

# Summer Plans?! Help Franchisees with 5 Suggestions Before Leaving Town

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Franchise owners, especially those newer to your system, are often hesitant to take a much needed and well deserved family summer vacation and break from their business. The problem is, they are afraid they will return to a myriad of problems, and they often do.

I remember as a new owner, wondering why there was not a checklist of some sort or a list of recommendations provided in my Ops Manual to reference and guide me. Unfortunately, I had to learn the hard way. I paid dearly and that's why I'm advocating for franchisees. Help them, help themselves!

Here's what happened to me when I left my business with no real plan for what to do if, or rather when, something happened.

### My Unfortunate Event

The very first time I was totally disconnected from my franchise, something urgent happened. Urgent as in it turned into a lawsuit urgent. I was on a horse in Idaho getting my Cowgirl on after a lovely rafting trip with my son when 'it' happened at my Kids R Kids Academy franchise.

A sweet and innocent toddler had toddled toward the diaper changing area just as the teacher walked in to change a diaper. The low door dividing the area had not yet been shut when another darling little one 'helped' the teacher by pushing the door closed and which smashed the sweet and innocent one's finger.

It was bad, as in mangled. "Disfigured" is the term used by the parent's lawyer during mediation.

At the time, I was glad I didn't know about the accident until I got home. It would have upset me and curtailed my Cow Girl. Later, I thought I could have possibly prevented the lawsuit had there been a plan in place and I had been in communication with the Director and immediately with the client.

Five years later I disconnect again for my 50th, only this time there was a plan. I instructed my GM, to hunt me down only if there was a fire or blood. A lot of blood, to be more specific. She called. There was a fire. It was a bathroom-fan-electrical-short kind of fire. But still, it was a fire.

This time the Unfortunate Event was very different. The GM handled the crisis so well that I could enjoy the remainder of the trip and wasn't bombarded upon my return and she was relieved to have told me in real-time.

Help ensure your Owners cover all their bases before they leave by reminding them to review their operations manual guidelines or including the following suggestions in your communication. They will appreciate your concern and notice that you cared to send it.

### 5 Suggestions to Do before you Get Away

1. Notify your Franchisor Quality Assurance representative before you leave.

He or she is there to support you, even in your absence. Your Manager should have their cell number. Consider this your first line of defense and they can play offense when needed.

2. Be specific about what you want to know in your absence.

Consider the following: Client Complaints, Injuries (Work Comp and/or Client), Terminations/Resignations, New Hires, Notable Mail (certified, urgent) and Money Matters.

3. Be specific about how you want to be notified.

Text, email, voicemail or other.

4. Be specific about how much information you want to know.

Consider an outline with Who, What, When, Where and How

5. Create a notebook for your Managers

Include Franchisor Contacts, Workman's Compensation Reporting Instructions, Client Injury instructions, Attorney contact and emergency contact information for you.

If your suggestions are well received, consider putting a page in your Ops Manual unless you already have something similar included. Either way, it's good to remind your franchisees to review and update their Getaway Checklist before leaving town. If they don't say thank you, don't sweat it. I'm sure their family appreciates that the 'boss' is unplugged for a few days.

Christy Wilson Delk owned and operated a Kids R Kids Academy in Orlando, FL for 15 years. Now, she teaches Entrepreneurship at Rollins College in Winter Park, FL and speaks and writes for the franchise industry. Her book, *Adventures in Franchise Ownership: 4 Pillars to Strengthen, Protect and Grow Your Business* will be published this summer. For more information, go to her website, [www.ChristyWilsonDelk.com](http://www.ChristyWilsonDelk.com) or call her at 407.399.5554.