

Franchise Mentor: BookKeeping Express Franchisee of the Year Grew Business by Becoming a “Professional Schmoozer” (Part 2)

Franchise Chatter

This post is the second of two parts. To read Part 1, please click [here](#).

Building Trust in Community

BookKeeping Express provided marketing support when Groves opened her business by generating leads through a third-party vendor and by doing a mass mailing to 500 business owners in Monterey County that might need her services. But Groves candidly admits that she did not garner any clients from those efforts.

“I only got one call from someone asking to be taken off the mailing list.”

As a new business in the area and a franchise that was still creating brand awareness, she knew it was incumbent upon her to become known in her new community. Building trust with companies who would be sharing their financial data with her was crucial.

“What I did, I became a professional schmoozer,” she said.

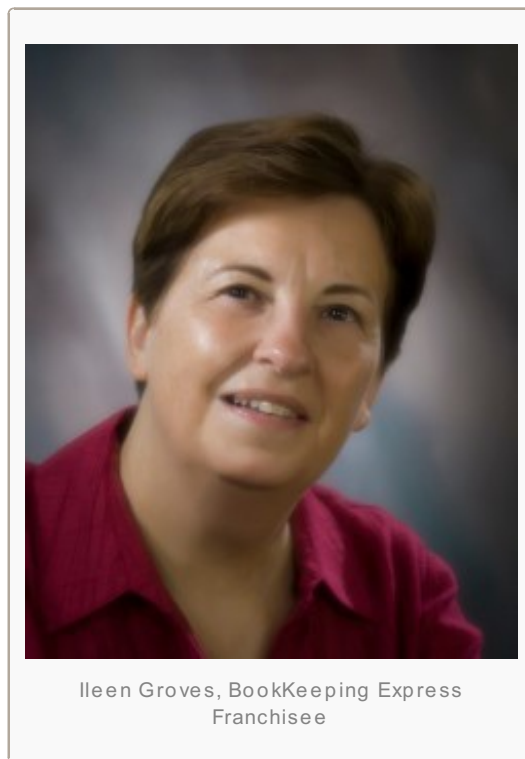
She even obtained a certification to pour wine in California so that when she attended business events, she could engage potential clients when they came to her for a beverage.

Because the economy of Monterey County is so diverse, made up of agricultural, tourism, and educational interests, Groves joined four chambers of commerce and two professional women’s networks. She holds educational business seminars throughout the year and is involved in several volunteer organizations. She was named the Volunteer of the Month by both the Monterey Peninsula and the nearby Salinas chambers in 2012.

Major Presence in Region

She is also a graduate of Leadership Salinas Valley; recognized by the California legislature, the 20-week program consists of various exercises and local projects designed to further inform leaders who can help enhance community problem solving and development.

“Despite entering a market that was uncharted territory for both the Groves and for our brand, Ileen and Barry have gone above and beyond to become a major presence within their region,” said [CEO of BookKeeping Express](#) Greg Jones. “They have dedicated themselves to investing in their business community and have done



so with the utmost professionalism as evidenced by client satisfaction and recognition among peers. In only a year, they have more than quadrupled their client base.”

“That’s how I marketed myself: I got people to know me and to trust me,” Groves said.

An Active Franchisee

Ileen Groves participates within the franchise as an active member, providing constructive input to improve the system and assisting other franchisees with marketing and business operations. She partakes in all corporate functions and has been chosen to be part of special internal teams to help analyze and improve company operations on the franchisee level.

One of the suggestions she made to the company was to take the money it spent generating leads and doing a mass mailing for a new franchisee and devote it instead to researching organizations they should join and helping with membership fees.

After the first six months of starting her business, Groves had only three clients. After two years, she is now serving 20 small businesses. It took a year for her to have enough income to cover her expenses.

“I wanted the business to be able to support itself and I achieved that at the end of the year,” she said.

Patience is a Virtue

She cautions potential franchisees to learn patience. It takes time to grow a business, she said.

“Don’t get down on yourself because things aren’t happening as fast as you want them to.”

Identifying some of her own best practices, Groves also recommends going above and beyond what’s expected by a client.

“Exceed your clients’ expectations,” she advises. “Be able to distinguish yourself as someone who really cares about them and their business and provides better service than they expect. They are your best form of advertising. You want to take really, really good care of the clients that you have.”



Naturally, Groves also recommends becoming involved in the community.

“Do it with the idea that you want to invest in the community where you’re doing business,” she said. “Showing an interest in (other’s) business and trying to understand what they need and what your community needs will bring sales to you.”

“In taking an interest in others, people will automatically take an interest in you.”

As a final piece of advice, Groves would tell potential franchisees not to get bogged down in day-to-day operations.

“Find a business that you’re passionate about that you can work *on* instead of *in*,” she said. “If you’re too busy working in your business, you get too entrenched in the day-to-day operations and you don’t see the big picture.”

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