

# Case Study

**Name :** Steve Bennett, Recognition Express Croydon

**Commenced Trading :** April 2002

**Previous Job :** Paper Supplier

## **Why did you choose Recognition Express?**

There was a nice feel to the business. They were well established with a good track record. The variety of the work was important- a good balance of production and sales, and the ability to make things quickly if required for my customers. When I visited the office in Leicestershire, I was impressed with the people that I met. They were likeable and trustworthy, and I left feeling that I would enjoy operating a franchise and make a good living. I looked at five other franchises, but did not get the same feeling.

## **How have you found the training and support given by Recognition Express?**

I have been very pleased. The helplines work very well, and all of the staff are knowledgeable and patient. The Centralised Marketing is an excellent initiative- when you are on your own, keeping up with generating enquiries can be difficult. The new product areas that have been developed since I joined will be very successful for me. Recognition Express is a forward thinking company rising to new challenges.

## **How was your first year in business?**

I had to pace myself as you can't learn everything at once. I opened 60 new accounts, and started to develop fruitful long term relationships. Recommendations started early on when customers experienced my service and these continue to bring in good business, and I get a real buzz from making my own products, although the sound of my invoice printer working gives me the most satisfaction! So far (touch wood) I have no bad debts, but my biggest challenge is balancing my time efficiently between the different parts of the role.

## **How do you see your business progressing?**

I have just taken on my first part time staff member. My target turnover is £250,000 within the next couple of years.

## **Do you have any advice to anybody considering Recognition Express as a franchise?**

Do your homework, talk to existing franchisees, and decide if this is a role that's right for you. The Recognition Express approach to winning business really works, and the impersonal methods of my competition are a real benefit. I am developing genuine customer loyalty. Our diverse range is crucial, so we are a 'one-stop-shop' for all recognition products. I can provide short runs in quick time using my own equipment, and high volumes through selected trade partners. I don't rely on repeat orders of the same items, and have now sold more than one product to most of my existing customers.

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# Case Study

**Name :** Chris Kerry, Recognition Express North Wales

**Commenced Trading :** June 2002

**Previous Job :** Retail and Banking

## **Why did you choose Recognition Express?**

Having researched the franchise market extensively the Recognition Express name kept recurring and I was attracted by the level of margins achievable coupled with a start-up package which represented excellent value, with literally every conceivable requirement included- from training and equipment right down to envelopes and business stationery.

## **How have you found the training and support given by Recognition Express?**

The initial 2 week training course was comprehensive, but as a consequence, was a lot to absorb. As with anything, knowledge comes with experience. The on-going support from Head Office and the rest of the network of franchisees is excellent- support in all aspects of the business is readily available whenever needed, not for a limited time after training, but on an on-going basis.

## **How was your first year in business?**

The first 12 months I was still responsible for another business and as a consequence my time was seriously diluted. I was unable to devote the sufficient time and effort to establish my Recognition Express business. Fortunately, I was able to draw a line under year one and I knew I had to 'hit the ground running' in year two. Marketing has been my high priority and I put systems in place to ensure that an established and proven marketing plan was followed to the letter- and eventually this began to pay dividends.

## **How do you see your business progressing?**

My office is our converted garage which has been invaluable when visitors call and in creating a working environment. This will be acceptable for maybe another 6 months, but thereafter I will look to expand into new premises. I am presently making enquiries about employing an assistant, as time does get very tight. My wife, Mary is more involved in the business now too- helping with the accounts and marketing.

## **Do you have any advice to anybody considering Recognition Express as a franchise?**

There is no magic formula for success; business will not fall into your lap! The success of this business is based on a high level of sales and marketing activity. The higher the profile you make for yourself, be it through local press stories, networking, cold-calling or direct mail, the more doors you will open and the more business you will get.

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# Case Study

**Name :** Sally Findlay, Recognition Express Mid Surrey

**Commenced Trading :** March 2004

**Previous Job :** Solutions Integration Manager for Print Company

## **Why did you choose Recognition Express?**

The type of work I would be doing each day suited my strengths and preferences. It required some use of the knowledge I had acquired in previous jobs. The franchise didn't require an ongoing financial burdens right from the start, like rent and wages, so I could grow the business at my own pace. It required a good combination of using my computer skills, people skills and also printing products.

## **How have you found the training and support given by Recognition Express?**

My training course was thorough and covered all I needed to know to get me started. In the first few months I had lots of questions about printing or sourcing items and phoned often and the support was always there and any problem always got sorted or answered. The marketing materials are excellent, the website and technical services are always being expanded, new products are brought in occasionally as needed.

## **How was your first year in business?**

I didn't quite make my target for sales but I enjoyed it and wasn't far off. Plus I probably spent extra time putting things in place for the future, internally and with external customers, so in my second year I exceeded the target and the groundwork in the first year really paid off.

## **How do you see your business progressing?**

In the next year it will be just about building on what has gone before and getting more clients and developing those we have. My husband has now given up his job (at the beginning of year 3) and is full time as well which has released me to do sales and marketing only. We will need bigger premises in the next year to two years. We already outsource book-keeping and occasionally have extra people in to do big jobs, that will happen more and more. I expect to have to invest in some further equipment but I am not sure whether that will be embroidery machinery, engraving or a large format printer. That will also depend on what happens elsewhere within the network so I can work effectively with the other branches of Recognition Express around me.

## **Do you have any advice to anybody considering Recognition Express as a franchise?**

It is an excellent company with helpful staff at the Franchisor's office and some very professional fellow franchisees. I'd recommend it to anyone who is willing to work hard and wants to see a return on that investment.

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# Case Study

**Name :** Dennis D'Arcy, Recognition Express North Scotland

**Commenced Trading :** 1982

**Previous Job :** Director- Office Equipment

## **Why did you choose Recognition Express?**

When I became a Franchise Owner Recognition Express did not exist as we see it today, the company was called 'Badgeman' and essentially that's what we did- made badges. Originally, we bought the business from a couple who had been trading for about 9 months (they had to move abroad) but we recognised the potential of the business even then, in spite of the limited product range. Back then, the concept of wearing corporate name badges was awakening in the UK.

## **How have you found the training and support given by Recognition Express?**

Having experienced the 'training' in the early days, today's structure with regard to training and support is a world away from 1982. The implementation of the marketing support and tools now available plus in-house training is a fantastic package to tap in to with the opportunity to pick the pack that most suits your particular franchise. A reassuring aspect is that support is only an email or telephone call away.

## **How was your first year in business?**

My first year's experience is probably not very relevant in comparison to the present time; suffice to say that the tools are in more abundance today to allow new Franchise Owners the opportunity to realise a healthy turnover and profit in their first year.

## **How do you see your business progressing?**

Over the years we have embraced and invested in the manufacture of signage products and we will continue to realise and grow our business from this market sector. We also recognise that there is added value and additional revenue to be gained from the supply of promotional items and business gifts, and we will slot this into our portfolio of Recognition Express products. Essentially the diversity of products at our disposal whether it be manufactured in-house or buy-through will see our company grow year on year.

## **Do you have any advice to anybody considering Recognition Express as a franchise?**

Firstly do your homework. Talk to people and other Franchise Owners, also have a look at yourself and question as to whether you feel good about what you see and can be enthusiastic about selling the concept of the franchise. With this being for most people their first step into self-employment, it is reassuring to know that Recognition Express has firstly the experience and more importantly the right structure in place to support you.

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# Case Study

**Name :** Alex Newman, Recognition Express Coventry

**Commenced Trading :** March 2005

**Previous Job :** IT Support

## **Why did you choose Recognition Express?**

As an employee of Recognition Express Limited I already knew the systems and business model and most importantly, saw first hand that it worked.

## **How have you found the training and support given by Recognition Express?**

I was in a unique position as I was already well versed in the production and IT elements of the course. However, I found the sales and marketing training invaluable as these were new to me, as well as the training on the accounts and database systems.

## **How was your first year in business?**

Coming from an IT background I found sales and building customer relationships daunting to begin with. Nevertheless, I followed the systems and processes recommended by the Franchisor which brought us success, and now I'm happy to say this is second nature to me. As a result, the first year was very hard work but good; we achieved our target.

## **How do you see your business progressing?**

I aim for a yearly growth on turnover and increased margins due to the introduction of large format printing to the product range. At the end of year two I am looking to expand upon our existing customer base by moving to a more sales orientated role and aim to have 20 to 30 key accounts that I deal with personally within the next year.

## **Do you have any advice to anybody considering Recognition Express as a franchise?**

Bear in mind that your are not buying a job and running your own business demands a change in mind-set. Be prepared for plenty of hard work and long hours but you will reap the rewards!

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# Case Study

**Name :** Stuart Fisher, Recognition Express Harrow

**Commenced Trading :** January 2008

**Previous Job :** Finance Director- Exhibition & Conference Venue

## **Why did you choose Recognition Express?**

I had always fancied running my own business in some shape or form, and following a failed management buy-out I decided I did not want to look back in 10 years and wish I had taken the plunge. I researched purchasing my own business and found that was far too risky for a man with a wife, mortgage and two kids! I then started looking at franchises and went up to Birmingham for the National Franchise Exhibition. I wanted to move away from finance and do something different and came across Recognition Express. After having a good chat with Nigel Toplis, managing director, I thought the franchise had a good connection to the business I had been involved in for the last few years. So after discussing it with my wife, who thought I was having a mid life crisis, I took a bungee jump out of my comfort zone and purchase a franchise with Recognition Express in December 2007.

## **How have you found the training and support given by Recognition Express?**

I can honestly say that the organisation does everything it says on the label: comprehensive initial training with refreshers if needed; great support from head office in terms of technical, marketing and sourcing enquiries; and a very helpful network amongst the other 46 franchise owners.

In addition there are quarterly meetings with Nigel Toplis the managing director, which have been hugely valuable in helping me to focus on my business in the right direction. He is a great sounding board for new ideas and opportunities. Recognition Express is providing me with the base on which I can build a successful franchise business, to achieve my personal and business goals.

## **How do you see your business progressing?**

At present there's just myself and my wife Bev part-time. I'm planning on bringing Bev more into the business as the kids become more independent. We've hit our first year target of £75,000 of sales (in 10 months) and we'd like to double our turnover and our profit in 2009. I would also like to double the number of clients wanting repeat orders and in 5 years time I would like to have built the business up to £500,000 turnover with a database of 200-300 repeat business clients.

## **What advice would you give to someone just about to commence their first year as a franchisee?**

Enjoy it and work hard. Plan your time carefully because there are a million different jobs to do, from sales and marketing, to accounting, credit control and invoicing. Make sure you get your invoices out on time and keep a watchful eye on your cash flow. Lastly, network as much as possible!

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# Case Study

**Name :** Keith Burr, Recognition Express Newbury

**Commenced Trading :** April 2009

**Previous Job :** Sales and Marketing Manager

## **What is your business about?**

If you can put a logo on it we can supply it. We specialise in supplying branded business gifts, clothing and personalised promotional products, name badges, staff awards, posters and signs to businesses, schools and organisations. Our products have been instrumental in maximising the impact of many household names in the UK. So, whether you are a large international corporation or a small charity, you'll benefit from a supplier that can help increase your exposure with an individually tailored solution.

## **What do you specialise in?**

We are a one-stop supplier and offer a complete service for all branded items. We have no minimum order and can turnaround orders in 48 hours. With my experience in both sales and marketing I can add value through offering a free consultation service helping customers to select the appropriate product for the target audience.

## **How do you start?**

Recognition Express is a franchise business which was established in 1979 and is now the European market leader in corporate recognition products. It has been a network of 43 franchisees operating across the UK and five master franchisees in Europe. I bought the local franchise last month.

## **Why should businesses invest in marketing in a recession?**

Those businesses that maintain a high profile in the marketplace throughout this recession will emerge as winners. By personalising items with their name or logo the recipient has something that is unique to him or her. These personalised items tend to stay on the desk and be valued, allowing you to keep your company name in front of your customer.

Similarly, new customers may not be in an immediate position to buy but you need to keep your name in front of them. Doing nothing is not an option - it simply allows your competitors to move in and steal a march.

## **What sets you apart from the rest?**

We are far more than a promotional products supplier. We can provide a personal service giving free advice and design ideas to help devise a winning campaign. It could be a business has spent a lot of money in the past on give-aways with little success.

I will be able to point out what might have gone wrong and suggest a more effective way to reach those targets.

## **Are you confident about the future?**

Yes. I feel very optimistic because I have first hand experience of how successful the use of properly targeted promotional items can be, particularly in challenging trading conditions. With more companies chasing fewer customers it's vital for businesses to keep their existing customers and react quickly to companies that have been let down by their existing supplier. The only way to do this is to keep your company name at the forefront.

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