

# Your New Year's Resolution: Know When to Ask for Assistance

By Mark Kelnhofer, MBA

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The restaurant operator is no different than any other entrepreneur. There is a large sense of pride with what you do. Too many times our pride is what keeps us from asking for assistance. Many times we may struggle and still find it difficult to ask for assistance. Whether it is with front-of-the-house training, labor scheduling, menu layout and design, recipe costing, or site selection, we need to know when we are not the professional and find one that is. Too many times the entrepreneur attempts to lay all responsibility on their shoulders and the first reaction is to do it yourself versus finding a professional.

**Step one: Know When to Ask for Help.** The timing of when we ask for assistance is one of the most important aspects of our decision making. Too many times we may have a problem that needs to be solved and we let the issue go on and not be addressed for an extended period of time. In this industry, it doesn't take much to lose a guest. Whether it is with the service levels, quality of food, presentation, or overall financial performance, we cannot allow areas where we are lacking to fester for very long. On financial performance as an example, too many times operators may lose money on a weekly or monthly basis. They know that they need assistance, but in many cases allow the operation to move forward as if it was the normal course of events. The timing of when we ask for assistance may be critical and it should not be delayed for a long period of time. It does not take much for an operation to fail. We need to accept that we cannot be the professional in every aspect of the business and know when the timing is right to ask for assistance.

**Step two: Vet the Professional.** When we are looking for assistance, it is easy just to do a search on the internet. However, we may want to do a little more than just that search to make a decision. It is prudent to vet the professional in a way that you have confidence that you are going to get the proper result to fixing your problem. Too many times we may bring someone to assist that was found through an internet search and not really do much beyond that. You should look at testimonial statements from past clients

as well as possibly calling them to ask them more regarding the details. Ask them what their problem was and how it was solved using the professional. Getting multiple customer references would be something to pursue as well. Remember, the problem you have does need resolution and you want to make sure that your time, effort and money are being used to get you there.

**Step three: Get Involved.** When you do bring in a professional, get involved with the process. Don't just sit back and not get involved with this learning experience. It is always wise to get involved with the process so that you learn as much as you can from them. Any time you have an opportunity to gain knowledge you should participate in the process. You are paying for the expertise, you should learn from it as well.

**Step four: Rate Your Experience.** When the job is done, it would be a great process to review their work and see if your problem was resolved. Record the overall experience with them as you may be a reference for them one day. Be honest in your review and document it so that you know how to respond if called upon. Word of mouth today for products and services in the restaurant industry is huge. Strong referrals within the industry assist greatly.

Going into a new year, as restaurant and foodservice operators, we should be committed to making our operation the most efficient and profitable as possible. Part of this is to acknowledge there is a problem and the other is the commitment to fix it. Bringing in a third party to correct an issue is not a bad thing and in fact can be a very good thing. Getting something corrected early on is generally a lot better than something not fixed or addressed correctly for an extended period of time. These decisions affect our ability to operate at a higher level and can translate into real dollars. We need to make sure that we address any issues we have in a timely and efficient manner so that the business continues to move forward and thrive.

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## 2014 Presentations & Speaking Events

01/28-01/29  
**Convenience Retailing University**  
Glendale, AZ

01/29  
**Restaurant Institute**  
Glendale, AZ

02/27  
**Economic & Community  
Development Institute**  
Columbus, OH

03/02-03/04  
**International Restaurant &  
Foodservice Show**  
New York, NY

03/18  
**Restaurant Institute**  
Las Vegas, NV

04/08-04/11  
**Craft Brewers Conference**  
Denver, CO

04/13-04/14  
**Northwest Foodservice Show**  
Seattle, WA

06/10  
**Restaurant Institute**  
Orlando, FL

08/17-08/19  
**Western Foodservice &  
Hospitality Show**  
Anaheim, CA

09/07-09/09  
**Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show**  
Orlando, FL