

CURB APPEAL

SPRAY-NET AN ATTRACTIVE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY FOR MONTREAL FRANCHISEE

By Christine Elstub

GABRIEL TOUPIN was working in the painting industry when the perfect business opportunity presented itself to him. Spray-Net, the painting company he worked for at the time, had a franchise territory available in the North Shore suburb of Montreal. Toupin, who had long dreamed of business ownership, jumped at the opportunity to own his own painting business.

"I always wanted to be my own boss. This was in my field so it was a great opportunity," says Toupin, adding that the franchise business model had always appealed to him. "Franchising was an opportunity to create my own schedule and have my own employees but with a system that has already been created and tested. The trial and error has already been done and the brand is already established so there's a big advantage."

Toupin was also a big believer in the Spray-Net concept. Unlike most painting companies, which specialize in interior painting, Spray-Net offers homeowners a permanent exterior paint solution. "When most people think of exterior painting, they think of wood but we actually don't even paint wood," says Carmelo Marsala, who founded Spray-Net in 2006 when he was just 19 years old. "We leave that, as well as interior painting, to regular paint companies."

Using an innovative spray application method and proprietary products, Spray-Net can paint surfaces ranging from vinyl and aluminum windows to doors and siding. "The best part is they look like new, not repainted, and have the same durability and scratch resistance as you'd get from new," says Marsala. The benefit to homeowners is a quick (jobs are always completed in one day) and in-

expensive service that increases curb appeal and property value. The company and its founder have won a number of industry accolades, including being named a finalist for the "Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award" by Ernst & Young in 2014.

Prior to becoming a franchisee with Spray-Net, Toupin worked for the company's corporate head office, doing everything from sales and marketing to processing paint orders. Today, as a franchisee, Toupin's primary role is to market Spray-Net's services to prospective clients. His enthusiasm for the concept makes this his favourite part of the job.

"When I'm out there speaking to people, transmitting my passion for this company, that's what wakes me up in the morning. I just love to make other people feel the way I feel about it," he describes, adding that many customers are initially unaware that this type of service exists. "People are so happy to hear that it can be done because they can save up to 80 per cent of the cost of replacing their windows, doors and siding," in addition to personalizing and modernizing their homes' exteriors.

While his passion for the business helps him attract new clients, Toupin also credits Spray-Net's marketing support for his success, as head office creates targeted marketing campaigns for each franchisee's territory. "They give us ideas and let us know what they think is best for our local marketing and then we all have input for national marketing," says Toupin.

In addition to sales and marketing, Toupin's day-to-day responsibilities include meeting with potential clients to conduct on-site estimates, managing and



supporting employees, providing customer support and aftercare and working with suppliers. "I'm supporting everybody and making sure we have sales." Toupin says a major perk of being a Spray-Net franchisee is the ability to set his own hours and work from home.

Since Spray-Net franchisees only offer painting services for part of the year depending on their territory's climate (the temperature can't drop below freezing for at least 24 hours after a paint job has been completed), Toupin only schedules jobs six months out of the year. During the off-season, he's busy making sales for the season ahead and following up with previous clients to gage customer satisfaction. "I start doing my sales and I call back my clients to see if they are satisfied and ask if they'd recommend us," he says of his off-season routine.

Franchisees benefit from a complete turnkey system, which includes a fully equipped trailer and an internal network where

franchisees can access documents to create contracts and estimates, and access tools to help them calculate sales and review productivity. Client calls come in through a centralized call centre and on-site estimates are then scheduled with franchisees based on their location and availability. Toupin says all of these tools

help franchisees with the day-to-day operation of the business. "They give us all the tools we need to be successful."

Toupin says the biggest challenge can be managing client expectations. "You do have more demanding clients, which is normal; it's their house, it's their biggest investment," he says. "You

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– Gabriel Toupin, Spray-Net franchisee

just have to learn how to work with certain personality types." He says Spray-Net trains its franchisees on how to resolve customer complaints and work with different personalities.

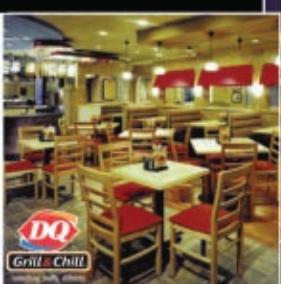
Although Toupin has many years of experience in the painting industry, he says you don't need a painting background to succeed as a Spray-Net franchisee. "We're not looking for someone to do the paint jobs," he says, explaining that most Spray-Net franchisees hire

professionals to do the painting. "We want someone who can get the jobs and make sure the jobs get done well. We want people who are going to be motivated and work hard, who will put in the time and effort that will pay off in the end."

More important than any particular educational or professional background is work ethic. "You need to be able to hustle," he says. "You need to want to go out and get new jobs and let people know your product. School-

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ing isn't as important as your character and personality and whether it's the right fit."

This is especially true given the tools and support Spray-Net offers to franchisees. "Once you're accepted as a franchise owner, you get all the training, tools and support you need," says Toupin. "You don't need a specific degree – you just need to want it really badly and we'll teach you the rest."

New franchisees receive one week of classroom training followed by unlimited on-site training. During the first year of business, franchisees are also assigned a business coach for weekly meetings, a sales and customer service mentor and a production mentor. Toupin has nothing but praise for the support offered by head office. "They're behind you 100 per cent in all of your decision making."

Toupin's advice to new franchisees is to follow the Spray-Net system. "Spray-Net has done all the trial and error. They don't want you to go out and make

mistakes, they want you to learn from the mistakes that have already been made," he explains.

For someone investigating a Spray-Net franchise, Toupin stresses the importance of researching the opportunity first. "Do your homework. Make sure it's the right fit and learn about all of the benefits we have to offer," he advises. The most important consideration, he says, is whether the franchise is one you'll be passionate about. "If you're happy in what you're doing, you'll be successful – that's my motto. For anyone

who wants to open a franchise, if you fit in with the culture and you're happy, you'll be successful."

SPRAY-NET STATS

Franchise Fee: \$30K

Investment Required: \$100K

Available Territories: ON

Training: 2-4 weeks

Franchise Units Canada: 11

Corporate Units Canada: 4

In Business Since: 2006

Franchising Since: 2012

CFA Member Since: 2013



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