

Discovery Day

This document will help to educate and prepare you with regards to “Discovery Day” (sometimes called “Meet the Team Day” or “Meet Your Team Day”), as well as set expectations for your visit to meet with the Franchisor as part of your validation process. Part of what is discussed here may seem obvious and be common sense, but it will help to reinforce what you already know and you may pick up one or two new ideas.

If your Discovery Day is virtual (video conferencing) rather than in person at the franchisor’s headquarters, then some of the recommendations discussed will not apply.

Discovery Day is when the Franchisor invites you into their headquarters to meet with the whole team; typically from the president all the way down...marketing department, training folks, support staff etc. This will give them a chance to make sure that you are a good fit for them and also for you to finalize your evaluation of the franchisor and their offering. Remember that you do not purchase a franchise; you are “awarded” a franchise.

It is a two-way relationship where your mutual success is dependent on each other. So not only are you assessing the franchisor, making sure that they are a good match for you, but they are doing the exact same thing with you, making sure that you are well suited for them.

Not all companies offer Discovery Day, but most do. In some cases, Discovery Day is optional and in others it is mandatory, i.e. if you do not go you will not have the opportunity to be awarded a franchise. Either way, I recommend that you go to Discovery Day, to see, hear, experience, absorb and learn all those final things that you could not get over the telephone, via email, through their web site or company brochures. You will see after your visit that it was very well worth going!

If you have a spouse or significant other, I strongly recommend that you take them with you so they may experience first hand what you experience at Discovery Day (Dday), be able to observe the company, ask questions, bring up concerns, etc. As they say...”two heads are better than one”.

It is virtually impossible to come back home after Dday and try to paint a picture for your spouse with the same excitement and experience that you felt when you were personally there. If at the conclusion of your research you want to move forward and purchase the franchise yet the spouse says ‘no’, then chances are that this project will quickly die. In addition, having your spouse take the time and effort to attend Dday with you, will show you that your spouse is truly supporting you in this endeavor and will also indicate to the franchisor that you are a stronger candidate and this may increase your chances of being awarded the franchise.

Discovery Day is not closing day as typically the franchisor will get back to you within a day or two after your visit to let you know if you have been awarded the franchise. So there is no pressure, no decisions for you to make while you are out there and you can leave your checkbook at home! The visit should be fun and enjoyable...almost a mini one to two day vacation.

What Should You Take and How to Prepare

Financials - Hopefully you already have your funding lined up to purchase the franchise. Whether it is from a savings or checking account, retirement plan, loan or Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC), this process should have already been started. If not, begin the process today. When the franchisor asks you during Discovery Day as to how you plan to fund the franchise, you want to be able to tell them that you either have the funds already, or what plan you currently have in motion for securing the funds. The last thing you want to tell them is that you do not know or have not considered it yet. Discovery Day is typically the last part of researching the franchise opportunity - not having your financial plan in order is very unprofessional. It could have you viewed as not being that serious about owning a franchise and perhaps send the message that you are not a good candidate for them.

Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC) - if you are considering obtaining a HELOC (or increasing the credit limit if you already have one) make sure that you do it **BEFORE** you leave your job. If you do not have a job/income stream, the bank will typically **NOT** approve your HELOC application.

Spouse/Significant Other – If you are married or have a significant other, I strongly recommend that the effort be made for both of you to go. Even if the spouse/significant other will not be involved in the business or will not be the one deciding that “this is the franchise for us” ...”I make all the decisions” (you say to yourself), you should still both go. It will make for a much better impression with the franchisor and the spouse/significant other may well have some great questions, insights, comments etc. that you did not think of. It is very difficult for you to come back home after Discovery Day and then try to share what you saw, heard and experienced with your spouse/significant other. It is just not quite the same thing as actually being there. Any issues or concerns from your spouse/significant other can be addressed while he/she is at Discovery Day. Arguments, misunderstandings and disagreements can therefore be avoided. Ultimately, your spouse/significant other may not be the one to say “yes” this is the business for us, but they can certainly be the one to say “no” and squash the whole project! You increase your chances tremendously of moving forward with a franchise if they come with you. **Bottom line – if at all possible, your spouse/significant other should go with you to Discovery Day.**

Dress Code – business casual is typically fine. If you are visiting a company that offers a business-to-business concept, e.g. some type of a consulting, coaching, sales training or financial services franchise, then I would recommend you dress in business attire. If you are not sure, it is quite all right to ask your contact person at the franchise company...”what is the expected dress code for a candidate coming in for Discovery Day?” Some franchisors may be in a suit and tie when you meet them, but do not let that you make you feel as though you are under dressed. Just do not show up in jeans, shorts, ripped clothing, sneakers, flip flops etc. Also, take some time to groom yourself...look good...be presentable. You are trying to make a good impression.

Do Not Go in Empty Handed - Have at least a paper pad and pen to jot down notes or to have prepared and written down some questions for the meeting...the last thing you want to ask the president is for a piece of paper and a pen! Take with you a folder that contains your notes, brochures, presentations, Franchise Disclosure Document (FDD), agreement and any other material that you have gathered on the franchise company. This will show them that you are prepared; a true professional. This will help to improve your image as they are sizing you up.

Get Contact Information – Be sure to collect business cards from all the people you meet during Discovery Day. If they do not have a card, then jot down their name, title/function, phone number, email and any other pertinent information or “hot” buttons.

You will be sending them all thank you emails when you get back home. If you discover a hot button of the person you met or something you have in common with that individual, then you may want to use that fact in your email, to help reinforce your rapport and relationship.

Remember that you want all the people you met to feel positive about you and to give you the “thumbs up” when they vote on whether to award you the franchise or not. If you have a positive and stronger connection with the individual, then chance are you will get a thumbs up.

Also, in your thank you email, express your continued enthusiasm, how much you like and believe in their franchise concept, what you bring to the table, how you will be an asset to their franchise family, etc. Keep the thank you note positive and upbeat.

Be Courteous, Polite and Mindful of What You Say - remember that this is the first time that they are meeting you face-to-face and you can only make a first impression once. “Please” and “thank you” go a long way to help making a good impression. The franchisor is basically opening up their home to you. Think of Discovery Day as being invited into an acquaintance’s home for the very first time and how you may act in that situation.

Meals and Relationships – Do not expect this, but you may get taken out for dinner the night before or for lunch during Discovery Day. This is a great time for the franchisor to get to know you on a personal level and vice versa. Use this time well to get a better understanding of the franchisor and the person that you are with. This will help your future relationship with them should you become a franchisee. If you do go out for a meal with the franchisor, I would recommend staying away from alcohol...a change in your behavior or something that you say may be regretted later.

Stay Away From - Since you do not know the individuals that well (that you will be meeting with) you want at all times, to remain professional, stay away from discussing (or joking about) sensitive subjects that may offend them or go against their beliefs, e.g. religion, sex, politics, personal beliefs, sports etc. A small joke or comment in one these areas could cause a major disagreement or even deeply offend someone. They will never say anything to you, but you may get a “thumbs down vote” from that person and ultimately not get awarded the franchise.

High Level Conversation – Keep your conversation/questions at a high level. Don’t get into nitty gritty/low level/operational type questions when talking with the high level/executive team or if they are present in the meeting.

Most of these questions should already have been asked/answered with your Franchise Development Manager (FDM - the person that has been taking you through the franchise process), but if you have more of these types of lower level/operational questions, then save them for a separate dialogue with your FDM, i.e. do not ask them in front of the executive team. You wouldn’t want to ask the president of McDonalds during a Discovery Day meeting if the tomatoes go on top of the lettuce or what temperature should the fries be cooked at.

Have Prepared Answers – Give thought beforehand and prepare answers to questions that you may well be asked:

- Why do you feel that this is the right franchise for you?
- What character traits/skills do you bring to the table that will help you in this business?
- Why do you feel that you will succeed in this franchise?

You want to have the answers to these types of questions at the tip of your tongue.

Be a Team Player - Franchising is all about being able to follow a successful and proven process. Show them that you are team player and that you can follow their process. Ask good questions (big picture as well as detailed), listen, take notes and make them feel that you are a person who will be able and willing to follow their system. Ask them about their vision and future plans, what services/products would they like to add down the road, what other markets are they considering entering in the future, how they plan on growing etc. Don't argue with them, get confrontational or start pulling their process to shreds and telling them how you can do it better - this will only serve to hurt your chances of being awarded a franchise. You want to make them like you, feel that you are the kind of person they want to invite into their "franchise family", who can follow their process, that is coachable and that can be successful.

All these tips and little details can add up to make a difference in how the franchisor perceives you!

Expectations

At the end of Discovery Day, your host will thank you for visiting with them and they will typically let you know their decision within a few days. Don't forget to send all the people you met a thank you email.

Assuming that the franchisor does award you the franchise, the decision will now rest with you as to whether you wish to accept or not. In most instances, if you are going in for Discovery Day, then both you and the franchisor are already 90+ percent sure that it is a good fit and if the visit goes well, you can be fairly well assured that you will be awarded the franchise.

If you decide to accept the award, then you would then send in your signed agreement together with the franchise fee.

Remember that you do not purchase a franchise as you might buy something at the store; you are awarded a franchise. So be prepared, create a good impression, make them feel good about you at Discovery Day and you should do just fine!

"In Franchising you are in business for yourself but not by yourself"