

Case Study:

ServiceMaster® Canada

From Franchiser to Franchisee, PI® Supports ServiceMaster® Canada

For more than 50 years, ServiceMaster® Canada, a division of the ServiceMaster Co. brand, has been providing commercial and residential customers with superior cleaning services through a network of more than 350 franchised business licenses throughout Canada. Headquartered in Mississauga, Ontario, ServiceMaster Canada is a leader in “modern carpet care maintenance methods,” and pioneered the sale of franchises by service lines, now the standard across ServiceMaster International. In addition to serving communities through independently owned and operated franchises, ServiceMaster Canada has also been a long-standing proponent of the Predictive Index® (PI®) behavioral assessment tool from PI Worldwide® at the Franchisee and Franchiser levels.

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Ian England, Vice President of Operations

Predictive Index for the Franchise

Ian England, vice president of operations for ServiceMaster Canada was first introduced to the Predictive Index more than 25 years ago while a ServiceMaster Franchise owner. Initially, his interest was to improve job fit but he soon realized the PI had many more benefits. Employing the PI across his business, England acquired powerful insight about what would make him and his employees more successful. Notably, the results of the PIs indicated that some employees — including him — were in the wrong jobs.

He recalls, “I’m a salesperson/marketer by trade but as the Franchise owner I was focusing my energy on operations. Meanwhile, I had my operations guy doing sales. The Predictive Index accurately identified that we were in the wrong jobs, enabling us to make a change that worked much better for us and the business.” After switching responsibilities which improved productivity, England continued to apply the PI across his business. He notes, “The PI was a great eye opener for me. I had no experience in ‘people management’ at the time. It dramatically changed the way we did business.”

Supporting Franchisee Selection

After more than a decade as a successful ServiceMaster Franchisee, England sold his business and joined the corporate office to manage operations for the brand. ServiceMaster Canada corporate also actively used the Predictive Index for hiring new employees and managing the company’s more than 50 employees. “We use the PI religiously to bring new people into the organization whether they are corporate additions or new franchise owners. The PI is a component of the application, so every applicant must complete a PI before moving forward with us,” says England.

One of the most beneficial applications of the PI for ServiceMaster Canada has been during the franchisee selection process. Each year, England and his team review on average 30-40 applications for new sales or transfer sales (a new owner for an existing franchise) across four business divisions. This has created two distinct franchise models: a “Start-up” Franchise, which is a new business in a new territory, and a “Mature” Franchise which is an existing territory under new management.

As England describes, “A start-up franchise requires a very different skill set compared to a more mature franchise.” For instance, he continues, “A start-up franchise needs to be led by someone who can work quickly and independently to introduce and build up a service in a new area. Mature franchise environments however, need a different type of manager, one that will focus on maintaining the business.”

In general, England explains, “We look at multiple components of an applicant including the resume, interview, and so forth. The PI helps us come to a conclusion about the candidate in a relatively short amount of time. Unlike a lot of other tools, the PI provides a ‘deep quick read’ on an individual and allows us to manage the hiring process ourselves.”

Finding the Right Franchisee Fit

One key behavioral trait England and his team look for is stamina, the ability to keep up in an environment. With 350 franchise businesses across Canada, each franchise location operates at a different pace making it imperative for a franchisee to be able to adapt within a given environment over the long term. “If you’re going to be selling in Toronto for instance, which like most cities has a pretty aggressive pace, you’ve got to have a certain amount of ‘gas in the tank’ to keep up. On the other hand, Franchise managers in a more rural community may value an employee with a higher level of patience.”

The PI is unique in being able to measure this capacity, providing a concrete understanding of one’s ability to thrive in a particular environment. England explains, “The more we use the Predictive Index, the more we uncover new applications for better understanding a person’s natural tendencies and how they may fit within our organization.”

PI for Predicting Success

As part of the application process, England and his team meet with applicants to discuss their business plans, their credentials and their PIs. The PI results quickly reveal the strengths and potential challenges an applicant would bring to the franchise organization, opening up the discussions to ensure the venture will be worthwhile for all parties.

“The Franchise business attracts people from all careers with varying levels of industry or management experience. Rather than discount some one’s background, the PI hones in on the areas in the application where we may need to dig deeper to determine if and how a particular franchisee would be successful.” England shares an example of an accountant-turned-franchise owner looking to start a ServiceMaster Canada in a very competitive market. As the PI confirmed, the candidate was lacking in sales ability—a key attribute necessary for successfully driving a start-up franchise. England explains, “It is our obligation to point out the challenges the applicant will face. The Predictive Index enables us to identify these areas and then work with the applicant to reach some kind of resolve. Sometimes we can brainstorm ideas to fill in the gaps and other times, the candidate realizes this is not the right fit. Either way, the decision is based on concrete data rather than uninformed presumptions.”

Helping Franchisees Make Hiring Decisions

The Predictive Index has been a valuable tool for many of the Franchisees themselves. Just like England during his days as a Franchise owner, many larger franchises are often faced with difficult decisions in terms of hiring for key positions and making promotions. The Predictive Index provides an objective assessment of the employee and the situation to determine if the proposed next step is in fact a good move. “A lot of time the business issue a franchisee is experiencing is in fact a ‘people’ issue in the sense that their employees may not be in the right positions for success and therefore impacting overall business,” said England. Using the PI, England and his team help counsel the Franchisees to manage their people most effectively.

England and his team have also used the PI’s companion tool, Performance Requirement Options™ (PRO), which helps companies better understand the behavioral requirements for the positions they are hiring. England describes, “One of the biggest ‘Aha’ moments for the management team when using the PRO was realizing that we were defining one role in very different ways.” The PRO helps ensure everyone is on the same page about the requirements and expectations for a position. “The PRO is a critical tool that we hope to be engaging more in the future,” England says.

After more than 25 years working with the Predictive Index on two very different sides of the same business, England reiterates the importance of the Predictive Index to supporting and growing the ServiceMaster brand. “Every business decision we make goes to further the ServiceMaster brand and the franchise community. That is why we believe if you hire someone knowing what you’re going to see in six months, you have a better chance of keeping people long term and productive. The Predictive Index is the one tool that lets you understand what you’re getting into from the beginning so you have a much better chance of succeeding.”