

SEVEN KEY STRATEGIES

SEVEN KEY STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING FRANCHISE ENGAGEMENT

When a franchise system is engaged, all parties are focused and working together to achieve shared common goals. An engaged franchise system can accomplish almost anything. Unfortunately, most franchise systems aren't engaged. There is a disconnect in the system - everyone is disconnected rather than working together, and their distrust causes the parties to spend time and energy battling each other rather building a business together.

The key to engagement is to treat all parties with respect, involving everyone in the process and sharing with everyone the vision of the organization. This sounds easier than it is to execute. The rush of business and lack of value placed the importance of engagement causes most organizations to miss many of these key strategies.

Here are Seven Strategies to help you build better engagement.

A CLEAR AND WELL-SHARED STRATEGIC VISION, A VISION THAT ALL STOCKHOLDERS PARTICIPATED IN BUILDING

It is very hard to have a successful and engaged franchise system without clear understanding of where the franchise system is going. It's all too easy for senior management to have a vision, but most of the time it's not in writing, and not shared with the rest of the staff or the franchise system.

Having a shared vision is good, but having a shared vision that has been created with the participation of all stakeholders is even more powerful. Someone who is asked about their opinion and has been involved in the process will have a sense of ownership. The pride, energy and passion of someone who feels like they were part of the process is totally different than someone who feels ordered around and distanced from the process.

HAVE A WELL-ATTENDED ANNUAL CONVENTION/CONFERENCE

A live meeting is the most impactful and important communication event a franchise system can have. It is the best time to share common vision and create focus for the system.

When a franchise system has a 90% or greater attendance, they can truly get the whole system focused and executing. Conversely, when attendance is low, the amount of effort and time that staff has to spend getting the franchise system up to speed is debilitating to the system. The franchisees that didn't attend will lack the motivation, vision and communication that without the live event is almost impossible to cultivate. Coincidentally, the organizations' ability to execute is drastically slowed.

HAVE NETWORKING GROUPS

The typical franchise relationship is one where the franchisor directs the franchisee. Although appropriate, it doesn't give the franchisee a sense of contribution. Networking groups do two things: first, they enable franchisees to help other franchisees and second, they encourage a competitive nature that drives success, causing franchisees to increase their performance.

Networking groups can be done regionally, by similar types of franchisees or any other system of grouping. The key isn't how you group them, but rather the agenda and how they work together. The goal is for franchisees to help each other out, encourage friendly competitiveness and look for ways in which franchisees can work together.

One of the concerns that franchisors have about networking groups is that the conversations of franchisees could be negative. However, if the franchise system has good methods of receiving constructive feedback, this normally isn't an issue.

HOLD REGIONAL LISTENING TOURS

In the traditional format of a franchisee and franchisor relationship, there isn't a method for management to hear directly from the franchisees about what is happening in the system. Unfortunately, the only feedback we hear is normally from the extremes, either negative or very positive. However, this excludes hearing from franchisees that are more in the main stream.

Franchisees truly appreciate when management takes time to really listen to them. The regional listening tours are a time for management to ask the franchisees questions and hear directly from them. Careful thought has to be put into the planning of meetings so that they do not become whine sessions, which is why it's important that you are prepared with a format that encourages positive and constructive conversation.

This type of meeting will be very positively received and will help you better understand your franchisees needs and what is happening in the real world. Your franchisees will feel heard and be more supportive of the efforts of the franchise.

HAVE IN AN INTERACTIVE FRANCHISEE WEBSITE

The franchisee internal website is predominantly a one-way form of communication with the franchisees. Perhaps this site has functionality that makes them interactive, but is rarely used or used only by a small percentage of franchisees. In many

franchises, the franchisees tunes out the franchisee website and delegate its uses to staff.

Creating an interactive website will accomplish two important things: it will engage your franchisees and will increase their exposure to the content on your franchises intranet site.

A lot of thought has to go into how you turn your website into an interactive tool. To some degree it will depend on your technology. The use of an advisory council will help you develop relevant interactive content that will attract and engage your franchisees. In this manner, your franchisees will become authors of their own intranet community, with its design reflecting both their input and franchises' initiatives.

HAVE AN ONBOARDING PROCESS THAT DEVELOPS A CULTURE OF ENGAGEMENT

Creating a culture of engagement starts with new franchisees. It is very important that at the start of the relationship you dedicate time to defining this relationship, the company's vision, how to interact with franchisees and how franchisees share their feedback with the company.

Thought needs to go into how the new franchisee goes through the initial training as well as the first few months of operating their new franchise. As part of this process, there need to be feedback loops that enable the franchisee to feel heard and supported through the onboarding process.

If you start the relationship on the right foot, it should continue to be a positive and engaged relationship though the entirety of the franchisees' experience.

INCREASE FRANCHISEE PARTICIPATION IN ADVISORY COUNCILS

Advisory council members have a greater sense of pride and support of the organization than the average franchisee. This is because they are engaged. It thus makes sense to have as many advisory council members as possible. Furthermore, the more franchisee involvement, the better your programs and services will be.

In order to accomplish this, you need to increase the number of advisory councils you have to increase participation. Each member of your senior team should have a council to help them. So, for instance you could have a training council, a communication council, a marketing council, a new franchisee council and of course the main advisory council.

All councils don't need to meet live and in person, as web technology can help deliver very effective meetings.

These seven engagement ideas will help you create a more passionate and effective franchise system. We at Ingage Consulting would like to help you implement these ideas. Let our experience help you successfully implement these changes.

ABOUT INGAGE CONSULTING:

Ingage Consulting is a management consulting firm that focuses on the franchise industry. Although Ingage is a traditional management consulting firm, we focus on improving business outcomes by engaging franchisees and creating a culture of partnership.

Key Service Offerings

- **Creating Partnerships** - Turn your franchisee relationships into partnership relationships

- **Change Management** - Helping franchisors positively implement change
- **Teambuilding Conference Presentations** - Energizing, creating focus and building partnerships
- **Trust Building** - Creating a stronger trust relationship with franchisees
- **Creating Vibrant Website Community** - developing vibrant communities on your internal franchisee websites
- **Strategic Planning** - Engaging all stakeholders in developing powerful strategic plans
- **Better Onboarding** - How to start the franchise relationship on the right note
- **Improving Communication** - Simplifying, energizing and amplifying franchisee communication
- **Creating Field Partnerships** - Building partnership relationships in the field
- **Maximizing Advisory Councils** - How to get the most out of your advisory councils
- **Internal Teambuilding** - Great franchisee relationships start from the inside
- **Performance Groups** - Creating performance teams
- **Regional Groups** - Improving engagement and performance through regional groups



Principal/Founder of Ingage Consulting, Evan Hackel, has 25 years of franchise experience having developed, implemented and managed three successful new franchise systems. At CCA Global Partners, he oversaw 4 different business systems representing over \$5 Billion in annual sales through 2,000 locations in 4 countries.

For more information or to set up an initial consultation contact Evan Hackel at (781) 569-5900 or via email at ehackel@ingageconsulting.com.

