



Today's Chef, Tomorrow's Restaurateur! Restaurant Start-up Tips Every Chef Should Know About!

By Kevin Moll, CEO, National Restaurant Consultants, Inc.

Researching information for a recent business plan, I came across an interesting number of 54,000. What is the big deal about that? Over 54,000 new restaurant business licenses were applied for in the last twelve months nationally. That is over 4,500 new restaurant licenses every month, or 90 licenses per state per month average.

Out of these 4,500 monthly licenses, I wondered about how many of these new applicants are experienced operators who are really qualified to open a restaurant. As a new restaurant startup specialist, I can sadly attest to the fact that very few of these persons are fully qualified, and as a result, my firm, National Restaurant Consultants, Inc. stays busy aiding those who are wise enough to ask for aid in the early stages of a startup restaurant.

The truth is that few people (just starting up) are fully competent at each task in a restaurant. As a new owner operator, you will need to master these skills beforehand-or get help. Frankly, if you do not, you will personally pay the price of being less profitable, and possibly the ultimate price of going out of business. Let us look at a few broad areas where you may need operational assistance:

1. Concept Development: Can you create a concept, position it in the marketplace, and grow the concept through licensing or franchising? What is your exit plan?
2. Pre-opening: Are you able to produce a Feasibility Study, a Business Plan, a Demographic Survey, and schedule the opening around a timetable and budget?
3. Staffing: Are you familiar with employment law, hiring, training, establishing personnel policies and scheduling all of your staff around a budget? Did we discuss management training and development yet?
4. Standards of operation: You will need some operational guidelines to insure that everyone is on the same page. In addition, you will need a personnel handbook with job descriptions. Also, let's not forget the recipe book-with costed out menus, pictures, portions and prices.

5. Purchasing: Can you negotiate with vendors, can you obtain the very best pricing (do you know what the best price is?) and how do you know what your inventory levels should be at for your expected volume?

We have not touched on many other areas including marketing, sales development, cost controls, advertising, promotions, vendor relationships, alcohol management, office management-including accounting, payroll, taxes and other paperwork...and the list goes on.

Here are ten good reasons why you should use a restaurant consultant:

1. Avoid wasting money. Quality prior planning will help you avoid the unexpected.
2. Construction of a Feasibility Study will uncover competition and other barriers to your success. Done in the very early stages, this is your starting point.
3. Creation of a business plan will help you solidify your concept, your plan, and will cement your ideas in a written form-a blueprint for success. This is step two.
4. Become more profitable. Third party feedback is impartial, constructive, and will give you systematic methods on how to improve your operations.
5. Get the right team. Want top-notch people working for you? You will need the right systems in place to get and keep them. Why should they join your team? Quality human resource planning makes a lot of sense.
6. Implement the right systems. Squirrel or Aloha? Is a pre-check system the right one? Yes, these and many other questions will need answers. By getting help, you will save money, time, and heartache.
7. Get the right menu. It needs to be done right the first time. Which items are going to be the most profitable, and where should they go on the menu? Do you know how to fully use your most important selling tool?
8. Large or small projects are OK. You do not need a \$10,000.00 project to justify using a consultant. Pricing is based on the size of your project, where you are located, and the nature of the work to be done. Besides, a price quote will not cost you a thing! In virtually every situation, the consulting fees that you pay will be more than offset by your newfound profits and a more efficient operation.
9. Vendor Negotiation. How are you going to avoid paying too much for your food? The author of this article has had major distributor experience as Director of business development. Did you know that you could save a lot of money when your consultant negotiates your food prices on your behalf? He has also owned restaurants and feels your pain when it comes to dealing with vendors. There are right ways to set up these relationships. Do not waste time or money doing it yourself.

10. Most importantly, you will get your restaurant open. Perhaps you have a concept, but lack the time, talent, or interest. We can open it for you! We can work with you side-by-side or simply hand it over to you-ready to go. If you are working now and want to open a restaurant on the "Side", it may make sense to go this route, and simply walk into your new open business. We are flexible, and you are always in the driver's seat.

You have your education, you have real world experience, and it's time to strike out on your own as a restaurateur. Do not go it alone. We are here to help you succeed in one of the toughest businesses around. Take advantage of your resources, and see restaurantconsultant.org for free tips on starting your new operation.

Kevin Moll is the CEO of Denver based National Restaurant Consultants, Inc., and a published author with over 34 years of hospitality experience. The firm's services are available worldwide for projects of all sizes. Call 303-757-FOOD (3663) or 1-800-961-6005 or visit <http://www.nationalrestaurantconsultants.com>