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Ideas For Success | February

Last week I attended the International Franchise Association convention. This was their 48th annual gathering, and my sixth time to observe the legends and new leaders of franchising, many of whom are doing wonderfully innovative things to expand their brands.

General Consensus The keynote speaker at the opening luncheon was Colin Powell. I've heard a lot of these speeches over the years – even given a few myself – and General Powell ranks at the top. In 45 minutes he never misspoke, and delivered the perfect mix of international experiences, self-deprecating humor and business philosophy. The standing ovation was loud and lengthy, and I heard several people say they considered shouting, "Powell for President."

The story that most resonated with me was something General Powell said he learned 50 years ago as a young 2nd Lieutenant. His commanding officer told him: "Powell, you have a chance to be a good leader. You'll know you're a great leader when your troops will follow you, if only out of curiosity...to see where you're going, to believe you'll take them with you and get them out of this." It's about trust. "That's what anybody who is in charge of an organization should work on first," said Powell.

Luxurious Connections The second day's headliner was J.W. (Bill) Marriott, son of the founder and chairman/CEO of the hospitality giant. It was a Q&A format with award-winning anchorwoman Kathleen Matthews (wife of Chris from *Hardball*). She began by saying they already had visited three properties before arriving for the 9:00 a.m. session. "I went to 300 last year," said Marriott. "It's not like I haven't seen them, but at least I know they clean the place once a year before I get there."

Mr. Marriott said he started blogging last year. Not surprisingly with the company's worldwide reach, he received 400,000 responses to his 80 posts. "You gotta connect," he said. "That's how you get new



Born Leader

Over the past 15 years, Steve Greenbaum and Brian Spindel built PostNet into one of the shining stars in franchising with more than 900 locations. Steve is the new chairman of IFA, and in his introductory address – referring to the fact franchising employs 15% of the private sector – said, “We create jobs. We create opportunities. And put people on the path to economic independence.” You got that right, Steve, and you are, indeed, the right leader at the right time for this organization. Here’s wishing you a terrific year at the helm!

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ideas. People think CEOs are different. We’re not. We’re just normal people.” While he probably had “people” to reply to all those postings, the fact a leader who turns 76 next month is participating in social networking – which is typically associated with younger generations – suggests the tipping point draws near.

The discussion included mention of his mother Alice’s philosophy that still focuses the organization: “When you take good care of your associates, they’ll take good care of your guests, and they’ll come back again and again. In a later session, the chief marketing officer of Marriott said, “Our goal is a problem free experience at every touch point, and the average guest has over a hundred different ones each stay. Just one problem means half the likelihood they’ll ever return, and we’re only aware of half of those.” Think about the touch points in your business and the percentage of problems you don’t know about.

Walt’s Wisdom The IFA Convention was in Orlando, which meant my 15th journey there in just over a decade. However, for the first time, I was unable to visit any Disney theme park. Nonetheless, this month’s magical idea from a previous encounter with Disney cast members seems appropriate in light of General Powell’s speech:

“When the leader is ready to change, it usually happens.”

What’s the biggest challenge you’re facing right now...and are you ready to change it?

Great Approach I sat in on a roundtable discussion hosted by Bette Fetter, founder of Young Rembrandts, which teaches the power of drawing to children. Bette said one of the best things a franchisor can do is fill in this blank with as many answers as possible: “Our franchisees really like it when we _____.” Then, focus on enhancing those offerings. Sounds like good advice for any business owner. Might be time to gather your team around the white board for a little brainstorming about your customers.

Bonus Idea Here’s one final nugget from General Powell: “Praise those who report to you. Tell them, ‘I don’t know how we’d do this without you, and I just called your wife to tell her that.’” What an excellent technique! Reach out to significant others and thank them for allowing their loved ones to serve on your team. Talk about a great way to strengthen personal and professional dedication. So, who are you calling today?

Until next month, continued success in all things.

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