

Catriona Berry, Training Manager at iSold It, discusses the importance of franchisee training

TRAINING FRANCHISEES – A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Training new franchisees is one of the most important and crucial investments that franchisors make in their business. Franchisees who receive good training are happier, competent and altogether more confident, which in turn will make them more successful and effective in their businesses.

However, with such a huge amount of initial activity involved in setting up and developing a new franchise, training is often overlooked or rushed through. It is the franchisors job to ensure that each franchisee receives suitable training which equips them with the skills needed to run the business effectively.

To ensure a successful training programme, there are some important components to remember and common problems to overcome. This article hopes to shed some light on these issues and offer useful solutions and a best practice guide.

The five P's - poor preparation produces poor performance

Planning is one of the most essential elements of putting a training package together. Trainers often get into the habit of regurgitating the same information over and over again: The skill is to constantly review and refresh the training and then deliver each and every session with the same passion and enthusiasm as if it was being delivered for the very first time.

The training session should constantly be evolving, taking in experiences learnt from the last session, and using feedback from the franchisees to keep the training fresh and continually updated. Challenging assumptions and testing the theory that is taught in the training programme is crucial to make sure the franchisees get as much out of it as possible.

When planning the training, it is important to look at the experience of each individual franchisee to know where to concentrate training and amend accordingly. Each and every franchisee will have different experiences and knowledge. Some will have management experience, others industry specific knowledge and others will be a blank canvas.

However each session should cover all areas directly relating to running your specific business. Developing a checklist can sometimes be a useful way to ensure all of the elements of a successful training session are covered, for example:

Environment - creating the right environment with all of the tools you will need in place in advance is essential in ensuring a seamlessly run training session

Technology - all technology should be tried and tested to avoid any technical glitches

Content - practice makes permanent, so make sure you have all of the content for the session rehearsed and on the tip of your tongue

Training manual - to ensure you have the trainee's full and undivided attention, provide all hand outs at the end of each session. BUT always ensure they have a notepad to hand to make notes

Feedback - feedback forms from each trainee will allow you to review and refresh your training sessions

The training session

Each session should be broken down into nuggets of digestible information, keep it short, punchy, informative and fun. Too much information and technical wording can easily overwhelm and frighten franchisees. Making training as interactive as possible, will help to enhance the training experience. Role plays are a very successful method for this. They help to instil confidence and allow people to make mistakes in a safe environment and learn more. With all the excitement of learning new skills trainees want

to just get out there and do the do! The skill is to embellish that enthusiasm as sometimes a little knowledge can be dangerous.

Role plays are an invaluable tool in bridging the gap between the theory and the practical and a chance for you to evaluate the franchisee's strengths and any further training they may need.

As mentioned previously it is very important the training does not overwhelm the franchisee but instills confidence and competence. A useful exercise to show each franchisee an individual detailed timescale of the whole franchise process is to use a critical path. This is a diagram of all stages of the process and steps, right from signing the franchise agreement, training sessions, right through to opening the franchise and day to day operations. By seeing the process as little steps, the franchisee can also see where their training fits into an everyday context and makes the whole process more practical, real and less text book.

Practical experience brings the training alive and makes it all feel real. iSold It take our franchisees into the live store at the head office in Redditch, so that they can become familiar with the environment and the day to day running of the operation .By letting the franchisees watch trained staff and being able to buddy up along side them they can learn how to deal with situations and can ask questions to those on the floor.

Training's not just for Christmas... it's for life

Once the initial training is completed and the franchisees are up and running, franchisees can often become complacent and need follow up sessions to refresh and re-energise. A comprehensive operations manual will help as a reference guide. However revisiting and interacting with fellow franchisees is a more effective and beneficial experience.

Ongoing training is extremely important and it is essential that franchisors offer refresher training. This ensures that franchisees are kept up to date with the ever evolving changes in the industry. It will also give them a chance to ask any questions or cover any problems they may have encountered.

iSold It also has an internal intranet, which acts as a forum for all franchisees to share their experiences, when their stores are opened. All post training and operations material are available to uploaded. It gives advice and tips for marketing and IT. The intranet is a great way to communicate which is the key to the success of any business.

The importance of a training manual

The manual can act as a bible for advice on all aspects of the business. Everything from marketing operations, training and IT. More importantly, however, the manual acts as an extension of the franchise agreement and a quality control mechanism. The manual covers all aspects of the development and operations of the business, to give the franchisee the tools to make their business a success. As part of this, iSold It provide franchisees with "Marketing in a Box" A manual, which covers all information from PR, to advertising through to leaflet design and point of sales material. This is all covered within a specific training session but the manual provides a valuable tool for ongoing reference.

Win - win situation

As with any industry, a good training programme is the backbone to a successful business. This is even more crucial for a franchise, as the all important brand values are being entrusted to individuals. This makes it crucial the training is delivered to a high standard and in a timely manner. Adversely, franchisees will not be in a position to run their business competently without thorough training. The training package offered is a big consideration before franchisees invest in a franchise. However with a little forethought, time and planning, it is relatively simple to provide a successful training programme, which will lead to happy employees and franchisees and ultimately a successful "Brand".

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