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## Equipped for growth

**Sunil Khanna, principal consultant & partner, Hotelconsult Orient**, firmly believes that what is needed on the equipment front is fast track transfer of technology through the joint venture route as this is the only way to trigger demand for quality goods. He shares his vision for growth of the sector with **Praveen K Singh**.



**Sunil Khanna**  
Principal Consultant &  
Partner, Hotelconsult  
Orient

With several projects lined up, Hotelconsult Orient is looking at India as the next big market for hospitality services. Sunil Khanna, principal consultant and partner, says, "We are increasing our capacity to become one of the largest hotel planners and food service design consultants in the world by grabbing the opportunity at a time when it is easy to break even. The next objective for us will be to get opportunities to team up with serious hoteliers and designers to create some of the world's finest kitchens or back of the house areas, here in India."

### Development in India

Khanna, who has widely travelled across the world as one of the prominent consultants in the hospitality sector, explains that in comparison to the European countries we are yet to make a mark as we lag behind in terms of quality of food, service standards and safety. "In order to drive the growth, we need to provide unique experiences to tourists at a good price and in a hygienic and safe environment," he avers.

He points out that the hotel sector has seen many projects that wanted to ride the boom in the sector but unfortunately failed to take off. "Due to the slow down in the housing sector (a result of a glut in the market), we do get feelers from a large number of realty companies wanting to venture into this sector to tap the growth potential. But we are certain that only few will take the final plunge as hospitality is a very different business with pay back periods which most realty companies do not find manageable." He rues, "Our main problem still remains much lower per capita yields compared to our counterparts elsewhere as the hotels here are not being built on a comparable scale."



**On the horizon**

Talking about hotels of the future, he says, "The maximum potential lies in the luxury segment with economies of scale." Elaborating further, he foretells, "Large hotels with a grand look and feel, more food and beverage options with more satisfying dining experiences than at present, added options of casual dining, use of technology and creative designing to make the guest more independent, no waiting time for as many services as possible, special packages for domestic tourists on lean days of the week and high quality entertainment which can generate large revenues by itself - in short a lot needs to happen."

**Khanna believes...**

What is needed on the equipment front is fast track transfer of technology through the joint venture route as this is the only way to trigger demand for quality goods. Mere opening up of the offices by major international food service equipment manufacturers will not suffice. Regarding the potential of the four regions of India for development, he describes, "All regions are equally important for us. It is the client profiles which matter."

He continues, "We are increasing our capacity to become one of the largest hotel planners and food service design consultants in the world by grabbing the opportunity at a time when it is easy to break even. The next objective for us will be to get opportunities to team up with serious hoteliers and designers to create some of the world's finest kitchens or back of the house areas in India. We are quite upbeat about this as our designs have been highly appreciated by planners all over the world and we have made huge investments in developing the design knowhow during last five years; and moreover the timing seems to be just right."

On the equipment side, the market is yet to mature. "We have to wait for the full implementation of Food Safety and Standards Bill 2005; international chains have to get more bargaining power with local partners to enforce safety, hygiene and quality norms; There is also the need to improve awareness on international quality norms to drive the upgradation of food service equipment," he concludes.

**About Hotelconsult Orient**

Hotelconsult Orient commenced its business towards the end of 1994 when G S Arora, then general manager - planning, Quality Inns India quit the company to partner with Sunil Khanna. Subsequently, Hotelconsult was joined by Rishi Dayal, who was with the Oberoi group and chef Rajeew Chowdhary. Hotelconsult continued its run of success in attracting the best of talent from hospitality industry including the veteran chef H S Malik, chef Garima Prakash, chef Saurabh Sethi, Sumeet Saxena and Suresh Sharma to name a few. Hotelconsult has planned a large number of hotels including many leading hotel brands such as Intercontinental, Shangri-la, Radisson, Crowne Plaza, Marriot Courtyard, Le Meridien, Ramada, Golden Tulip, Park Plaza, Park Inn, Fortune Park etc. Today, Hotelconsult is poised to achieve new

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