



MIXING



FRANCHISING AND FRIENDSHIP

Jani-King franchisees Terry Browne and Jillian Weir play to their strengths

By Lauren d'Entremont

When Terry Browne and Jillian Weir went into business together as Jani-King franchisees, they had a strong foundation from which to build. For starters, not only had they been friends for years, they were already quite familiar with the janitorial services brand's concept and offering.

"We were friends in Ottawa for years and then I moved away. I was working with Jani-King's Eastern Ontario regional office and I mentioned the opportunity to Jill, but it wasn't the right timing," says Browne. "Later on we talked about it again and Jill was ready to make a change, and so that's when we took the leap."

Weir was still living in Ottawa at the time, working in the banking industry. A new challenge sounded intriguing, though, so she packed up and moved to Peterbor-

ough to operate the franchise with her friend Browne, a seasoned entrepreneur, who previously operated other businesses and had been employed for five years with Jani-King as a telemarketer.

"Because I'd already worked with the Jani-King system, I had a good knowledge of how it worked and I knew how I would work it and how it could be beneficial," Browne explains. "It's a small investment for a much larger return. Franchising takes the guesswork out of running your own business, and it gave us a change of lifestyle."

For Weir, it was a bigger leap of faith. "The opportunity to start the franchise with Terry came at exactly the right time for me in 2010. I quit the bank, gave notice on my house, and packed up myself and my dogs to take on

“IT’S A SMALL INVESTMENT FOR A MUCH LARGER RETURN. FRANCHISING TAKES THE GUESSWORK OUT OF RUNNING YOUR OWN BUSINESS, AND IT GAVE US A CHANGE OF LIFESTYLE.”



the adventure of self-employment.” Looking back, Weir sees the move as serendipitous – she would have likely lost her job when her previous employer was acquired by another company and layoffs were issued about a year later.

VENTURING INTO NEW TERRITORY

Once in Peterborough, the friends got right to work, dividing up duties according to their strengths. Weir is the administrator, looking after things like scheduling and payroll, while Browne looks after sales and client and employee relations. Their first big challenge? Getting the quoting process to add up.

“Jill and I decided right from the start we would create, solicit, and quote our own potential client base. I was adept at booking business, but we were both new to outside sales calls,” says Browne. “The initial challenge was working out the quote process and feeling confident and comfortable when presenting the quote to potential clients. With time came experience, and we’ve learned from every new client what needed to be tweaked and adjusted each time, until we found what worked in this particular territory.”

The friends add that having the backing of the Jani-King brand has helped them in building their client base and achieving success. “The biggest advantage we’ve benefited from has been

the freedom to utilize the brand name for bidding on larger contracts. Those clients see our brand as an established player in the commercial cleaning industry with the resources capable of managing their personalized needs,” Browne says.

“Since the beginning, we’ve had great success with the business model that a Jani-King franchise provides. It has offered us opportunities to book clients we might not have been otherwise eligible to obtain, been an excellent revenue stream, and provided a work schedule flexible to our personal pursuits,” Weir says, adding that it’s been very helpful to have access to Jani-King’s resources and expertise at both the regional and national levels.

Once they began building their client base, Weir and Browne made a commitment to get to know each client’s

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unique needs. "When we first started, it was paramount to us that we never lose a client due to non-performance and we've never had an issue with that," says Weir. Both she and Browne have done all the work required of their staff of cleaners so that they know precisely what each job entails, how long it takes, and what's needed to get the job done right. This also means that they can step in if a cleaner is unable to complete a job.

"The buck stops with us, so we need to do what needs to be done, and if that's stripping and waxing a floor, we have to do it," Browne says. "We're on duty from the first email in the morning until the last of the cleaning is done. If you're at a party or a barbecue and someone calls in sick, well, you're going in to clean."

The franchisees would advise any new Jani-King franchisees to adopt this hands-on approach, as having first-hand knowledge of the "scope of the clean" not only allows you to take over duties when cleaners are unable to, but also to communicate efficiently about it to both client and cleaner.

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

An early and ongoing challenge the franchisees have faced head-on is the need to rely on others to operate effectively. "One of the biggest challenges for us – and in this industry in general – is that you are relying on your staff for a lot of your success. Your clients are giving you access to their properties and spaces, including keys and access codes, and you need to be able to retain that security and reliability. All of our staff have to pass background checks and be bonded," says Weir. "We have a good base of staff right now who do an excellent job."

Browne and Weir also advise new franchisees to start slowly like they did, adding accounts over time. "Don't move too fast by booking too many clients at once. Start slow and ensure each new account is up and running smoothly before starting another new account."

It also helps to be clear about the objectives that new franchisees have set for their businesses. "Our

goals were to achieve financial independence and a better quality of life. We've achieved that and more," says Browne. "An unexpected achieved goal for both of us has been the skills we've built during the past six years. We have learned to wear a multitude of hats, ranging from managers, cleaners, HR reps, and health and safety regulators, to accountants, bookkeepers, and service technicians – you name it."

Looking back on their time as franchisees, the two friends credit keeping things light and having each other to rely on as keys to their success.

"Owning this franchise with Jill has allowed us to operate a business in such a way that it has helped us achieve both financial and personal satisfaction. We have achieved the goals we set out professionally, and have acquired an enormous wealth of experience for both our life resumes," Browne says.

"This has been an amazing opportunity and continues to be. We look forward to whatever new experiences await us down the road, and will meet them with the same focus and attitude we had when we first started this journey together. I could not imagine operating this business without Jill as my business partner."

Adds Weir, "It's also really important to keep a sense of humour." Browne chimes in, saying, "And an open outlook. Like with anything, you'll have good days and bad days. Having each other to rely upon has been without question the best part of the experience." 🍀

JANI-KING STATS

Franchise units in Canada: 497, **U.S.:** 6342, **Other:** 2157

Corporate units in U.S.: 21

Franchise fee: Varies with plan purchased

Investment required: Varies with plan purchased

Available territories: AB, BC, MB, NB, NL, NS, ON, PE, SK, US

In business since: 1969

Franchising since: 1974

CFA member since: 1995

