

HAPPY to chat

TWO FRANCHISEES FROM THE COFFEE GUY TALK BUSINESS OVER A BEER

➔ Michael Baxter worked as the customer services manager for a software company before being made redundant. Francis Fitzgerald was a truck and crane driver for 20 years. Today, they are both franchisees with The Coffee Guy; Michael in Tauranga and Francis in Mt Manganui. Every fortnight, they get together over a beer to share ideas and experiences – part of the informal networking that makes this franchise such a happy group.

‘When I was made redundant last year, it was a blow,’ Michael admits. ‘I wasn’t sure what to do so I tried my hand at real estate before deciding to put my hard-earned savings into a franchise.’ Michael had considerable experience in the hospitality sector, as he had previously managed a McDonald’s restaurant.

‘Although I looked at other franchises, nothing stood out for me like The Coffee Guy. ‘They seem to have a winning formula. It’s affordable, you don’t need experience, you only pay a flat fee rather than a percentage of turnover, and they are very open. When I started asking questions, they gave me every franchisee’s phone number and told me to ask them what they thought. I phoned half of them and asked if they would do it again. They all said, “Yes”. That was good enough for me!’

Michael has now been operating for three months. ‘I was a little apprehensive at first as customer numbers seemed low, but The Coffee Guy team promise to get you up to speed and they were as good as their word. They spent two weeks canvassing the area with me and brushing up my barista skills. Those are vital, because what you are trading on is top-notch quality coffee every time. I soon found that once people had noticed my van they would come and ask me to deliver to their workplaces, too. Since then, on more than one occasion I’ve been cheered by my customers when I’ve driven up – that’s a great feeling.’

FRANCIS FITZGERALD: FROM TRUCKIE TO BARISTA



MICHAEL BAXTER: EVERY FRANCHISEE SAID THEY’D DO IT AGAIN

Michael believes in putting in the hours to get his business off the ground. ‘Five days a week I have a layby stop-off from around 7-8.30 each morning to catch the passing trade then I go round my customers’ premises until about 2pm. After that, the day’s my own. I actually love doing a Saturday as well, as there are frequently big events down here and going to them can be very profitable. They really are the cream on the top, and if there is something worthwhile I’ll do Sundays as well. The only thing I don’t like are these cold mornings!’

THE TWO KEYS TO SUCCESS

Francis comes from a very different background and is delighted with his new-found popularity. ‘As a truck driver, I was just an inconvenience at best whereas people look forward to seeing me as The Coffee Guy,’ he chuckles. Francis had toyed with the idea of a franchise ever since he, his wife and three boys moved to Tauranga from Auckland nearly four years ago. ‘I looked at a couple of similar options,’ he says, ‘but I’m glad I chose The Coffee Guy because they have been very supportive.’

Francis was the first Coffee Guy franchisee in Tauranga. ‘Yes, it was scary, especially as I had been employed all my life, but at the end of the day the business is all about you. There are two keys – a friendly personality and great coffee. You have to make people feel special when you serve them. If you are a miserable old bugger then it could just fall over on you!’

Like Michael, Francis begins his day with a layby stop then it’s off on the rounds. ‘You’re only making money when you are pouring coffee,’ Francis points out. ‘During the winter I spend every Saturday morning at the soccer grounds – that is very lucrative. There is plenty of business and I could work seven days if I chose but there is a work/life balance to achieve. Certainly I am making money, life is much easier, and I’m convinced this area is still untapped. After years of long hours in trucks, including night shifts, I’ve no regrets and I’ve certainly made the right choice.’

GUARANTEED EARNINGS

With 40-plus franchisees already, The Coffee Guy still has plenty of opportunities for new franchisees, especially in the central North Island. The purchase price of \$35,000 +gst includes full training and support, and after four years franchisor Richard Karam is now so confident of the success of his franchisees that he offers a minimum earnings guarantee to all operators. ‘As Michael found when he rang around, our franchisees are consistently generating annual turnover of \$100,000, and several are doing much more,’ he says.

The only thing not included in the purchase price is what Richard calls ‘our flying silver billboard – the custom-fitted, signwritten espresso van. But that can be financed or leased through a number of options to make The Coffee Guy franchise very affordable. If you are a people-person like Michael and Francis, this could be the business for you. Ring Brent Ardern, our franchise development manager, or talk to The Coffee Guy in your area and find out more.’ ■

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