

Cathi Kern Borushek



The Sandwich Artist greets and serves guests, prepares food, maintains food safety and sanitation standards, and handles or processes light paperwork. Exceptional customer service is a major component of this position. They exhibit a cheerful and helpful manner while greeting guests and preparing their orders. They demonstrate a complete understanding of menu items and explain them to guests accurately. They use point of sale systems/cash registers to record the order and compute the amount of the bill. They collect payment from guests and make change. They check products in the sandwich unit area and restock items to ensure a sufficient supply throughout the shift. They understand and adhere to proper food handling, safety and sanitation standards during food preparation, service and clean up. They clean and maintain all areas of the restaurant to promote a clean image. They understand and adhere to all quality standards, formulas and procedures as outlined in the operations manual. They perform light paperwork. The Sandwich Artist greets and serves guests, prepares food, maintains food safety and sanitation standards, and handles or processes light paperwork. Exceptional customer service is a major component of this position. They exhibit a cheerful and helpful manner while greeting guests and preparing their orders. They demonstrate a complete understanding of menu items and explain them to guests accurately. They use point of sale systems/cash registers to record the order and compute the amount

Love wasn't the only reason that, in 1995, I packed my bags and moved to Kingston, Jamaica with my husband, Ernie.

Franchising was hot, hot, hot, and Subway Sandwiches was on fire. Declaring their intention to rule the world, or at least the world of the Quick Service Restaurant, Subway was aggressively doling out rights to various countries, intent on having more stores than McDonald's, the reigning king. That meant selling franchises at an astonishing clip, including the exclusive Subway rights for Jamaica to my husband.

Fast forward five years and I'm standing in O'Hare's International Baggage Claim, waiting for my suitcases to appear. By this time, both the customs dog and I smelled trouble. After all that travelling between Jamaica and Chicago, I knew this wasn't going anywhere good.

The Company

The simple beauty of a franchise is that it's designed to cover everything you need to operate your business. It's almost idiot proof. Almost, but not quite.

To weed out incompetent potential franchisees, Subway administers a basic skills test, with stumbers like these:

Choose the word that best completes the sentence:

We waited downstairs for 10 minutes. At last, the _____ arrived, and we rode it up to the tenth floor.

A. bus B. package C. elevator D. neighbors

The 5:15 train takes 2 hours and 10 minutes to get to Graystone. Today the train will be 15 minutes late. What time will it get to Graystone?

A. 7:15 B. 7:05 C. 7:25 D. 7:40

Thankfully, Ernie nailed it.

The only other requirement was to complete Subway Training, so Ernie headed to Milford, Conn. for the two-week session, culminating in the Subway final exam. Although a little tougher than that skills test, he passed and was awarded a diploma and official Sandwich Artist designation. Then Subway gave him a copy of The Manual.

To own, operate and sandwich your way to success, everything you need is in The Manual. Designing and outfitting your stores, specified in The Manual. Hiring and training employees, specified in The Manual. Preparing the ingredients and recreating exactly all the products you carry, specified in The Manual. Accounting, advertising, signage, uniforms, price points, garbage collection, all specified in The Manual.

To make The Manual useful to the broadest array of owners and employees, Subway went acronym crazy. Submitting a WISR (weekly inventory and sales report) for each store was mandatory. Understanding all your costs (gas, electricity, telephone, garbage, insurance, rent, labor, miscellaneous, repairs) was referred to as GET GIRL MR until someone realized that GET GIRL MR sounded shady. Evaluating a potential site for your store? Remember to consider PAVE (people, accessibility, visibility, energy).

Armed with The Manual, a Sandwich Artist diploma, and all the acronyms we could carry, we headed for Jamaica to spread the footlong gospel to a metric world.

The Stores

After identifying initial locations, keeping PAVE in mind, we loaded up shipping containers with everything we thought we'd need from the United

States and sent them to Kingston to build our first stores. Or so we thought.

The Manual provided a comprehensive checklist of all the ovens, refrigeration, signage, tile, wallpaper, cash registers, menu boards and counters we needed for our selected decor package. It was the hundreds of things we took for granted, like the availability of tools and basic hardware, that sent me back to the United States for supplies. Travelling round trip as a tourist meant we could quickly get what we needed without waiting for shipping containers and customs red tape. So instead of shorts, sandals and sunscreen I packed nuts, bolts and power tools.

I quickly learned to double the quantities I brought in the hope that half of it would still be there when we needed it. Stuff disappeared faster than rabbits at a magic show, pocketed by construction workers, delivery people and curious strangers who wandered in and out of the construction sites. The laborers we hired, with their erratic hours and varying skill levels, met some deadlines and ignored others. Some we fired and a few disappeared with their advance, never to be heard from again.

Ernie spent hundreds of hours working, teaching, learning and troubleshooting the construction until our shiny new stores were ready in time for the planned Grand Openings.

The Staff

While Ernie prepared the stores, I readied the staff. I spent weeks conducting interviews at picnic tables in the boiling Jamaican sun, while the noise from the store construction droned on in the background. The first set of hires graduated from The HEART Academy, a government sponsored training program that focused on jobs in the hospitality industry. These folks were adept at interviewing; speaking with tourists; preparing food under proper sanitary conditions; knew basic math and reading; and could perform managerial duties. They became our supervisory staff.

The second group of employees was mostly women from Kingston. Not as experienced with interviewing, almost all of the questions I asked were answered with “Ya, mon, no problem.”

Do you have experience? Can you work any shift? Do you have references? Can you handle basic math functions? Are you able to perform any job we have, including heavy lifting?

“Ya mon, no problem”.

I later learned “Ya mon, no problem” was their pat answer for two reasons: I spoke too quickly for them to understand me and their Jamaican patois was so thick they didn’t think I could understand them.

Also a little disconcerting was my novelty effect. The HEART graduates were used to foreigners, but other Kingstonians weren’t as familiar with Americans. At their first training session, our employees stood together whispering and staring.

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The boldest of the supervisors pulled me aside and asked if the others could touch my straight, blonde hair.

“It’s so soft,” they said to each other as they took turns petting me. “She gets to wash it every day,” the supervisor told them

with authority. Startled, I asked her what she meant and was told that most of our staff lived in houses without running water.

The weeks of training flew by and we proclaimed our employees qualified Sandwich Artists, fit for duty. I flew back from the States, again declaring myself a tourist, this time with duffle bags full of Subway shirts, hats and aprons. By the time we held the Christmas Holiday Grand Openings, as specified in The Manual, everyone was ready to go.

The Food

In addition to overseeing the construction, Ernie carved out time to find suppliers and distributors for the raw materials needed to make those footlong sandwiches. The Manual is very specific about the quality and quantity of each ingredient – how much, how many, how they should look, when they should be prepared, and how long they should last.

We learned that nearly all of our food and paper goods would have to be shipped in from certified U.S. suppliers, which meant having to place weekly orders, track shipments, hire customs brokers to clear the shipments, pay duties and store the inventory. Finding on-island suppliers was a high priority but a slow process because everything specified in The Manual had to go through an exhaustive Subway review process before being approved for the stores.

The Bread: Lacking a viable Jamaican supplier, we were forced to import frozen breadsticks and cookies from Miami. Guessing when shipments would clear customs was like creating a March Madness bracket: infinite possibilities and impossible to predict. We became slaves to our bread supply. When the stores were up and running we shuffled breadsticks like we were playing Three Card Monte. The supervisors would tell us their stores were fully stocked, then an hour later we’d get frantic calls telling us they were out of bread. We’d beg each store to share spare sticks with other stores, which they did by having us drive bread around Kingston, sometimes sending it in taxis.

At one particular low point, dangerously close to being out of bread and after placing hourly calls to the customs broker, we were told our shipment had cleared and was on its way. We waited for the delivery man. And waited. And waited. It wasn’t until well into the evening that he showed up in a non-refrigerated truck that was built by welding together two different car chassis and a trailer. By the time he arrived the frozen breadsticks had thawed in the heat and were rising, breaking through the boxes and causing the back of the truck to look like marshmallow fluff had exploded. It was a total loss.

The Meat: We were able to import most of our meat and seafood products, however U.S. pork-based products, which The Manual requires, are prohibited in Jamaica. Since we had to find a Jamaican provider for pork, I was tasked with stuffing bacon, ham and Cold Cut Trio samples in my tourist luggage so we could show potential suppliers the quality we needed. I was able to get the Cold Cut Trio samples past Jamaican customs, claiming they



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were beef products, but the inspector questioned the two pounds of boiled ham.

“We have to confiscate this for testing,” she told me as she put the package in her purse under her station. “Are you sure you don’t have anything else for me?” she asked, eyeing the bacon.

That too went into her handbag as she waved me through the line.

The Vegetables: Fresh lettuce and tomatoes were easier to source, but not without problems. Vegetable men were fairly unreliable and once you found a good one, you tried to hold on to him. Tomatoes, because of the quantity needed and easy spoilage, became our Achilles Heel. Competition was so fierce among all the franchises for a good Jamaican supplier that it was like trying to score drugs from a dealer.

“KFC’s not talking but Burger King says there’s a chance for a good shipment from Spanish Town,” we’d whisper to each other.

Lettuce became my personal trial. Fresh from the fields, heads of lettuce were thrown into deteriorating rice and potato bags and

indiscriminately left by our back doors. The first time I opened a lettuce bag, frogs hurled themselves at me, jumping around the prep area.

“ The first thing to go was the required greeting, "Welcome to Subway" . . . "Don't nobody but an idiot know what store dey in," said one of our more cheerful employees.”

they closed. Thankfully the novelty started to wear off just after New Year's Day. The stores were still busy, but we had some time to catch our breath. And when

That was the last time I cleaned the lettuce.

The Grand Openings

With the stores complete, the staff trained and the food procured, we were ready for the December Grand Openings. If you've seen footage of people waiting in line at Best Buy on Black Friday and then storming through doors to grab cheap flat screen televisions, you have an idea of what our first few weeks were like. The Christmas season is just as crazy in Jamaica as it is in the United States, and as the new kid on the food block we became the focus of the insanity.

Jamaicans who had been abroad knew our products and were excited to have them on the island. Jamaicans who didn't know about Subway firsthand knew us from satellite television, and were excited to try us out. Lines snaked out the door.

Our employees were overwhelmed and required constant supervision, but they proudly wore their uniforms to and from work for all of Kingston to see. We were regularly close to running out of ingredients, and our sandwiches weren't always picture-perfect, but word of mouth spread and the stores were packed from open to close.

The Aftermath

We worked nearly around the clock. We were at the stores before they opened and long after

we did, we realized that the employees had made some adjustments to The Manual.

The first thing to go was the required greeting, "Welcome to Subway." Picture a sullen teenager being put in charge of hospitality at a wedding.

"Don't nobody but an idiot know what store dey in," said one of our more cheerful employees. Second to go was "Is this for here or to go?" We quickly adapted to the local custom: "Ya havin' it or takin' it?" I said as I worked the counter.

Portion sizes spiraled out of control. The amount of bread, cookies and meat that disappeared, written off by the supervisors as bad, skyrocketed. Some employees refused to go into the walk-in refrigerators because they were certain that the cold temperature would make them sick. Many of them were late due to the overcrowded, decrepit buses with infrequent schedules that served as mass transit. Employees on the late shifts had to be driven by company-contracted taxi men piloting broken down cars that held eight or more employees on the long ride home.

Then the hijinks really began. Those HEART supervisors, the shining stars, the best and the brightest, were among the architects of ingenious plans to steal from the stores. It started with everyone selling their Subway-provided free staff lunches to our customers and pocketing the money. It progressed to elaborate schemes involving U.S. dollar exchange rates and credit card receipts

that Ponzi would be proud to call his own. One mastermind stole a considerable sum before we caught wind of the plan and he disappeared. One of our long-term drivers, entrusted with bringing the cash from all the stores to the bank each day, concocted an elaborate story about being carjacked, beaten and robbed. He withstood hours of interrogation by the local police without missing a beat, only to melt into the countryside with the cash the moment he was released.

The imported supplies started taking over too much space in the stores so we rented a townhouse to serve as a warehouse and office. Employees who lived in dangerous parts of the city began staying overnight in the upstairs bedrooms. Suddenly the night shift became very popular, due in part to the peace and quiet but due mainly to the availability of showers. One day we arrived to take inventory only to discover that someone had left the water running in the upstairs bathroom. It overran the tub and rained onto the first floor, destroying boxes of imported potato chips and kids' pack toys.

Through it all we adjusted. We formed a franchise association with other American and local franchisees. We made Jamaican and other ex-pat friends. We got to know our regular customers, particularly the army of young Mormon men in white shirts and nametags, living in Jamaica as missionaries. We spent time in beautiful beach communities around the island. We helped some employees immigrate to the United States and Great Britain. We brought in watches, backpacks and sneakers each fall for the employees' children who were going back to school. We succeeded



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where other American franchises failed, most notably McDonald's. Their two stores lasted barely a year, defeated by us, and the KFC and Burger King franchise-holders.

Our stores remain to this day, but after five years of living on the island and with the stores able to run on their own, we decided it was time to move home. One of my last regular trips found me standing in O'Hare's Customs Hall waiting for those bags the dog found so interesting. After heavy interrogation and a thorough search, the agents came up empty and sent me on my way. It wasn't until I got home that I discovered the source of the trouble.

In my bag was the most recent stack of Subway employment applications. Apparently, when I stepped away from one interview to take a call, the applicant had siezed the opportunity to clean his marijuana on my file folder, leaving just enough weed behind for the customs dog to smell.

In retrospect, that took initiative. Maybe I should have made him a supervisor.