

# SpecLink helps TRO/The Ritchie Organization Manage Projects Consistently

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**S. Jay Sweeney**  
**Architect & Specification**  
**Writer**  
**TRO**



*Covenant-St. Mary's of the Plains Hospital.*

**TRO/The Ritchie Organization, an ENR Top 400 design firm, was founded in 1909. TRO is a private, closely-held 200-person architectural, engineering, interior design and planning firm headquartered in Boston.**

They have regional offices in Birmingham, Sarasota, and Memphis, as well as alliance offices in Beijing and London. Their services include master planning, space programming, architectural and interior design, engineering, and real estate asset management. Their clients span the health-care, industrial, corporate, and institutional markets.

TRO is organized around design studios, each one focused on a market-specific specialty, with a number of projects occurring simultaneously within each studio. They value the synergism of an interdisciplinary design approach and offer clients the

advantage of comprehensive in-house services: architecture, engineering, interior design, and planning. Project review and collaboration are encouraged across studio and design discipline boundaries, to improve outcomes and provide educational opportunities for their staff.

Respect, teamwork, integrity, and uncompromising professional ethics are at the core of their practice philosophy. They work with clients to define a standard of excellence that responds to their client's unique needs with flexibility, imagination, and the highest quality design services.



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**The need:** As is the case with many businesses, the TRO staff has had to become more efficient and versatile. They no longer have the luxury of having a single individual who is dedicated to just setting up and maintaining specifications. According to S. Jay Sweeney, an architect/specification writer with TRO, "Before SpecLink, keeping headers and footers consistent, maintaining the proper format for duplicated product data and printing out final specifications was very difficult with a dedicated person handling it. It was even more difficult without a dedicated person."

TRO's philosophy of excellence permeates every aspect of their business. They wanted their specification writing process to have the same high level of quality as their architectural design, planning and other services. They knew SpecLink could help them maintain this.

**The solution:** TRO started using SpecLink in 1998. They selected SpecLink because they saw it as a way to help them consistently manage their projects and maintain product updates. Says Sweeney, "The ease of copying the office master into individual projects and then turning required sections 'on' and 'off' saves so much time. Because the system is so easy to understand, it significantly cuts down on the errors and omissions common to previous methods." This is especially important when multiple people are working with the specifications. Sweeney continues, "Reviewing project status is simplified by the global view - being able to see the

entire project helps us better manage the project. And the automated reference standards are helpful by not only saving time required to obtain the correct standard, but also in providing a source and a crosscheck for new standards that need to be investigated."

The process of creating, maintaining and printing specifications can be time consuming. While a main benefit of SpecLink has been to help TRO produce consistent, up-to-date specifications, it has also given them significant time-savings on average of 40%.

**The outcome:** The time-savings aspect of SpecLink became very apparent when TRO worked on a group of projects for one of their healthcare clients. Sweeney recalls these projects, "They were all interior infill spaces and had the same basic construction requirements. Many of the projects, however, were located in buildings of varying construction types. The Contract Requirements and General Requirements were nearly identical for all projects, and the core set of specification projects were identical." Using SpecLink, TRO was able to easily select and deselect specification sections as needed, copy the project information and update the product data over the extended life of the multiple projects. "With many of the projects going on at the same time, we were able to remain confident that each project was being tracked separately and completed on time. Our entire spec writing process was greatly simplified by SpecLink!"



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Illustrations courtesy of TRO/The Ritchie Organization.



Exclusive offering of  
CSI-DBIA and BSD.



For more information on BSD SpecLink, contact Bryant Hendricks:  
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BSD SpecLink is a powerful specification writing, management and production system with built-in intelligence designed to dramatically speed up editing tasks and reduce specification production time while minimizing errors and omissions. Users' project files are each maintained in a single database, rather than in multiple word processing files. Several model projects are included that allow the user to start with a pre-edited set of complete specifications. Because the master data is always visible and never deleted, it is easy to review project choices or select alternatives. Users can also import their own custom sections and/or create model projects specific to company or project-related requirements.