

## **Red and white Fish Window Cleaning logo**

### **Franchisee Q&A**

#### **Tell Us A Little About You**

*Lori Minter sitting in a room with a lamp and tree in the background.*

#### **Lori Minter**

#### **Fort Collins, CO – 2004**

**Lori Minter:** Lori Minter and I have the Fort Collins, CO, territory. So it encompasses most of northern Colorado.

#### **How Did You Find FISH?**

**Lori:** So we started our business in 2004 and little bit about our business is that I was a stay-at-home mom and my husband decided that it would be a good idea since all of our kids were now in school if I started a business and ran it. He thought that would be really good. So we started working with a franchise broker and there was not a FISH franchise available so we looked for quite a while. Although our broker did say it's too bad that FISH isn't available to you because I think it would be a perfect fit.

#### **Why Did You Choose FISH?**

**Lori:** I was scared to death to be honest. So I was looking for someone who had a really strong franchise support because I needed it. I hadn't worked outside the home for probably 15 years. So I didn't believe that this was something I could do and I knew that is was something I couldn't do if I didn't have a lot of support from the franchise. So many of the franchises that we looked at were, you know, here, we'll give you two weeks training and then you're on your own and it wasn't really very good ongoing support and I knew that wouldn't work for me. We invested everything we had into this business and it could not fail. And I needed to make sure that we were getting into something that going to be successful for me. And FISH came along about a year and a half into it. There was a territory that became available and so we went and met with the owner who had just had it for a very short period of time and then was moving so he was looking to sell it and we found everything that we wanted and when I spoke with FISH, the headquarters office, it was like a glove. I was going okay this is it because I could tell that the support was genuine and that they were gonna be there for me.

#### **How Did You Feel About A Window Cleaning Franchise?**

**Lori:** So when my husband and I were looking at different franchises, I had more of a oh wouldn't it be fun to do like you know the shaved ice or something that people really love to do. That kind of a thing and so when our franchise broker came up with Fish Window Cleaning I was like I didn't even know that was a thing like people pay to clean windows? That's a thing? Definitely not the glamorous idea that I had in my head. My husband was the one who kind of talked me into looking past the window cleaning portion of it and look at the business itself. Some of the things that he really pointed out to me that I probably wouldn't have thought about was that it was a service business. It looked like it would ride the economy that's always a roller coaster ride really well because it had low overhead. You know the way that it's kind of set up, you're just not putting a lot of money out there. You're not paying for a retail space. You're not, the equipment is not overly expensive. So the things that you're having to pay for

they're low. And that makes it good in a bad economy and at the time it was a strong economy so we didn't have any way to test that. But those were the things that he thought really would shine out, you know. Yes, it wasn't glamorous but it was good solid system that looked like it could be successful and maybe not glamorous, which it wasn't. But all of that actually held to be really true. We did go through a pretty big recession and we were barely impacted by that. I saw businesses closing all around me but, you know, we ramped up our sales and at the end of the day, our paycheck of what we took out of the business barely changed. And so he was absolutely right about that.

### **What Was Your Start-Up Like?**

**Lori:** The start-up for me was incredibly scary because I didn't even know how to email and this system, the database was all on a computer and I was scared to death. I think I called Jennifer every day probably 4 times a day for the first little while but she never made me feel like I was a bother or like made me feel like I was stupid which I was because I just didn't know anything about computers. So that was probably my biggest learning curve for me was just learning how to email people and how to run the system. Thankfully it's very user-friendly and so it was easier than I expected it to be and it didn't take me very long before I kind of had everything down and understood what it would take. That was also true for the sales, and for getting customers, and for bidding jobs which was terrifying for me I thought oh what if I get this wrong, especially those big jobs. The first few really big jobs that I did, I was like how do I know this is right? But I think that you just have to have faith in the system that they've done all of this work so if you follow the pricing, if you follow the way that they tell you do stuff, then it's gonna be okay and it always was. There was never a time that I followed the way that I was trained to do it that it didn't turn out right. Everything was good. And so I think over time I had a lot of faith in the system and so that I knew it wouldn't let me down if I just stayed with the program it would be okay and it always was. And so I'd say the first 6 months is scary. It's scary cause you just don't know. You have to prove it. You have to gain trust in the system because you hope that it works, it sounds like it'll work, but does it work? And so putting that into play for the first 6 months was just gaining trust and over and over coming to understand that okay yeah this works, okay yeah this does work and it didn't take any longer than 6 months for me to see the bigger picture.

### **Tell Us About Your Structure**

**Lori:** I set up the structure because I really didn't want to work full-time in the business. My goal has always been to be able to oversee the business but not work in the every day day-to-day operations of the business. That was my goal from day 1. And so we've been there for a while which is great but I do have to have good structure in place for our employees. So I have an Operations Manager and a Sales Manager and together they kind of create what would be a General Manager position. And then we have some support. I have an Office Manager and then I have an Assistant Office Manager and a Lead Cleaner who's kind of the assistant to the Lead Cleaner. And so together they all sort of make up what I don't go in to do anymore. I work very little in the day-to-day operations and in fact I realized that I have only met half of my cleaners at this point. I need to get in there and meet the rest of them probably. I think that the strongest success that we have in being able to run an operation where the owner is not in there every single day is that you have to have a good structure so everybody is cross-trained. They all have their own responsibilities that they carry out, that they're responsible for themselves but everybody knows how to do everything else. And that way if somebody's on vacation or if we have to create another position or we have to hire for another position because we lose somebody, I don't have

to be pulled back into the business to take care of that. They can cover until we get somebody hired or until somebody's back from vacation. And that's a huge part of being able to manage a large crew and still not have to be involved in the day-to-day operations.

### **How Is Your Business Today?**

**Lori:** Today I have 15 employees. It's hard for me to believe that we have 15 employees but we have 15 employees. And, you know, managing your employees is tricky sometimes. You have to be able to see what they don't want you to see. And be able to see what they don't see in themselves too and that is kind of a hard thing. I had a lot of trouble at the very beginning with hiring, the hiring process, because I was way too trusting. I worked in a volunteer world for a lot of years and it's a different kind of people. And so FISH was really great because they sent somebody out to help me with the hiring part of it and just what questions do I ask and what do I do? What do I look for in mannerisms and not just in the words that people are telling me? And that was truly helpful it made all the difference for me because you're interviewing someone for 15 or 20 minutes but there's a lot you can see if you just know to look for it. So I think that was a great help for me at the very beginning and being able to make sure that I was hiring good people and what to look for. I had an employee, a couple of employees when I first started. One was a full-time employee, one was a part-time employee and the one that was a full-time employee just didn't fit. It didn't fit FISH's idea of what you should be looking for and so I got rid of him pretty quickly. I promoted the part-time guy who was more in line with what I was being told would be a good fit and hired another part-timer and that's how we got started. The full-timer did some operations management stuff for me, scheduling and looking out for the jobs but he also did sales because we needed both in the beginning period of time and that worked really well.

### **What Makes A Good Franchisee?**

**Lori:** That's easy. I follow the system. When I first started, I had no idea about business. So I didn't have any pre-conceived notions. I didn't come into this business thinking that I knew how to do it better. That was the whole reason we bought a franchise is that I didn't want to have to do that because it would be a disaster. I wanted somebody to tell me this is what this is a proven system that works. It's a proven business that works. And that's what I paid for. And so for me, there really was no other choice. I followed the system to the letter because I knew that it worked. I believed that it worked and that's what I paid for. And so I never veered from that because following the system was the key to the success for sure and in hindsight it absolutely was the key to the success of my business. I couldn't always see the wisdom before on certain things. I thought well maybe it makes sense to do this but I didn't, I followed the system and in the end I could see how that would of, my idea would've probably not been a very good idea. There is a lot of wisdom that comes with this franchise because it's been true and tried, right? They've got it down to the details. And so if you follow the system, then you'll be successful. The people that I have seen not do as well in FISH every single time it's because they're not following the system or they're not doing something that they should be doing that is a crucial part to the success of FISH. So you buy the system, you should use it.

### **What Is Your Favorite Aspect Of The Business?**

**Lori:** I think my favorite part of FISH is that it isn't just a business it's a family. That's my favorite part. I can pick up the phone any time that I have a concern or a question or I'm just feeling frustrated or I'm just wondering if I'm making a mistake or questioning the way that I'm running things, I can pick up that

phone and I can call Headquarters or I can call any one of hundreds of franchise owners and have them help me through that. And I have utilized that a number of times with people that have been in longer than me or are facing maybe problems that I hadn't faced before and I just need some advice on that and they come through for me. So it feels like a family to me. It feels like it's not just me out there trying to make this business work but that I'm a part of something else that's bigger. And that has always brought me a lot of comfort and a lot of motivation to do a good job because I'm a reflection of FISH and therefore it's a reflection on everybody. And so if we all work together then we can make it stronger. And I love the family aspect. That's probably my favorite thing about FISH.

### **What Has This Franchise Personally Given You?**

**Lori:** What it's brought to me in my life is more than I could've ever hoped for. We bought it as kind of an investment, something that we thought would be a really good thing for our retirement. That was 14 years ago and so retirement was a little bit out of reach. It's closer now 14 years later and it looked at the time we bought FISH it looked like we could achieve those things. That I could have it be more of an investment and oversee the business but not have to work every day for the next you know however years in the business itself but that it would give us the extra income that we were looking for and we could just oversee that. It looked like it could do that and but time would tell, right? And so 14 years later that's exactly what it proved to be. So it changed our lives in ways that I never thought that it would. Things that mean the most to me like being able to help all 4 of our children through college so they didn't have to be in debt when they got out of college. I got to have a beautiful custom home that every day I still wake up and can't believe that it's mine. And as we near retirement there's a whole nother great thing about FISH and that's that it's like a little ATM. I can just take money out of it but I'm not really working every day and it's just awesome cause if I want to go on a really great trip and I want to take my family, I can do that. And 14 years ago that was a dream would have never come true for us. My husband did okay financially but, you know, it didn't give us the kind of opportunities that we have with it and that's made all the difference for us. Now I know that we can retire in just a few years. I kind of already retired really but my husband will join me in about 5 or 6 years and we'll get to travel and do all the things that we love to do but we'll have a business that gives us that income that we can count on every year. That's huge. Our 401K can't do that. And so it made all the difference for sure.

### **Knowing What You Know Now, Would You Do It Again?**

**Lori:** Absolutely and not only would I do it again but I tell everybody in the world that they should buy a FISH franchise. Everyone that I see. They can see that it has made such a difference in my life and it's funny cause when we first started and I let my family know that we were gonna spend every dime that we had and invest into a FISH franchise, they thought we were crazy. They were like are you kidding? This is just gonna be a disaster. They didn't believe in it and those same people today are on the waiting list for a territory that's available in Colorado which probably is never gonna happen. Because they have seen what a dramatic difference it has made in our lives and they want that. So friends and family, they doubted me, and they doubted FISH but they don't doubt us anymore.

### **Anything Else To Add?**

**Lori:** This guy calls me because our whole family is taking a vacation to Portland and most of my children are married and live in different states so it's really fun for us to be able to get together with all of our kids and their wives and grandkids and it's just really fun and so we're going to Portland and right now is

our family really loves to fish. We always have. And so right now is the world class season for salmon fishing in the Columbia River right where it meets the ocean in Astoria. And so I found that out and I was like oh my gosh we have to do this. So I picked up the phone and I booked a boat for the day. For our whole family to go. And I would've never been able to do that. I mean, I didn't even bat an eye. I just picked up the phone and said I'd like to book your boat for \$1200 for the day. And that's, how can you ever, it doesn't get better than that. My family will love that so much and we rarely get to see some of our kids and so what a memory, right? What a great thing. And I couldn't have done that if I didn't have my little ATM that I can just pull \$1200 cash and I didn't even ask my husband because it's my money.

**Red and white Fish Window Cleaning logo**

**FishWindowCleaning.com**