

Developing a worldwide brand

WITH OVER 100 FRANCHISEES IN THE UK AND MORE OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT TAKING PLACE, OVENU IS DEMONSTRATING HOW TO EFFECTIVELY EXPAND ITS FRANCHISE MODEL



Rik Hellewell has developed his Ovenu brand and oven valeting service from humble beginnings in Wokingham to an international brand establishing itself in Europe, America and Australia, with much more to come with the right overseas partners.

Such brand development has been achieved by hard work and a clear understanding of the franchisee-franchisor relationship since recruiting the first franchisee back in 1999.

"Franchising is a partnership," says Rik Hellewell, owner and managing director of Ovenu, "and we understand the importance and impact buying a franchise has for everyone concerned. We also

understand the importance of moving our business forward at the right pace for our franchisees, because if they're happy so am I!"

OBJECTIVES

Having recruited a few franchisees that were trading successfully, Rik set himself two clear objectives. The first was to find a British Franchise Association affiliated franchise consultant to review progress to date and advise on future recruitment and international development strategy. The second was to qualify as a full BFA member.

The Franchise Company in Darlington helped Rik achieve his first objective; the second followed soon

after. Fulfilling the strict criteria for full BFA membership with its first application set Ovenu apart from its competitors.

Franchising is now a well-established industry, acknowledged by the banks and other professions and supported by the BFA. The success of franchising is strongly influenced by the relationship the franchisor develops with franchisees (often referred to as the 'franchising culture').

The strength of that relationship starts with the first contact in the recruitment process. The way in which the recruitment process is managed speaks volumes about the approach the franchisor is likely to take when you become a franchisee.

The Ovenu process is deliberately open and transparent. Prospective franchisees are required to spend a considerable amount of time with an established franchisee to see exactly how the business operates and have the opportunity to ask questions about the business and the franchisor. The decision to proceed (or not) must be the prospect's alone. In other words, the prospective franchisee must want to join the franchise network because it is what they want to do, and not have it sold to them.

Equally important to the prospect's decision making process is whether they get value for money from the franchisor for the ongoing support they pay for. The answer if you join Ovenu is a resounding yes.

The start-up and ongoing fees are exceptional value and compare favourably with any other franchise system in the sector. Marketing campaigns to promote the brand and service have included satellite TV advertising and adverts in the national press and glossy magazines, while 'off-the-shelf' local sales promotions such as leaflet drops can also be used by franchisees.

Despite the support and commitment from the franchisor, the franchisee has to take what's on offer and make it work in their 'local' territory. The best franchise system in the world won't work unless the franchisee is comfortable with the day-to-day operation and is clear about their role and responsibilities.

That takes us full circle to the recruitment process and the help given by the franchisor to prospective franchisees to ensure that the right decision is made for the right reasons.

ESTABLISHED

With over 100 franchisees in the UK and more overseas development taking place, Ovenu is demonstrating how to effectively expand its franchise model and maintain its position as the UK's market leader in oven valeting.

Rik Hellewell started Ovenu in 1994 and sold his first franchise in 1999. He quickly realised that the potential for the service was huge and to ensure the business moved forward on a sound basis he decided to seek professional help from one of the UK's leading franchise consultants (The

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Franchise Company) and joined the British Franchise Association.

The Ovenu franchise business is now firmly established in the UK, although there are some prime franchise areas remaining to be developed - especially in the north and Scotland - and because the franchise is established there are also a few existing areas for sale with good profits being generated.

Because of the time Ovenu has been operating there are also, from time to time, opportunities to buy existing franchise territories at sensible prices.

SUCCESSFUL

Value for money is at the heart of Ovenu's success - from franchisor to franchisee and from franchisee to customer. Gary Hawke (Teesside area) confirms: "The Ovenu package provides superb training and support. Ovenu really does deliver."

Rik Hellewell adds: "The demand for our oven valeting service is enormous, but we will take great care to ensure our franchisees receive first-class support because it's only through their continuing efforts and commitment that we will maintain the Ovenu brand as the market leader delivering the best value service to our clients."

Ongoing support for franchisees includes marketing initiatives to increase brand awareness, sales promotion schemes and technical developments to increase productivity and profitability. The company's website generates a high level of good quality enquiries and there are frequent leaflet promotions to sell the service.

The Ovenu franchise model is both simple and flexible, which is why there is a mix of backgrounds and ages in the network. And franchisees are very much in control of their own work-life balance, because they manage their work diary and collect the rewards for their efforts after each job is completed.

UK EXPANSION

Because of the demand for oven valeting, 2007 should see some of Ovenu's more established franchisees progressing to a second vehicle or territory. Many of the existing franchisees should also be ready to press on with their own development plans to operate additional vehicles and expand the service in their territory.

OVERSEAS

The overseas business generally operates on a master license basis and is beginning to flourish in Australia, parts of Europe and the USA. However, there are still many good areas left in the UK, and Ireland remains undeveloped at present. This year will see some significant improvements to the Ovenu system and day-to-day operation of cleaning ovens that will benefit both customers and franchisees.

The approach overseas is logical and equally transparent for prospective master licensees. Stage one for the master licensee is adapting the UK model to their 'local' market conditions and operating that model successfully for at least six months.

Stage two requires the master licensee to then establish a franchising business by recruiting and training three or four 'pilot' franchisees. Having ensured the success of the pilot franchisees, the master licensee can then develop a strategy for expanding the Ovenu franchise throughout their respective country, all of course with the help and support from Rik Hellewell and his team. **MM**

To find out more about Ovenu contact Ken Rostron for a franchise pack on 01325 251455 or email info@franchisecompany.co.uk

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