

San Diego Subway Franchisee Connects with Employees with RemoteMgr.com

C A S E S T U D Y

Owner: Dana Toogood

Franchise: Subway®

Store Locations:
Chula Vista (San Diego County), CA
(2 stores)

Total Employees: 35

Dana Toogood came to her Subway stores with a perfect combination of business and people skills for making her enterprise a success. "I had spent the previous ten years as a high school math teacher," she began. "Before that, my husband Brant and I owned frozen yogurt stores; before that, I worked for the first TGIF franchisee, opening stores around the southeastern U.S. The yogurt stores and TGIF experience helped me understand what it takes to run a successful franchise. The teaching experience helped me understand how to communicate with teenagers. This is especially important at my Subway stores, as most of my employees are in high school, or recently graduated."

For Dana, clear communication – and giving employees a sense of an open line of communication with ownership – is an essential element for running a successful operation. "My biggest battle is keeping good employees," she continued. "I run a business that by nature doesn't pay well. The key to keeping an employee isn't always what you pay them, but what they get out of a job.

Sometimes it's a check, but sometimes it's a little recognition or having someone who will listen to you. RemoteMgr.com has helped me connect with my employees, especially those at my store location that I don't get to as much. I get emails everyday from employees, and I get to know them. I can figure out if there's a kid who needs a pat on the back.

"When someone starts at a store on a day that I don't happen to be there, I email them to ask how the first day worked out. I learn all kinds of stuff that way. Sometimes, it can be something as small as the new employee getting the wrong-sized shirt. I can quickly address problems like this. For many of my employees, working at one of my Subways may be their first job. After six months or a year, they leave for a new job, thinking the grass will be greener elsewhere. Not long after, they return to work for me. I think they come back because they think they can communicate with the owner."

RemoteMgr.com – an End-to-End Remote QSR Management System

RemoteMgr.com uses web-based applications and hardware to create an end-to-end QSR Management System, which include modules for Financials, Operations, Security and HR/ Risk Management. Functions that can be performed with RemoteMgr.com include accounting and reporting; video surveillance; time and attendance tracking; employee communication; payroll; on-line food ordering; on-line training; and work scheduling.

Saying “Bye Bye” to Meetings... and to Frivolous Lawsuits

RemoteMgr.com’s robust communications functionality helps franchisees like Dana Toogood connect with individual workers. It has also helped with broader, multi-store outreach. “I think meetings are a waste of time,” Toogood continued, “not to mention, a waste of money. I hardly ever do employee meetings . If we have a new sandwich or new policy, I distribute it to employees over RemoteMgr.com. It’s the best way I can think of to talk to 35 or 40 people at once. I also use the system to augment my training for new employees. My training hours have gone down since I began using RemoteMgr.com; in fact, we don’t use as many training hours as the handbook recommends.”

An important aspect of the RemoteMgr.com communication system is that all correspondence to and from employees – plus any occasions when an employee clocks in late, is absent, or is written up by line managers – are all automatically logged in the system. These automated employee files provide a critical risk management tool, allowing store owners to fend off unwarranted lawsuits, as Dana Toogood explained.

“I had an employee who filed a wrongful termination lawsuit after he was let go for repeated poor performance. In his suit, he claimed he was terminated because of his age and his race. This wasn’t the case; I had tried to walk him through our processes again and again, but to no avail. When he filed the suit, I was able to print out his employee file with one keystroke – 39 pages. Again and again, the records showed my emails to him pointing out how he had made a mistake – cashing out incorrectly, or not ordering

enough turkey for the store. Following my emails were his responses, saying he was sorry for screwing up again. When I confronted him with these records of his performance, the case immediately went away. There was no way I could’ve documented all this on my own, as I was far too busy doing his job as well as mine. RemoteMgr.com saved us a settlement



RemoteMgr.com’s surveillance cameras help Dana Toogood keep an eye on her stores, even when she’s home or on vacation.

of \$25,000. (We later learned that this man had a history of successfully filing similar employment-related claims in other states.)

“Another way that RemoteMgr.com has helped us refute employee claims is in documenting worker breaks. In California, people can get awards by claiming that they didn’t receive their breaks. RemoteMgr.com logs every break every one of my employees has ever taken. In the past, all breaks were recorded in a paper log, and thus were easy to forge. I’d also have people taking breaks

at busy times when breaks are not supposed to be permitted. Now, employees are held accountable for their breaks. I no longer have people stretching their allotted 10 minute break into a 20 minute break, because they know I see immediately how long they were gone. If employees take longer breaks, I deduct the extra time from their pay."

Keeping Productivity Up, Keeping Employees on Their Toes

For Dana Toogood, the key to a strong bottom line is staffing. "It's simple," she continued. "If you have too many people working, you lose money; if you have too few people, you lose customers. I'm able to stay on top of productivity (defined as revenue divided by labor costs) at my second location when I'm working at the first with RemoteMgr.com. I can set the system to send me hourly productivity reports, as it's tied in to my Point of Sale system. If productivity is in the right range, I know that the store is appropriately staffed. This feature of the system is especially helpful for my location that's near a state college. It seems that it's either very quiet there or off the charts. When things are going crazy, my manager at that store tries to be a hero and handle it without staffing up. RemoteMgr.com alerts me when there's a spike so I can take the pressure off her and get more people in there to serve the rush of customers."

The RemoteMgr.com system includes surveillance cameras that are placed in the restaurant and the back room. These cameras allow franchise owners to oversee activities in their stores in realtime over the Internet; all video footage can be archived on a digital video recorder, with the POS transaction imposed over the footage. The knowledge that the cameras are rolling helps keep

employees on their toes – and weed out dishonest employees. "When we first installed our cameras at our Benita store, we lost a lot of employees," Toogood explained. "When we were in escrow for the store, we knew there were lots of food-trading deals going on, and a lot of lost food costs. When the cameras went in, some employees left; my guess is that they were the ones stealing.

Since implementing RemoteMgr.com, Toogood estimates that food costs have dropped 3 to 4%, amounting to savings of \$600 week.

"When we're on vacation or at home, we'll sometimes log in to see what's going on. We don't sit around and watch our stores all the time, but our employees don't know that. We happened to turn it on the other night, and noticed that one of our best employees wasn't wearing her visor, as the handbook requires. We made a call, and soon her visor was on. The cameras aren't just for identifying miscues. I've discovered kids who were working very hard but were under our radar. Once I realized how much they were doing, I gave them a raise.

"As I mentioned earlier, we have a lot of first-time workers. With these teenagers, it's inevitable that their friends are going to come in and ask for free sandwiches. There's a lot of peer pressure. If this happens, I tell my young employees to show their friends the camera

“RemoteMgr.com has helped me connect with my employees, especially those at my store location that I don’t get to as much. I get emails everyday from employees, and I get to know them. I can figure out if there’s a kid who needs a pat on the back.”

and say, ‘I can’t give you any food, my boss is watching, and I’ll get in trouble.’ That almost always works.” Since implementing RemoteMgr.com, Toogood estimates that food costs have dropped 3 to 4%, amounting to savings of \$600 week.

“A funny thing happened a few months ago that really speaks to the effectiveness of the cameras,” Toogood added. “A lady called and claimed that she didn’t get any roast beef on a party sub, and wanted some free food. I told her I was very busy at the moment, but recorded the day and rough time that she was in the store for the purportedly beef-less sub and told her I would get back to her. I scanned the digital footage for the time of her visit

and found the sub being made – with ample roast beef. I called her back, told her that she must have been mistaken, as I was looking at the video of her sandwich being made. Then I emailed her a picture of her and her sandwich. That was the end of the matter.”

RemoteMgr.com has impacted nearly all the aspects of Dana Toogood’s Subway operations, including scheduling and payroll. “Before RemoteMgr.com, employees would tend to clock in early and clock out late. The result was that my weekly labor hours were often 50 hours over recommended levels. RemoteMgr.com only lets people clock in when they’re supposed to be on the clock. Now my labor hours are on budget. I use ADP for payroll, and RemoteMgr.com makes it easy for me to forward time sheets along. I’ve made it a policy that employees have to check their time sheets on RemoteMgr.com before payroll. As a result, I’ve never had to re-run any paychecks because the time was wrong.”

One facet that franchise owners and employees alike prize in RemoteMgr.com is the simplicity of the system. “Teenage employees are very used to computers, and find it second nature,” Toogood said. “We have one employee who is 69 years old. I had to help her clock in at first, but now she sends emails just for fun. If this employee could learn the system, anyone can!”



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