

Setting the Standard

3 suppliers that kept the world growing

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During the Covid-19 pandemic, franchisors were forced to work with their international licensees remotely. Travel in both directions stopped. All communication was remote, often through video services like Microsoft Teams and Zoom. All training, support, and auditing of operations had to be done remotely. Despite increased communication, identifying and correcting operations and development problems became extremely difficult.

For restaurant brands accustomed to visiting their international locations in person to see that their standards are being followed, this often turned into having the licensee do an iPhone video of the front and back of house in their restaurants—not a foolproof manner of identifying problems with quality control and operating standards.

As is typical of franchisors and their suppliers, they became innovative. This column

focuses on three franchise suppliers that have become standards for global franchise development, marketing, and operations. During the recent IFA in-person annual convention in San Diego, I visited with Constant Contact, FranConnect, and World Manager. Each has a global solution for their franchisor clients that have become post-pandemic industry standards. These tools manage intellectual property, training, general support, audits, and communications through web- and app-based tools that are available 24/7/365.

Constant Contact

Anne Cardente is channel partner acquisition manager at Constant Contact, a web-based global business platform that gives franchisees the marketing tools they need to succeed. She says the company provides customized onboarding, training, marketing resources, and ongoing support for franchisees worldwide.

They provide a centralized dashboard that shows the franchisor what is happening across their franchisee marketing anywhere in the world. Franchisor control of email marketing, social media, digital ads, landing pages, and surveys the international licensee is using helps keep the message consistent across all countries. This allows franchisors to give franchisees the tools they need to ensure consistent branding, plus the flexibility to customize content for their market. Franchise partners unlock access to all of Constant Contact's online marketing tools and those built just for the franchise business model,

such as Central Send, Campaign Approval, and Global Unsubscribe.

A centralized dashboard provides franchisors with insight and visibility into what's working and what isn't based on opens, clicks, etc. so your team can plan its next steps. You also can add multiple users to your account with varying user permissions and control who can then create, edit, and publish campaigns or make billing-related changes. With customized onboarding, marketing resources, and ongoing support, Constant Contact's team of experts can train international franchisees and provide hands-on support by phone or email anytime they need help. I especially like that the marketing collateral used by the international franchisees is managed and controlled in real time by the franchisor at home.

FranConnect

When it comes to technological innovation in the international franchising space, Keith Gerson, president of franchise operations for FranConnect, told me that there are some very compelling remote solutions for franchise brands headquartered abroad or that use master franchisees.

Using the right technology, he says, you can support any type of organization and ownership structure, including very complicated ones that can exist when operating abroad. An example is having flexible technological hierarchies of franchisees under master franchisees. One of the most critical technologies involves managing a single



source of truth of franchise information, along with managing a multi-level global hierarchy for consistent reporting and the ability to share key resources and management engagement across the globe.

Additionally, many of the challenges associated with international franchising can be resolved through franchise sales technology, where you can align processes and gain visibility into franchise development efforts with your master franchisees. There also are solutions related to the opening or reopening of locations via processes to scale efforts for reduced time to value. And in the area of operations, innovative solutions exist for sharing key business insights on unit performance and executing performance improvement plans.

World Manager

One of the biggest challenges for franchisors during the pandemic was their inability to bring people from their international licenses to their home country for training and to send their teams to countries to train staff in-country. This was especially hard for restaurant brands, where typically the franchisor sends a restaurant opening team into a new country for two to four weeks to ensure that the restaurant or store is opened with local staff properly trained. World Manager's education suite allows franchisors to create a customized online training academy and deliver nationally accredited qualifications with any training provider.

This web- and app-based service allows franchisors to communicate to employees

worldwide and to track standards, eliminating frustrations over inconsistencies. Franchisees and managers in locations both domestic and abroad are empowered with up-to-date, branded content to more effectively train their teams and drive consistency through the company's learning management system (LMS).

Franchisors stay up to date and track each location in real time, ensuring a high standard from day one in the operation of retail and restaurants units. Location audits, service desk tickets for equipment or product support, forms tools, and other key tools allow franchises to provide franchisees with what they need to run their businesses successfully. Real-time mobile operational compliance audits can be done with paperless records.

World Manager often made the difference between delaying the startup and ongoing training of staff and management at franchisor restaurants worldwide until after the pandemic, enabling new restaurants to open in 2020 and 2021 with state-of-the-art training customized to each franchisor's brand needs and standards. This service was used during the pandemic by many U.S. food and beverage brands including The Boiling Crab, The Coffee Club, and Walk-On's, which are clients of the company. According to Domino's, another client, "Using the World Manager platform, we've been able to maintain a 98% completion rate of training across all of our employees. This has had a direct correlation to our sales performance."

Bottom line

One of the biggest impacts of the pandemic was a major hit to global franchise development and operations because of the shutdown of travel to other countries. These suppliers and others allowed franchisors to manage, train, and support their international franchisees remotely, leading to the opening of new units, keeping existing units open, and maintaining global brand standards. Innovation in difficult times has resulted in better global operations and development going forward for the franchisors that invested in these remote management services. ■

William Edwards is CEO of Edwards Global Services (EGS) and a global advisor to CEOs. From initial global market research and country prioritization to developing new international markets and providing operational support around the world, EGS offers a complete international operations and development solution for franchisors based on experience, knowledge, a team on the ground in more than 40 countries, and trademarked processes based on decades of problem-solving. Contact him at bedwards@edwardsglobal.com or +1-949-224-3896. Read his latest biweekly global business newsletter at www.geowizard.biz.

