

# SCOOPING UP BUSINESS

Career corporate snaps up ice cream business and lifts sales by 25 per cent. How did he do it?

**J**ustin Budhdeo is a newbie to the franchise sector but a highly experienced sales and marketing executive whose corporate career was forged in his home base of India and over 15 years in New Zealand. So what made him take the leap into business ownership?

"I was promoted as brand manager across Australia and New Zealand and moved to Sydney, but I didn't enjoy it. I'm 50+ so it was a chance to look at options. I've worked for a lot of big companies, and it was something I always wanted to do, see if I could make money for myself."

Justin spent 15 months thoroughly researching his next step. He investigated different industries, met business owners and franchisors, and after his deliberations decided on the well-known Baskin-Robbins franchise as the best option.

"I experienced the product, so I knew that I would be happy with what I was selling, that it is a superior product. I went and experienced a couple of stores in other places, spoke to old and existing franchisees and got their feedback. Then I had to make my own decisions – you have to understand what is relevant and what is not relevant."

It was fundamental to Justin that the franchisor displayed honesty in the due diligence process, and he says he was well informed about the financial figures of the corporate store he decided to buy.

"It was a well managed store and had good systems in place. I'm not from a business background so transparency of figures I was looking at was most important. I took them to an accountant to have them vetted.

"I got legal advice too. Buying a franchise is a big step and when you are putting a lot of money into something, you need to do all the homework that you can.

"I think it's important that the franchisor is transparent – they do what they say they will do, and what's right for the franchisee."

All the months dedicated to researching the business opportunity and the seven-day working week operating the store have paid off; not yet 12 months into his business, Justin can report that he has raised turnover

by 25 per cent compared to the same time last year.

"The corporate store had all the systems in place but from my point of view, I've looked at it from what do I need to do. I need to have stock all the time, maintain my fast moving flavours, and new flavours – these are the basics."

Justin has been fastidious about the roster, ensuring the store is managed by the right number of team members at the right time.

"Once you've got the basics in, it was then where do I see the incremental gains? I saw them in cakes."

His strategy to bring in two full time cake decorators and promote the line on Instagram, showcasing every one of the 120 designs, has taken the ice-cream cakes turnover from 3.5 per cent to close to 10 per cent.

He has boosted income in other ways too, such as upselling.

"It's pretty straightforward, customers come in to buy an ice cream for \$5 or \$6 so I think, what can I add? A topping for \$1 doesn't cost me \$1."

He has just launched a home delivery service using Uber Eats and is pleased with the initial results: a 10 per cent increase in turnover and no loss of instore custom.

Looking ahead to his second year in business the goal is to open up a second site, and a third outlet in year three.

And there's plenty of support when he needs it. "Franchisees have a direct line to the GM, can call at any time. He's very approachable, and the business is transparent, the systems are really good."

Justin has praised the level of detail in the operations manual and follows it accurately.

"Sometimes it can be tough but I see why it has to be followed," he says.

Consistency is a byword for a franchise, but it's not always sustained. Justin has made it a cornerstone of his business.

"I expect everyone to be thoroughly professional, and customers welcomed in the same way," he says. "When people walk into an ice cream store they are already happy and our job is to make them walk out happier." ■

