

Winning ways to support your franchisees effectively

Sophie Brooks, MD of Clive's Music discusses winning ways to support your franchisees effectively

Developing franchise support through a combination of the latest developments in technology, hand-in-hand with the results of academic research, will enable you to work smarter, more cost-effectively and flexibly, and from the franchisee point of view, will provide the benefit of extensive support systems that need to range from quick and immediate self-help access points, perhaps through to a responsive priority-based online ticket system to ultimately a one-to-one enhanced support programme. All the above support should be structured around dedicated support staff that ideally should have solid and extensive experience within your franchise system.

Supporting franchisees online

Providing an online self-help portal, with an in-depth searchable knowledge base enabling franchisees to access helpful information and run targeted topic queries to find solutions to common problems 24 hours a day, enables you to work smarter and provides 24-hour support to your franchisees.

This may lead onto the sort of prioritized online support ticket system mentioned above, giving franchisees the opportunity to register support tickets (perhaps via email) for more detailed help from their designated franchise support manager. It is a good idea if the ticket-based system incorporates three levels of urgency, each with service level agreement (SLA) times so that franchisee can be sure of the most appropriate reaction from the support team...low, medium and high

Recent research suggests that any advance in technical bonding through ICT, (which saves the franchisor considerable time and money), should be matched by a similar advance in social bonding. Therefore it is important to employ dedicated field support managers who offers both reactive *and* pro-active support.

Forum enabling franchisee-to-franchisee horizontal communication

Something else to consider is the provision of an electronic forum enabling franchisee-to-franchisee horizontal communication. If created, this should be designed to share hints and tips for best practice in promotional and operational areas. The net result will hopefully be that franchisees will bond, share useful information and assist each other to strengthen and build their businesses.

Pro-active support system

In addition to the technology, you may wish to consider providing an enhanced/pro-active support system, where a franchise support manager will work with a franchisee either on the phone or face to face, intensively if needed, to identify and solve problems, set benchmarks and work together with the franchisee to raise turnover.

Research indicates that if a franchisee is provided with a high level support in areas where they do not necessarily expect it, then the franchise lifecycle, (where the relationship quality naturally declines over time), is significantly lengthened, which is, of course, a very good thing for franchisors.

Combining the above will hopefully add up to happier franchisees who drive increased revenues from their businesses, act together as a structured and collaborative team, (whatever their physical geographical distance from their peers), and become an much more integral part of their franchise network!

Information provided by Sophie Brooks, MD of Clive's Music

