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Rebranding a Franchise



What are some of the most common reasons for rebranding a franchise?

JIM SAYS:

Many franchise systems, including well-known multi-unit, large or global chains, are rebranded at some point. The most common reasons include staying up-to-date with trends and setting themselves apart from their competition.

In retail, especially, many rebranding efforts have been undertaken in recent years to enhance the customer's shopping experience with greater excitement, which is crucial to developing long-term loyalty. As a result, many stores today are becoming easier to navigate, present clearer product information and focus on the franchise system's history and commitment to service.

While all franchise systems have goals with regard to how customers view them, 'repositioning' adjustments sometimes need to be made to fix a perceived problem. A company's goals and values can change over the years, after all, necessitating better control of the franchise brand identity. Examples include restaurant chains going back to their roots and celebrating a retro sensibility with vintage décor.



What is typically involved in franchise rebranding efforts?

JIM SAYS:

There can be many steps when rebranding a franchise system, including creating a new logo, selecting and stocking new products and revamping the corporate website. Of course, it is important to note these steps and specific actions will vary for each brand, depending both on the nature of the business and on the rebranding project's goals.



What roles do the franchisor and franchisee play, respectively?

JIM SAYS:

Once the franchisor has decided it is the right time to rebrand, the following are some common examples of steps the franchisees themselves will typically need to take.

In retail, it is important for the 'look' of the store to reflect the positive direction the franchise system is taking, so the franchisee will work with the franchisor to ensure the correct paint colours, new signage and any other interior and exterior décor elements are being implemented at the store level.

Each franchisee also needs to take time to educate his/her employees about the new changes. It is becoming more common for both franchisees and their staff to complete training courses about products—especially highly specialized lines—and about improving the customer experience.

The franchisor should lay out a rebranding plan for the franchisees. In some cases, franchisors even offer an incentive for franchisees to complete the rebranding of their stores by a certain date.

While each franchise system is different, most depend on their franchisees to help successfully implement their rebranding initiatives. With this in mind, a rebranding project should not be undertaken simply to change paint colours and fixtures, but should also serve a strategic purpose. The franchisor may be best-positioned to pull all of the necessary elements together for this purpose, but the implementation should represent for the franchisee an investment that helps create future sales growth, rather than an ineffective and expensive burden. **CBF**

Jim Carpenter

Franchisor

Jim Carpenter is founder, president and CEO of Wild Birds Unlimited, a retail franchise system specializing in backyard bird feeders. For more information, visit www.wbu.com.