



The Garage Door Dealer's Primer on the Self Storage Industry

As with commercial door purchases, the informed self storage owner will look far beyond just the bottom line price when purchasing doors. Key decision influencers should include a thorough investigation of the quality of the product, the anticipated maintenance & repair, and the ultimate Return on Investment (ROI).

Finish First with the Proper Finish

Avoid buying doors coated with low-quality paints. We first saw polyester paint, and now a siliconized polyester, which offers a 20-year warranty and is available as a standard from most manufacturers. There is yet a better option, *Super Durable Polyester*, which offers greater flexibility, corrosion resistance, heat resistance and hardness. This system is harder than siliconized polyester, yet performs almost identically to Kynar. In addition, it carries a 40 year film integrity warranty. When considering that painting is expensive and adds about six pounds per application (making the doors heavier and more difficult to operate as well as dangerous to adjust), it pays to select a quality finish from the onset.

Making the Grade

Steel grade is an important industry detail often overlooked by some manufacturers. It is the industry standard of rating the yield strength of steel. This yield strength property is the maximum stress that can be applied without permanent deformation to the tested specimen. Using softer steel will quickly result in dents, deformation and the accelerated demise of those provided components. The higher the grade, the harder, stronger and stiffer the steel, which means a longer lasting and more secure door and hallway system. For best performance, look for doors and systems made with at least grade 80 full hard steel.

Dead Axle Design

Self storage doors have improved over the years, but most manufacturers' offerings are based on the same operational design. This design utilizes a live axle, disc wheels for curtain coiling and support, typically a single exposed spring, and various quality paint coatings. This design has been favored because a live axle design incorporated less material and is more efficient to manufacture. Even though a live axle design does not have the long term dependability or operate as smoothly as a commercial designed door, it has served its purpose and has helped the development of the self storage industry. There is an alternative, known as the 3rd Generation Door, which utilizes the superior underlying engineering found in a commercial design door. This door includes a dead axle design with a continuous drum, factory-lubricated oil-tempered springs, a ratchet

that tensions both springs if present, a patented stainless steel high security lock, grade 80 full hard steel curtain and an unmatched manufacturer's warranty.

Down to Specifics

Door tension is best when it's adjustable within increments of 1/16th of a circle, with each spring adjusted evenly, not individually. The astragal should be a bulb type—for a continuous seal at the floor—and be UV protected. If these specifications are followed when orders are placed, many future maintenance problems will be eliminated, promising long-term savings for facility owners.

The Latch Catch

Versatility is the most important aspect to look for in a latch. You want the flexibility to change latches as your needs change. You want to be able to do this with minimal modification to your installed door. Choose a latch that allows you the convenience of using cylinder locks or a variety of padlocks; its magnetic properties allow it to be used with guide-mounted magnetic field security devices typically used with individual door alarm systems.

Be wary of inferior zinc plated latches or trendy oblong composite latches in lieu of the high quality stainless steel. Over time, the zinc plating can eventually wear off as a result of friction caused by usage, leaving steel exposed to allow the formation of rust. Once rust is present, the only option you have is to purchase and install a new latch.

Ease of Installation

Safety and speed are major issues for the installer, general contractor and developer. To minimize installation time, look for doors that are shipped with the latch factory installed and the brackets and tensioner preassembled to the door. The faster the doors and hallways can be installed, the quicker the general contractor can complete the project, thus allowing the project to open sooner and generate revenue.

Minimal Maintenance

Preventive maintenance is always more cost-effective than any actual repair, but even preventive maintenance has a cost. The dollar cost to do such maintenance as greasing springs is easy to define. The opportunity cost associated with the time and hassle of gaining entrance to rented units to perform that type of maintenance is immeasurable. Your best bet? Select doors where the springs are pre-lubricated and enclosed in a barrel. Not only are they virtually maintenance-free, they also do not have the drippage associated with lubricating a live axle open drum. Drippage means liability, and liabilities cost.

Expense Report

Operating expenses in the self-storage industry normally run about 25-35%. This includes management, maintenance, advertising, utilities and taxes. The gross income less the expenses (not including debt expenses) results in net operating income (NOI). Obviously, the more expensive the maintenance, the lower the NOI. Keeping expenses

like maintenance low and controlled will increase the NOI, profitability and overall value of the project.

Clearly cost is but one aspect to consider when making a self storage door purchase. When comparing manufacturers, an owner can quickly see that not all doors are created equal. By factoring in maintenance, installation time and design, owners can truly select the doors that deliver the best bang for their buck.

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