

Steve Olson

Closing more deals and faster

Why not start now?

Unless you only recruit experienced franchise operators, most of your candidates have never bought a franchise and really don't know how. They're intelligent prospects, but unintelligent buyers that don't understand the decision-making process for purchasing a franchise. They make wrong assumptions, anticipating you'll divulge all the facts when they contact you so they can determine if your opportunity is "the one" for them. Logically, they want earnings claims and answers to all their questions now. To make matters more difficult, these first-timers fall prey to the mountain of overwhelming public information, often receiving conflicting advice from blogs, social networks, chat rooms, newspapers and broadcast media; as well as from personal and business friends, father-in-laws, accountants, and other armchair advisors.

The challenge

Here's your question – when speaking with today's misinformed buyers, how can you(a) effectively engage a prospect, (2) steer them onto the right road to investigate your business, and (3) quickly gain their confidence, credibility and trust? How do you keep them focused and disciplined as they explore your franchise offering? Minimize broken appointments? Avoid distractions and false objections? Prevent sidetracking assignments and commitments? Eliminate stall tactics in making decisions and moving forward?

The solution

Just remember these three words, "pre-close your prospects," and you can change your selling success! During your initial application review, use this powerful technique and your sales will improve. If you aren't doing this now, you are battling unnecessary obstacles that rob your time, cause heartburn, and can lead you down a foggy road that does little justice for you or your weary suspects.

Pre-close at application review

During the first part of this critical meeting, review your prospect's application and ask and answer their related questions. Build some rapport and make them feel comfortable discussing their career backgrounds, reasons for considering business ownership, what prompted them to respond to your brand, who would be involved in operating the business, etc.

Now's your ideal opportunity to set expectations and ground rules for the investigation process of your franchise opportunity. It's your time to take control and pre-close your prospect. Executed properly, this proven approach can work wonders for you. Here's a successful five-point presentation that's quite successful for pre-closing during the application stage:

1) Define your role in the process -- *"My role is to educate you about our franchise, and explore this opportunity with you to see if we're the right fit for each other. This is a franchise partnership, and we're interested in candidates who can be successful, satisfied owners. I am not here to sell you. My responsibility is to facilitate the investigation process. Our executive review committee makes the decisions on offering our franchises to qualified candidates."* (This helps puts your prospects at ease in knowing this is a mutual decision that has to work for both parties.)

(2) Introduce the Review Committee – *"If you want to be considered for our franchise after completing our investigation process, you'll attend Discovery Day and meet our Review Committee, that awards our franchises to qualified candidates."* (This builds the credibility and importance of your approval system for screening qualified buyers.)

(3) Require open and honest communications – *"Anytime in the process you have a question, concern or want to stop, let me know!. Just 'wave the red flag' and we'll address the issue. Out of respect for you, I will do the same. If this franchise isn't the right one, we certainly don't want to waste each other's time. Does that make sense?"* (This rule allows you to directly confront and 'straighten up' or disqualify prospects who make excuses or break appointments.)

(4) Agree to a timeframe for decision-making – *"Candidates we work with decide within four to five weeks whether this is the franchise they want and are ready to make a commitment. Can you?"* (Most prospects agree to this timetable, since it is logical and they have no reference point on how long it should take.) *"Okay, now moving forward we'll schedule conference calls that work for both of us in our investigation."* (Prospects are looking for this guidance to decision-making which you have just defined with a specific time table. Disqualify individuals who can't commit to an acceptable decision time. If it's a military person considering a franchise down the road, ask them to contact you six months prior to discharge. Or, place them in a future follow-up file. Too much can happen in between for them to be classified as "a prospect.")

(5) Explain your process for reviewing the program – *"We have five-steps for exploring our franchise opportunity to determine if we are right for each other. These are the Program Review which we are conducting today; Franchise Disclosure Review; Franchisee Validation; Discovery Day; and Awarding of the Franchise. Discovery Day is the meeting at our headquarters at which time you'll visit with our support team, tour our operations and local franchise locations, and get*

final Committee Approval for securing the franchise. Does this investigation process make sense for you?" (Most systems award the franchise after Discovery Day, while others award the franchise and sign agreements at the event. It can work well either way, depending on how you set expectations and what's most effective for your development program.)

What are you waiting for?

If you're not using a pre-closing process, definitely try it and see for yourself! It may make the difference between celebrating another franchise sale – or commiserating another loss.