

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

### **Franchisee Q&A**

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

*Eric Silver sitting in a room with a lamp and tree in the background.*

#### **Eric Silver**

#### **Fort Worth, TX – June 2008**

**Eric:** My name is Eric Silver. I'm in Fort Worth, TX, and we opened in June of 2008. Before starting my FISH franchise, I had a few different jobs, mostly in sales and marketing. One of my first jobs was, it was a marketing manager for a small software firm. Then I was an account executive for a graphic design firm and I got to work with a lot of different small businesses there and had a lot to their with their marketing campaigns and helping build their image. The last job I had before coming to FISH and opening a FISH franchise was as a Yellow Pages sales representative and a sales manager and what was funny about that is before starting the FISH franchise I spent a lot of time on the other side of the table trying to get people to spend money on Yellow Page advertising and then after I started my FISH franchise I was trying to figure out how to be very frugal with that money on the Yellow Page advertising.

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

**Eric:** So I found FISH through a unique channel. I was actually going back to school to get my Masters in Business Administration and I had taken a class on entrepreneurship and one of the segments of the class or one of the sections was talking about franchising. And I was at point in my career in Yellow Page advertising where I knew things were not going to be going in a positive direction there. Yellow Page advertising was kind of going away and online advertising was really picking up so I looked at that a little bit further, the franchising part of the entrepreneurship class and had a particularly rough day at work one day and came home and got on the internet and did a little bit of research and filled out a form which turned out to be for a franchise consultant. And put some information in there and we got a call from the franchise consultant a couple of days later and started the process of talking to them about what our goals were and what we wanted to do. And that's how we ended up finding FISH is basically through a franchise consultant but it was because I had taken that class on entrepreneurship which had a franchising component. I always wanted to be a business owner. I just didn't know with what. Never really knew, never really felt like I was particularly great at any one thing or had a hobby that I really wanted to monetize so franchising really felt like it was something that would be a good step for us.

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

**Eric:** When we were presented the idea of Fish Window Cleaning by the franchise consultant, prior to them presenting us the idea they asked my wife and I what kind of cars we drove. And we kind of looked at each other because we were doing this over the kitchen table one night before we went to bed, we were having a conference call with the franchise consultant and they asked what we drove for cars. And at the time, we both drove a Hyundai. And so we told him that and he goes oh great and I asked why are you asking that question? And he said well I wanted to know if you were image people. For example, do you drive a Lexus or a BMW and he said cause I may come back to you and present a porta potty idea

and if that's not something that fits with you there's no point in me trying to do that and I said whatever's gonna make money, I'm happy with. So when the franchise consultant came back to us they presented with a painting franchise, a framing like a quick framing franchise, and then a water recovery or water reclamation and then also FISH and we really liked once they went through and explained everything to us we really liked the FISH franchise. We loved the idea that it was mostly during the week, that it would focus on commercial, the model sounded terrific, and so we just from that moment the other ones weren't really even in contention once we found out a little bit more about the franchise itself and what goes into making a FISH franchise operate, it felt like it really fit with our goals.

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

**Eric:** We ended up choosing FISH for a couple of different reasons. Mostly because the family environment, the family friendliness of the franchise itself and the people that worked there. We felt really good after visiting the Home Office. We really liked the model of focusing mostly on commercial accounts rather than residential. We really liked that you were not putting all your eggs in one basket so to speak. That you're diversifying your income across hundreds or thousands of accounts as you build your business. And so we really liked the way that the business was the business model was put together. It was very family friendly environment with the idea that we would be working mostly during the week and not on nights or on the weekends and I know a lot of the franchises the other ones we looked at really had to do with being more focused on residential which meant you'd be working a lot at night when you're meeting with customers and things like that. Another thing that we really liked about the model itself was that we wouldn't be putting all of our eggs in one basket in terms of accounts. So by following the model and the business plan we would be building a business where our revenue is spread across several hundred or thousands of accounts rather than having one or two or three or ten customers, we're going to have several hundred and so if you lose a couple customers here or there, it's not gonna hurt you. It will take a while to get those things going in the right direction but the idea that there was diversification really made us feel comfortable. So that's really what drove us to go with FISH is the model and then the people behind the model.

When we started, it was in the fall of 2008 and it was interesting. The first day I opened the office I sat down and I thought what am I gonna do today? And about an hour into the day as I was getting ready to go out and start street bidding I had one of my neighbors call from our Dallas office and had an emergency window cleaning for us. And so well for us it was for me because I was the only one in the office so I gathered up all my gear and I went over and I did that cleaning. It took me most of the day and as we built we kept that customer for a long time and as we built the business our cleaners would go and clean the job in about an hour so the first time I cleaned it took me most of the day cause I just wasn't familiar with what I was doing. So the start-up of the business was great. We started with no customers and we just went out and started street-bidding and cleaning the glass. About a month into our start-up I had appendicitis and I was in the hospital. I was hospitalized for 2 weeks so once I got out of the hospital I went back to work but didn't really feel good for a couple of months and the nice thing about is we had started the got the business going and got things started and the employees that we had kind of kept things going while I was in hospital and still recovering. That was a great benefit to having the system that we had and the structure that was behind the system.

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

**Eric:** So now that we've been in the business for about 10 years there are some pretty distinct differences between day 1 and year 10 or year 1 and year 10. At the beginning, it was all me and it was just me coming in every day and I would do the, I would answer the phone, I would clean the windows, I would collect the money and now we have an office staff that answers the phones, collects the money, we have our staff, we have training managers, a couple training managers that train our staff on how to clean. We have a sales team that goes out and sells so most of my day is around running the business and is focused on working on the business and not in the business. So I will spend things spend my time on looking at things like do we need to add another training manager or should we be adding another vehicle or are we selling the right mix of accounts? So I'm looking at a more global view of the business and so where there's some things that I wasn't having to do when we were much smaller those things I'm having to take care of now but that's really why I wanted to get into the business. I wanted to be doing those larger picture things instead of the day to day cleaning the glass, collecting the money, selling the accounts and that type of thing. So now my life is a little bit my business life is a little bit more of what I wanted it to be when I started so and it took us a couple of years to get there but it's been a really good ride.

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

**Eric:** When we first started there was just me. So I did all of the selling, cleaning, and collecting. 10 years later we have an Operations Manager that is responsible for running the office, we have an Administrative Assistant who is collecting Accounts Receivable and answering the phone, we have a couple of salespeople and we have 10 cleaners. So we are keeping them all busy and the whole business really is working together so one of those positions feeds the other and everybody there can see that. So they're all on the same team, they all know that what I'm doing is affecting somebody else. And my role is now to keep an overview of that entire business and make sure that everything continues to function and as we grow things need to change. We may need to add another Administrative Assistant so I'm watching numbers and calculating when I think would be the right time to add that or we might find another salesperson and we need to figure out how to work them into the mix. We're always adding cleaners, we're always interviewing. The funny thing is it's really not about can we sell the accounts, it's about can you get what you have cleaned and do you have enough people to clean the stuff that's gonna come in every week because there's new accounts coming every week. Whether you like it or not. And we like it.

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

**Eric:** So I think the reason that I've been a successful franchisee is when I started I had put everything into this. So failure was not an option. We needed to make this work and for me to come home and tell my wife that it wasn't working I just couldn't do it. I knew because the system was there and the system had been around for so long and been refined that if I followed the steps and I followed the process and the roadmap that is the system, it was going to work. So it really became a matter of determination for me. And just work ethic and I knew that I had that the work ethic. I knew that if I put my mind to it I could make it happen.

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

**Eric:** My favorite aspect about running the business is I'm in control of my business, my job, my investment, and my day and so I get to control when I come into work. I get to control when I go home

from work. I get to control when I can spend time with my family. And those are all very important things to me. I get to do the things that I want to do and work on the things I want to work on. For example, I don't want to be involved on the day-to-day scheduling of the jobs. So I've hired somebody to run the jobs and schedule the jobs. I work on the bigger picture things like insurance and making sure we're getting good rates on that and deciding when it's time to hire another cleaner or when it's time to hire more salespeople or do we need another Administrative Assistant. So those are things that I like to work on is the bigger picture stuff. I don't want to get down into the details and the minutiae of what's going on so the fact that I have control over that part of my day and that part of my life really makes me feel good about the FISH system.

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

**Eric:** So the thing that I like best about what FISH has afforded me is the amount of time that I can spend with my family. When I was working for someone else I was always worried about am I putting in enough time. And am I doing the right things. With the FISH system it's my business. I know when I'm putting in enough time. I know when I'm doing the right things. And so what that's allowed me to do is be a little more free with my work life and choosing when I'm going to be there. It's also helped us financially. We got into it thinking that we just needed to make enough money to get by on and it's done better than that for us and that's because I truly believe it's because I feel free enough and I don't feel pressure of someone standing over me to grow the business. It's more pressure that I put on myself to grow it and that's been a great journey for us so far.

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

**Eric:** That was the question I asked when doing validation. And the reason that I felt comfortable going forward is that most people said yes, they would and I absolutely would. I would absolutely do this again. I encourage people that are looking at this business to continue to look hard and talk to as many people as they can and really look inside themselves and find out if what the FISH system provides is aligns with what they want to do. You have to be honest with yourself. Do you want to run a business like this? Do you want what this business can afford you and if you do I would say wholeheartedly go after it.

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

**Eric:** The one thing I can think of is I wish I would have found FISH sooner. I wish I was the guy that invented FISH. I wish I was Mike Merrick. That would make me happy. If I could've put together a system like this that other people could partake in that's one thing that I wish I could've done differently. Now it's not realistic and we're not gonna see that happen but it is a great system and I really feel good about it. I just wish I would've started it sooner.

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

**FishWindowCleaning.com**