

Viewpoint

Explaining thought processes

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Earlier this year, Angela Phelan and Ernie Wilder, our senior consultants, helped an institutional client reorganize its dining service and modernize its kitchen facilities to meet new challenges.

A few weeks ago, after the project ended, the institution's chef-manager e-mailed Angela, asking her what her thought process was in developing the solutions. Her response is worth sharing, as it helps explain our philosophy and approach to improving dining and hospitality services.

“Thought processes are really the combination of experience, training, observation and problem-solving techniques,” she wrote. “Keep asking questions of people who can give you good, solid information.

“One of the things we all have available is critical thinking: Why is this piece of equipment here? Would it speed the process if we reshuffled the line to work like [an assembly line in] any factory? “Look up and see what’s there – is there room for a second level?

“They call it thinking outside the box these days, but being free to ask ‘what if?’ has always been available. Be willing to take some risks – sometimes I’m wrong too.

“Without stepping out of your comfort zone, you can never find out if your ‘what ifs’ can really make a difference. More often than not, something good comes from being audacious.

“Learning more about efficient design, staffing and finances; constantly researching new equipment coming onto the market and getting out to look at other locations is the key to keeping fresh.

“I know how heavily your time is booked, but it might be a good time to talk to management about research and fact-finding – what’s happening in retail food services, hospitals, fast-casual restaurants. I always learn something when I visit or eat away from my own locations.”

That’s sound advice for managers in any field, or for anyone who’s interested in making their job and personal life richer and more fulfilling. It also explains our approach to the projects we undertake. Asking questions, especially why, usually bring answers that suggest solution and new opportunities.

If solutions and new opportunities could be found by looking out a window and wishing, no one would ever need our services.

– Tom Mac Dermott

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