



The Role of a New Restaurant Opening Operations Consultant Project Manager

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The Role of the Food and Beverage Equipment Supplier

Food and Beverage Equipment suppliers sell and provide equipment and in many cases kitchen and bar layout drawings for architects in new-build and remodel projects.

Forced Roles

In many cases the supplier gets forced into the role of operations consultant and project manager when the client has insufficient staffing, depth of knowledge or insufficient experience in opening or remodeling a food and beverage operation. Many times this occurs due to oversimplification of the perceived needs of the project by the client or by a belief that the client has hired staff capable of these functions because they have been involved in projects in the past.

In this case the supplier is forced to consult with the client to come up with a concept plan arriving at an equipment package. Many Food and Beverage suppliers have worked in the industry in operations roles in their past but now specialize in supplying equipment.

Two conflicts exist in this situation:

1. The supplier is now accountable for the success of the concept over and above the layout and design of the operation and will be held responsible for the success of the operation by the client in the future.
2. The supplier now becomes the Project Coordinator for the project between the client, the staff and the contractors. Instead of merely selling equipment, designing the F&B space layout, coordinating delivery, installation and fire-up, the supplier has to coordinate and sometimes push the parties along to get the project done. This leaves

the supplier in the unfortunate role of delivering bad news to both parties in cases where the client doesn't really know what they are doing and haven't retained sufficient resources for the project and in the case that the contractor and/or sub-contactors are not staying on schedule and fulfilling their responsibilities. All of these cases may leave the F & B supplier in a position where their installers cannot provide a completed installation on time or where there are numerous changes needed in the midst of the installation from missed items or when clients have changed their minds during the project (in some cases resulting in additional costs that the client feels the supplier is responsible for).

The difficult role of the supplier should be limited to supplying, delivering and installing on time and the inevitable role of collecting payment from the client (sometimes the hardest and worst part of the project)

The Project Operations Consultant's Role

All clients should have a qualified person assigned to act as the Project Operations Manager for the duration of the project. In many cases there is no such person involved in the project. The equipment supplier and/or the client's staff are forced into this role. If the supplier has worked in an operations position in the industry it is unlikely that they have done so recently. Not only will the project suffer from lack of coordination but it will be faced with additional expenses involved in correcting missed items and additional labor expenses involved in improper scheduling. Additionally there is no one to act as liaison between the parties at points when either the client or the contactors and suppliers are behind schedule and not fulfilling their obligations to complete the project in time.

Here are the functions of the Project Operations Consultant:

1. Consolidate Client Decision Makers

Define the role of all parties involved in the project and define who the decision makers will be. This includes focusing the parties to get critical decisions made in a timely fashion throughout the project.

2. Refine and define goals of project and specific project needs

Define the entire project including how the construction and equipment package fit into achieving the business plan. Assign roles and coordinate the design with the client using background and experience in the industry. This includes removing the F & B equipment supplier from the role of operations consultant in the project.

3. Define equipment needs including flow and function

Work with the client to clarify the design and package to fit initial and future needs. This includes flow and function of operation and staffing planning to maximize efficiency and minimize long-term labor requirements as well as flexibility of equipment layout to facilitate future menu changes or concept adjustments. The consultant facilitates detailed decisions that must be made by the client to arrive at the plans, shop fabrication plans and the equipment package order.

4. Define a realistic timetable for project

Meets with the client, contractor and equipment supplier to establish a realistic timetable for the project. The schedule will be maintained, updated and adjusted during the project process. Consultant communicates with all parties when an element of the project is falling behind schedule to assist all parties in adjusting individual schedules.

5. Clarify viable recycled and used equipment

Assists client in establishing what if any used equipment may be used in the project. Acts as a voice of reason for the equipment supplier when the client wants to use equipment that isn't suitable; helps the supplier from appearing eager to sell new equipment to a client when the old equipment is not usable.

6. Onsite supervision and contractor coordination

Establishes an onsite presence during the project to oversee and coordinate all suppliers as well as the client's staff.

7. Coordinate additional elements that are not the responsibility of the F & B equipment supplier (ie. POS, sound, lights, communications, systems by others including beverage equipment such as soda, coffee, frozen beverage).

Many times these items are left until the end of the project by the client. This can cause delays and costly change orders to redo work already completed by the contractor

8. Coordinate client access to project area

Clients need a controlled access to the construction area. Consultant coordinates visitation with the contractor and trades to avoid disruption of the project and injury.

9. Liaison for schedule adjustments

The project schedule is dynamic in nature and must constantly be adjusted to avoid overlap of workers or mis-scheduling.

10. Voice of reason for all parties

Times will arise in every project where parties need assistance in reaching agreement on issues. The consultant provides an independent perspective based upon previous experience to assist in resolving concerns. This can help all parties when news to be delivered is not always favorable,

Numerous projects are attempted and eventually completed without the services of a New Restaurant Opening Operations Consultant Project Manager. These do not always go smoothly and are not always completed in the most cost effective way. This consultant should be viewed as another element of the sub-contractor pool used to complete the project and as an investment in immediate and future profits.

Craig Pendleton is the President of National Foodservice Consulting, Inc. He has worked in the industry for over 40 years in both individual and corporate food service positions for many major industry chains. He has been involved in over 75 new openings and re-concepts. His services are hands-on and onsite to independent operators, chain operators and tribal casinos. Craig is available to assist in your current or upcoming project. Project consulting is available worldwide.

Please review our website for additional information

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