



Best Practices in Decorative Concrete

CREATING PRODUCT SAMPLES

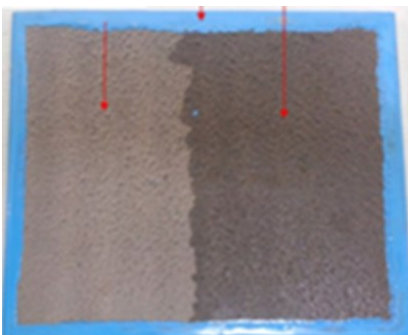
Defining Good Product Samples

What Should Product Samples Convey?

Making show and display worthy samples may not be as easy as you think. Some product samples deliver inspiration and motivation that excites an owner or decision-maker into the project. They tell the story of the substrate being addressed, the systems as they will be installed, or the anticipated finished outcome of the project. However, they can tell much more! They can tell how professional your craftsmanship may be or display your attention to detail. There is a saying that he that is faithful in little is also faithful in much.



However, sloppy, unfinished, weathered, poorly applied, and beat-up samples may tell a different story. Likewise, you only get one time to make a first impression. So, samples such as these could convey that your work will be hurried and not thorough. They may also speak to the fact that you will not maintain a clean process throughout the installation, or even that you may not have the necessary experience to be the contractor of choice for the project.



With many decorative and concrete flooring installations, the consumer may often have unrealistic expectations regarding their concrete “canvas.” Professionally constructed and well-placed samples and mock-ups may help manage these. Another advantage is that they may mitigate common misunderstandings that can result in delayed, discounted or even canceled payments.

It is highly recommended that floor or wall mock-ups be performed to effectively translate scale, color, depth, saturation, and hue. This is especially true of semi-transparent, multi-color and metallic finishes. Most decisions start with a printed color chart or perhaps a small hard sample.



Many CSI specification documents suggest installing a mock-up of an area that is at least 10’ x 10’ for large scopes of work. When this is not practical or cannot be performed inconspicuously, then a smaller or off-site sample may even be warranted. Clean taped edges, removing excess materials, and geometric-friendly design well convey the concept of the end result that the owner/consumer is endeavoring to achieve.

(A stamped concrete mock-up is often a minimum of 4' x 4' due to the nature of the intricacy of a cast-in-place application.)

**** Samples and mock-ups should be finished COMPLETELY with ALL application steps applied to avoid concept confusion and unachieved expectations!!!****

1.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE

- A. Installer Qualifications:
 - 1. Successful experience in application of similar finish systems.
 - 2. Employ persons trained for application of finish systems.
- B. Mock-Up: Provide a mock-up for evaluation of surface preparation techniques and application workmanship.
 - 1. Finish areas designated by Architect.
 - 2. Do not proceed with remaining work until workmanship, color, and sheen are approved by Architect.
 - 3. Refinish mock-up area as required to produce acceptable work.
- C. Single Source Responsibility: Materials shall be products of a single manufacturer.
- D. Pre-installation Meeting: Convene a meeting before the start of the application of. Require attendance of parties directly affecting work of this section, including Contractor, Architect, and applicator. Review surface preparation, application, protection, and coordination with other work.

BEST PRACTICES FOR MOCK-UPS & SAMPLES AFTER APPLICATION

- Review the final mock-up with the owner, owner's representative, customer, and all stakeholders that will have input for the final look before final invoicing. (This should be included in the contract or agreement.
- Provide paper, manufacturer's sales sample, or sample board at the time that mock-up is being reviewed and manage the expectation of variances, variables, and variety during this review.
- Endeavor to avoid questions/inquiries such as asking, "Do you like it?", "Is this what you wanted?", "Does this look good to you?". A better line of reasoning is, "Does the final outcome reflect the original sample that you signed off on?" or "Is the final outcome a reasonable reflection of the mock-up that we agreed on?"
- If practical, have the owner, owner's representative, or customer sign an actual sample/mock-up, take a picture and distribute that photo to all stakeholders.
- Review the difference between standard wear and use versus maintenance wear and use. If the expectation is to extend the life of the aesthetic value of the installation, then a maintenance package will be required.

PROPER STAGING & MIX FOR MOCK-UPS & SAMPLES

When setting up your mix station be sure to have proper Personal protective equipment (PPE) for the product you are mixing. The types of gloves, respirators, and goggles required will vary depending on product.

The most important aspect of proper mixing is consistency. Measure each step exactly, DO NOT eyeball the measurements and repeat the same process each time you mix the product.

Temperature & Humidity

Keep a temperature & humidity gauge near the mix station to properly monitor. Most decorative concrete products have small tolerances to relative humidity and surface air temperature ranges.

Typical tolerance is between 50-90 degrees for most decorative coatings, with a humidity reading of at least 5 degrees above or below the temperature.

If you are making samples off-site, try to recreate the same temperature conditions as the actual job site.

Members of the Decorative Concrete Council (DCC), a specialty council of the American Society of Concrete Contractors (ASCC), will work with owners and architects to develop specifications and establish methods for addressing technical requirements to meet desired final appearance of their decorative concrete projects. For more information, visit www.asconline.org or call the ASCC Decorative Concrete Hotline at (888) 483-5288.