

It's All About Relationships

Fifty years ago 13 foodservice consultants met in Chicago to share similar professional interests with the objective of promoting research and improving design of public food facilities. After merging with a "rival" group, a few name changes and the creation of chapters and divisions worldwide, the Foodservice Consultants Society International (FCSI) has grown to approximately 1200 members. In 2001, FCSI created the North American Division (NAD) to concentrate on the specific needs, issues and concerns of the 675 members we represent. Our membership, here and worldwide, consist of consultants (design and management advisory services), students, and corporate/allied supporters (manufacturers). As our industry grows and each niche becomes more specialized, FCSI continues to evolve to recognize and include those professions which directly impact our members and the services we provide to our clients.

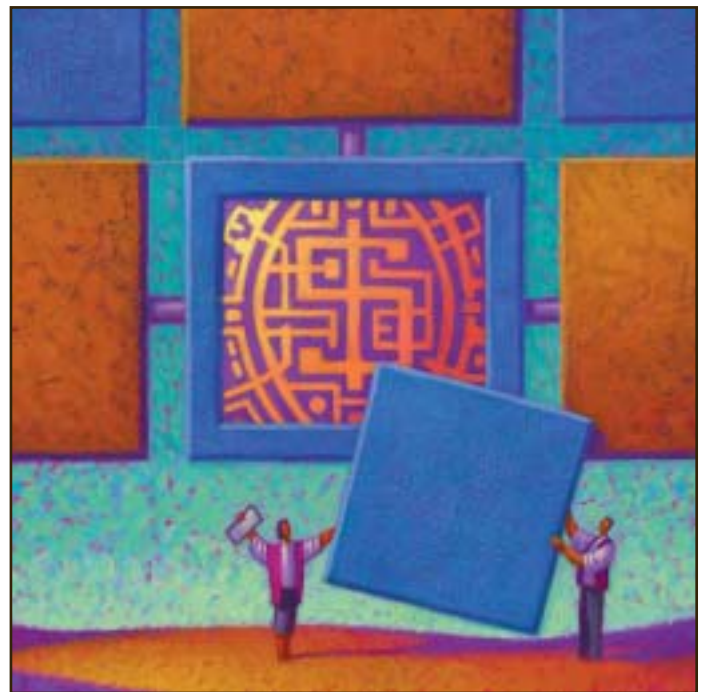
Though projects are handled differently all over the world, FCSI provides the opportunity to exchange information with members locally and globally. Networking, division and chapter meetings, round table discussions, focus forums, professional relationships and alliances, sharing experiences and solutions to common problems are only a few of the many reasons FCSI exists. We consistently raise the bar for our members with continuing education programs, manufacturer seminars and industry association programs. FCSI is constantly developing "best practice" principles for our consultants and clients to ensure they are well informed of the latest trends and how new innovations may effect their operations. To keep those processes up to date, FCSI has liaisons with a number of industry associations and members of other organizations who supply reports for our growing technical and resource library. For college and trade school students interested in becoming consultants, we offer mentorship and scholarship programs to help expose them to our profession and how we interface with the foodservice industry.

Our main focus this year is rebuilding relationships, reconnecting with our members as well as establishing new and better relationships with our industry associations. The services our members provide to a project represents a small piece of the pie – manufacturers, manufacturers' reps, kitchen equipment contractors, installers, service agencies, etc. all share in the completion of a successful operation. We all need to understand what each of us bring to a project, our responsibilities and be held accountable for them. The better we coordinate as a team, the smoother the ride will be to the completion of every project. The better we improve the process, the happier the client will be. And that's really the bottom line. There's nothing better than leaving a client with a great impression and a job well done.

To get the process rolling, FCSI and MAFSI have joined forces to develop a relationship that was long overdue. As MAFSI President Jeff Hessel noted, this was the missing link

between the FCSI consultants and the manufacturers. Since one of FCSI's most important initiatives is to reach out to our members by creating local networking groups and MAFSI members wanted to increase face-to-face time with our members, this alliance worked out well for both of us. Thus far, four networking groups have been created in Dallas, Philadelphia, New York and the Maryland/DC area with the hope of others in the near future. These gatherings are more than just social events; they include educational programs, facility tours and provide time for FCSI and MAFSI to conduct local meetings.

No matter how you look at it, all of our organizations and the members we represent provide services that directly or indirectly affect the client and can shape the outcome of their project as well as the opinion they have of us. The better partnerships we build with each other, the better relationships we maintain with the customer. FCSI understands how important this is and the professional consultants we represent know we are only as good as the teammates we align ourselves with.



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