

Salesmarts

Training Sells!

3 keys to get new franchisees started

BY CORDELL RILEY

Young and growing franchise organizations have many responsibilities to handle:

- Assembling the right team/selecting the right partners
- Fully documenting the operating system
- Forming supplier relationships
- Registering with appropriate state and local agencies
- Announcing and marketing the opportunity to own a franchise
- Establishing a new and/or larger online presence

This is a long list of essential things to do, but there is one more activity franchisors must be thinking about too: franchise development.

Franchise development means starting to bring new franchise owners on board. There are many moving parts in this process: creating a strong brand image, advertising, presenting the franchise opportunity at trade shows, and finally awarding licenses to the new owners who will invest and expand the business and the brand.

To help their new franchisees succeed, franchisors must have an effective training program in place, for many reasons. One is that new owners will be more successful—and sooner—when they are well trained. Another is that if they are well trained, they will be better validators for the system. This means that when a prospective new franchisee speaks with them, they will have great things to say about the franchise's training, which got them up to speed quickly and quickly generated income.

How do you get training working for you and your franchisees in that way? Let's take a closer look. Based on my 20 years of working with franchise brands on their training programs, here are three keys to putting a great training system in place.

1) Make sure training is part of your franchise culture. That means writing it into your franchise's mission and vision

statements, talking about it at conferences and conventions, measuring who is taking the training, and comparing their performance to that of the people who are not. When a strong training program is part of the brand's culture, franchisees will understand that they are going to succeed as

owners—well before they come on board.

2) Train from the business system. A franchise organization is an operating system that contains information such as, "This is how we greet guests," "This is how we make the product," and, "This is how we do things here." That system needs to be documented, typically in the form of an operations manual. But how do that system and those beliefs become alive? Through training. So when you are about to build your training program, look first to your system to determine what you are going to train on.

3) Don't try to immediately teach everything. Many young franchise systems make this mistake. Their owners think, "We have great products, great marketing materials, great branding, a great system, and we are going to train everybody about every single piece of it all."

When franchises try to cram too much information into every owner's head, the result is like trying to get people to drink from a fire hose. They cannot absorb everything so quickly, will feel overwhelmed, and actually learn less.

The solution to this desire to teach everything at once is to think creatively and strategically about which things need to be trained, and when. To determine that for your system, ask yourself the following questions: What are the most important skills and knowledge to teach brand new owners? Which skills can be taught later, when owners have opened locations? What should be taught even later, when owners are staffing up, or getting involved in marketing and expanding?

The bottom line here is to think about training strategically and avoid the temptation to cover everything at once. Success comes from having a process in place that allows you to identify what matters most—and when. ■

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Three Keys To Starting Franchise Training Right

1. Make sure training is part of your franchise culture.
2. Use your business system and operations manual as a road map to the training you will create.
3. Don't try to teach everything at once; select and introduce training topics according to a master training plan.

