

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

### **Franchisee Q&A**

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

*Andy Winig sitting in a room with a lamp and tree in the background.*

#### **Andy Winig**

#### **Arlington, MA – May 2002**

**Andy Winig:** I'm Andy Winig. I'm a franchisee in Arlington, Massachusetts just outside Boston. I've been in business since May of 2002. So I'm a computer scientist by training. I was programming and managing software developers before I found FISH and I got laid off in December of 2001 so I was looking for a new way to make money.

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

**Andy:** So when I was laid off in December of 2001, I was looking for another computer job in 2002 and there really weren't any computer jobs there so I actually started putting my name in on a bunch of websites and I got some ridiculous calls from people. Oh one guy even said you know just give me your credit card and we'll charge you the \$500 and we'll get started! And I said so what'll I be doing? And he said oh it doesn't, we take care of everything, just give me your credit card and we'll get started. I said but what am I selling? He said doesn't matter, we take care of it all. So I hung up on him and in the middle of that I got a call from this franchise consultant who somehow convinced me to have like a 2 hour call with him where he worked on my business model and figured out what I was looking to do and then started showing me some franchises. And so that's how I kind of got into the world of franchising and thought business might be the way of making money.

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

**Andy:** The thing that was most confusing about the process for me was that he was talking about my business model and I kind of thought that was his job. I didn't understand what business model meant but after talking to him I realized that my business model was that I wanted a business with a small initial investment, a quick return on investment cause you know I needed to make money pretty quickly. I wanted a small number of employees because I didn't want to have to do everything myself but I didn't want to have to manage thousands of people and so we just kind of went through this list of things that I knew was what I wanted in a business but hadn't thought that they mattered and of course the thing that I most wanted was daytime weekday work. I was doing a lot of theater at the time and my nights and weekends were pretty busy so I was looking for daytime, just daytime activity, you know a daytime business but I knew that didn't exist. And so then he came back and it was funny when he came back to me because he wouldn't tell me it was a window cleaning business. He said so I've got a business that's really matches your business model. You have a small number of employees. I said great. What'll I be doing? He said and it's a small initial investment. I said great, what'll I be doing? And it's a quick return on investment. He went through the whole list and I finally said look, if you don't tell me what this is, I said I'm just hanging up on you. He said it's a window cleaning business and you know I, it was funny because when I came out for training, everyone had gone through the same experience. I bought it despite the fact that it was a window cleaning business. I bought it because I loved the business model. I

loved the people who were there and that was really what I was looking for. And I did look at a couple of other I did look at a couple of other opportunities. One was more a leadership training program and I didn't have the chops for that thing. I needed to know like 20 CEOs so I wasn't really good for that opportunity. Another opportunity was more of a retail opportunity. I just realized that I'm much more of a service guy. I wasn't interested in trying to get product to the right place at the right time. I was more interested in going out and kind of helping people and being in a service model kind of business.

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

**Andy:** So the real reason I choose FISH is just that it was an exact match for what I wanted to be doing. You know I was looking for something that was just daytime weekday work. I was looking for something that had a small number of employees and I was really looking for something that I could build up and would run without me being there all the time. I had gotten in my head that franchising would be a way of starting a business that I could make money at without having to be at every day and FISH promised that and the people that I validated with in the system were all doing that and so I knew it was gonna be a good opportunity to kind of create that kind of business where I didn't have to do all the work myself and where I had this kind of support system where I could build it up and really create something for myself.

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

**Andy:** So my favorite story about startup is that about 2 months after I started, my salesman got a bid at a 3-story building that was in my territory and he called me in a panic. How do I bid this thing? I said I have no idea. I said I called my franchise support people and they walked me through it and we came up with a bid and put the bid in and then 2 days later the guy said yeah let's do it and so I panicked again. And I just loaded everything, I loaded everything from my startup kit into my car and drove over to the building and laid it all out on the lawn and took the 2 cleaners that I had and we just kind of put everything together and went ahead and cleaned the 3-story building. I had just gotten exactly what I needed to do everything. You know the support was there and I had all the training. Everything they gave me was exactly what I wanted to do what I thought was the biggest building I could imagine at the time and so the startup, that was what it was. The work was coming in and we were doing the cleaning and it was interesting. FISH had promised me I'd be cleaning by Friday of the week that I opened and I actually started cleaning Wednesday and they told me that yeah that was more of the usual thing. So the startup was exactly how they said it was going to be.

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

**Andy:** So when I started it was pretty much me doing everything. I mean I had a few employees but I was involved in the sales and the cleaning and the training and the collection of money and all that kind of stuff and today I've used the systems to train people to do all those roles. I have a General Manager, an Operations Manager, and they kind of take care of making the sales go and all the work done and I'm not involved in the business at all. I go in every week for meetings with all my teams, the sales team, the operations team, and the admin team but they're getting all the work done and I've been able to step back a little bit and actually start another business and that was a lot of what I was looking for from this opportunity. That I could kind of start up a business and get it running and then not have to be there every day while still making good money.

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

**Andy:** So most of my team is cleaners. Those are the people doing most of the work but in terms of the office staff, I have a General Manager who's kind of responsible for overseeing the 3 areas of the business. I have a woman who runs the office and collects the money. Then I have an Operations Manager who's responsible for making sure the work gets done. Actually I have 2 Operations Managers, one on the commercial side and one on the residential side so their job is to hire the cleaners and train the cleaners and make sure all the work gets done. And then I have a sales team so their job is to go out and get the new work. Well I find that when you hire people, they're all different kinds of General Managers and Operations Managers have different personalities and different skills and you know I've had Operations Managers who are out in the field but I've got one now who's more in the office and you just kind of design, you can design it around the people that you've got so that's kind of the fun part for me now is kind of working with the team and kind of figuring out where everyone's best in the organization.

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

**Andy:** I think what makes someone a good franchisee is that they're willing to follow the system and there's you've got some especially as you get to a bigger business there are some things you can be creative with in terms of how you set up your team and how you move people around within the organization but starting out I just, I did what I was told. That's really what it is and I find that the people who are unhappy in the system are the ones who think they have a better way or think they know better and for me I mean I knew that I didn't know anything about window cleaning and I knew even less about business and so what I was looking for was to kind of be taught how to do both. How to do window cleaning in the context of running a business and so going into it with that open mind of learning and kind of trying out what they were suggesting to do I think is really what made me successful.

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

**Andy:** So my favorite thing about the business in all the years I did computers and went on client visits no one was ever excited to see the computer programmer show up and in the window cleaning business, they're very excited to see you. The residential customers and commercial customers they're like yay the window cleaners here! Like they're really excited to see you and really excited for the service like you're really providing a service that people enjoy and so that's my favorite part of it. That we're doing something people really, they look forward to seeing us and they're all excited and that's it's a very big difference from the work that I used to do.

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

**Andy:** The real answer is everything. Like FISH has allowed me to meet my wife. She's got a very high power job and she travels a lot and I'm the one with the flexibility. I'm making the money I used to make in computers but I'm home every day at 5 to get the kids and I'm there in the morning when the kids are there and so I've had, you know, I've got the flexibility to start my other business and my goal with FISH was to create the cash flow and the time to do this other stuff and the other stuff has started being there for my family and having a second business that I love as well and it's created everything for me.

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

**Andy:** Yes, I mean, you know it's funny because I pretty much answer that question every day. Every day when I get out of bed, is this still the opportunity that I want to be pursuing? And it is. It's still making me the money with the few

number of hours that I'm putting in It's something that I've built up for myself that's valuable to me and my family and the way that I am in the world so yes I would absolutely do it again.

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

**Andy:** So there's two things that I tell people when they ask me if there's anything else they should know. The first is that in all the business dealings I've had across my computer and entrepreneurial career, FISH is the most honest group that I've ever worked with and by that I mean, if you ask them a question they give you an answer and that's the answer and in the 16 years I've been doing this, I've never once been surprised by something. I bought this thing with a lot of moving pieces and I've never once been surprised. Like everything they told me upfront has proven out to be true long-term with the business. The second thing I tell people is that it is business ownership. Like FISH is there and they will help you. At the end of the day, it's up to you. People don't show up, you have to hire them. You have to train them. You have to do the work and so I encourage people to do some soul searching and think about that. I mean some people, I find it less stressful being the boss but that's not true for everyone. Some people like being told what to do and so you know it's a great way to start a business because you do have FISH is wonderful support wise behind you but at the end of the day it is your business and it is your responsibility and so I think it's worth deciding whether that's the kind of opportunity you're looking for.

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