



Advice for franchisees.....

WEATHERING THE STORM

For months, we have been treated to daily revelations about the seriousness of the current economic climate and how businesses are adapting or even diversifying with new goods and services, just to stay afloat.

Many businesses are using the downturn to re-appraise what they do and how they do it, successfully turning problems into opportunities. Since money is tight and people are less well-off, buying habits are changing and both businesses and consumers are becoming more careful and prudent.

There have been some good examples of changing trends and initiatives in the press recently – the estate agent who set up an interior design business in the same office, the pizza chain that has reported record sales as people order more take-aways instead of going out for meals and holidaymakers who camp instead of flying abroad.

When times are hard and companies are chasing an ever diminishing pool of sales orders, businesses have to be imaginative, proactive, energetic and loud to make sure they are noticed. This is especially true as the recession takes hold and seems to infiltrate every aspect of our lives.

Franchisors are quick to spot – and exploit – opportunities for their networks, which is one of the advantages of being a franchisee. Marketing support for franchisees is often centrally produced and generated and, of course, being part of an established, well-known and recognisable brand gives franchisees a big advantage over the smaller independent competition.

Proactive marketing will help your franchise to attract new customers and remind existing ones that you are still around. Sometimes all that's needed is a quick phone call to say "hello, how are you" or a leaflet through the door to trigger a request for information and a quote.

Maintaining contact with customers (or database management as it is sometimes grandly called) is a great way to stimulate business. Apart from anything else, it makes you feel better because you have to sound positive and upbeat to enthruse customers. Fixing a

smile on your face and being friendly, however bad things are, produces a dynamic approach that often generates a positive reaction, ie new business.

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