



CUSTOM FABRICATED SHEET METAL SHAPES SAVE TIME AND MONEY

By Andrew T. Martin

Contractors are usually interested in shaving a few points off the job cost wherever possible; and there is an often-overlooked area of the tenant improvement marketplace that can save a few dollars. The area of custom fabricated sheet metal products can be advanced beyond the obvious tracks, reveals and end-wall cap applications. Custom parts that are designed for specific labor savings yield significant cost savings for the contractor. The primary challenges with using custom fabricated sheet metal shapes are getting the parts specified correctly and then getting them delivered on time.

While this article cannot help with getting parts delivered on time, it certainly can help in providing an outline for correctly specifying custom sheet metal parts. Whether the part is a customized clip that will eliminate the need for on-site fabrication, or a part that eliminates a drywall rip and corner bead application: the part needs to fit the right way the first time. The best way to insure against ill-fitting parts is to design the part well and clearly communicate the design to the manufacturer. Usually the contractor is well versed in how to design a part that will reduce the time needed to install and finish it. The larger challenge becomes communicating the part design to the manufacturer.

For non-structural applications, the specification of a part can be simplified by using an information checklist that is passed along to the manufacturer. To get the right part the first time, simply submit the information to a reputable manufacturer that can deliver what is promised.

For structural applications, it is recommended that a professional engineer be used to specify the part and confirm the strength of the part for the application. If this process is followed, the specification and design of the part will already be done, and the information on the print need only be forwarded to the manufacturer.



Specification Checklist Custom Fabricated Sheet Metal Shapes

- Provide a section view of the part (draw and dimension the part exactly as needed)
- How long does the part need to be?
- How many parts are needed?
- What is the material the part is made from?
- Can an alternate or comparable part be used?
- Can the part be modified if it will reduce the purchase price?
- What is the dimensional tolerance? Angular tolerance? Square tolerance?
- What edge quality is needed?
- What is the material thickness?
- What type of material finish is needed?
- Other
 - o Is there any welding? What type and how much?
 - o Is the material plated or otherwise processed after fabrication?
 - o Does the part need to be deburred?
 - o Is the part heat-treated or annealed after fabrication?

NOTE: A custom shape request form and checklist can be downloaded at <http://www.BendiForm.com/images/customshaperequestform.pdf>

When designing a custom part, it is always a great idea to ask the manufacturer if they have any ideas that may reduce the price of the part or the price of the installation. The experience that a manufacturer possesses is vast and can lead to new ways of completing tasks that can significantly reduce costs.

Try using the checklist the next time a custom sheet metal part requirement comes along: the cost savings will definitely make the time investment worthwhile.

About the Author

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