

| By Joseph M. Carbonara |



Scott Reitano, FCSI  
Principal  
Reitano Design Group

## Future Focus

For some companies, celebrating a milestone anniversary like the 20-year mark would generate long periods of reflection and celebration. That's not the case for Scott Reitano, FCSI, principal of Reitano Design Group (RDG), an Indianapolis-based food-service design and consulting firm celebrating such an anniversary this year. "I can only celebrate the past for so long. You have to keep your foot on the gas pedal to keep driving forward," Reitano says. He and the team at RDG are looking ahead to the next 20 years with clear vision and purpose.

**Q: How have you seen the industry evolve for the better over the past 20 years?**

**A:** The level of professionalism in the industry has risen. This enhanced professionalism carries over into a number of aspects in our industry. Certainly, the products and/or services that you provide and how you provide them is as important as ever. This is what builds trust among clients and professional colleagues. Finding people that you trust is still and always will be really important. I believe that today, we are all better putting our egos aside and doing what's right for our customers and professional trade partners.

**Q: In what ways has the industry remained consistent or true to itself over the past 20 years?**

**A:** Yes, the conglomerate manufacturers are bigger and there are larger dealer firms and manufacturer representative consortiums taking shape in the supply chain. However, the one constant in this industry is still its very strong sense of community. Many of us have known each other for a very long time and in different roles within the industry. That is a good thing given how

relationship-driven this business is. Because of those relationships, we have the opportunity to learn from our mistakes, as well as from each other and grow as a result. The sense of community that still permeates the foodservice industry is unique and that is a good thing for all of us.

**Q: What will foodservice designers need to do to remain relevant and add value moving forward?**

**A:** Embrace the fact that we are a design firm! We need to first seek to understand the role of food in a facility and to a community. Then, we can bring value through relevant, research-driven metrics, meeting deadlines, effectively communicating, and actively collaborating with other members of the design team. Most of all, we can bring value by knowing our stuff. We need to be experts in our field.

**Q: What's an important lesson you've learned that will shape your company moving forward?**

**A:** I continue to explore what servant leadership looks, acts and feels like. What impact does it have on an organization? Before my friend and colleague Nick Andersen passed away, we decided that being kind is a solid business strategy. We firmly believe that being kind — speaking truth in love — matters. At RDG, we say that we take care of each other, and together we take care of our clients.

I have also learned that a company does not reach two decades of service without a lot of help and guidance. There have been many, many heroes along our path. We have a deep sense of gratitude for the architects, operators, professional colleagues, and other members of the supply chain that have taught us so much over the years.

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