

Brown: Training people is the key to success

BY GERALD FRAWLEY
STAFF WRITER

The pizza wars will be won in the streets, not in the board rooms.

Tim Brown, owner and training director of Metro Detroit Pizza, the largest Domino's Pizza franchise in metropolitan Detroit and the second largest Domino's Pizza franchise in the country, believes this so strongly that he can be found working the rush at one of his 45 stores or riding shotgun on pizza delivery trips almost every weekend.

Brown, who had been vice president of operations for Mississippi-based RPM Pizza Inc. before acquiring the 45 stores said the main thrust of his job hasn't changed.

"People have been telling me, 'Gee, now that you own the stores, you can kick back,'" he said. "I must be doing something wrong because I'm working harder than I ever have."

Hard work for himself and continued training for his employees will continue to be his highest priority. Part of the reason he works so hard is so he can gain a better understanding of what a Domino's employee faces every day.

"I'm constantly breaking down barriers between myself and the people who work for me."

In January, Brown plans to move his headquarters from Livonia to Farmington Hills so he will

have adequate training facilities for employees. He personally teaches classes for his management team.

Training covers all aspects of running a Domino's; from dotting

all the i's and crossing the t's on U.S. Immigration Department forms to how to make pizza crust.

"The pizza business is really a simple business, but there are a lot of variables that get thrown

out that make it more difficult," he said. "You've got to make sure you don't spend more time on administrative details than on making a good pizza and getting it to the customer on time."

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meeting with Monaghan in August to discuss the agreement. At the meeting, Monaghan announced he had decided not to buy franchises.

"He said he thought it would be better to sell them to someone who wanted them and someone who was already in the market," Brown said. "And then he turned to me and said, 'Someone like Tim.'"

At first, Brown said he thought Monaghan was joking, but it became apparent it was not a joke.

There was a problem. The original arrangement with Monaghan involved an outlay of roughly half a million dollars in cash with additional payments paid to RPM over time, Brown said.

"I didn't exactly have the money. I had made some plans to purchase some franchises, but I was thinking five."

Monaghan "essentially agreed to put up the money for me."

In a complex arrangement involving a loan, salary cap for himself and payments over several years, Brown went from RPM Pizza vice president, to Metro Detroit Pizza owner in a little over a month.

Glenn Mueller, president of RPM Pizza, said if anyone can make a go of it in the pizza business, it's Tim Brown.

"He's a great leader and he attracts great people," Mueller said. Many of the people hired by Brown over the years have gone on to become successful managers and franchise owners.

His ability to attract good people is perhaps his greatest asset. Mueller said he believes it was inevitable Brown would some day leave RPM Pizza to start his own company; it was really just a

question of when.

"He'd already been in charge of hundreds of stores (as vice president of operations)," Mueller said.

"(But) he's an entrepreneur at heart," Mueller said. Brown had already had a chance at starting a franchise operation in California, and RPM Pizza had plans for him to help out the company in the southern region. But when the opening came up in the Detroit area, it was exactly what Brown had been looking for.

"He really loves Detroit and the surrounding area."

Brown began his career as a part-time delivery person 14 years ago while attending Ohio State University. He worked for RPM Pizza corporate for more than 10

BUSINESS PEOPLE

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years, moving up the ranks until he reached the position of vice president of operations for the corporation.

"I believe you can learn a lot about a person by how they play sports," Mueller said.

"Tim plays them all; he's very competitive and he doesn't like losing," Mueller said. "But in the end, he won't cheat to win."

"He's always had very high standards for himself, his people and his customers," Mueller said.

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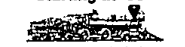
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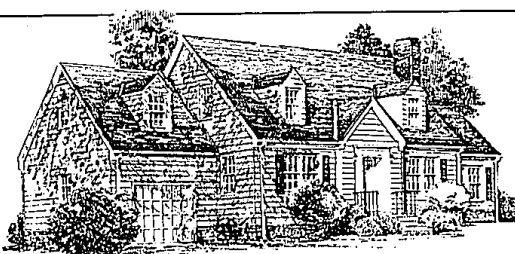
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