This is the One Thing Every Franchise Needs to Scale Successfully

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Key Takeaways

- Develop your team through tailored growth programs, empowering them to evolve alongside your expanding franchise.
- Retain employees by fostering recognition, collaboration and a supportive culture that values contributions and loyalty.

They say there's no "I" in team, and while there may technically be one in "franchising," success is never a solo endeavor. Franchising is built on systems, but it is *sustained* by people. It would not thrive without the people "behind the curtains" who maintain a seamless brand vision and are employed in each branded location.

As the CEO of an early educational childcare franchise, Lightbridge Academy, I recognize that our journey from a single center to over 150 locations nationwide wouldn't have been possible without first investing in the right people. Growing a franchise network requires more than just strategy and scale; it means building a core team that you can trust, empower and grow alongside. Whether you're just beginning your franchise journey or expanding across new markets, attracting, developing and retaining top talent is the cornerstone for growth.

Making your business “attractive” to incoming talent

When attracting top talent, we often focus on offering the best compensation, benefits or job titles. However, the most talented individuals thrive in their fields, not only due to their hard skills, but because they are passionate about the work they are doing.

Applicants look for meaning, somewhere where they can belong and be proud of their work. Before you can attract the right people, you have to be the kind of business they want to be part of. In franchise systems, franchisees are responsible for hiring their staff and overseeing all employment-related decisions at their centers. Quality franchisors provide the structure and consistency that shape the employee experience. A strong franchisor delivers comprehensive training programs, tools and resources that empower franchisees to develop their teams and uphold brand standards locally. Prospective employees want to know: What do you stand for? What are you building together? Why does it matter?

A mission statement isn’t just a paragraph in your employee handbook, it’s the guiding beacon for your culture, your decisions and the day-to-day experience of your team. In a franchise system, where your values must scale across dozens (or even hundreds) of locations, that beacon matters more than ever. After all, if you don’t truly believe in your mission statement, how can you expect others to preserve it?

Your core team is not only looking for their next job, but they are also searching for a community in which they can grow, feel valued and be part of something meaningful. Clarity is attractive. It empowers people to do their best work, knowing they’re working toward shared goals.

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Mentor Your People

Developing talents to fit your growing vision

While building your core team, it is important to remember: this isn’t a fairytale. Finding the “perfect” candidate may feel like discovering your own knight in franchise armor, but even the most qualified candidate won’t stay perfect unless they grow alongside the brand. As your business evolves, your people need to evolve with it.

In franchising, every new location, every new team and every shift in scale adds complexity, and your success depends on whether your team can keep pace. If team members remain stagnant while the business moves forward, you create gaps that will ultimately limit growth. It’s not enough to have a few overachievers; you need a consistently capable team across all roles and regions.

One of the most effective ways to develop talent is through creating advanced learning programs that are unique to their individual career growth can demonstrate your commitment to supporting your people, not just your bottom line.

Nurturing raw talent and allowing team members to play to their strengths will create a more unified and stronger core team. When team members feel supported and their growth potential is leveraged, they not only perform better, but they stay longer. Developing talent isn’t just about filling today’s gaps, it prepares your people for what’s next. By developing your team’s talent, you are setting up your business for longevity and to withstand any challenges that may come.

Creating community and retaining talent

Retaining your core team is about more than just offering competitive pay or perks; it’s about creating a true sense of community and growth within your organization. When you recognize team members for their hard work and creativity, they’re far more likely to stay and thrive. This can be done even through the smallest of actions, like a “thank you” or an “I see you”. Actively communicating how you see them growing alongside the company builds motivation and loyalty.

When it comes to feedback, I believe in creating a two-way system between your team. Just as you feel empowered to provide constructive feedback to help your team grow, you should actively seek their input on your leadership and how the system could work better. Making space for their voices not only creates trust and community but will also, in turn, make you a stronger leader.

Additionally, the greatest leaders aren’t distant rulers; they’re collaborators and inspirations. Be the kind of leader your team wants to learn from and lean on. Show up as a teammate, not a dictator. When you engage alongside your people by celebrating wins, problem-solving challenges and sharing the load, you build loyalty and foster a positive, resilient community.

What does it mean?

I believe the most fulfilling aspect of growing a business is not the profits, but the opportunity to create a supportive group that is passionate about seeing your vision come to fruition. Your core team should never feel stagnant. They’re the living, breathing guide that cultivates your community through each decision made and campaign led.

Your team isn’t just supporting your growth; they are your growth. What you pour into them, they’ll pour that same energy, care and commitment back into your business. So build with intention. When your team feels part of the journey, they will do more than help you grow your brand. They’ll help you protect it, strengthen it and bring it to life in ways you could never do alone.

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