

5 Questions about Food & Beverage Operations Consulting: **Answered**



USC CONSULTING
GROUP™

Empowering. Performance.

What are food and beverage consultants, why would an F&B manufacturer need one, and what sorts of projects do we typically work on? At USC Consulting Group, we hear these questions often. So, here's a primer: Food and Beverage Consulting 101.

This eBook will answer those basic questions and more, outlining how USC Consulting can help your F&B operations and ultimately your bottom line.



What is a food & beverage consultant?

At USC Consulting Group, operations consulting is what we do. Our goal, in any project we take on, is to make operations and processes more efficient, streamlined and profitable. We work with a wide range of industries, including food & beverage.

Our consultants are experienced in the F&B industry, and understand and appreciate the multiple segments of the industry — pork, poultry, beef, vegetables, organic, frozen foods, soft drinks, restaurant or retail ... the list goes on. F&B is a big umbrella, and each segment under it has unique differences, particularly around Food Safety and Quality, but also some commonalities.

Our job, for any company we work with, is improving performance, whether by reducing costs, or raising efficiency, productivity, throughput and yield.



Who should consider using an F&B consultant?

Any company that wants to control costs and improve its productivity, throughput and yield, or increase their bench strength in any way. When is the best time to bring in a consultant? That varies from company to company. In many cases, there's a readily apparent challenge for us to tackle — whether an internal issue such as low yield, or reacting to external market forces, for example.

But sometimes, there isn't an epic challenge, a bottleneck or a sticking point. It can be a situation in which a company wants to go from good to great. In some cases, clients are coming off a record year and want to sustain that momentum, to continue to grow even more. Kick it up a notch.



To delve deeper, download our free eBook, ["When is the Right Time to Bring in Operations Consultants?"](#)

Why would an F&B company use a consultant instead of internal teams?

Why bring in an outside consultant at all? Here are several reasons companies choose to hire us rather than use an internal team. It boils down to the ability to have a bit of distance from internal politics, allegiance to the “way we’ve always done it” and resistance to change.

Above the fray. An outside firm is not subject to internal politics and company red tape. They can make the changes necessary for improvements to get results without stepping on anyone’s toes. Oftentimes, recommendations for change go down easier when delivered by someone outside the organization.

A fresh set of eyes. You know what they say about the forest for the trees. Sometimes, when you’re too close to a problem or challenge, you can’t see the big picture of how to solve it. Operations consultants are outside experts who can look at your operations with a fresh set of eyes, leveraging Best Practices they have seen across F&B as well as other industries.

Horsepower. In many cases, operations management firms actually augment the efforts of internal teams and provide “horsepower” to improvement initiatives and help achieve results quicker. If a company already has a great game plan, we can provide the momentum to get it done quicker. That doesn’t mean we’re going to do it all, however. A key part of our work is training teams to continue to drive results post project.



Cost. Outside firms are hired for limited engagements with a tangible ROI and are not full-time employees. Therefore, a company does not need to provide salaries, benefits and other costs for full-time employees who are part of their internal teams.

Industry expertise. Another facet of bringing fresh eyes to a challenge is the fact that those eyes have seen a thing or two. We have 55+ years in this business, and our F&B teams are deeply steeped in the industry. While every situation is unique, the decades-long expertise in operations improvements is impossible to duplicate in-house.

Process improvement expertise. It’s a fair bet that companies don’t have a Master Black Belt in Lean Six Sigma on staff. LSS is focused on eliminating waste and improving throughput, and it takes years to become an expert in it. External consultants like USC bring that expertise, and even train your staff to implement these simple, proven, repeatable tools to drive improvement.



For more information about outside consultants vs. internal teams, read our blog:
[Operations Management Consultants vs Internal Improvement Teams: What’s the Difference?](#)



What kinds of issues does an F&B consultant help resolve or prevent?

In the F&B industry, extremely tight margins simply go with the territory. They're a fact of life. That means even small process changes can net big results. We work with our F&B clients to increase throughput, yield and productivity and reduce the waste that can be eating into your bottom line.

Every project is unique, but we find that many companies have common issues and challenges, including:

Supply chain and changing demand. The pandemic was devastating for the U.S. economy, to the tune of a [\\$14 trillion loss](#), according to new research out of the University of Southern California. The F&B industry, along with other consumer industries, was among the hardest hit. One aspect of the industry that was especially snarled: the F&B supply chain. It still hasn't quite recovered. Demand for many F&B producers also shifted from, for example, a focus

on restaurant supply to more grocery store supply when people stopped eating out during the pandemic. In the end, it requires careful attention to SIOP (sales, inventory and operations planning) to strike the right balance between not enough and too much.

Yield. When [yield](#) numbers are low, profits can suffer dramatically. Yield can be a confusing term, but it boils down to ... what you have left when it "boils down." It's easiest to think of it in terms of something like a side of beef hanging in a cooler, and the hamburger that beef is ground into. In the processing, you're going to lose weight and moisture. If you start with a pound of beef and end up with .8 pounds of burger, that's an 80% yield. The reasons for that gap become the problem. We look at things like speed, waste, even scheduling to improve those yield numbers. Here is one area in which a little improvement means a lot.

Government regulations or MAV. This issue goes hand in hand with yield and has to do with complying with the Maximum Allowance Variance. This is, in a sense, "wiggle room" that the government gives food processors in terms of the actual weight of a product. You can't label a pound of burger at a pound when it's really .8 pounds. The product can't weigh less than the MAV, nor should it weigh more than 100% of the MAV. Many food producers compensate by adding a bit to each package to not risk going below the MAV. The industry calls this "the giveaway," because they're essentially giving away a little beef to compensate for the loss of moisture in processing. In keeping with "a little means a lot" in this industry, compensating — adding just a smidge of beef to each package — was costing one of our clients 1.5 million pounds of beef yearly.

Operations or process improvements.

At USC, this is our sweet spot. We are always looking for opportunities to improve processes, operations, scheduling and how the job gets done. We have Lean Six Sigma Black Belts on our staff that can come in and whip operations into shape. This is especially important now, not just in F&B but in all industries because of the labor shortage. Companies of all stripes are doing more with less. Process optimization needs to be the top of the list of importance.

Equipment maintenance. If you work with us, you'll find out we're not the type of consultancy that recommends costly new equipment. Yes, sometimes it's necessary, but we prefer to work with the assets our clients have, and make sure the machinery is operating at maximum efficiency. Often small issues can be overlooked, until we measure them correctly and realize their full impact. It may sound basic, but something as simple as build-up on a machine can cause overfilling. A small slowdown with, say, a processing arm can cause a costly delay. For example, a delay of 15-30 seconds here and there can add up to many minutes in a day and hundreds or thousands of minutes in a month.



How does USC Consulting Group work with an F&B company?

At USC Consulting, we don't believe in doling out cookie-cutter solutions. Yes, experience matters — we've learned a thing or two during the 55+ years we've been in this business. One of the most important: Every situation is unique. Companies, even if they're in the same industry making the same product (two beef processors, say) have unique processes, procedures, management styles, cultures, machinery, employees, norms. You name it.

That's why we go into each project with a fresh set of eyes. We look at organizational design, management, what's happening on the production floor. We do NOT sit in the CEO's corner office or the conference room and spout platitudes. We involve everyone, at all levels of the operation. Sure, we get input from the top brass, but almost more valuable are the thoughts and ideas from the people who work on the line day in and day out.

We investigate and really dig into the business, create a plan and carry it out.

Another aspect of our business that sets us apart: We play the long game. We don't swoop in, offer a playbook of solutions and swoop out, leaving customers on their own. We deliver sustainable results. We train your people to do what we do, if necessary. We make sure the positive changes we've helped companies enact will stick, long after we're not walking through the door every day.

A part of our style is subtle, but important. We don't take credit for your work. We're not out for the glory. We're interested in building up departments, making possibilities into realities, and helping employees get the most out of their jobs.

**Interested in learning more about it?
Give us a call. We're happy to roll up
our sleeves and get to work maximizing
your company's operations.**

**Read more about how we work with the
Food and Beverage industry [here](#).**

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