

Franchise Training

By: Michael Seid and Kay Marie Ainsley, Managing Directors, Michael H. Seid & Associates, LLC (MSA)

When prospective franchisees begin to separate one franchise opportunity from another, one of the items they need to examine closely is in the training the system will provide them.

Running any business is a complex undertaking. Besides having to know how to prepare your products or deliver your services to your customers, you need to understand how to manage the business, how to hire and fire employees, how to advertise, how to do the books, how to make deposits and a thousand other small details. As a franchisee you will also have to do everything in compliance with the consistency standards of the franchisor. But, not all franchisors provide the same level of training to their franchisees or prepare their franchisees for success.

We will begin in this article to examine how to tell the difference between franchisors that are committed to training and those that are not. Next month, we will look at some of the techniques franchisors use to make certain you are prepared to operate your new business.

On the service, when it comes to training, many franchisors look alike. On average, they will be providing between one to five weeks of training to you as a franchisee. But, what if those five weeks of training are no more than working in an existing operation? Who trains your management team and your line staff? What happens when new products are launched or some of your management team quits and you need to replace and train your other personnel? This is when the difference between a great training program and a surface training program become critical.

You should always meet with your future franchisor at their headquarters and plan to spend considerable time with their training department before you sign the contract. If your franchisor is using a franchise broker, understand that it is their job to close the sale quickly and you may need to insist upon a face-to-face meeting with the franchisor at their headquarters. (This is one of the reasons that in [Franchising for Dummies®](#), we recommend that you avoid franchise systems that have outsourced their franchise recruiting). Some of the questions you should be concerned with are:

- Where does the training take place? How long is the initial training program and what, if any are the additional costs that you will need to pay in addition to your franchise fee?

- Who does the franchisor require to attend training? Are there criteria established for ensuring that you are prepared to operate the business once training is completed? Simply spending time in the franchisor's training program may not be sufficient for everyone. The best person to tell you if you are ready for the challenge of operating the franchised business is the franchisor.
- Can you bring your managers and initial staff to training? If they are not on board with you yet (which is fairly typical) can they attend training classes after they are hired? How much will this additional training cost you?
- What is in the training curriculum? How much of your time will be spent in the franchisor's headquarters in classroom training and how much time will you be spending in an operating location? What subjects are covered and in what depth. Will you only learn how to make the product or deliver the service, or is the program comprehensive enough to teach you the financial, marketing, operational aspects of the business? If you are preparing food will you be training in safe food handling and preparation, will your franchisor provide CPR training? How much management training will you receive?
- Who conducts the training? Are they line personnel brought in for the day or week or have they been trained to be teachers. Remember, the goal of training is not for you to be impressed by the trainers, the goal is for the trainers to provide you with knowledge – and to do this – they must know how to teach. You need to find out the background of the training team and their qualifications.
- How comprehensive is the training material? If you will be expected to train your staff before your business opens, what tools does the franchisor provide you – what training in teaching techniques does the franchisor provide you – so that you can accomplish this task?

These are some of the questions you should be focusing on when evaluating a franchisor and making a comparison between franchise training programs. Don't forget that the business will change over time. New products and services will be added or modified. Is your franchisor prepared to provide you and your team with training as the system changes? How will they do it and at what cost?

Remember, just because one franchisor has a longer training program than another doesn't mean that their training is better. You need to understand what is provided to you in the initial training and what happens after your business is up and running.