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**Franchise Opportunities Interviews WSI President, Ron McArthur****Can you please tell us about the WSI concept?**

The WSI concept is built around the model of being a one-of-a-kind freedom franchise. What I mean by that is that we really allow our franchisees to leverage their experiences that they bring to the table from their outside careers – whether that's a management experience, or a business experience or certainly an entrepreneurial spirit. The freedom comes from being able to operate their own business, run it as their very own business locally, with WSI support from a global perspective, and they can focus on generating profits, servicing their small and medium sized business owner customers in a world class consulting environment. That freedom comes from having the distinction of being able to operate in an industry that's booming - the Internet industry is booming - serving a sector of the economy, the small and medium sized business owner, which is the fastest growing sector of any economy. It's really a virtual business, which makes the WSI concept very interesting, highly profitable and a relatively satisfying experience for each of our franchisees. That's where this whole "freedom franchise" concept comes into play.

Each of our franchise units is locally owned with a local presence, global reach of WSI and they rely on WSI's global knowledge through its marketing materials, through its leading edge products, and its ability to differentiate them and themselves from independent competitors of theirs because of the advantages we can bring to the end customer.

Furthermore, as part of our concept and model, we provide continual infrastructure training and strategic support from the very start. We begin with our Pre-Training Program and continue with our ongoing business development and set up that our franchisees go through, during their life as a franchisee. We've had experience growing businesses in this highly dynamic Internet industry, with providing services to the small and medium sized businesses in the 87 countries that we work in.

**What is the key phrase that best describes WSI?**

WSI stands for We Simplify the Internet. We really feel as though we're just at the very beginning of the great opportunity of taking the ability of the Internet to provide the small and medium sized businesses with the potential, to realize from the Internet, the tremendous success of their business.

What we mean by simplify the Internet is helping businesses to improve their efficiencies, increase their revenue, and profit from providing affordable, custom built e-solutions that are applicable to their businesses.

**How has WSI risen to the top of the Internet Franchise industry?**

We ourselves don't even focus on that aspect of it. But when a magazine like Entrepreneur

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#### FRANCHISE HIGHLIGHTS



magazine recognizes us in a number of ways, we're truly honored by it. A key part of our business is to always understand the needs of the end customer - that global small and medium sized business owner. We're working very closely with our franchisees, our suppliers, our employees, all members of our marketplace, and business advisors to ensure that we have a thorough knowledge of their needs by doing focus groups around the world, and surveys to really ensure that we're able to tap into those needs and understand the new technologies that the Internet is providing. We aim to marry those two and provide initiatives and products and services that add tremendous value to our franchise offering, which contributes to their profitability, their success and more importantly, the success of their end customer. Entrepreneur magazine has ranked us in the Top 50 companies in their "Top 50 Offerings," we've been voted as the "Number 1 Technology Services Franchise" for the fifth year in a row and we're very pleased to have the singular distinction as being the only Canadian company in Entrepreneur magazine's ranking of the "Top 10 Global Franchises," offering International opportunities - which is very exciting.

We feel we're very service-oriented, and focused on the offering that our franchisees provide to the end customers. We have over 14 production centers around the world. These centers are separate from WSI, they have their own agreements with us, and they provide the solutions, the products and the services to our network through modular development technology that our franchisees can then take to their end customers.

And finally, we really focus on creating relationships. We create relationships with the end client, with our franchisees, with our suppliers - focusing on their needs and their profitability. The small and medium sized business owners are growing so quickly, the Internet is providing reams of technology and benefits to all of us, including the business owners, and we're caught up in the middle of it, so it's pretty exciting.

It's a fast changing world and it keeps us growing. We're right on top of this fast-paced world and I do believe that that's helped us be where we're at helped us achieve what we've attained.

But we feel as though we've only just begun! Every day is a new day, and each day we hope we're better at what we do than how we are today. It's our striving for excellence and innovation and our determination to never be satisfied with where we are today.

#### What kinds of businesses does WSI have as clients?

Our marketing department would define the small business owner as 1-99 employees and that's within every sector. It always surprises me, each time I speak with our ICs (Internet Consultants), there's another sector of that small and medium sized business owner that we're servicing. Whether it's a manufacturing outlet, a retail store, a tourist operation, a real estate operation, an automobile store, a consulting service - legal and accounting or a massage therapist, there doesn't seem to be just one area that we focus on.

Our reach is so huge globally, that our franchisees are really able to focus on what interests them in their local market. There's not one sector or one particular sector or part of the small and medium sized business owners that we really focus on.

Everybody that is in business today, if they don't use the Internet, they are missing a huge opportunity and I think we are all beginning to realize that.

#### What benefits does WSI provide to its franchisees?

We really focus on training and ensuring that our franchisees are certified in the tools, products and services they are providing to their end customers - it's an important element. When I speak every week in training our ICs, I talk to them about "Welcome to the rest of your life of learning." The Internet is changing, business is changing and the value that we can provide to the end customer is changing daily, so we have to be on top of that. It's a continual learning process from the time our franchisees start. And here at our Home Office, once they've been awarded a franchise, we start them out with an e-learning environment, which lasts about six weeks and is pretty intensive, but its training on our systems, our products, industry best practices, what's worked in different markets, sales techniques, marketing techniques, a thorough understanding of the product before they come in for training. Once they complete that online training, all of our franchisees attend a one-week

training program at the company's headquarters in Toronto.

It is fun to come in at the very beginning, because everybody's so excited about the WSI opportunity, and then by Friday they're saying, "Oh my gosh, there's so much to learn!" And that excitement has been amplified.

They just want to get back to their areas of where they come from, and get going. I then say, "The first thing you do, is you put all of this learning, and all of these books and all of these textbooks on a shelf, and you go out and meet the customer. You are certainly not going to build your business by reading these books and expecting the phone to ring."

WSI is very much about building relationships, building trust and establishing credibility. When the ICs come out of the gate, they really have to use the tools, techniques and credibility of a global company like WSI to establish that credibility. It's like any new business owner, they have to win over the customers with trust, relationship development and high levels of service.

The e-Learning and the one-week training at headquarters are a very integral part of our process, as far as a benefit for the franchisees. They are learning the system and they understand the system. Once they leave training, they are assigned a Coach - we call it the Quick Start Program. The Quick Start Program lasts for 12 weeks after initial training. They are trained and coached on selling techniques, marketing techniques, presentation techniques, in addition to what they've already received, to ensure that when they stand in front of that customer for the very first time, they're not shaking in their boots because they do have so much information and technology behind them.

After the 12 week Quick Start Program, it's a continual learning process that we provide. I spoke earlier about the Excellence and Innovation session we just had in Mexico City. There were over 75 ICs from Latin and Central America in attendance, and more from around the world. We had ICs attend from Amsterdam, from the UK, from Australia. These are not all "new franchisees" - there was one who would be coming in for training next week and some have been there for 7 or 8 years. It's a cross section of franchisees, which is why we call them Excellence and Innovation. We really focus on the processes, the services, the products that are innovative and up-to-date, and we share that with the local franchisees.

Plus through our own technology, WSI Live, we transmit to all of our franchisees around the world. So the presenters are not just in front of the local audience in whatever city we're holding the session in (this year we've been in Mexico City, we'll be in the U.K. in April, and the U.S. in September), but we project their presentations and make them available "live" to all of our franchisees around the world. This way, if a franchisee cannot get to an Excellence and Innovation session physically, they can still watch them and learn from them.

Excellence and Innovation is just one of the many successes. We also have five of our very experienced and highly successful franchisees travel the world, running two-day training programs for "early stage" franchisees to individuals who have been franchisees for years.

Our philosophy is that you're never too old to learn and you always have to learn at WSI to ensure that you understand the latest and leading edge technology that is available to you, to provide to your customers. To that end, we are constantly providing training, whether it's Excellence and Innovation, Quick Start Coaching, Corporate, Regional or Global Conferences and our Mentoring Program - whereby new ICs will receive help from experienced franchisees in their area on their first project to ensure that a high value is delivered to the customer and to make sure that our new ICs are successful quickly and easily, right out of the gate. We also have daily Webinars, we call them "Coffee Breaks." These webinars give our franchisees constant updates and relay information to ensure that they are right on top of their game.

### **Why is now a good time to join WSI?**

The small and medium-sized business market is just growing all over the world. The entrepreneurial spirit hits everybody in the 87 countries that we operate in. Plus the power of the Internet - the Internet is just beginning, I believe, to demonstrate to business owners the power that it has to drive their revenue and to increase their profitability, by bringing

customers to their front doors. If we use the equation of great solutions, affordable solutions, dynamic solutions to successful franchisees that provide benefits to successful customers, that equals some tremendous opportunities for people around the globe to be awarded a franchise of WSI.

### **What does WSI look for in potential franchisees?**

We really target individuals who are searching for a new business opportunity. We have a fairly intense selection process – it's very detailed. We ensure that we get a high caliber of franchisee who has the aptitude, plus the potential that is required in order to keep pace in a very fast environment that is quite dynamic, as a result of the dynamic nature of the Internet and someone who has an understanding of the growth of the SME marketplace around the world. We want to ensure that they have a clear understanding of what's required. While they should have a good solid business background, we really see our franchisees as a cross-section of business backgrounds. Whether its teachers or lawyers or business owners, or marketing, sales or engineering, or even an IT background, they really come from a broad range – there's no one specific area that they come from that we focus on.

But we really search for people who have the ability to follow a proven system and who have a willingness to work hard, again, that "entrepreneurial spirit." They should also have a dedication to fulfilling their customers' needs, a willingness to learn every single day, and really a very personal drive to succeed. Through our selection process, I think we're able to deliver applicants and franchisees who are a tremendously high-driving, high energy group. As I said, after I leave a Session like Excellence and Innovation, I am so excited and am so powered by the intellectual power in the room that I don't need a plane to come home, I always tell that to our staff when I return. I always give an update after the trip that is supposed to be seven minutes long, but I usually speak for about 15 minutes after I return from an Excellence and Innovation session, because it's so exciting to give them live experiences that our ICs are fulfilling. They are realizing their dream and its fun to be a part of that.

### **How do you keep in touch with all of your franchisees around the world?**

The sessions give us a ton of energy, and they also make sure that we are very much on top of the industry. Last year, our home office management team worked with, saw or touched almost a thousand of our franchisees through our Excellence and Innovation sessions, which can range from anywhere between 60 people and 200 people, our Ambassador Training sessions that are very much focused on local areas and range from 15 to 50 people. We make sure that our management team - from all divisions - is very much there in front of the ICs to get to know them, understand their business, understand their needs, and then return to the Home Office to make sure that whatever initiatives we're going forward with, are very much in line with their needs.

Just last year, we called for elections around the world for ICs in their area to nominate an IC or franchisee who represents them on a council we call the International Advisory Council for franchisees. Our management team meets with these 12 elected, or nominated, franchisees from around the world every quarter to make sure that we keep on top of the needs of the marketplace, the needs of our franchisees, the needs of the small and medium sized business owners and then we marry that all together to ensure that we put out products, services, technologies, and everything else that are very much in tune with the marketplace. That is how we keep in touch here with the global marketplace that we're operating.

We HAVE to be in touch with each other and with the needs of the marketplace, as this industry moves too quickly, there's too much happening to not be in regular contact with our franchisees. By keeping in touch, we can understand their needs and we can enhance our offerings and our products to ensure their success and the success of WSI throughout the world.

**To request information about \*WSI Internet, simply complete the Express Request form provided below.**

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