

Creative Colors International

This franchise business, which specializes in repairing leather, fabric and vinyl, needed help repairing their reporting structure — and reached out to Supporting Strategies

As this family business expanded to more than 70 locations nationwide, many of its franchisees were having trouble managing the day-to-day bookkeeping operations. Supporting Strategies offers a solution.

Client Profile

Jim and JoAnn Foster launched Creative Colors International (CCI) in Illinois in 1980, repairing vinyl furniture at a local hospital. Since then, the business has expanded in size and scope, with franchises that specialize in repairing an array of furniture coverings in locations ranging from auto dealers to airports to private homes.

An Evolving Business

Mark J. Bollman, CCI's President and Co-Owner, started working at the company in 1990 while attending college. Having progressed through the ranks from working nights repairing damaged seats at O'Hare International Airport, Bollman has had hands-on experience with every facet of the business. He understands the challenges of the company's rapid expansion, from the perspective of both franchisor and franchisee.

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President and Co-Owner
Creative Colors International

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“As we have evolved as a company, so have our franchises,” Bollman says. Some franchisees work exclusively onsite with auto dealers; others work remotely with a variety of clients. These different priorities have resulted in a hodgepodge of invoicing procedures and bookkeeping systems.

One consistent tendency has emerged, however: “For an owner/operator just starting out, doing the work all day and then coming home to a stack of invoices when they’re tired hasn’t been conducive to on-time reporting,” Bollman says. As a result, many franchisees have been behind in submitting the necessary reports to the home office.

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Jeff Boyer,
Owner
CCI North Dallas

A Pilot Program Takes Flight

To try to get everyone on the same page, Bollman turned to Lynette DeRose, Managing Director of Supporting Strategies | Chicago Southland. Working initially with two franchisees, DeRose developed a pilot bookkeeping program. The goal was to develop a reporting structure that would be consistent for key categories, yet flexible enough to account for variable pain points across franchises.

For Texan Jeff Boyer, who purchased the CCI North Dallas franchise in 2016, the pilot program paid immediate dividends. Boyer has five territories in the busy Dallas-Fort Worth area.

“It’s just me and seven technicians, and we’re all busy,” Boyer says. “So any bookkeeping work, even just scanning

and sending over expense receipts, is something that I’ve personally had to slot time for.”

DeRose makes sure he stays on schedule. “The thing I appreciate about Supporting Strategies is that they will actually push me to hurry up and get stuff over to them,” Boyer says. “Before, I was having to chase the bookkeeper we were working with. It’s made things easier from the standpoint that Supporting Strategies is worried about it, so we don’t have to be. We don’t worry about them making major mistakes with our books, and we don’t worry that they’re not going to be accessible to us when we need them. That’s a dramatic improvement. And our fee structure is now predictable every month. All good things.”

Reaching New Heights

Bollman hopes the Supporting Strategies pilot program is just the first step toward companywide standardization. “Our goal, when we make our next round of FDD [franchise disclosure document] changes, is to incorporate a set monthly fee to have the bookkeeping package be a requirement,” he says. “That will give us a consistency in franchise reporting, and all owners will submit royalties on time.”

In addition, he’s hopeful Supporting Strategies will help CCI fully migrate to a cloud-based bookkeeping system that will help enable a “100% mobile” field service management platform. “My guys in the field will be able to generate invoices, take payments, process them, sync them up to [the cloud] and eliminate the data entry,” Bollman says.

Unlimited Visibility

From the time he was in college, repairing seats at O’Hare, Bollman has had a keen sense of CCI’s long-term potential. He thinks Supporting Strategies will help him reach the next level. “Where we’re headed,” he says, “is that when a new franchise comes onboard, bookkeeping will be just part of the turnkey package.”

Get started today!