

From Franchisor to Franchisee, Change is Good when Accomplished Together

A franchise is only as strong as the support behind it and change is much easier when everyone involved is working together toward a common goal—to build a better franchise.

BY CHARITY RAUSCH

Entrepreneurs come from all walks of life and enter into business ownership for myriad reasons. There are many advantages to choosing to become a franchise owner, chief among them is the support provided by the franchisor. Operating any business can present a unique set of challenges on the road to success, making it invaluable to have a partner with the experience and the resources to help overcome potential roadblocks.

While most franchisees are aware of the franchisor's role in developing standard practices that will help the franchise succeed, many do not realize how to work together to institute change on the franchise level and strengthen the entire system in the process.

As someone who worked for the franchise's corporate office before deciding to become a franchisee, I approached my first major business decision with the perspective of having witnessed firsthand how best to implement the franchise's resources. Within my first year of being a franchisee, I led my employees and customers through changing our store location, which was a completely different experience as a franchisee but ultimately proved to me that our systems work. This experience enabled me to view the relationship with the corporate office in a new way.

WHEN CHANGE IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Buying a franchise, becoming more familiar with the support systems during the training process and eventually getting to your opening day is an exciting and wonderful journey. However, that initial excitement can quickly dissipate if one or more components of your business isn't working to your advantage.

I bought an existing location that had not been growing as it should have been considering the strength of the surrounding community. Shortly after settling into our existing store location, the shortcomings of the store layout and the inefficiencies caused by the building design became evident. Even when my business partners and our employees had confidence in the systems and executed them to the best of their abilities, it was clear that we needed a location better equipped to reflect the potential growth we originally saw in the business.

With the help of the franchise office, we evaluated what was and wasn't working for our employees and our customers. There were fundamental aspects of the store location that weren't allowing us to optimize our operations and better serve the customer. Our original space put constraints on our ability to store proper inventory and take deliveries due to poor center layout; this was not something that I had encountered in the corporate office. This discouraged a great customer experience and significantly hindered growth opportunity. In addition, there wasn't ample parking space or visibility for the store front. It became apparent when the lease ended that we needed to explore alternative options; that's when we reached out for guidance from the franchisor.

GETTING THE PROCESSES TO WORK FOR YOU

The standards and systems within a franchise should be constantly evolving with the franchisee. As the franchisee and franchisor work together to overcome challenges, those systems can be refined or optimized to achieve a desired outcome. We turned to the franchisor for guidance in selecting and opening a new location that would be able to adapt to our customers' needs and prepare us for future success.

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When undergoing any change, the experience can be smoother when viewing the franchisor as the business partner. Involve it in the decision-making process. When there is a question, don't be afraid to pick up the phone to contact corporate support members and bounce your ideas off of them. They are there to work through any challenge and test their systems and achieve positive results that will benefit the brand.

While undergoing a change, we had to learn how to adapt the available resources to meet our needs in our unique situation. For example, our previous location didn't reflect the newest store design, putting us at a disadvantage. In selecting a new location with enough space, we were able to apply the brand's marketing materials and in-store displays to create an entirely refreshed experience for our staff and customers.

COMMUNICATING AT EVERY LEVEL

Open dialogue is the greatest resource. Learning how to effectively communicate with staff and customers and remain transparent about our decision helped for a smoother transition. The corporate team helped me communicate with my employees and provided me the freedom to manage the lines of communication between myself and my staff. Having this support made the transition painless and was helpful in retaining my core staff into the new location.

In addition, our team used many of the franchisor's available resources to educate our loyal customers about the new location and how it would benefit their overall enjoyment

of the shopping experience. A new location gave us a new opportunity for communicating the brand to customers with the help of updated signage and store displays.

CREATING A STRONGER SYSTEM

From the moment we took over the existing location to the day we opened the doors to our new store, I had confidence in the plan laid out by the franchisor and knew that following the brand's standard practices would help us achieve the goals we had set for ourselves. After going through this process, I look at the role of the corporate office differently and try to advise new franchisees who visit my store and talk with me about my experience.

During my experience, I came to see the franchise office as my business partner who could open the lines of communication and provide a unique set of tools that could help me greet any new challenges in the future.

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FRANCHISE RELATIONS

Multiple Employer Plans: A Good Fit for the Franchise Industry



Many franchisees can't afford to invest much a qualified retirement plan. Choosing the right, reasonably priced multiple employer plan can help them attract and retain employees by offering valuable benefits, allowing management to focus on growing the business.

BY GERALD WERNETTE