fail to appreciate the complexity of some repair problems and who tackle jobs without engineering input.

Dr Consultant

The first, and arguably the most important, role of a consultant on a concrete repair project is to diagnose the cause of the problem.

To repair without fully understanding the causes that must be addressed along the way is to invite a repeat of the damage that everyone is trying to fix.

Medical analogy

As a useful analogy: **if you go to the doctor with a headache and the cause is a brain tumor, he won't help you much if he sends you away with two aspirin and tells you to go to bed.**

In another medical parallel, consider the GP (that industry's backbone "consultant"), whose role is likewise to recognise special problems and to refer the patient to a suitable expert.

In concrete repair, many engineers are only occasionally exposed to concrete repair problems but do not have a high level of experience or expertise in this field. It is therefore common for structural engineers to either



IT'S A LOT OF REPAIR WORK TO DO WRONGLY. SO DIAGNOSE!

work with engineers who specialise in concrete deterioration and repair or to refer work to them.

No cheap way

In both disciplines, once the diagnosis has been made a suitable remedy must be designed to give the best prognosis.

But unlike in medicine, the "patient" (building owner) commonly tries to get the repair work done for the lowest possible price. This runs dangerously counter to the consultant's agenda, which is to get the work done in the most cost-effective manner, **including referring the owner to a specialist contractor who will do the work to the required quality for a fair price and with as little fuss as possible.**

During the repair phase, the role of the consultant is to work with the owner and contractor to ensure that the work is done as specified. When unforeseen problems arise, you want to be sure that any counter-measures are orchestrated by someone who knows the building intimately. The consultant fulfils this role.

Stories abound of jobs that went wrong and mostly this occurs because the nature of the problem was not well understood at the start.

Good diagnosis is the key.

Free advice

To ensure that your building repair problem gets the best remedy, **go to any ACRA web page and click "Get help".** ■