

BACK TO THE CLASSROOM

For most potential franchisees, the question of training is crucial. Michael Seal and two other new franchisees have just returned from a packed five-day training course in Atlanta with business brokerage company Sunbelt Business Advisors.

The course features five days of intensive training for franchisees from around the world, much of it in small focused groups. The aims are to teach the new franchisees everything they need to know to start business brokering. Topics include running an office, advertising, hiring staff and collecting commissions.

A hands-on approach to training is the key to giving Sunbelt franchisees a solid start in their new profession, explains UK master franchisee Stuart Montgomery. 'The camaraderie and sense of belonging to a worldwide organisation with values of honesty and integrity is very important to everyone in the Sunbelt network.'

Franchisees benefit from business broker training conducted by knowledgeable and successful Sunbelt franchise owners. These trainers have the necessary experience to prepare newcomers for the real challenges of running a new business.

Training also covers more advanced topics such as franchise re-sales (there were 3,500 in the UK alone last year), mergers and acquisitions, accounting, financial statement analysis, income tax and legal issues, and IT.

So what exactly happened on this recent training course? The first two days were spent on new broker training, an intense programme focusing on the basics of business brokerage, with emphasis on obtaining listings. 'Based on experience, not theory, this training produces brokers



After 30 years as a teacher, the tables turned for Michael Seal when he took on a Sunbelt franchise. We caught up with him after his return from a rigorous training course in the US

who are capable of producing immediate results,' says Montgomery.

The final three days were spent on new office owner training, designed to offer proven techniques to help franchisees manage their offices for success. Topics included hiring brokers, advertising, using the internet and other office management procedures. All sessions were taught by experts who know what it takes for a business brokerage office to thrive.

Michael Seal is one of the new Sunbelt franchisees on the latest training course. Having spent 30 years in education, the last 16 in Hong Kong as head of a special needs unit, Seal struggled to find the right career when he returned to the UK. Then a book he received as a Christmas present from his son started him thinking. 'Sunbelt chairman Edward T. Pendarvis's book, *The Family Business, The Family Farm*, convinced me that I should start my own business' he says. Business broking appealed to him and once he discovered Sunbelt, he knew he had found what he was looking for.

The Atlanta training course was 'one of the most intense, information-loaded, thought-provoking, rollercoaster-ride sessions I have ever attended,' says Seal. 'It was both rewarding and insightful, thanks to the enthusiasm, zeal and

professionalism of the presenters.' Seal particularly appreciated the trainers' ability 'to temper knowledge with great patience' and to resolve any misunderstandings right there in class.

Seal is confident that he now has all the information he needs to run his Sunbelt brokerage. 'We left clutching several weighty manuals and a set of DVDs, from which we can find the answers to all our questions.'

Just as important as the factual learning that occurred on the course was the human interaction. 'From the inspirational Ed Pendarvis to the receptionist on the front desk, all the Sunbelt staff radiated sincerity and warmth,' remarks Seal. 'At first I found this slightly disarming but very soon I began to accept just what an exceptional company I had joined. The key knowledge new franchisees take away is that this support will always be there because the more successful the individual franchisee, the more successful the whole company.' ■

further information

To find out more about Sunbelt contact Stuart Montgomery on 020 7836 4900 or visit www.sunbeltnetwork.com/uk