



OPENING OPPORTUNITIES

How to expand your business with bi-fold doors

By Jason Myrvik, Midland Door Solutions

Customers know they can come to you for a traditional garage door, but where do they go when they need to fill a 60'-wide opening, or when a restaurant needs a customized, all-glass designer door? If bi-fold doors are not part of your product offering, you could be losing opportunities to retain customers and find new ones.

Bi-folds: the key differences

There are two key differences between bi-fold and sectional doors: size capabilities and the way they open. Rather than retracting into the interior space like sectional doors, bi-fold doors are mounted on the exterior of the building. They fold up and in half to provide full use of the opening, from the floor to the bottom of the building rafters.

Bi-folds have a unique truss system that allows them to be used in openings as wide as 90'. This makes them ideal for large buildings that house agriculture equipment or aircraft.

Liked by architects

The open design is also why many architects have started designing them into

commercial buildings and some high-end residential homes. An architect designing a new restaurant, for example, may want to incorporate a glass door to provide access to a patio space.

Unlike sectional doors, bi-fold doors maximize use of overhead interior space because the door opens up and out. This allows more space for overhead ductwork, lighting, and seating.

Preferred for larger openings

Bi-fold doors, whether 16' or 90' wide, can be made of glass, wood, siding, or a combination of materials. While sectional doors can be built as wide as 40', many dealers would rather install bi-folds in these instances.

The reason is that sectional doors operate with rollers and hinges, which are challenged to handle both the static and dynamic loads of doors

that large. Over time, these larger sectional doors will require many more visits from the dealer for maintenance. Bi-folds, however, have fewer moving parts and are designed specifically to handle the large loads.

Adding bi-folds to your product line

While bi-folds differ greatly from sectional garage doors in terms of size capabilities, many dealers are already equipped to begin offering the product. They have the salespeople and much of the necessary equipment, so the biggest hurdle is simply education.

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The opening must be measured just as for sectional doors, but it's important to work closely with a dependable manufacturer to understand the structural building requirements. Bi-fold doors have different load requirements than sectional doors and often require a more robust structural framework, such as a larger header.

Other structural factors must be considered, including whether the building is new, existing, steel, or wood. Consequently, working with the manufacturer will ensure that you spec the right door for each application.

Installation assistance

In some cases, manufacturers provide installation expertise, limiting the hassle for a dealer's team and business. If you prefer to take on the installs yourself, be sure that the manufacturer will provide the necessary training. Some manufacturers will also provide onsite training to contractors who prefer to handle their own installs.

Most manufacturers will do what they can to make it as easy as possible for the contractor

and the dealer. This includes drop-shipping to the jobsite so dealers don't have to hassle with loading, transport, and unloading.

Choose the right partner

Support after the install is also important. Choose a manufacturer that will service its doors, respond to questions, and stand behind its products. The right manufacturer will not only uphold its own excellent reputation, but can also help your company maintain your hard-earned reputation as well.

Since you are already a specialist in filling large openings in buildings, bi-fold doors can be an easy addition to your product offering. Best of all, bi-fold doors can help you earn more business and more profits. ■

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