

# Growing Franchise Melts Inefficiencies by Outsourcing Branded Merchandise



## Situation

Rita's Italian Ice dates back to the sweltering summer of 1984, when a former Philadelphia firefighter decided to open a small business to augment his income and named it after his wife. Today, the franchise has grown to more than 550 locations across the United States.

With limited headquarters staff, Rita's management recognized it needed outside help to deal with the challenges of rapid growth. They wanted to build a supply chain program that matched their corporate mission: that is, an appealing store environment for customers and carefree service for their franchise owners.

Rita's wanted a single distribution facility for all of its branded merchandise and point-of-purchase graphics. This ranged from store signage and operational print to uniforms and mascot costumes. Under their old operations, stores were not receiving products on a timely basis and the wrong items were often shipped, which frustrated owners. The company realized it could not achieve its high growth expectations by managing this program internally.

## Solution

Taylor Communications began its relationship with Rita's by analyzing their existing processes, gathering information about future business requirements, and designing a complete supply

chain for branded merchandise that met the goals and objectives of the company and its franchise owners.

### The main components of the program are:

- Sourcing and manufacturing of store signage and graphics (operational print, POP, banners, flags, tents), uniforms (T-shirts, polos, name badges, caps and visors), and branded merchandise in support of key marketing efforts.
- Variable and print-on-demand signage that empowers franchisees to be hyper-local in their messaging.
- Just-in-time warehousing and distribution of all branded merchandise and print promotional materials.
- Kitting and mass distributions ("pushes") for seasonal promotions (e.g., First Day of Spring, Fourth of Gelati) and charitable fundraisers.
- An online ordering website with secure credit card billing for franchised stores.
- Detailed reporting on inventory and item usage.

## Outcomes

Taylor Communications currently supports a wide range of fulfillment programs for Rita's, from routine replenishment of store supplies to seasonal campaigns and special opt-in promotions for local charity fundraising efforts. Rita's has a variety of store layouts — walk-in, walk-up, combinations and mail stores — which serve different levels of consumer traffic. By matching Rita's point-of-purchase materials with these various store attributes, Taylor Communications has streamlined the company's POP distribution, saving money on material costs and shipping. This has also enhanced franchisee satisfaction by ensuring timely, accurate shipment of branded merchandise. Taking the pain out of fulfillment has enabled the company's busy headquarters staff to spend more time developing campaigns that build traffic and less time checking on the myriad details of a given push.