



## CONSULTANT'S CORNER

### The Power of Transparency

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Recently, I designed and built a catering commissary for a client in the tri-state area. The budget was tight and stakes were high and obviously what the client wanted did not fall into his budget. Through many value engineering

exercises and many revisions, we finally came to a point where we fell into his budget and were awarded the project.

In the preliminary phases of design this particular client wanted titanium cooking suites, flight type dish machines and self-cleaning ventilation hoods; they truly wanted a “top of the line” kitchen, however when they saw the preliminary budgets attached to each option they were blown away by how much everything was and needless to say it was my job to revise the drawings and equipment schedule and value engineer the equipment package.

This process went on two or three times until I asked my client what their budget was. As they were cautious about telling me, thinking that it would in some way allow me to go way under budget and make a killing on the equipment package, they finally saw the advantage of disclosing their budget so I could design within their true means.

Obviously their budget wasn't the biggest I've seen but it certainly wasn't the smallest either. By specifying equipment within their price range and being transparent about the advantages and disadvantages associated with the new equipment specified, we eliminated any questions or concerns that might've been there when we moved to less expensive equipment.

The transparency that was shown throughout this process in the end finally made the process run a lot smoother and eliminated the guessing game associated with not knowing the client budget. Once we found out that piece of information, we were able to design within the client's true budget. If we would've done this earlier in the process, it would've taken half the time. So by the client being transparent and sharing their budget with us it allowed us to design within their means. Designing within their means and showing them what they were getting, allowing them to get their hands on it, and comparing the goods and the bads from one piece of equipment to another allowed them to realize that they didn't need the equipment they originally desired. Being transparent on our end saved them money in the long run and allowed them to get equipment that fell into their budget that ended up being truly what they needed. Being transparent on their end allowed us to properly design and build their desired space well within their means.

We've all heard the saying “honesty is always the best policy” and there is a reason we have all heard it. If an equipment dealer knows a budget and designs within that budget telling the client the equipment is amazing when it really is restaurant series, both parties are going to suffer. If your client is willing to be transparent with you and you are able to know the budget you can design within their means, educate your client on what they are getting and what to expect; this way you are not only leaving nothing on the table, you are earning their trust and building a relationship based on transparency and honesty... and that is always the best policy!