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8 WAYS TO SUCCEED WITH FRANCHISE TRAINING

An effective training program is the bedrock of a successful franchise partnership, says Nancy Bigley



THE GOAL OF ANY FRANCHISE TRAINING PROGRAM IS TO ENSURE FRANCHISEES UNDERSTAND AND CAN ACCESS ALL OF THE TOOLS AVAILABLE TO MAKE THEM AS SUCCESSFUL AS POSSIBLE"

As the old adage goes: "You're only as good as the team around you." In franchising, your brand is only as good as the network of franchisees within your system, and their success begins with their training.

A strong franchise training program is the backbone of a successful franchise brand, but creating a new training program and then keeping it relevant can be a daunting task. When developing a training program for your franchise system, here are eight things to keep in mind:

1 START WITH THE END IN MIND

Although this may sound counterintuitive, determining the end of your training program before anything else is one of the best ways to lay the groundwork for a successful program. Start out by defining the most important items that franchisees need to walk away from training with in order to make their business a success, and unwrap your presentation from there.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nancy Bigley is the CEO and Co-owner of Bottle & Bottega, a painting and wine party franchise based in Chicago. She also serves as the Chair of the Women's Franchise Committee with the IFA (International Franchise Association).

By determining the overall priorities of your training program from the start, you're drawing yourself (and your franchisees) a roadmap of how to get there in the end. Not only will this help you in organizing your program, but it will also help ensure your core values and lessons shine through the entire training.

2 PRIORITIZE BASED ON GOALS AND GENERATING FRANCHISEE REVENUE

It's no secret: as a franchisor, you have definitive goals in mind that you want your brand to achieve. Your franchisees ultimately have very definitive goals, too, and the top one is to make money. Thus, it's important to keep this in mind when you determine the content of your training program and what you're focused on teaching them. The success of their goals is the ultimate factor in the success of your brand as a whole.

Work with your franchisees to set clear goals that will ultimately help the entire franchise system reach larger milestones. Clearly define these goals within your training program so that franchisees understand expectations from day one, and make a point to emphasize them up front.

5 FOCUS ON QUALITY, NOT VOLUME

There's an endless amount of content that could be covered in a franchise training program that all feels of equal importance. While it's tempting to load your presentations with copious details, facts and figures, your training program should not be the same intensity as a SAT prep course. The human brain can only absorb so much great information.

The goal of any franchise training program is to ensure franchisees understand and can access all of the tools available to make them as successful as possible – not to overwhelm them with information. In creating a training program, it's important to consider what you want franchisees to walk away with in order to best prepare them for success and create a foundation for future training and support follow-up. Take time to develop and refine those points to ensure that they are clear, concise and actionable.

TREAT FRANCHISEES EQUALLY REGARDLESS OF BACKGROUND

Franchisees come from all levels of experience and backgrounds. While it may be easy to make the assumption that a franchisee with a background in finance, as an example, won't need your brand finance training, resist the urge to change or give someone a pass on any section.

The reality is that your business is brand new to all of your franchisees and their training should be presented as such. Each one of them is going to encounter obstacles with their business at some point along the way – it's your responsibility to ensure that the training program leaves them well-prepared and ready to handle whatever comes their way.

5 KEEP TRAINING VIBRANT AND CURRENT

If your brand was founded in the 1980s, would you still be using the POS system and technologies today that you used back then? Hopefully, your answer is no. To sustain the momentum and growth of any brand, it's essential to change with the times – and that applies to your franchise training program as well.

While you don't need to constantly recreate the wheel, it's important to tweak your training program to not only remain consistent with what's occurring within your brand, but also to keep up with what's happening in the world as a whole. Franchisees of yesterday are not the same franchisees of tomorrow – keep cultural references, technologies and content as current as possible to keep them engaged during their training.

6 ASK FOR FEEDBACK

One of the hardest parts about being a leader is recognizing where there's room for improvement. But, with franchising and specifically with a franchise training program, franchisees are quite possibly the best sources to evaluate what's working and what needs to be revised.

Send them a short survey or brief, personalized email asking their thoughts on the training program: What were their favorite learnings? At what points were they the most/least engaged? What did they wish they had learned more about? Not only does requesting this feedback lead to improvement for your training program, but it also provides franchisees an outlet to express their opinions and feel that their voices are being heard.

7 EVALUATE, REVISE AND REPEAT

Training methods continue to evolve and improve. Thus, it's important for the brand to learn how you can fine-tune your training

to make it even stronger. After each training session, schedule some time to take a step back, review how it went for them and for you and find where you felt the greatest success and where things may have become a bit clunky. It can be tricky to get the balance right between online training and hands-on training, so reassessment is good but don't update just to update.

To ensure you are making tweaks for the right reasons, create then run through an internal checklist of questions before each training session. It will help you stay focused and keep your program relevant. Some things to consider are:

- ★ Were any new products or services added?
- ★ Were any processes changed or updated?
- ★ Are there any key promotions coming up?
- ★ Were any key suppliers or staff added/deleted?

8 MAKE THE PROCESS FUN

Above all else, don't be afraid to have a little fun with your training program. Training can be intimidating and overwhelming for even the most seasoned entrepreneur, so a healthy dose of humor and lightheartedness sprinkled into training can go a long way in making franchisees feel more comfortable and confident.

Creating a dynamic, engaging and relevant franchise training program can lead to vast success for your franchise system as a whole. With a well thought-out program in place, franchisors can work to ensure the best possible results for not only franchisees and the overall brand, but for the entire customer experience as well.



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