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Top Questions to Ask Franchisors After a Franchise Show

1. *What systems do you have in place to monitor and react to changes in the market; be they legal, regulatory or innovation led?*

A good franchisor should be working hard to monitor the landscape by being involved with the relevant industry/regulatory bodies - this will allow them to be proactive not reactive when important changes come along. Brands with their own R&D departments can help keep you ahead of the competition by being able to lead with product and technology innovations, recognising and capitalising on trends in advance.

2. *After my initial training, how much on-the-ground support will I receive in my first one, three, six and 12 months of business? Can you break it down into those time periods for me?*

Most franchisors will focus on how comprehensive their initial weeks of training and support are. Which is great! But what happens after you launch? What happens when you've been up and running for a few months and the franchisor has new 'new franchisees' to train? Don't just get caught up in the first few weeks of all-singing, all-dancing support. Dig deeper to find out what life as a franchisee looks like when, six months in, you ask for help. You should be pleasantly surprised.

3. *On average, how much time does it take for one of your franchisees to make their first sale/secure their first client or contract? If this timeframe isn't met, how do you help?*

Remember, you need to think about going for a period of time with no money coming in. If you can't afford to do that then you shouldn't really be buying a franchise right now. But it's going to be crucial for your business planning and financial forecasting that you understand a worst-case scenario. And any franchisor should be able to give you network averages to work from. With finances, a best-guess of 'in theory' answer to this question just won't cut it. Whilst it's ultimately going to be your business and your responsibility, as a franchisee, you will have the back-up and support of your franchisor if things don't go to plan. Or will you? Make sure you check what systems they have in place... just in case.

4. *I'd like to speak to a franchisee who isn't doing so well to chat to them about how they feel about their business and the franchise - is that ok?*

If any franchisor tells you that none of their franchisees have ever struggled or been unhappy then you should hear alarm bells. With a life-changing decision like this, honesty is crucial and in the real world, things don't always work out. It could be through no fault of the franchisor and you'll most likely find that they have done all they can to help – but it's important to find out what the hard times can feel like as much as the good. When speaking to franchisees who haven't been 'cherry-picked' for you, take things on board with an open mind and then take any findings that give you cause for concern back to the franchisor for explanation.

