

Downloadable Tool - Hiring a Food Consultant Checklist

What to Prepare Before Your Meeting

Preparing for your meeting with a food and beverage product development consultant is crucial to ensure a productive and efficient engagement. Here are some essential items to have ready:

1. Define Your Project Scope:

General Summary or Description:

2. Objectives:

Goal 1	
Goal 2	
Goal 3	

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3. **Timeline:**

Key Milestones (turn this into a Gantt chart for maximum benefit)

Milestone	Due Date	Days until completion

4. **Budget** for your product development project.

R&D Budget	
Manufacturing Trial Budget	
Target Final COGS	
Target Wholesale Price	
Target year 1 Revenue	

5. **Must Haves:**

6. **Nice to Haves:**

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7. **Willing to Sacrifice:**

8. **Market Research:** Share any Market Research conducted prior to your first call - power points, final reports etc - the more you can provide the better.

9. **Existing Product Information (if available, print or send link ahead of time):**

- Formulations:

- Packaging (design, type, etc.):

- Pricing (of any ingredients already identified)

- Distribution Information:

*if you are nervous about sharing protected information before your first meeting, you can request an MNDA in advance.

10. **Internal Resources:** Do you have internal:

- R&D team
- Manufacturing facilities
- Quality Assurance
- Other:

11. **Sample Products:** If applicable, provide samples of your current products, prototypes of your new product ideas, or a “Gold Standard” already on the market that you want to mimic.

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How to Qualify the Consultant

Qualifying a food and beverage product development consultant is crucial to ensure you are working with a competent and trustworthy professional. Here are some factors to consider when evaluating potential consultants:

1. **Relevant Experience:** Look for consultants with proven experience in food and beverage product development, preferably in your specific industry or category. Ask for their portfolio, case studies, and references to assess their track record and expertise.
2. **Technical Knowledge:** Evaluate the consultant's technical knowledge in areas such as food science, ingredient functionality, formulation, processing, packaging, and regulatory requirements. They should have a deep understanding of the technical aspects of product development and be able to provide sound advice.
3. **Problem-Solving Skills:** A good consultant should be an effective problem solver. Assess their ability to identify and analyze issues, propose solutions, and handle challenges that may arise during the product development process. Look for examples of how they have solved similar problems in the past.
4. **Communication Skills:** Strong communication skills are essential for effective collaboration with your team. Evaluate the consultant's ability to listen, articulate ideas, and communicate complex concepts in a clear and concise manner. Communication should be open, transparent, and responsive throughout the engagement.
5. **Collaborative Approach:** Look for a consultant who adopts a collaborative approach and works well with your team. They should be able to listen to your ideas, incorporate your feedback, and work together towards a common goal. Avoid consultants who dictate or impose their ideas without considering your input.
6. **Business Acumen:** A food and beverage product development consultant should also have a good understanding of the business aspects of the industry. They should be able to assess the market potential

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What to expect from your consultant

1. **Strategic Guidance:** A qualified consultant should provide strategic guidance based on their experience and expertise. They should be able to assess your business goals, market research, and internal resources, and provide recommendations on product concepts, formulations, packaging, and other key aspects of product development.
2. **Technical Expertise:** Your consultant should possess deep technical knowledge in food science, ingredient functionality, formulation, processing, packaging, and regulatory requirements. They should be able to provide insights on technical challenges and solutions, and ensure that your product meets quality and safety standards.
3. **Innovative Ideas:** Your consultant should bring creative and innovative ideas to the table. They should be able to generate new product concepts, explore unique ingredient combinations, and suggest novel approaches to differentiate your products in the market.
4. **Project Management:** Your consultant should have strong project management skills to ensure that your product development project progresses smoothly and efficiently. This includes setting timelines, managing resources, coordinating with suppliers or vendors, and overseeing the overall progress of the project.
5. **Communication and Collaboration:** Your consultant should possess excellent communication skills and be able to effectively communicate with your team, suppliers, and other stakeholders. They should be responsive, open to feedback, and willing to collaborate with your team to achieve the desired outcomes.
6. **Problem-Solving:** Your consultant should be skilled in identifying and addressing problems that may arise during the product development process. They should be able to troubleshoot technical issues, overcome obstacles, and provide effective solutions to keep the project on track.
7. **Results-Driven:** Your consultant should be focused on delivering results. They should be able to measure and evaluate the success of the product development project against the defined objectives and make necessary adjustments to achieve the desired outcomes.
8. **Confidentiality and Professionalism:** Your consultant should maintain confidentiality and professionalism throughout the engagement. They should respect your proprietary information, follow industry regulations and ethical standards, and conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.

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9. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Your consultant should be flexible and adaptable to changes in project requirements or unforeseen circumstances. They should be able to adjust their approach and recommendations as needed to align with your evolving needs and business goals. Of course, you as a client should be upfront with any changes that you make after an initial proposal is accepted as that is the agreed to contract and expect a reasonable change to the project timeline and costs depending on the complexity of your requested changes.

10. **Value for Money:** Your consultant should provide value for money by delivering high-quality services within the agreed-upon budget. They should provide transparent pricing and be able to justify the costs associated with their services based on their expertise and deliverables.