

DO YOUR DILIGENCE

Jennifer Hay, a franchisee with Gilford, Ont.-based The LiceSquad Inc., is very successful. And she's not afraid to admit it. "My accountant told me that I really shouldn't have turned a profit in the first year, and I have."



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Hay bought her first franchise in 2005, and her second in 2006. Both are in the Greater Toronto Area. Doing her homework and understanding the demand for this line of work, believes Hay, is what set her up for success. Anxious to reassure herself that it wasn't just a "fly-by-night company," Hay explored the franchise from every angle. She had a lawyer look over the contract. She investigated the founder's background, noting with whom she had associated and what kind of business advice that meant she would get. Hay also visited the local small business bureau and armed

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herself with pointed questions to put to the franchisor. Ultimately, she was very impressed by the energy that the founder, Dawn Mucci, exhibited. "I really felt passionate about the business because Dawn was so passionate about it," Hay recalls. "I could see that she was pouring her heart and soul into it. She's very motivated and I could see that she motivated her employees. That was a big thing for me."

BE AN EMPLOYEE FIRST

Signing on as an employee before buying a franchise was instructive, says Hay. "My advantage was that I was a nit-picker before I was a franchisee, so I knew it was a business that was worth being part of. I knew it was a business that families just love, and that it was such a unique service."

GIVE A LITTLE BIT

Because The LiceSquad's business comes largely through referrals, Hay made sure to target the right market by aligning herself with potential clients at every turn. She offered a lot of free seminars to the parent councils of schools. Free-of-charge "lice awareness nights" only cost Hay her time but the student and parent councils who meet her often end up hiring her to go in and screen their schools. And once they find lice, Hay's franchise gets the residual business from frustrated families. "You give a little and you get a whole lot back," she says.

But the true measure of success for Hay? The flexibility the job offers her to lead the life she desires. "I can be as busy as I want," she says. "I can stay home with my daughter, who's not yet 3. It's really just the best thing." 🍀