

Brian Duckett, head of Howarth Franchising discusses the considerations for franchising internationally

## **A DECISION NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY**

FOR a franchisor whose network is well- established, perhaps even nearing capacity, in its home market, the lure of international franchising can often be irresistible.

The dream is often made more attractive when individuals or businesses from foreign countries approach that franchisor with the question " Can I do what you do in my country?".

Such approaches are fine if they become the trigger for starting to think about an international franchise development strategy. However, if they become the trigger for starting that development, without properly researching and planning it, then the dream will turn into a nightmare.

Why should someone who approaches you out of the blue be the right person to operate your system in their country? Indeed, who says their country is right for your system?

As one experienced international franchise developer says, "If you received an e-mail from a girl in China, who you know absolutely nothing about, saying she is looking for a husband, would you jump on the next plane and go over there to meet her family and marry her?"

I suspect probably not, and nor should sensible business people do more or less the same thing with a business system that has taken them years to develop and become profitable.

### **Be honest**

The process for going international starts with being honest with yourself about why (or indeed if) you want to do it, and what you expect to get out of it. Having established that, then identify the countries you would first like to be in, and why.

Next work out exactly what goes into your franchise offer package, and build a detailed profile of the type of person, or organisation, who would best be suited to being your master franchisees. Having decided that, put in place a marketing programme to pro-actively target such people, on a country-by-country basis, and make sure you have set aside a big enough budget to pay for it all- including the sales and support staff you will need to make sure everything goes as planned.

Going international is what the Australians call "a big ask" and you need to give yourself a big ask, with some appropriate professional advice, about whether it is indeed the right thing to do.

Of course, there is another way that an established franchisor can grow its business within international franchising, and that is to stay at home and become the UK master franchisee {or a system already proven in another market. There are many excellent systems from other countries (watch out though, there are plenty of the other sort, too) looking for a master franchisee - and a prime prospect for them is someone who already understands franchising. The decision-making process is for both parties to have developed a profile of what they are looking for and then to see how closely various opportunities match up.

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