



Counting the Beans

A former accountant's first year as a Good Earth Coffeehouse franchisee

By Karen Stevens

Many people dream of opening up their own café, but for Joe Angotti, making that dream a reality involved joining Good Earth Coffeehouse, a franchise system with an established brand. His first year on the job has been filled with many rewards, and was not without its challenges.

After 17 years of accounting and operations management experience, Angotti was at a point where he was ready to make a career change. "I always had an aspiration later on in life to be part of a café operation, and this opportunity just lined up at the time," he explains.

The opportunity was a franchise resale location in Edmonton, Alberta, which had been in operation for more than six years, and was now looking for new ownership. When Angotti found out that the Good Earth Summerside location was available "I explored and researched and found that I was ready for it. I was familiar with the concept, but I didn't go out seeking Good

Earth specifically. I was just doing my homework and seeking out business opportunities."

Even though a Good Earth franchise itself wasn't his original end goal, Angotti's research uncovered that he liked the franchise system and concept. "They believe in their product and what they do – they've been around for 25 plus years," says Angotti.

He says he likes the welcoming atmosphere and fresh-baked and nutritious food, as well as the direct trade system that supports the coffee farmers. "It's all about community, from where we source our products to our coffeehouses, where we connect with our communities and give back and help locally."

Angotti suggests that someone looking to join the Good Earth Coffeehouse franchise system should have business experience. "If someone is keen and business-minded and wants to take that next step, I don't think they definitely need it, but it would benefit them to have

THE FIRST YEAR



a business background. You don't necessarily have to have a hospitality and food background, and I didn't have that, but I do have the business knowledge."

Pairing an established concept with his previous experience was key for Angotti. "The franchise has helped me understand and know what I need to do to move forward with my coffeehouse. My business knowledge has allowed me to wrap it all into one big package to help me make the rest of it happen successfully," he says.

He recognizes that having the support and guidance from the Good Earth system has helped immensely. "Trying to do this on my own without that industry knowledge would have been more difficult and I don't think I would have ventured into this industry on my own," he notes.

Conquering the challenges

For Angotti, the biggest challenge of his first year was the fear of uncertainty. "Getting into business on my own – something I hadn't done before – was the biggest fear," he says. "It was not knowing if I was going to be able to do this and having the confidence in myself. I knew this location was established and that I had a customer base already, so it was just a matter of having that confidence in myself."

To overcome this challenge, he tried to keep things in perspective, recognizing that his experience was an asset. "I realized that operating the business was very similar to what I've done in the past, while working for someone else. The difference now is that it is for myself. It's important to service your customer, know your product, know your customers, and go out and put your best foot forward. This is something you need to do in business – it doesn't really matter which industry you are in," he explains.

Another challenge he encountered was staffing. In his previous career, he had hired a team of accountants. "There's a difference between hiring a team of professionals and hiring younger staff who are taking a job while in university, or while they're taking a year off to

decide what they're going to do after high school." The hospitality industry also has much higher employee turnover. "It's going to be an ongoing challenge. You're dealing with typically younger employees," says Angotti.

Good Earth Coffeehouse provides a six-week training program for new franchisees. "There's both training that is business-related and training that is tied in to the specific industry. I learned about the coffee industry, and that side of the business model, and then we had our hands-on training for each area in the cafe, from front end customer service to making espressos to food on the front side to learning food prep in the kitchen," he recalls.

"As an owner, it's good to know what's involved so you can own that business or franchise and know what's involved, whether you work hands on or have managers. You need to know what is expected and involved so that you can help coach and develop your staff better."

Ongoing training and support is provided to help guide the franchisees through situations like new product launches, while Intranet and franchise-network-wide communications, as well as over-the-phone support, are always available. "You can call and speak with varying individuals, depending on your issue, and you have the support of your regional manager," explains Angotti.

Reaping the rewards

As for the benefits of owning a Good Earth franchise, Angotti loves the café atmosphere and receiving feedback from his customers. "It's a fun industry to be a part of. I like speaking with the regulars and knowing that they appreciate the efforts that I put into making the coffeehouse a place they enjoy coming to. They see the effort I put into making it cleaner and tidier, and into providing better customer service. These are things that I feel great about."

He's also excited when the feedback comes in from online sources. "When I see a good review, I know I'm

“It’s all about community, from where we source our products to our coffeehouses, where we connect with our communities and give back and help locally.”



doing the right thing. It gives me the reinforcement that I am doing a good job and I’m on the right path.”

After a successful first year, Angotti has some advice to offer potential franchisees. “Take the time to meet with the franchisors, and have your list of questions on hand. Know what you want and know where you want to go,” he says. “You don’t want to get into it and realize six months in that this isn’t going to work for you. Make sure you have ample time in your evaluation stages to make up your mind.”

Angotti also stresses the importance of doing your research and your due diligence. “Make sure you take the time, either with your lawyer or your accountant, to go through the financials to understand what you’re getting into. Talk to other business owners and find out what their challenges are, and assess those challenges based on what you know about yourself,” he recommends.

He also suggests taking advantage of the franchisor’s business support. “They want to see the operators succeed, so keep in communication with them. They’re there to help support us. Take the opportunity to have those conversations, and be open about your challenges. They are there to help you.”

His final piece of advice about taking the plunge into franchising is to “have the right support system to support you

mentally and emotionally,” and, above all, “Don’t be afraid to try it.”

GOOD EARTH COFFEEHOUSE STATS

- Franchise units in Canada:** 50
- Corporate units in Canada:** 2
- Franchise fee:** \$35K
- Investment required:** \$385K-\$595K
- Start-up capital required:** \$225K-\$300K
- Training:** 6 weeks plus opening support
- Available territories:** AB, BC, MB, NS, ON, SK, International
- In business since:** 1991
- Franchising since:** 2005
- CFA member since:** 2005



SHOELESS JOE'S SPORTS GRILL

NATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

- FRANCHISEE
- OPERATING PARTNER
- INVESTOR

BUILD AN **EXCITING FUTURE** WITH US. JOIN OUR TEAM TODAY!

CALL US
1.877.567.5637 EXT: 2260
 franchising@shoelessjoes.ca
 f /SHOELESSJONES t @BOSHOELESS

STARBUCKS

LIVE THE EMOTION. EXPERIENCE THE THRILL. ENJOY THE TEAMWORK. JOIN OUR TEAM TODAY!
 shoelessjoes.ca/franchising/