



**We share,  
we support,  
we inspire.**

**FCSI'S PRESIDENTS PANEL  
FCSI.ORG**

**SUPPORTED BY**  
**SALVAJOR**  
FOOD WASTE SOLUTIONS  
**VULCAN**

# **FCSI WHITEPAPERS**



# **FCSI'S PRESIDENTS' PANEL**

In December 2022 a selection of FCSI Worldwide presidents from the past decade joined a virtual roundtable, chaired by *Foodservice Consultant* magazine, to debate the current state of the foodservice industry and where it must go next

The sector has experienced much change, not just in the past decade, but also quite intensely in the past couple of years. The panel represents some of the world's most experienced foodservice consultants and this whitepaper aims to capture their key learning advice and experience.

The panel members:

**Mario Sequeira FCSI**, is current Worldwide president of FCSI. He is based in Western Australia where he operates a firm called Hospitality Total Services. He has worked both back and front of house in hospitality before pursuing post-graduate studies. All of which gave him a good grounding for design and management consulting.

**Bill Taunton FCSI**, served as Worldwide president between 2015 to 2017. Based in Santiago, Chile, his company Gastrotec works on projects all over Latin America.

**Jim Petersen FCSI**, stepped in briefly as Worldwide president in 2015. He is currently working with the FCSI Educational Foundation. His company C.i.i Food Service Design, which he started in 1974, is based in Michigan, US.

**Ed Norman FCSI**, was Worldwide president in 2013. He owned and operated his Iowa, US-based firm MVP Services Group, with his son, Eric, who's now on the FCSI Worldwide board. In 2017 they merged with Clevenger Associates. He is partially retired, having turned over design responsibilities to Eric and the team. He now focuses on Management Advisory Services for the company.



Clockwise from top left:  
Mario Sequeira FCSI; Bill  
Taunton FCSI; Ed Norman  
FCSI and Jim Petersen FCSI

## **REMEMBERING 2022**

Before looking forward the panel briefly looked back on the past year. We have seen a time of unprecedented upheaval and change since 2020. The way that foodservice and the hospitality industry reacted to the challenges is going to inform many decisions about the future.

Although he maintained a busy schedule throughout Covid, for Ed Norman 2022 saw somewhat of a return to normalcy. "I'd say a return to normalcy, with some major challenges," was his summary.

Likewise, Jim Petersen did not slow down in the pandemic. However, 2022 was "actually uncomfortably busy."

"There are so many projects that were held up during 2020 and 2021 that have now started, so I'm involved in more projects than I have been in any other year. People are feeling more like they can go ahead with projects. The biggest issue I've seen is the supply chain issues," he explained.

Bill Taunton said the market in Latin America was held back by fear and insecurity, however 2022 saw clients in Mexico, Peru, and Colombia starting to get back in touch again. "So that gives us a very positive view of 2022, and then 2023," he said.

Mario Sequeira traveled a lot in 2022 in his role as Worldwide president. He was able to visit all three divisions of FCSI, The Americas, EAME and Asia Pacific and found three common challenges in all areas. "Globally, there were three things that were top of the list, with all three divisions," he said. "First were labor shortages, especially in hospitality and foodservice. The second was increased costs, because of the war [in Ukraine] and energy prices. And the other thing was supply chain issues."

## **SILVER LININGS**

So how does a fundamental reset, such as the one we have just experienced with the Covid pandemic, shake things up in foodservice and maybe lead us to operate more creatively? Can good things come out of this that will help us in the future?

We've learned as individuals that things can change on a dime," said Ed Norman. "The pandemic hit us so hard, so fast. It caused everyone to pivot in their operations. And I think that has affected the way our clients now look at their businesses. They want to be sure to guard themselves against potential future situations. Customers are embracing technology, artificial intelligence, robotics, those are all things that are being looked at more carefully now."

Bill Taunton explained the positives being carried forward from the pandemic in Latin America. "Hygiene in Latin America was never seen as something important. I am very strong in my position about hygiene and security in operations. Now, many of our clients in Latin America are finally paying a lot of attention to that. They're willing to extend the budget on those health and security issues."



**"The pandemic hit us so hard, so fast. It caused everyone to pivot in their operations. And I think that has affected the way our clients now look at their businesses"**

**Ed Norman FCSI**

Covid has emphasized the importance of hygiene in foodservice



When asked if there was any specific innovation or any particular new way of thinking that has fundamentally changed how consultants approach projects Jim Petersen flagged the technology that enables remote meetings. “The technology was there before, but Covid meant being able to have remote meetings was very important. And I think now we have seen how it works; we won’t have to drive two hours to attend a 15-minute meeting anymore. From a practical perspective, that’s a great benefit.”

Innovation is the lifeblood in this sector and all the panelists agreed that foodservice consultants as a profession must continue to stay close and learn about new products and innovative new developments that are out there. Particularly from equipment manufacturers.

“Innovation does help whether it’s specifying a piece of equipment that is multi-use, or low energy, or reducing waste and doing more with less,” said Sequeira. “Innovation is absolutely critical and the cornerstone of all we do.”

Innovation is getting exciting says Ed Norman: “in the past 10 or 15 years, the market has driven manufacturers to become more creative. The pandemic even pushed that farther to the edge of the envelope. I’m excited about what I’ve seen over the last 15-20 years with innovation. We watch these companies bring forward new products every year. They’re exciting, they’re versatile, they really allow us to do more with less. And for us to be able to take that to our client and say I can develop and deliver a sustainable kitchen design for you, one that’s going to last a number of years.”

“That concept of using all this multifunctional equipment is expensive, but we were able to help our clients to reduce their investment at the end of the day.” Bill Taunton added. “It [multifunctional equipment] can reduce the amount of people working in the kitchens, reduce the square footage of these kitchens, and do more with less equipment.”

### **POSITIVE DISRUPTION**

Dan Montgomery, director of design and consultant services with one of the panel sponsors companies, Vulcan, raised the question of why disruptive technology is good for the sector? What is it and how positively disruptive can foodservice equipment actually be in terms of its impact?

“One of the things that I guess I would touch on is what has happened with the labor situation. We complain about it in foodservice, but it affects all segments in the project I’m involved with,” said Petersen. “Every time I go to a school they’re looking for food service workers bus drivers, first custodians, substitute teachers. We need to be involved with how we help them deal with that aspect – and others – but to focus on labor.”



**“Innovation does help, whether it’s specifying a piece of equipment that is multi-use, or low energy, or reducing waste and doing more with less”**

**Mario Sequeira FCSI**

Remote meetings are one of the benefits to come from the pandemic

“We are all in business because of the customer. We’ve got a client because satisfy our client,” said Mario Sequeira. “We have to then focus on how we satisfy that end customer and what is that end customer looking for? Now, the end customer wants convenience. The likes of UberEats and ghost kitchens are there because that’s part of what the customer wants. Whether they are sustainable long term or not is another matter.”

Ed Norman added: “What has happened, as part of this disruptive environment that we’ve lived through, is that we’ve lost a great deal of knowledge and skill from the labor force that was employed in the restaurant and hospitality industry. I think the disruptor in the workforce, along with the innovation on the side of the manufacturer, is going to accelerate things a great deal.”

### **AUTOMATIC ANSWER**

With labor shortages affecting hospitality businesses the panel were asked if automation could be the primary answer to the pressing labor challenges facing operators, or is it just one of the pieces of the puzzle?

Bill Taunton posited that training staff should be the primary answer. “We need to go back to our people, we need to go back to our roots, and start training our people in a better way. I think the foodservice industry is going to go back to being a business where people are important, because for many years, people weren’t really important, it was like meat in the grinder. If you don’t want to do it, let’s go to the next and the next and the next. The way I see it today is that we’re going to have to be very conscious about who we are hiring and training them and paying them the way it’s supposed to be.”

Jim Petersen agreed with Taunton. “When I think of automation, I wonder how big a project has to be before they benefit from that,” he said. “With my projects, since they’re typically publicly funded, whether it’s automation or other types of technology, the cost is just not in the cards. They’re not huge projects, and because of the way they’re funded they can’t exceed a given budget. Even if there’s a great ROI, they’re legally not able to increase the cost using ROI as a justification. So, I’m not convinced that significant automation is going to improve things. I think the big thing now is just getting people back to work.”

### **FUTURE PROOFING**

The panel were asked whether the pandemic had made them reassess the vulnerability of the systems in foodservice and whether consultants, along with operators and manufacturers are taking sustainability more seriously now than they were before Covid?

“I don’t think it’s the pandemic, that’s the motivating factor, I think it’s the climate. It’s the paradigm shift of the people, having faced the pandemic and realizing the value of life and just appreciating what they have,” was Mario Sequeira’s response.



**“We need to go back to our roots,  
and start training our people in a  
better way”**

**Bill Taunton FCSI**

The foodservice industry  
needs to acknowledge the  
importance of its people

“People want to support local, they’re concerned about carbon footprint and what they’re consuming. They’re also concerned about waste and the use of plastics.”

Ed Norman brought up the electrification of the commercial kitchen as a way to become more energy efficient. “Energy is a big consideration, and the cost of energy is going to continue to be paramount. I think we’re seeing the electrification side of things as a driving force because we now have access to wind energy and solar energy,” he said. “If you’re a chef, and you’re used to working on gas-fired equipment it’s not an easy transition to move to an electric range. There will always be a portion of the industry that will be chef driven, culinary driven, that will want to stay with some of our natural resources, if they’re available. But I do think the electric kitchen is a thing of the future. We’re already looking at that from the design side. We’re seeing how that’s going to impact our firm already in larger cities, especially on the West Coast. I think it will continue to move across the states as time goes on.”



“In Australia you don’t have a choice anymore,” Sequeira added. “If you design a new kitchen, you can’t have gas in the TMO, it’s got to be electric. And the thing is we have a responsibility as foodservice consultants to educate the people about the benefits. Apart from the energy savings, the ambiance in the kitchen is improved, you’re not creating the heat, the smell the emissions.”

### **WORKING HARDER**

Jim Ottmer, national sales manager at Salvajor, another panel sponsor, asked the presidents, with sustainability being seen as an increasingly important factor for operators, will 2023 be the year of doing more with less?

Jim Petersen replied: “in my experience, sustainability and automation both cost something, and we do get involved with projects where they want the building to be a certain level of LEED energy savings. With the projects we work on we frequently get local legislative issues, for instance, fats, oils, and greases. Things seemed to have changed quite a bit in the past five or 10 years. The local jurisdictions will not accept a lot of that kind of stuff going into the municipal waste system so, we do have to look at equipment that will take care of that. But we’re so used to trying to put 10 pounds of kitchen in a five-pound bag, we’re already doing more with less almost all the time.”

Another trend taking the hospitality world by storm is the increasing popularity of plant-based diets. Mario Sequeira reckons that the spread will not necessarily become a common thread around the world, rather it will vary from country to country.

Bill Taunton gave his perspective on the plant-based trend. “Most of the younger people in Chile are looking for vegan foods and plant-based foods. But the older generation, and the less well off people in Latin America are more into chicken or beef. I think it will change a bit, but I don’t think it’s going to mean a big change in what we’re doing.”

**“We’re so used to trying to put 10 pounds of kitchen in a five-pound bag, we’re already doing more with less almost all the time”**

**Jim Petersen FCSI**

Electrification of the commercial kitchen is a way to become more efficient

## **CONSIDERING THE TRENDS**

So, what will be the biggest trends to impact the foodservice and hospitality sector for the rest of this decade? What will really change the game for operators, customers and consultants alike?

Jim Petersen splits the question into short term and longer term. "In the immediate future, it would go back to some of the acute demands that we're dealing with now in regard to supply chain and staffing. I think that will even itself out within two to four years. I don't think they are going to be a long-term issue," he said. "Sustainability, on the other hand, is going to make a big difference. I think we need to recognize that we're going towards electric and we need to do whatever we can to make that as easy and as inexpensive a transition as possible.

Natural resources also concern Bill Taunton. "The big change for us now is water consumption, because we have been living with a drought in South America for the last 12 years," he said.

Ed Norman concurred: "I definitely think all the issues around natural resources and utilization of those resources will remain paramount. On the other side, when we look at the customer driven elements, we've all learned some important lessons from Covid, such as embracing all the different ways that we can serve a customer. That will be a major point of discussion as we go forward with design: what does the client want to do? How are they going to reach their client?"

"Another area that I believe will have a big focus on the next 10 years is the use of digital technology, remarked Sequeira. "We already have connected kitchens; we are monitoring the energy usage and we are monitoring preventative maintenance. Data is being collected about how we are servicing our clients, how we are scheduling our staff, how we are scheduling production. All of that data can be fed into artificial intelligence, and then give us the information to make decisions in our businesses driven by data.

"Part of our journey as consultants is to collaborate with our Allied members, keeping at the forefront of innovation and then we can pass that knowledge and experience to our clients in turn." ■

### **A WORD FROM SALVAJOR**

At Salvajor we do believe in doing more with less from the operator's side, using our scrapping systems to effectively remove waste from an operation with a minimum amount of staffing requirements (a finite resource these days), and utilizing less water and energy, which is important in helping manage how we're impacting our environment and being more cognizant with our stewardship of our environment and our planet.

**Jim Ottmer, national sales manager, Salvajor**

**SALVAJOR**  
FOOD WASTE SOLUTIONS

### **A WORD FROM VULCAN**

The message we get from consultants is that it is not always the technology that should be creating positive disruption, but the potential for disruption should be driving the technology and the solutions. For example, we want to make a cooking line up that is not only adaptable to any change in menu, concept, or process, but if we do need to make a significant change in the future can that be done? The technological answer for us is modularity.

**Dan Montgomery, director of design and consultant services, Vulcan**

**VULCAN**

### **FURTHER INFORMATION:**

For more information about FCSI, please visit: [fcsi.org](http://fcsi.org)

Produced by Progressive Content. If you are interested in supporting a new FCSI whitepaper, please contact: [sales@foodserviceconsultant.org](mailto:sales@foodserviceconsultant.org) [progressivecontent.com](http://progressivecontent.com)