



## **ACE BODY CORPORATE MANAGEMENT**

PROFESSIONAL PERSONAL SERVICE

### **Expert Opinion Piece by Stephen Raff**

Franchisor of Ace Body Corporate Management

#### **‘Culture is King when selecting the right franchise for you’.**

As Franchisor and CEO of one of Australia’s largest strata management companies, I am often asked one simple question ‘What makes a franchisee successful’?

My answer to this question has evolved quite significantly over the years and if truth be told, measuring success can be interpreted in a myriad number of ways as some people measure success according to financial growth, whereas others find work/ life balance as a better measurement of success, or even something completely different entirely.

For the sake of this article, I will determine that success can be measured by overall happiness. Happiness is an umbrella term that considers work/ life balance, financial security and finding challenging yet rewarding work as a franchisee, but most importantly happiness correlates to belonging to a group of likeminded individuals that share purpose and direction. That is why belonging to a franchise group can be so empowering and I would argue that a successful franchisee is always someone that best fits the ‘Culture’ of the franchise they decide to belong to.

A successful franchisee in my opinion is someone that best embraces the culture and group mentality of the brand that they have decided to represent. As a franchisee you are a part of the brand and by default have become an owner in the business.

All potential franchisees when purchasing a franchise, should first research the franchise and investigate whether their own personal goals and aspirations marry up with the culture of the franchise group, because if not, it is very likely not the franchise for you.

I have met with hundreds of potential franchisees over the past 22 years that on paper have been the perfect candidate for my industry, they have been university educated, have good financial understanding, comprehend the importance of local area marketing and have experience in mediation.

However, when it has come time to meet with the franchisee face to face, it often becomes apparent that their goals and aspirations are completely different to the culture of the franchise group.

While short term this would not be too much of a problem as the potential franchisee undeniably has the skills to operate a franchise and likely grow and improve the overall brand, but long term this could lead to a toxic work environment for other franchisees and create conflict with the franchisor when misaligned values start to become noticeable.

Happiness is subsequently at an all-time low, because the franchisee wants to head in one direction while the rest of the group is moving the other way and while the group culture will eventually win, it has taken time and effort away from focusing on more important endeavours.



## ACE BODY CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

PROFESSIONAL PERSONAL SERVICE

Allowing these people to become franchisees would have been doing a disservice, not only to myself, but also to current franchisees that are on this journey together that believe in the culture and direction of the franchise group and an established way of doing things.

While it is true, that goals and ambition change with time, it is always best to have everyone working together and if I get the sense that someone is not going to be a good fit culturally, I thank them for their interest but suggest that this is not the best option for all concerned.

I have always valued the honesty of potential franchisees when considering what franchise might be the best fit for them and I know other Franchisors also value honesty very highly.

Entering into a franchise agreement is one of the biggest decisions that you will ever make in your life, and while everyone has some doubts about their own ability or potential risks with operating their own business, the one thing you should be certain of is that your personal goals align with the culture and direction of the franchise group.

The Franchise Industry in Australia is incredibly diverse and there are many options available to potential purchasers, so you should never feel rushed into making a major decision without being confident, doing so will just lead to problems for both you and the Franchisor in the first 18 months.

As a new or potential franchisee, I will let you in on a little piece of advice. It is much more advantageous to feel happy and confident as a franchisee that embraces the company culture and believes in the brand long term, than operating within a brand that you do not care for, with the only thing driving you being the financial gain. Your motivation for carrying out the work will likely wane much faster than if you were passionate about the brand and company you're representing, and without passion you may not be getting the best successes that could be achieved to help grow your franchise.

I have many franchisees that have been with me for over 15 years. These franchisees have been integral to the development of a successful culture and while there have been times when I would have liked them to grow the business more, they are happy with the current position of their business including their financial position and work life balance.

Securing long term happy relationships with your franchisor is one of the critical factors determining sustained growth and expansion within a franchise environment and this can be directly related back to having a strong company culture.

Okay, so now that we have established how important the alignment between a franchisee and the existing franchise system is, what can you as a franchisee do to ensure that you are entering the right long-term environment for you?

1. Be completely honest with the Franchisor or Head Office about what you would like to achieve by entering into this franchise system and ask whether this aligns with their current franchise culture.
2. Contact franchisees already operating in the system and ask them whether they are happy to belong to the organisation.



## ACE BODY CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

PROFESSIONAL PERSONAL SERVICE

3. Ask the Franchisor to provide the contact information of some industry relevant suppliers and then ask them how the franchise is perceived in the industry.
4. Repeat question 1 and ask further questions to the Franchisor and head office.

Culture really is king when entering a franchise environment, so I implore all potential franchisees to do their homework and make sure that they are going to fit in well with the current culture and vision of the franchise.

Franchising really is a great opportunity that allows many different people the opportunity to operate their own business, I wish you all the best in your hunt for the perfect cultural fit.

Best Wishes,

Stephen Raff,

Franchisor and CEO, Ace Body Corporate Management

[Stephen.r@acebodycorp.com.au](mailto:Stephen.r@acebodycorp.com.au)

### **Ace Body Corporate Management**

Ace Body Corporate Management (Ace) is the largest 100% Australian owned strata management company with franchises and their support staff managing property worth an estimated replacement value of \$20 billion. Ace currently manages over 60,000 strata title units nationwide. Website: [www.acebodycorp.com.au](http://www.acebodycorp.com.au)

### **Stephen Raff**

Stephen Raff is the CEO and Franchisor of Ace Body Corporate Management. Stephen now supports over 118 franchised areas under the Ace name around Australia.

Stephen holds a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, is a qualified Surveyor for Retirement Villages, an Accredited Mediator and he holds a Master's Degree in Management.

Stephen is also the author of The Body Corporate Handbook, Strata Living Stories and he co-authored the bestselling book, Top Franchise CEOs' Secrets Revealed.