The menu is not enough

Associate FCSI member **John Reed** looks at what benefits MAS consultants can bring to the table

Foodservice designers dedicate a great deal of time to the development of a design that will last for many years and give investors a great return on their investment. It is a collaboration of designers, engineers and architects to create a plan that meets the goals set out early in the conceptual or investigation portion of a project. However there is a behind-the-scenes group who could be brought in to play a pivotal role early in the design process.

Generally MAS (Managerial Advice Services/Management Advisory Services) consultants are brought in to the process after the operation opens and the operator is having difficulty making the operation work as intended. We advise on how to best make the operation more profitable or bring solutions to logistical problems that have popped up.

The reasons for this may be many. The last thing consultants want to admit to is a bad design. However, there are many cases when the project was brought to design without a thorough concept plan in place. Factors include lack of pre-design work or decision-making done early on in the process. Designers may end up making decisions based on other similar projects or a particular style of design that they have used in the past.

Factors affecting incomplete concept development include:
- limited pre-planning budgets for concept consultancy
- constraints of existing facilities

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- project schedules and expedited delivery dates
- lack of proper concept investigation with end clients; and
- minimal foodservice operation experience on the design team.

The best-case scenario for a great textbook design is the menu. For most designers it is a written document or menu outline. However the mere written description of a menu only touches the surface of what information needs to be captured during the investigation phase of a design to create appropriate floor plans and equipment packages. This is where an experienced MAS consultant can help bridge the gap between end-clients and design consultants, who are removed from day-to-day operations, or architects who may not have foodservice operation experience on the design team.

The world of food, beverage and service programmes are constantly changing. A MAS consultant can bring "emotional" operational issues to the forefront in an organised manner. Kitchen spaces are not just places to produce food but a space where employees have to

spend a large proportion of their days. It also needs to reflect the corporate culture. For the next generation of employees who need more than four walls, they will need a complete work environment that supports their ideals and concerns for personal space, individuality and the environment. So what does that look like and how can you best incorporate it into your investigation portion of the design phase?

A comprehensive "concept statement" includes descriptive narratives of each of the operational areas with regard to cuisine, beverage programmes, service styles and ambience. In addition to the operational goals, other emotional and cultural statements for employees, sustainability programmes, purchasing directives and social responsibility are outlined. Why? All of these operational and cultural parameters are considerations that need to be built into an effective design.

The design needs to reflect the emotional desires of the operator, as without it how can the whole project, from design to operation, work? A foodservice operation needs to have a soul. In creating this vision of how the owners want to run their business and profit from it, there will probably be less need to fix things later. It is important that there is a budgeted line item in design proposals for better concept investigation.

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