

12 Lessons Learned as a Food and Beverage Consultant

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Everything
comes to you at
the right time.
Be Patient

I would like to share my personal story on how I ventured into becoming a consultant, I hope it helps those who are facing challenges in their careers, lives, or relationships. Sometimes, all it takes is patience, self-belief, and faith in others. I have 12 lessons in total, and here are six I want to share.

Lesson one: Be prepared for the unforeseen.

I distinctly recall being involved in two simultaneous full hotel brand conversions as part of my personal development plan. We had completed the necessary changes, and I was at a hotel, conversing with the General Manager and F&B Director, expressing confidence in their future success. The properties we had converted were exceptional, and the teams were highly capable. Little did I know that a few weeks later, COVID-19 would drastically alter everything.

Lesson two: Be ready to let go.

As many of you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the hotel industry in 2020. Like countless others, I experienced the unfortunate consequence of being laid off from my corporate position, which I genuinely enjoyed. At that time, I had developed an emotional attachment to my job, my colleagues, and the company. However, given the extraordinary circumstances, the company had no choice. Once I accepted that I would not be returning, I focused on letting go and directing my energy towards the future.

Lesson three: Connect with positive individuals.

In my case, I was incredibly fortunate to have a supportive Industry colleague and a friend in the industry who was facing a similar situation, albeit for different reasons. This individual was full of positive energy, which somehow influenced me to be positive and believe in future possibilities and to seek out opportunities.

Lesson four: Collaborate with like-minded individuals and learn.

We made the decision to collaborate as freelance consultants, and we were able to secure projects that received positive feedback. Our collaboration taught us valuable lessons as we tackled new ventures together, from our approach to tasks to our problem-solving strategies. This experience transformed me as a person and reshaped my perspective on certain tasks and where I placed value.

Lesson five: Diversify your options.

I made a personal commitment to explore various avenues, including both job opportunities and consultancy work. I embraced whichever opportunity came my way first. I diligently pursued the job search process, applying for numerous positions through reputable London and global head-hunters, job agencies, and online platforms. However, despite my efforts, I often encountered a common obstacle—lack of response to my applications. It still today makes me smile in disbelief.

Lesson six: Don't persist with fruitless endeavours.

Personally, I strongly believe that if something feels like pushing water uphill, it is a sign that it may not be the right path for one's life. Surprisingly, without any advertising or active promotion, consultancy projects began coming my way. I did not engage in marketing or extensive consultancy applications. People started reaching out to me directly, and fortunately, some of my friends recommended me. The company that had let me go displayed incredible support by being one of the first to offer me consulting work. I genuinely appreciate and hold deep affection for this hotel group and will most likely for a long time to come.

Lesson Seven: Harness the Momentum of Action

In my capacity as an F&B consultant, there have been instances where securing projects has felt like an impossible task. It's easy to succumb to self-doubt, especially when peers in the industry seem to be thriving. However, I find strength in a fundamental truth: The next project is in reality one phone call, email, or meeting away. By anchoring myself in the present and working on the tasks within my control, I realise that every interaction is an opportunity for progress, and that potential projects or

collaborations can manifest in unexpected ways. Remember: you're just a single step or action away from securing a project.

Lesson Eight: Setbacks as Launchpads for Success

I will be honest as an F&B consultant, I have faced setbacks, such as not winning projects despite submitting proposals that I believed were competitive and perfectly tailored. However, I've worked on myself to perceive these setbacks as temporary. Each setback brings an opportunity for growth and learning. Harnessing a growth mindset enables me to maintain resilience when facing challenges, and to refine my strategies, and adjust to evolving circumstances. I strive to rebound from setbacks stronger and face future opportunities with renewed enthusiasm. It sounds easy in words; it does take practice. Remember, setbacks are not synonymous with failure; they are stepping stones that lead to success. Stay resilient, learn lessons from each experience, and let setbacks be the launch pad for your success.

Lesson Nine: Cultivate Connections

To me fostering connections and forging relationships with like-minded individuals can significantly support personal and professional growth. Even though I am an introvert, I proactively seek advice and engage in conversations with hospitality professionals who share my love for F&B. These connections provide invaluable support, insights, and guidance that you cannot get online or from books. Remember that collaboration is a reciprocal process—aim to give as much or more than you receive. Through collaboration, you can garner new insights, fine-tune your strategies, and tackle challenges with more confidence. Embracing a growth mindset means acknowledging that learning from those around you is an effective strategy for improving your competencies as an F&B consultant, and offers an opportunity to share your wisdom with others.

Lesson Ten: Build Chemistry and Deliver Solutions

My experience has taught me the importance of building working relationships where there's genuine chemistry between my clients' business and my own. I strive to become an integral part of my clients' organisation, aligning my actions and behaviour accordingly. However, I want to be clear maintaining a robust relationship doesn't entail avoiding tough conversations or losing objectivity. When working with clients your ultimate obligation is to provide effective and lasting solutions to your clients' problems. I often tell people that there are multiple ways to TEN —whether it's one plus nine, two plus eight, or three plus seven, all equal TEN. There are many ways to find a lasting solution and address your clients' issues promptly and proficiently.

Lesson Eleven: Know Your Worth as an F&B Consultant

One of the difficulties I find being an F&B consultant is determining the appropriate charge for my services. I have learned that it's crucial to ensure that the fees I present accurately reflect the value I offer. When I initially started as an F&B consultant, I used to determine my charge based on the fees others disclosed to me. However, I soon recognised that this method lacked any substance or value. It is vital to understand your true worth and the expertise you contribute when negotiating your contracts. Balancing reality, your client's budget, and the value you offer in addressing their unique challenges is vital.

Lesson Twelve: Your Professional Reputation Is Carved Daily

A significant difference between being a self-employed F&B consultant and an employee is that, as a consultant, each day can be viewed as a performance review or Job Interview. As a consultant your reputation is being continuously assessed within your client's organisation. I tend to keep in mind that my actions and the quality of my work directly influences how I am perceived by my clients' organisation. Every day is an opportunity for me to add value, share expertise and dedication to solving my client's challenges. As a consultant if you consistently deliver outstanding results, exhibit integrity, trust, and cultivate positive relationships, you have a greater chance of being successful.

I hope you've found value in these twelve lessons from my journey as an F&B consultant, and I would greatly appreciate hearing from you if they've been beneficial. If this post resonated with you, please consider sharing it. This would broaden its reach and offer more individuals on LinkedIn the opportunity to learn insights from it.

In Summary

Overall, remember to stay resilient, adapt to change, and maintain faith in yourself and others. Through patience and a positive mindset, you can navigate through challenges and find success in unexpected ways.