

ComputerXplorers

Business Franchise

December/January 2008



Mark Stabler **Computer Xplorers**

ComputerXplorers franchisee Mark Stabler began looking at franchises in September 2006. 'I was keen to do something that was more than just another job. I took part in some career coaching sessions to try and ensure my next move would be the right one for me, and those sessions clarified my desire to be able to control my own destiny. Something where I felt my efforts would enable me to directly reap rewards, and I would be less reliant on other people.'

'Having come to this conclusion, I did research on the internet about franchising and attended the NEC National Franchise Exhibition in October 2006. I went there with a shortlist of potentially interesting franchises that I had already researched. These were all management franchises and my aim was to gather information and to see what sort of opportunities there were.'

Mark initially came across ComputerXplorers on the internet and, after discussing the idea with his family, he realised that it was a good proposition. 'There was a lot of government interest in providing extended school activities and schools were under pressure to be open from 8am to 6pm. They therefore needed a way to manage this, and with staff having already worked a full day, the opportunity to provide some ICT activity in a fun way after school seemed to me to be a winner. A lot of money had been invested in IT infrastructures in schools and this equipment was not being fully utilised, and that was the unique selling proposition of ComputerXplorers.'

In order to build a long-term business, Mark says that growth needs to be in a controlled manner. 'I think year one is about getting established in the area, beginning to get the name known in the appropriate circles. Year one also allows you to bed in your processes and methods of working and this gives you a good foundation for growth in year two.'

'All the children have enjoyed the variety in the lessons that we deliver. I like to compare them to classes at school, in that school is Education with a capital E and fun with a small f. At the ComputerXplorers classes, it is education with a small e and fun with a capital F.'

For the future, Mark is looking to grow the business in a steady way by developing long-term relationships with the schools. 'The franchise is new and needs to develop, and it can only do that with input from current and new franchisees as they explore the market in their locality. The continued expansion of this new franchise is important to me at the local level as it promotes the brand and gives access to more fellow franchisees to share experiences and ideas with.'

'It is good to be in at the start of something like this. Whilst the risk may be slightly higher, you are in a great position to influence the development of the franchise. I feel I have made the right decision for me and am really enjoying the freedom that running my own business affords me.'