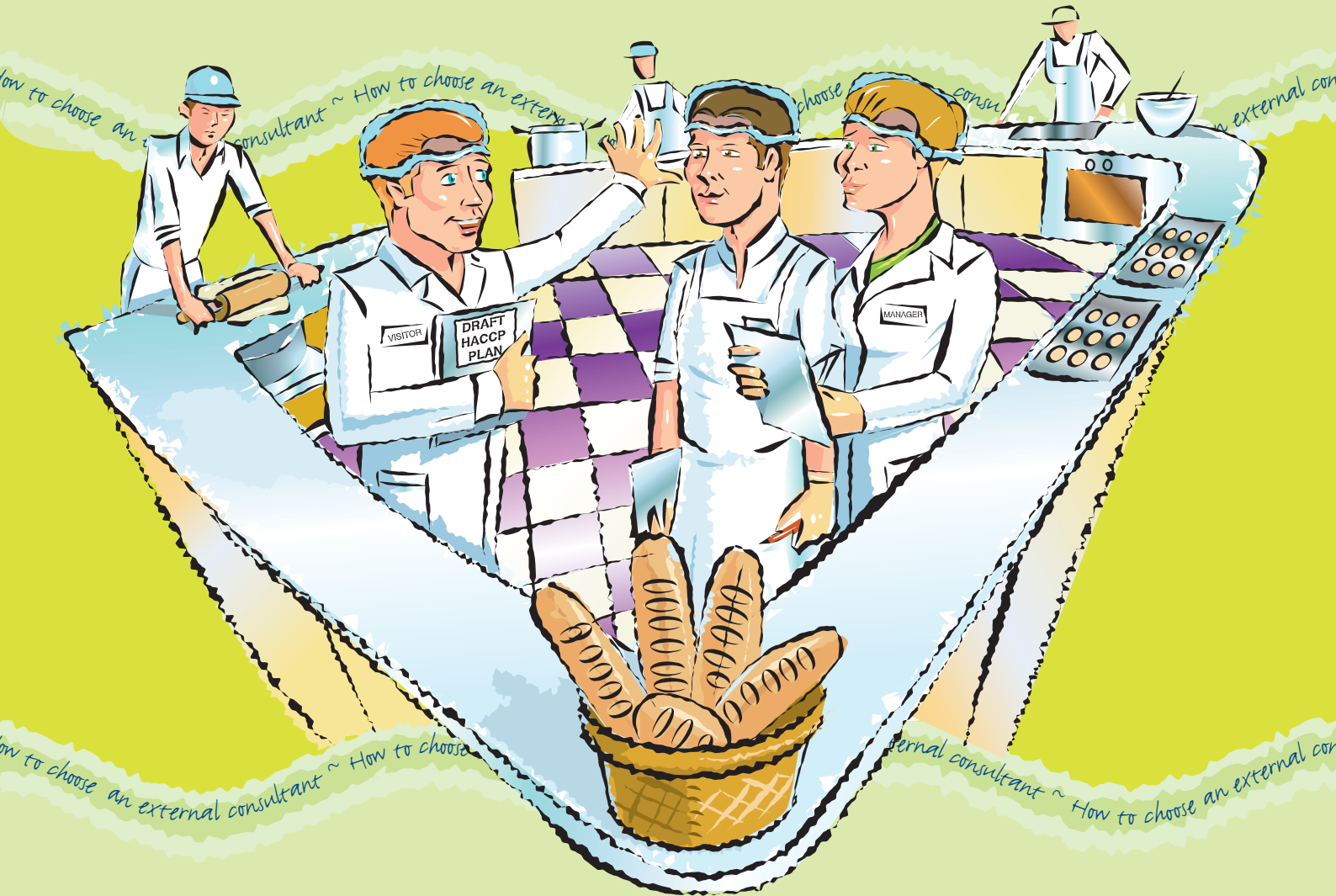


HACCP

A FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

How to Select an External HACCP Consultant



Selecting an External HACCP Consultant

BACKGROUND

Some food businesses use external consultants to assist them in the design and implementation of their food safety management system (HACCP).

As with any service you buy, remember "BUYER BEWARE".

The following advice is intended to assist food businesses who plan to engage the services of an external HACCP consultant.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A HACCP CONSULTANT

Step 1: Plan your business needs

Step 2: Interview each consultant

Step 3: Select the consultant

Plan Your Business Needs (Step 1)

1. Decide what level of service you want the consultant to provide.

This could include any or all of the following services:

- introductory HACCP training so you can develop the food safety management system yourself.
- technical support for you to devise and document a HACCP plan.
- technical support for you to devise a HACCP implementation plan.
- follow up assessment of a HACCP implementation plan.
- development of HACCP documentation.
- verification and validation of existing plan.

For example:

Where a consultant is providing/implementing a food safety management system (HACCP) - they should:

- a. be willing to help you to develop a system, customised to your business's needs.
 - b. have the technical knowledge and ability to help you identify the hazards in your food operation.
 - c. have a clear understanding of the principles of implementing a HACCP system.
 - d. ensure that at least one person in the business (preferably the proprietor/manager) understands the HACCP system and how it is to be implemented and reviewed.
 - e. be willing to conduct a follow up review of the working HACCP system at a future date.
 - f. have suitable qualifications and a track record in HACCP implementation that can be checked with their other clients.
 - g. provide appropriate training.
- 2.** Make a list of at least three consultants preferably based on recommendation from other food business owners or failing that, lists of consultants offering HACCP services.

Interview Each Consultant (Step 2)

Contact each consultant to discuss your requirements either on the phone or preferably in person. These questions may be useful:

- **Is the consultant interested in identifying your specific needs?**
Are they willing to spend time with you, listen to you and explain the best method of meeting your requirements?
- **How does the consultant assess your business needs?**
Will they visit your company – are you happy they will visit for the right reasons e.g. assess your current practices etc.? Will they meet with key representatives – what do they want to achieve by doing this?
- **Are they willing to show you some of their previous work?**
This will give you an indication of the quality of work you can expect to receive. It also allows you to assess whether the service provided is generic, or customer specific.
- **What do some of their previous clients say about them?**
Talking to some of the consultants previous clients will inform you of the quality of the service you may receive. It must however be kept in mind that the success of the service is dependent on both the consultant's **and** your business's input.
- **What type of follow-up support will they provide?**
The success of the project is dependent on its how it is implemented in the workplace. Follow-up visits may prove beneficial as they assist in the implementation of knowledge obtained. These visits can also help clarify any issues that have arisen since the service was provided.
- **Do they encourage management participation?**
Proprietors/managers should be familiar with and have ownership of their food safety management system; therefore it is important that the consultant and proprietor/manager work together to address all food safety aspects relating to the business.

- **Do they have an appropriate qualification?**

The person delivering the requested service should be competent in the task they are undertaking. They should have an appropriate level of technical knowledge; in addition relevant experience in the food industry may be of benefit when addressing issues in your food operation.

- **Do they provide appropriate HACCP Training?**

A consultant who is involved in developing a HACCP system should provide appropriate HACCP training as part of the service. This should include introductory training in HACCP for staff members who have a role in your HACCP system and advanced HACCP training for at least one member of staff who will be responsible for the implementation, verification, validation and revision of your HACCP system. Advanced training should include full practical details on conducting the steps covered by the seven principles of HACCP.

While there is no specific timescale for completing a HACCP course to ensure all the requirements are addressed effectively will take approximately two days (14 hours).

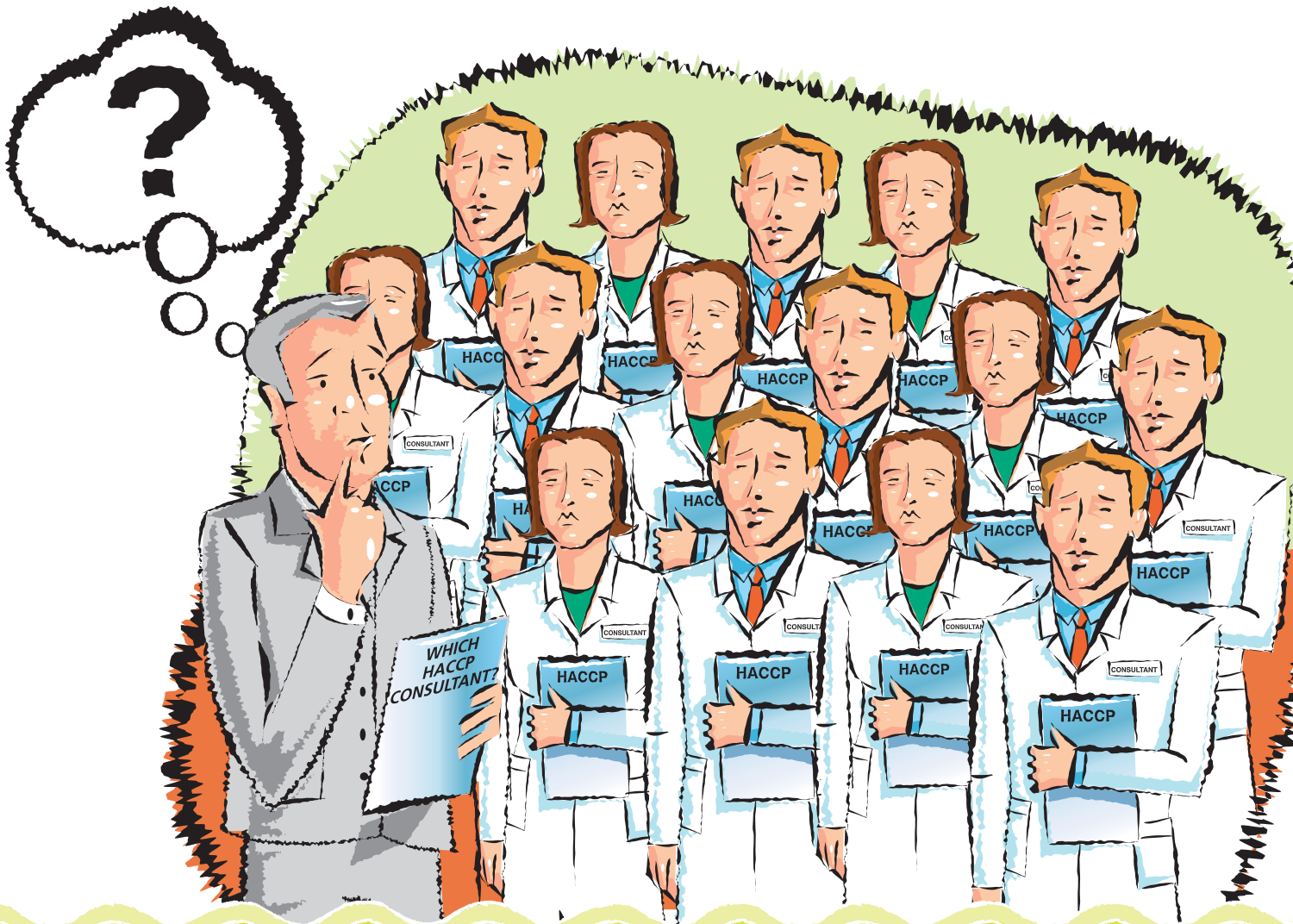
Things to avoid:

Do not buy a HACCP plan off the shelf no matter how tempting it seems. This will not meet legal requirements.

Do not hire a consultant to devise and document a HACCP plan for your business without working with you to do it.

Remember:

You will have to run your HACCP system, revise it and defend it when asked by the authorities or your customers long after the consultant has banked your money.



Select the Consultant (Step 3)

The responses you receive to the above questions will assist you in making your final decision.

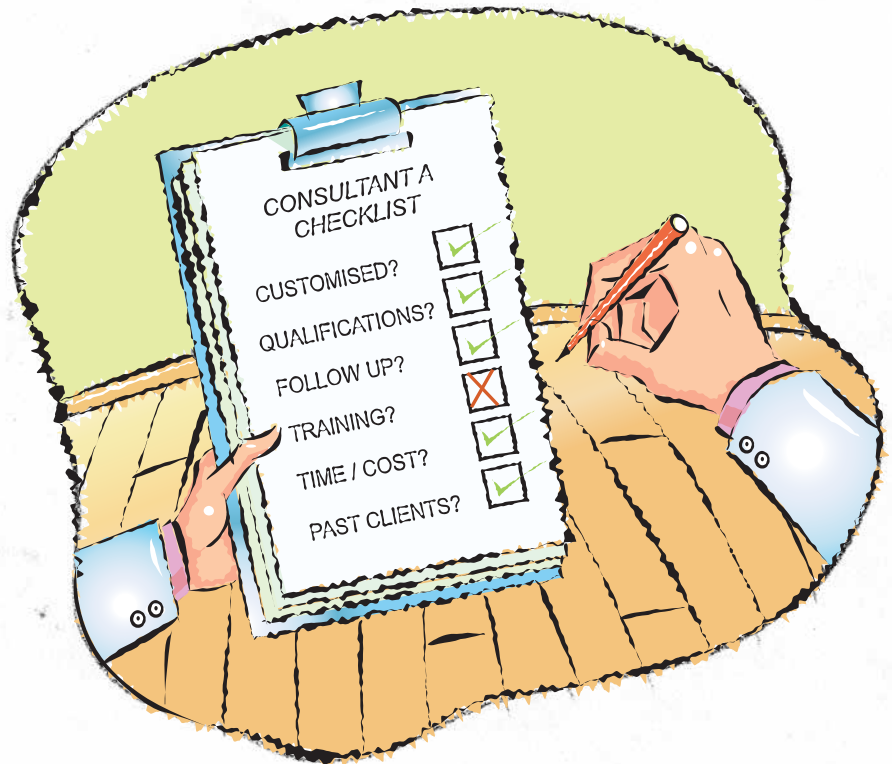
- Draw up a short list of at least three consultants.
- Ask them to tender for the work. A tender should consist of a breakdown of the work they will undertake, a costing and a timescale.
- Select your consultant based on your discussions with them and their tender document.

Remember:

The quality of the service they provide is as equally important as the cost. If you get it wrong and you harm a customer the financial cost and the damage to your reputation will be much higher.


The success of the service provided by an external consultant depends on your willingness to encourage its implementation. A consultant can only provide you with the tools; it is the commitment of the individual food business owner/manager that ensures the success of the project.

HACCP is a legal requirement





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