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Franchise relationship cornerstone of ServiceMaster Clean's success in Canada

ServiceMASTER Clean

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A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN

ServiceMaster Clean hits homerun with innovative offerings, quality service

by Clare Tattersall

The year was 1929. The Chicago Cubs kicked off the World Series against the Philadelphia Athletics Oct. 8, at Wrigley Field — the first championship series game ever to be played at the iconic ballpark. The hometown heroes put forth a valiant effort but fell to their rivals. Four games later the Athletics crowned victory. It was a dark day for fans in the Windy City, but nothing compared to the devastation wrought soon after by Black Tuesday. The infamous stock market crash brought the Roaring Twenties to a screeching halt and swift change to many.

While 1929 is often memorialized as the end of an era, it marked a new beginning for a salesman by the name of Marion E. Wade. The former minor league baseball player — Wade was a catcher for the Chicago Braves — launched a mothproofing company that year, which he operated out of his home. During the Dirty Thirties, when unemployment was high and many companies closed their doors, Wade's new-found business weathered the economic storm, and persevered through the ensuing war years. By the early '50s, it had grown its

service offerings to include rug and carpet cleaning and, in 1954, the company changed its name to ServiceMaster — now one of the world's largest residential and commercial service networks, operating through seven industry-leading brands.

Around this time, ServiceMaster expanded beyond the country's northern border to Toronto. It was here that another salesman, Thane MacNeill, developed a unique carpet cleaning maintenance program, delivered through a network of individually owned franchises. Soon after MacNeill became the owner of the distributorship, marking the early beginnings of ServiceMaster Clean in Canada.

More than 10 years (and the establishment of several distributorships) later, Gary Franklin joined ServiceMaster with a vision of uniting the Canadian franchises under a national banner to provide a leadership role within the industry and better service to customers. This was achieved when he bought out all the distributorships in the early '90s.

Today, ServiceMaster of Canada Ltd. is a wholly owned subsidiary of ServiceMaster

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- Daily, weekly, monthly cleaning services
- Office cleaning
- Waste removal
- Entrance & lobby programs
- Daily carpet care
- Sanitation programs
- Resilient flooring programs
- Environmental cleaning services
- CAPTURE & REMOVAL CLEANING®



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- Hazard Clean Up
- Construction Services
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Pea

TOP TO BOTTOM: LOW-MOISTURE SOIL ENCAPSULATION PROCESS. HEPA FILTER, BACKPACK VACUUM. DUST WAND VACUUM ATTACHMENT. PHOTOS COURTESY SERVICEMASTER.

Global Holdings Ltd. (the U.S. parent company bought back its Canadian distributorships beginning in 1997). The ServiceMaster Clean brand in Canada boasts 95 franchises from coast-to-coast, each offering a wide range of professional cleaning services, including commercial carpet cleaning, hard surface floor care, janitorial services, upholstery cleaning, tile and grout cleaning, as well as other specialty cleaning services to all building types. Every year, the brand serves more than 10,000 businesses, totalling 78 million square feet of cleanable space. More than 250,000 square feet of commercial carpet alone is cleaned each month in Canada.

MASTERS OF INNOVATION

From the start ServiceMaster has been ahead of the curve, with its Canadian operations playing a pivotal role in the company's international industry-leading status.

In 1973, ServiceMaster Clean launched an innovative commercial cleaning program, considered the father of modern carpet care maintenance methods. Initially known as Spotlight, it consisted primarily of spot cleaning, complemented by more frequent and efficient cleaning methods.

"It was essentially interim maintenance to improve the carpet's appearance and prolong its lifespan," explains Gavin Bajin, director of business services for ServiceMaster Clean of Canada.

While this program hardly seems innovative by today's standards, it was a cutting-edge development at that time when it was all too common to see clouds of cigarette smoke wafting from workstations, rotary dial phones and typewriters were office staples, and shag carpet was the style of the day.

Since then, the program has been refined to keep pace with the professional cleaning industry, developing into a sustainable cleaning process that uses low moisture agitation and green cleaning solutions.

ServiceMaster Clean's history of innovation continues with the creation of its Capture and Removal Cleaning system in 2006. The proprietary program combines advanced equipment and technologies with a proven process to trap and remove dirt,

rather than just moving it around. Janitorial staff use backpack-style, high-filtration vacuums along with dust wands and microfibre cloths to capture 99.9 per cent of particles smaller than one micron in size.

"The system is both highly efficient and effective," says Bajin, adding that it helps companies qualify for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) points. "It dramatically decreases airborne dust, volatile organic compounds (or VOCs) and bacteria, helping create a cleaner, healthier workplace for employees and guests."

Complementing the Capture and Removal system is a full line of sustainable cleaning products, also launched in 2006. Developed over the course of three years to ensure they were gentle yet as highly effective as traditional cleaning products, the Green For suite of products is a testament to the company's commitment to the environment. Not only are they free of ingredients such as perfumes and dyes, but they also contain no VOCs and are odourless and solvent-free, making them safe for all occupants in the workplace, including people with asthma, chemical and allergic sensitivities. What really separates these products apart from others in the marketplace, however, is that they carry the EcoLogo label (also known as Environmental Choice). A registered mark of Environment Canada, EcoLogo is the only environmental certification officially recognized in the country. Products and services that bear the logo meet stringent environmental standards that have been verified by an independent auditor.

"We're one of the only cleaning companies whose products are third party certified," notes Bajin. "This signifies to our clients that we're not simply claiming to be green — we actually are."

ServiceMaster of Canada's contribution to its parent company goes beyond creating advanced commercial specialty cleaning processes. Most notably, the company pioneered the sale of franchises by service line. This concept, which is now the standard at ServiceMaster of Canada, promotes greater expertise and knowledge in each



of the company's brands — Merry Maids (residential cleaning), Furniture Medic (furniture repair), AmeriSpec (home inspections), ServiceMaster Restore (disaster restoration) and ServiceMaster Clean.

"Specialization where the market can handle it is key," says Bajin. "If you focus on a specific service line, you are more likely to grow it aggressively."

BUILDING UNBREAKABLE BONDS

Though the ServiceMaster Clean brand has evolved since its founding in 1953, much has remained the same. The company continues to abide by the tenet 'treat others how you want to be treated,' which likely explains why

GAVIN BAJIN, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SERVICES FOR SERVICEMASTER CLEAN OF CANADA, WITH FRANCHISE OWNER PAUL POTTER.



many of its customers have remained loyal to the brand.

“We have been working with many of our clients for more than 20 years,” says Paul Potter, a long-time employee who transitioned to become a franchisee. “I’ve provided services in Toronto’s Scotia Plaza since it opened (in 1988), for instance, which is longer than many companies have been around.”

To ensure it continues to meet and exceed customers’ expectations, the company uses the Tell ServiceMaster program. Customers are surveyed at least once a year to gauge satisfaction. The results are used to improve service and train employees.

Additionally, franchise owners regularly check in with their clients since they have a vested interest in their venture. Each franchise business is independently owned and operated with 100 per cent of staff living in the communities they serve.

“The customer receives true care because my equity is tied up in our relationship,” explains Potter, who’s been the franchise owner of ServiceMaster Clean of Downtown Toronto for more than 20 years. “If I were merely a manager working for a large cleaning company, I wouldn’t be as devoted.”

Like most franchisees, Potter isn’t just committed to his customers; he’s dedicated to the company, too. Now in his twenty-eighth year with ServiceMaster Clean, Potter first

joined the company as a customer service representative. He worked his way through the ranks, which gave him an extreme appreciation for what is involved in every aspect of the business, and became a franchise owner in 1995, when the opportunity presented itself. What initially drew Potter to ServiceMaster Clean wasn’t the work, though. Rather, it was the company’s reputation and the strong support it offered its franchisees.

“You can’t put a price tag on having a national brand of ServiceMaster Clean’s stature behind you,” he says. “Customers get the benefits of a large corporation — superior training, quality standards, expertise and stability — with the service of a small business. It’s an invaluable connection.” /