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Make effort to promote diversity within system

By Barbara Moran

What does the term “diversity” mean to you? To many, diversity simply relates to the matter of race, but in the workplace this term takes on multiple meanings. An individual’s age, gender, race, talent, culture and even physical attributes make them diverse in their own way.



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By embracing differences and pulling from the strengths of each franchisee within the system, businesses can improve current practices, increase productivity and produce a well-rounded franchise concept.

In a 1994 study from the federal Glass Ceiling Commission, it was concluded that: “Organizations which excel at leveraging diversity (including the hiring and advancement of women and nonwhite men in senior management jobs, and providing a climate conducive to contributions from people of diverse backgrounds) will experience better financial performance in the long run than organizations which are not effective at managing diversity.”

Cultural diversity within a franchise system promotes a healthy social and learning environment for all to prosper and grow. Age diversity helps mix the tried and true practices of business past with the new technologies and mindsets of America’s youth. Bringing together such diverse backgrounds give companies a competitive edge.

Veterans of the armed forces can also be defined as diverse. This particular group possesses many characteristics which make them ideal franchise business owners, all which stem from their experience in the military. For example, veterans possess a demonstrated ability to follow and improve upon well-defined operational procedures. They also have a “team player” mindset which is ideal when working within a national franchise system.

These traits allow them to not only operate successful franchise locations but provide insight and guidance for those in the corporate office. Working with and listening to the franchisees within a system is key for growth and success as there is no one solution to any problem.

Bringing another level of diversity to a company are women business owners. While most are looked at as the primary caregiver of their family, many still have the desire to obtain a fulfilling work life. Due to this aspiration, women create a diverse working atmosphere by learning to create a work/life balance. Many franchise systems promote and reach out to women to capitalize on the determination and balance so many women possess.

While franchisors may be eager to increase and promote diversity within their system, many are unsure where to seek the necessary help in doing so. Here are some initiatives and associations formed by the International Franchise Association to serve this exact purpose:

The Diversity Institute

- Created to expand diversity education and communication within the IFA membership and to increase cooperation with other organizations working in the diversity arena.
- Promotes and fosters diversity and inclusion within the franchising community by providing information to assist IFA members in expanding their diversity recruitment and multi-cultural marketing efforts at all levels – franchisees, employees, suppliers, and consumers.

MinorityFran Program

- Created to increase the number and success of minorities in franchising, including franchisors, franchisees, suppliers, and employees.
- Provides educational information and programs to IFA members and prospective minority franchisees and participates in outreach activities to increase the awareness of franchising in minority communities.

- The goal is to not only increase the numbers of minority franchisees, but to send the message to all communities that franchising is a smart and affordable way to realize the “American Dream” of small business ownership.

Women’s Franchise Network

- A network of local chapters that are designed to develop relationships with women franchising professionals and to address issues, share ideas and offer solutions related to franchising.

The importance of diversity within a franchise system hits very close to home for me. As a female in a predominately male industry, I frequently face extra pressure and scrutiny and must prove my talent and expertise. Initially, I was told that leading a company in the automotive industry wasn’t in the cards for me as I would not be recognized by others in the industry as a credible source. Rising above these challenges, I know that I continue to pave the way for women in this field as well as the franchising sector.

Today’s most effective franchise systems don’t just tolerate diversity, they seek it out. They reach out to people of all cultures, beliefs, backgrounds, ages and genders. These differences, when embraced and utilized, help create competitive edges over others. However, for diversity in the workplace to be effective, franchisors must create a work culture that identifies and welcomes various perspectives, opinions and styles.

Barbara Moran is the president and chief executive officer of Moran Industries Inc., one of the largest and fastest growing franchisors of automotive repair centers in the country. Moran Industries has provided specialty products and services in virtually every aspect of the automotive aftermarket through six franchise brands and more than 200 locations including: Transmission USA service centers (Mr. Transmission, Multistate Transmission, Dr. Nick Transmission); Alta Mere “Toys for You Car”; Milex Complete Auto Care centers; and SmartView Window Solutions. For more information, visit www.moranindustries.com