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How to Choose a Franchisor

First and foremost, you are choosing your working partner for the next five or more years at least - ask yourself, "Can I work with these people?"

Generally an unethical franchisor will reveal themselves very early on in investigations. However, the following seven steps will aid your choice.

STEP ONE

Speak to those involved in the franchising industry, read articles about franchisors.

THE BRITISH FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION: (BFA) This is a trade organisation, a "watchdog set up by the franchise industry. Not all franchisors belong and it is not necessarily a reflection on their integrity if they don't" - quote by the NatWest. The BFA market a pack on franchising containing a wealth of information and they have a website showing details of members' franchises.

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STEP TWO

Judge the franchisor from the moment of your first contact - the rule for running a successful business is that you must be good at three things to succeed. They are:

1. communication
2. communication
3. communication

If the franchisor does not communicate well - do you want them as your business partner?

STEP THREE

Judge the quality of the franchise prospectus - has the franchisor invested time and money into presenting a quality proposition - is the franchise offering clear? (Communication once again!)

STEP FOUR

Use the web site, www.companieshouse.gov.uk or other sources to check the viability of the franchise company.

STEP FIVE

Check the quality of the franchisor's Franchise Award Programme, are all the stages clear and the purpose of each stage explained? Enlightened franchisors will issue a comprehensive Franchise Award Manual (see Choosing a Franchise).

STEP SIX

Visit the franchisor's head office. Judge the support and personnel involved: · executive support (marketing and financial) · training · administration (particularly important if the franchise proposition offers centralised accounts and communications)

STEP SEVEN

Judge their willingness to allow you to speak to existing franchisees. The final decision is yours alone, however a fee paid to an experienced franchise lawyer for opinion is money well spent.