

Four-Franchise Road Show Hits the Garden

By Joao-Pierre Ruth - 6/25/2007

Prominent brands got together for a seminar in New Jersey this month to lure potential franchisees to their respective teams. Carvel, Nathan's Famous, Saladworks and Philly Soft Pretzel Factory collectively plan to open more than 240 locations in northern New Jersey within the next five years. The companies sent franchising executives on a collaborative road show that made a stop at the Teaneck Marriott June 13.

"This seems to be a logical approach, working with other companies to pool our resources together and get as many leads in the market as possible to grow," said Marty Ferrill, vice president of operations with Philly Soft Pretzel Factory in Philadelphia.

Rather than fighting pitched rivalries, the franchisers are relying on each other for greater exposure on areas where they have limited presence. "In some of these markets we are targeting, the other brands have a much stronger brand recognition," said Ray Torres, regional vice president of franchise and food service sales for Carvel in Rocky Hill, Conn. "We look to piggyback on their strengths and they look to piggyback on our strengths in other markets. We complement each other."

Think of it as a way for the new kids on the block to meet the neighborhood through an introduction by a popular local. "Carvel and Nathan's—their brands are so well known in Long Island—whereas Saladworks has no locations there," said Steve Beagelman, chief franchising officer for Saladworks in Conshohocken, Pa. "For us to go to Long Island and expect to do a seminar and have 100 people there would be impossible."

The road show also eases the expense of reaching out to new markets as the companies share the costs of the effort. "We never aggressively sought franchisees and never spent a lot of money against it," said Randy Watts, vice president of franchise operations with Nathan's Famous Inc. in Westbury, N.Y. "Recently we decided to grow a little faster. This is the way for us to dip our toes in the water and spend a lot less money than most typical franchise companies do to generate leads. In Washington, D.C., Dunkin' Donuts is going to be with us, and they will bring a lot of people to the table because their brand is better known down there than our brand."

The road show's success will be told not only through the new franchises agreements signed but in the affect on the local economy. "We're really looking at this event as a way to educate people about franchising, getting into their own businesses and about our companies," says Beagelman. "We'll all be creating jobs in the market."