

SUMMER 2014

western Food Processor

The magazine for food professionals & processors

HolyCrap.com

Factory

Corin Mullins, CEO/Owner and
Brian Mullins, Founder/Owner

The World's Most
Amazing
Breakfast C

Holy Crap!

Holy Crap's creators take the
artisan cereal to new highs

hycrap.ca



FOODpro
west 2014
BC Food Processors Conference

+ PACKAGING • PROCESSING INNOVATION • BAKERY

JUNE 11 & 12, 2014

Whether it's the launch of a new product, rebranding a tired company or updating plant equipment, food processors have at some point experienced a common sensation: that of needing help from an outside source.

In fact, arguably there is no business, no matter how successful, that hasn't benefited from objective, expert guidance — and that's where consultants come in.

But a quick website search reveals a daunting array of consultants for hire, all claiming different types of expertise and credentials. How does one go about selecting a true professional who can address specific business needs?

Andrew Raphael (partner, director food & ag processing for MNP), Sherrin Western (director of insight for Shervin Communications Inc.) and Michael Selci (vice-president financing and consulting for Business Development Bank of Canada) represent a diverse spectrum of consultancy services. But they are united in how food processors should go about choosing an appropriate professional.

Raphael says the first thing processors should do is not jump the gun. "Select a few candidates who you think might meet your needs and then research them thoroughly before picking up the phone. Any consultant worth his salt will have a solid portfolio and good references — all of which must be checked."

Western adds, "Once you've determined the candidate is all he or she is cracked up to be, you should check the services offered. In my experience, clients get nervous at the prospect of hiring more than one supplier for a solution."

Then comes one of the most important considerations. "After meeting the candidate, is there good chemistry between you?" asks Raphael. "Because trust is at the heart of a productive consultant/client relationship." To which Western remarks, "A good fit is vital, yet this is usually overlooked. The consultant/client relationship has to be a collaboration in order to work."

After that, Raphael strongly recommends developing a letter of engagement that outlines fees, objectives and time frames for delivery, plus frequency of interaction.

A consultant of Raphael's calibre is always in high demand. "I helped launch a beef export association, got Alberta beef into Quebec, worked for the federal and provincial governments, and helped build the agri-food niche for MNP, which has served the agri-food industry since the 1940s," he says when asked about his background.

With 2,500 employees and 700 partners, MNP has the wherewithal to fulfil the requirements of a wide range of clients. One of many projects currently underway is a gap analysis for the BCFPA that will give the association

*Consultants
can solve a host
of problems
– but how to pick
the right one?*

Professional Power

By: Robin Brunet

comprehensive knowledge of the activities and achievements of similar associations in other jurisdictions. "That way the BCFPA can go to government and point out areas of the processing industry that need support," explains Raphael. MNP also conducts feasibility and economic impact studies, strategic planning, and policy analysis, for private firms and government.

As with any sector, fields of specialty abound in the consultancy world; Western's company is sought for its graphic

design and marketing skills. "Shervin helps processors create brochures, catalogues and product flyers," she says. "We also do website development or updating; branding or rebranding; packaging and point of purchase trade show marketing and booth design; social media marketing; and multi-media production."

Western cites this long list not to brag about her firm's capabilities, but to illustrate that even within the realm of a fairly narrow specialty there are

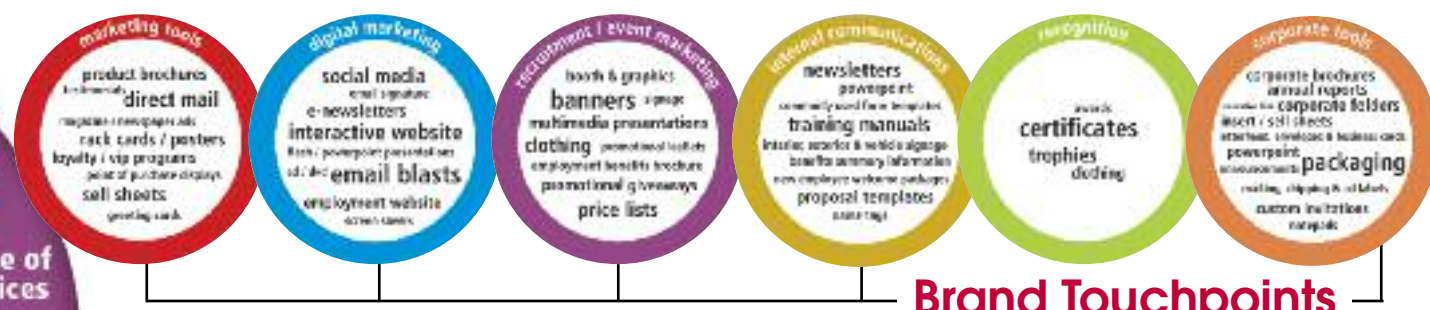


"Promoting yourself in marketing channels can be a real trick, especially in the world of social media."

many services that, in other circumstances, would require clients to seek multiple solution providers. "We try to provide a seamless service, and in cases when a client requires something beyond our skills we get the appropriate specialists on board," she says.

Although Western handles both large and small clients, she especially likes working for mom and pop firms that have grown to the point where the owners realize they can't handle all aspects of the business anymore. "That's the sweet spot for boutique consultancies like ours," she says. "Home-grown business may be chugging along just fine, but what about five years down the road? Promoting yourself in marketing channels can be a real trick, especially in the world of social media."

Courtenay Lewis, marketing coordinator for Grimm's Fine Foods, credits Shervin for having a creative team that "is always



Brand Touchpoints

eager to present me with options I may not have thought of. They're great for bringing new ideas to freshen up an ad campaign or breathing new life into dated packaging."

The Business Development Bank of Canada is another consultancy that strives to be a one-stop shop for clients. BDC is a unique hybrid of financing and consulting services — the only bank in Canada, in fact, to provide comprehensive consulting services along with money loans.

For example, BDC's focus on food processors' needs for information, technology and communication is such that if it provides



Michael Selci, vice-president financing and consulting for Business Development Bank of Canada.

financing for software, it also provides support for installation and training. "First of all, because this type of investment is intangible, most leading financial institutions would not give out loans for software procurement," says Selci. "And they certainly wouldn't provide money for installation or training. Also, if a company requires a tech solution but doesn't know where to turn, we can refer them to companies that would be an ideal fit and the right price point."

BDC is also the preferred financier and consultancy for start-up firms, as well as a go-to solution for commercial real estate financing, with flexible amortizations of up to 25 years.

The reason BDC seems like a windfall for food processors (not to mention many other industries) is simple. "We're dedicated exclusively to small and medium-sized entrepreneurs," says Selci. "Our focus is on their growth and productivity." As such, BDC extends its services to over 29,000 entrepreneurs across the country.

Competition in the food processing sector is fiercer than ever; unfortunately,

along with many great ideas dying before they get off the ground are promising companies that fall by the wayside due to a lack of business savvy.

Consultants are the solution. And by performing due diligence, it's easy to find one that suits specific needs, no matter how unique they seem to be.

WFP

Talk to your BDC specialist to learn how our flexible financing and consulting services can help you meet your unique growth challenges.

Lisa Christensen
Regional Director, Strategy Implementation
lisa.christensen@bdc.ca | 888 INFO-BDC

BDC IS THE ONLY BANK DEDICATED EXCLUSIVELY TO ENTREPRENEURS.

FINANCING | CONSULTING > BDC.CA

Canada BDC Entrepreneurs first

At AFSC, every idea has a place to grow.

Find out how our Value Added & Agribusiness Loan Program can grow your Alberta business.

- Loans up to \$5 million (per connected borrower)
- Personalized service and acceptance
- No early payment penalty
- Competitive interest rates

AFSC
1-877-899-AFSC
www.AFSC.ca

SELL MORE PRODUCT!

We Can Help...

- Create innovative product applications for customers.
- Adjust product ingredients to make a health claim.
- Use natural ingredients for higher consumer acceptance.
- Turn low value by-products into high value foods.

FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
Growing Opportunities in Food

CONTACT: Roberta Irvine 204 239 3150
roberta.irvine@gov.mb.ca