

OBSERVATIONS ON THE BUSINESS SERVICES INDUSTRY

'Business services' is a somewhat all-encompassing term for a range of industries helping businesses to achieve their goals by providing them with assistance outside of their core areas of expertise.

Being an effective business service provider should come from a place of passion in your work and wanting to assist other businesses in achieving their goals. Within the couriering and logistics industry, a large portion of our effort and energy is in providing a tailored service to our customers – acting as the crucial logistics arm of their business. Without us, our customers just wouldn't be able to deliver on their own business promises.

A lot of trust is put in service providers – and trust isn't something that comes from clever marketing campaigns – you have to prove yourself over and over again.

As a service provider via a franchise, you have the comfort in knowing that you will be associated with a brand that has already built a reputation in the marketplace.

Further, there is a network of businesses all working under the same brand that you can learn from and share experiences with. You also have a franchisor that provides training, support and tested business processes that they know work. Non-franchise businesses are usually going it alone, so you already have an advantage as a franchisee.

So how do you go about building that trust? There are a number of management skills and techniques which assist in ensuring that you can deliver the best service possible to your business customers and improve the reputation of your franchise and the brand in the process.

Communication

Twenty years of working toward the future of couriering and logistics with PACK & SEND has opened up the world of business services and what can be achieved through effective service provision and management, particularly at a franchisee level. Effecting change in a franchise to deliver a better service proposition to clients is all about maintaining open and fluid lines of communication with head office and management teams, both regional and national.

It's important to ensure that ideas and feedback are fed to the rest of the network as the service afforded to one customer at one franchise can easily effect the reputation of an entire franchise business through social media. Change often starts with franchisees coming up with excellent, innovative ideas comes from their on-the-ground experience with customers that opens up doors in terms of client service.

The service we provide our customers at PACK & SEND breaks the mould – every customer who phones or comes into a service centre is speaking to an employee who helps to pick up and deliver parcels. There's a level of care and attention to each customer's needs and providing them with an end-to-end service which is simply not possible when you pop a package in a post box.

Know your competitors

All businesses face competition. Knowing what your competitors are offering and the quality of service they are delivering is an important part of maintaining your reputation and market share. In most circumstances, healthy competition is good competition, and as long as you're aware of what's happening outside your four walls,



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PACK & SEND



you should be in a position to differentiate your brand from the rest of the pack and ensure your service delivery is a beacon to others searching for a quality provider.

At PACK & SEND we recognise that our success relies on the support of our customers and that they always have a choice to use us – or the services of an alternative logistics company. That’s why we always aim to ensure we are doing things differently with a unique service proposition – in fact that’s really how PACK & SEND started. We have been the driver in our industry for the introduction of flexible features including a packaging service and multiple sales channels such as online bookings, phone and in-store bookings.

Few companies in the logistics space offer a holistic packaging, couriership and logistics service that can service such a wide range of clients, from one-off parcels for small businesses to complete couriership and logistics solutions for larger companies requiring import and export options – you might say we’re like the Flight Centre of our industry, ensuring our clients can get their goods from A to B to meet deadlines and without breaking the budget.

Innovation

Business is always evolving and adapting to service the changing needs of clients. The advantage that smaller companies and franchises collectively have is that they can be nimble and need to think more innovatively to compete – another advantage for your customers. Larger companies take much longer to process and enact change, and innovative thinking can often be more difficult to convert into new processes and offerings.

Innovation of convenient couriership options is a big factor when looking at the success of PACK & SEND as business. Online shopping is constantly boosting demand for innovative parcel delivery services, challenging businesses in our industry to

develop sustainable alternatives to home delivery services and product return solutions.

When people shop online, they want their parcels fast with minimum fuss. Consumers want parcels delivered to work, home, or somewhere close by to pick up later. Businesses with regular accounts want large quantities of parcels picked up, packed and sent off to clients, and in some situations, they want containers of goods imported and a full logistics and warehousing solution to ship packages around the country whenever they’re required. Our innovative advantage is that we’ll find a way to send anything, anywhere.

Innovation doesn’t just have to be a nifty new app for your business or a creative iPad cash register – innovation can be geared toward responding to a growing customer need and adapting your services accordingly without changing the end-game.

Managing expectations

Delivering an effective service to clients in many cases is about managing their expectations. This is integral to maintaining your client base and developing strong and consistent word of mouth about the services you deliver.

Being transparent with clients about what they can expect from your business is a more effective business strategy than wooing a client and then not being able to deliver what you’ve promised. Under-promising and over-delivering is often touted as the best way to maintain the business of your clients, but in some ways delivering the service exactly as you said you would is the best policy. This is how trust is built.

For PACK & SEND, that means collecting and delivering the freight on time, packing it safely as possible, taking care of the freight throughout the delivery process and dealing with the client on either end of the

delivery spectrum with care and respect. People want their couriership and logistics handled efficiently and carefully with little fuss – a trusted pair of hands to leave their business in.

Summary

Business services can be an excellent and rewarding field to be involved in. There is a great feeling that comes from helping a business to be at its best and provide a solution to a problem they might have, that’s why there are so many business service franchises in a range of industries.

The most important things you learn from providing services to other businesses is that they all have the same end in mind – do a fantastic job at whatever it is they might do, making money in the process. If you can help your clients achieve their goals with little fuss and within their budget, changing and adapting to meet their growing needs, you’re on the path to having a successful franchise business.

Michael Paul is the CEO and founder of Australian company PACK & SEND. He established the business in 1993 after noticing that businesses and consumers were looking for one-stop-shop solutions for sending anything, anywhere – that also included a convenient packaging service (especially for items that were fragile, large, awkward and valuable). Michael has over 20 years experience in the franchising and retail industries.

PACK & SEND opened its first Service Centre in Parramatta, New South Wales in 1993 and has since grown to a \$37.4 million international business with 300 people employed under the brand and a network of more than 130 Retail Service Centres in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

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