

# Clients Can Miss Full Value of Dining Consultants

*Originally published in FM Newslink, e-newsletter of Food Management magazine.*

*Dining Insights, Summer 2020*

Food service consultants frequently aren't used to their full value by their clients," Tom Mac Dermott, president of Clarion Group, a food service consulting firm, says. "Often, we're brought into a project too late to provide maximum benefit for our client."

"For example, if a food service facility design project is already underway when the consultant is retained, it may be too late to incorporate important features or modify the plan for maximum efficiency and service," he says.

## Three Keys

"A food service consulting project also may not deliver full value if our recommendations are accepted but we're not retained to implement them," he added.

There are three key components to a successful corporate food service consulting project whose objective is improving performance, service and cost-effectiveness, according to Mac Dermott:

**Investigation:** What's happening now? What are the services? How are they being performed? Where are the weaknesses that need to be improved?

**Research and Recommendations:** The consultant reviews operational and financial records of the food service, researches alternatives to the current methods, procedures and systems and develops solutions to remove obstacles, strengthen inadequate areas and increase the value of the corporate or campus food service to the client.

**Implementation:** The consultant works with the client and the contractor- or client-employed food service operator to implement the solutions to ensure they are successfully established and maintained.

"This last step is where a food service consulting project actually provides its value," Mac Dermott says. "If the consultant's report and recommendations are just accepted and filed away, the time, effort and cost invested in the project is wasted."

## Follow-Through

The food service consultant needs to be retained throughout the implementation phase, Mac Dermott says, "because the operator often has a degree of 'tunnel vision' and can't see beyond his/her own comfortable way of doing things and the client doesn't have the knowledge or experience to know whether the needed improvements are being implemented effectively."

"Our food service consultants have decades of experience in managing all types of food services as well as other hospitality services and know how to work with the on-site manager and staff to clear away obstacles, provide training and solve problems as they arise," he says.