

Lessons from Food Franchises¹

by

David G. Blumenkrantz, Ph.D., M.Ed

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If it's good enough for the start-up of successful food franchises should it be good enough for the start-up of youth development and education programs and services?

The most prevalent paradigm in human services and education for starting up new programs or services is to have an "outside expert" come in or have staff responsible for the program or service delivery sent out for training.

What can be learned from how many of the most flourishing food chains transfer the information and practices necessary to start-up a successful franchise outlet? And why would this be so critical to their success?

The answer lies in this question: If after eating at a restaurant would you go back if the food wasn't good, if service was terrible, if dirt was on the floor and lipstick was on your glass? NO, you would not go back and you'd probably tell everyone what a horrible place it was! And, that's the point. You have to get it right the first time for each new customer or you'll never make it in the restaurant business. What if that was the same ethos for those dishing out services and education for children and youth?

Here is how these restaurant franchises do it. Many of the top chains, such as Ruby Tuesdays, TGI Friday, Outback, Hooters and the Palm send in a *team of operational experts* to open a new franchise. In a sense, they provide an "intervention."

From the very start the *team of experts* actually runs the operation and in the process demonstrates how everything is done and supports the independent operator's understanding of location management, direct customer service, product preparation to ensure consistent quality (fidelity), the creation of environments (setting) that convey the ambience desired. A unique training protocol unfolds that ensures a high quality start up while building the capacity of the independent operator to run a successful franchise.

The team of seasoned "operational experts" is brought into the location and begins the orientation and training phase. Within a very short time the local operator's staff (LOS) are in position and the *team* of "operational experts" (OEs) open the franchise for business while the LOS serve as apprentices. Management and administrative systems are put in place to support the production of a high quality product and service delivery. This is an intervention for the creation of settings and future success of a food franchises and other business enterprises.

¹Joe Groves, Special Projects Coordinator for The Center, initially identified this concept.

These food franchises are the most successful grossing businesses with high customer satisfaction. The customers keep coming back for more and tell others about the restaurant!

They keep coming back for more. Wouldn't that be a nice goal for our youth development and education settings?

It can be.

The same method for an "intervention" can be used for starting up a new education or youth development strategy in a community. We call this an "intervention for innovation transfer."

Here is how it works. A *team* of "operational experts" in the particular design of youth and community development desired, such as youth and community development through rites of passage, are invited into a community to support a "prescribed plan" for an "intervention process." This process builds a *core group*² that functions as "apprentices." They become a team of "Elders"³ who get intensive "OJT - On the Job Training." Policy and administrative personnel receive orientation and training to guide a recalibration of the system, which is required for mechanisms to be in place that support the intervention. You cannot hope to achieve success in one level of awareness that is changed, i.e. service delivery, if awareness at the systems level is not oriented to and supportive of the change.

Then the "business opens."

Students and their families (customers) are "served" by the *Operational Experts* in a *Rite Of Passage Experience* (or other strategy). The *Operational Experts* become the mentors for the *core group* of community elders (staff and volunteers) who are in the process of being trained and supported to become initiators of children (service provided). They experience actual demonstrations of the nuts and bolts of how all aspects of the strategy work while being taught, from the inside out - through experience - the underlying principles that guide practices creating and supporting powerful community rites of passage (or any other strategy). They are given precise ways to create the appropriate context, deliver the "service" to insure high quality, (fidelity) and have the organizational and management structures in place. The *core group* of Elders are part of the existing system (school and community), and others, perhaps in retirement, passing into the SMART-AGE®, becoming rejuvenated for civic engagement and mentoring children who are coming of age.

The business is successful. Students and parents are not only engaged, but are having fun and want to be there! ***They keep coming back for more!!!***

The Operational Experts leave after a given period that is determined not solely by time, but by the capacity of the system and *core group* to successfully continue to nurture, grow and help to continually adapt any youth and community development strategy.

² Blumenkrantz, *Fulfilling the Promise of Children's Services: Why Primary Prevention Efforts Fail and How They Can Succeed* (1992) – Key people learning and "rolling out" a new strategy.

³ SMART-AGE® - Rejuvenating for civic engagement.

Fostering synergy among diverse groups within a system is one goal of the “intervention”. Change in anything takes time and energy. The larger the system the greater amounts of time and energy necessary for change to occur and be sustained. The new paradigm of *intervention for innovation transfer* recognizes these facts and brings together people and resources in intentional ways that creates a synergy capable of responding to the challenges of creating sustained change.

Together people and resources become part of a “Force of Nature,” that responds to Newton’s⁴ first law of motion: An object will stay in motion until an equal and opposite force interacts. Galileo called this *Inertia*.

Changes in large systems frequently require an equal and opposite force to redirect the motion of the system and trajectory of its work. Given a system’s tendency to function within the laws of motion its inertia and force of its direction and trajectory are also considerable. It is its own **force of nature**. There is no panacea, no guarantee that the energy and force of a system hurtling through space could be nudged out of its trajectory and change unless it wants to!

The start-up of anything new, whether a food franchise or educational and youth development program, must reconcile the elements that challenge change within complex systems. How can we intentionally create a “force of nature” capable of producing the kind of sustained change we desire? Lessons from food franchise start ups may provide part of the answer.

⁴ *Fear of Physics: Physics Explained. Finally.* (2008) – www.fearofphysics.com/w.php?define=newton