

How I Protect the Environment as a Green Cleaning Franchisee



KATE TAYLOR
ENTREPRENEUR STAFF

Staff Writer. Covers franchise-related trends and topics.



NOVEMBER 24, 2014

Lindsay Dellasega wanted to open a business that aligned with her core values, creating jobs for her community while protecting the environment. EcoMaids fit the bill perfectly. The eco-friendly cleaning service uses products free of toxins and allergens. Dellasega became the first area developer for the franchise, and now controls a territory that spans all of Oregon, Washington and Northern California.

Here's what she has learned about combining environmental values with business.

Name: Lindsay Dellasega

Franchise owned: EcoMaids franchisee in Portland, Ore.

How long have you owned a franchise?

We have been in operation since May 2010.

Why franchising?

I have an entrepreneurial spirit, driven by risk and reward, but my experience is in utilizing available resources to develop and improve. I didn't set out to start a franchised business, but when researching available business opportunities to better understand the eco-friendly market, I found EcoMaids compelling. I realized the benefit of buying into someone else's good idea, and bringing it to life.

What were you doing before you became a franchise owner?

I was vice president of operations at a construction firm. I started as a receptionist and throughout the nearly 10 years I was there, I proved my value in developing business systems to help the company grow from one location to five throughout Oregon. It was rewarding to learn, create and refine systems that could be repeated and managed centrally for controlled growth.

Why did you choose this particular franchise?

The brand easily aligned with my core values. It was important for me to start a business that offered value, not only to me and my family, but the community by creating good jobs and leaving a positive impact. I was seeking my MBA with a focus on sustainable business and was committed to the authentic delivery of a good product that improved people's lives and reduced our impact on the environment.

How much would you estimate you spent before you were officially open for business?

Initial investment was about \$95,000, including \$30,000 of capital reserves and another \$30,000 for the first three months of working capital, payroll and overhead. About \$35,000 was actual pre-startup costs, and included the small office setup and rent, equipment (computer, phones and software, three team kits, one car with wrap), initial insurance and franchise fees. Additionally, I started with a standard (smallest) market and expanded within the first six months, with another \$35,000 investment.

Where did you get most of your advice/do most of your research?

I relied mostly on my own market research and the general guidance from professors at Marylhurst University, where I received my MBA. They helped to guide my entrepreneurial drive so I could discover what really wanted out of a business. I also gained a lot from talking with existing franchisees and then meeting with the owner.

What were the most unexpected challenges of opening your franchise?

I feel I was ready for the unexpected, knowing I was creating this from the ground up and not expecting anything to be easy or "out of the box." I continue to learn every day. I'm committed to improving and being proactive with my business rather than waiting for things to happen.

What advice do you have for individuals who want to own their own franchise?

Have a vision and goals to allow a forward focus and continue to refine the plan to stay on course with your vision. A franchise is not a short cut to success – the brand cannot hold up on its own – so be prepared to invest time, energy and money in it. It is extremely rewarding to build something you can be proud of.

What's next for you and your business?

I recently became an area developer for EcoMaids, and my new territory expands the entire state of Oregon and includes cities in Washington and Northern California. We have a great opportunity to build up the EcoMaids name, and I'm looking forward to being able to help other likeminded entrepreneurs reach their goals. As an area developer, I look forward to establishing new businesses across the Northwest. Using the success we have achieved in Portland as a model, I am confident we can replicate the EcoMaids brand quickly throughout the territory.

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/240119>