

# Restaurant Start-up: A Practical Guide for Entrepreneurs

**“My purpose is to help entrepreneurs succeed in start-up, growth, or re-engineering, through collaborative planning and hands-on execution.”**



**Ravi Wazir**  
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Consultant & Author

Inspired by watching his grandfather cheerfully trying to delight every guest at their family hotel, Ravi began his journey in the hospitality sector. He has served the industry as a business head, an entrepreneur and a consultant since 1988 when he graduated from IHM, Mumbai and later attended The Small & Medium Enterprise Program at IIM Ahmedabad.

He has worked with a diverse range of businesses at various points in their life-cycle including Swati Snacks (The Zaveris), Harry's India Pvt. Ltd. (Everstone Capital), The Olive Bar & Kitchen (A.D.Singh), Cafe Ritazza (The Compass Group, UK), Desi Deli (Radhakrishna Hospitality Services), The Tasty Tangles (The Noodle House, Jumeirah Group, Dubai), The Sports Bar (Galaxy Entertainment) and the erstwhile Taj Birdys (Sanjay Narang).

In 1996 Ravi founded Sun Catering Services, delivering freshly packed executive meals to companies like Jet Airways — Engineering Services.

In 2003 he began a consulting service to help hospitality companies in the planning & execution of their start-up and growth strategies. His assignments range from full-time business-head roles to mid-term consulting over a few weeks/months and also single-day advisory & mentoring sessions.

Ravi is always willing to share, practise and implement what he has learnt from his own experiences and those of others in the trade, through his writing and speaking at events.

His articles have been published in all the major hospitality magazines as well as news papers across the county. ■

## Q&A

### Q. What is it like to work with entrepreneurs who are so different from one another?

A. Every entrepreneur has pushed me with different approaches to drive their business goals. I collaborate with them to bring alive their vision — through decision making and problem solving. Once we've agreed to work together, I adapt myself to each entrepreneur's needs and style — be it time spent or intensity of my involvement. On occasion, when I find the need to recommend a change in their basic approach to a problem, I place my cards on the table honestly, knowing that the news isn't always welcome, and the decision is always theirs. I've found that a flexible and collaborative approach from both sides delivers the best results and creates the most fruitful relationship. I've experienced a few relationships that aren't based on openness... inevitably a lack of openness to dissent leads to very transactional relationships.

### Q. What kind of assignment do you most enjoy?

A. I most enjoy helping people develop to their full potential. My revenue earning time is spent driving my client's initiatives, developing business models, influencing work cultures, and doing whatever is necessary to move the business from where it's at to where it needs to be. When not on a full time assignment, I enjoy spending time on research, writing and speaking. Doing this gives me valuable insights into people's behaviour, and this understanding is the best premise on which to base business decisions.

### Q. How is your work as a Consultant different or similar to that of a Business Head?

A. Entrepreneurs hire consultants to work on initiatives which require the time and/or skills that are not available in their existing team. Working as a consultant allows my client the flexibility of not carrying my costs "permanently". In a cost sensitive market, entrepreneurs value this. Internationally, consultants often work as interim business heads for periods ranging from 3 months to 3 years. While service tax forms a part of my cost-to-company as opposed to employee provident fund, I've often worked as a de-facto business head. In some instances I've even held an employee visiting card while on a consulting contract to help establish my level of responsibility.

### Q. So which is more exciting to you, a consulting role or a business head one?

A. Both have been dynamic and challenging — so I find both exciting. As long as I see a worthwhile task ahead of me, led by an ambitious leader with both feet firmly planted on the ground, I find working towards his/her goals meaningful. The format in which I execute the work is secondary. It is always rewarding to work with someone mature enough to understand and agree upon the vision we are trying to co-create.

### Q. So what's next for you?

A. Three areas I would like to concentrate on in the years ahead are:

- Help professionalize family-run businesses with growth potential.
- Introduce and localize more international brands to India.
- Take more authentic Indian brands to the global market.

Any which way, there's never a dull moment!