

CASE STUDY:

How Sport Clips Brings a Successful Franchise Brand To Canada

Introduction



Sport Clips, started in Austin, Texas by former U.S. Airforce Aircraft Commander, Gordon Logan, is a hair salon specializing in hair cuts for boys and men. Franchising since 1993, this dynamic system has over 1,800 locations in North America. Sport Clips has been in Canada since 2012. Sara, who is going into her eighth year with the company, works with franchisees from sea to shining sea.

What does it take to extend a successful franchise brand to a new country without spending too many resources? **Sara Belanger, Vice President of Operations, for Sport Clips Canada** works with franchisees from coast to coast to set them up for success using franchise coaching and processes adapted to their needs.

We sat down with Sara and she shared how she uses smart processes and tools.

A Day In The Life

What is your role?

Sara Belanger: "I am the VP of Operations for Canada. Our focus here is to put the

processes that are already established in the United States into Canada. My responsibilities include system-wide software launches and roll-outs such as POS or core operational software shared with franchisees. I also take care of national recruitment strategies, campaigns and platforms. I wear many hats, but I would be bored if I had the same tasks day after day. The diversity in the role keeps it interesting.

Management of all new store build-outs is also key to my role here at Sport Clips. That means taking the new franchisees through 'day one' in the field in terms of starting their new business after they have been on-boarded through their initial training. I navigate them through the entire build-out process task-by-task and we have regular calls to get that done. Once they are up and running, I do the ongoing coaching on operational strategies to grow their businesses. A big part of our franchise coaching is strategies to manage store teams in terms of development and engagement."

What strategy do you employ to set your franchisees up for success?

Sara Belanger: "Sport Clips started franchising in the early-90s, so they have over 25 years of experience building systems and processes. To make sure that our store owners are successful, we take them through every element of each process. We want to make sure that they are armed with the tools and information that they need."

What tools keep you on track?

Sara Belanger: "In terms of staying organized, FranConnect is a great help. It is an opportunity to get back into the system and have task-oriented items there that you can check off. We have processes in place for every development point including:

- Onboarding training
- Grand opening
- Store build-out
- Ongoing plans

This is something we can build into a process, and we use FranConnect to ensure that we are hitting every point on the checklist. After that, communication is key. We make sure that we are reaching out to franchisees on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, depending on where they are at in the lifecycle. We have a call with an agenda and create follow-up items to ensure that we are getting traction on our shared goals."

How do you use tasks specifically?

Sara Belanger: "We do 'Success Checks' which is what we call our Store Audits. Using FranConnect, we can store and track relevant follow-up tasks. We also use the Projects function when we are doing a store transfer or grand opening – all the associated tasks are there. We have it broken down by department and we are able to follow-up on that. If I see a task that hasn't been marked as complete, it is easy for me to see who needs a follow-up communication. It ensures that nothing gets missed."

"There is also a function to edit plans for ongoing enhancements. If we go through a process and find that there is something missing, we can build a stronger process for the next time. We don't need to rebuild the same tool over and over – it is a huge bonus for us."

What was the biggest challenge?

Sara Belanger: "Across Canada, I would say that recruitment is an ongoing challenge. We want to make sure that each store manager is not taking his or her foot off the gas in terms of finding those awesome new stylists. Having great stylists is the best way to ensure that our brand is the premium one that we all work towards as an organization. Once they are hired on, one of our first steps is to take them through a full checklist of what that new hire must go through to ensure





that we are setting them up for success. Do they have the tools that they need to function in our environment? Do they know what to do? We want everyone to be successful and they can only be successful if they have the tools and training.”

What advice would you give to someone who wants to take an established system and make it successful in a new market?

Sara Belanger: “Take a look at the processes in your system and adapt them where needed. We have taken some and broken them down further, so that they are more digestible chunks that will get quicker results. Look at your overall processes and where they would fit in that store’s development. Every team leader who comes on has a different set of experiences and different specialties. You may not train one team leader the same way that you train another one, for example.

When you look at them on an individual basis, you may want to simplify the training content to ensure that it is meaningful. Also having your actionable items created as tasks, helps you track and see progress. I would also advise to “never assume anything”.

Don’t assume that the franchisee knows something without being sure. Instead, ensure that the touch-points and ongoing communication is there. This helps you get in front of an issue as opposed to reacting to it because an assumption has been made.”

About FranConnect

FranConnect is the leading franchise management software provider. For 20 years, the FranConnect platform has served as the sales, operations, and marketing backbone for approximately 900 brands worldwide. Nine of the Franchise Times Top 10 Fastest-Growing franchise businesses rely on FranConnect to drive growth, improve profitability, and streamline operational performance. FranConnect customers span all sizes, growth phases, and industries and they grow 44% faster on average than the broader franchising market. Backed by private-equity investor Serent Capital, FranConnect is headquartered in Herndon, Virginia, with global operations in India and Canada.

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