



EDUCATION BUILDS MAX MUSCLES

Discovering the Key Ingredient to Max Muscle's Success

By James Medeiros



In some ways, sports nutrition is a field that is still defining itself and how it relates to the masses. As years go by and people become more interested in reaching their physical fitness goals, they begin to look to many places to find information and better educate themselves. Information or, more specifically, education is just one of the many factors involved in the evolution of the industry. Every company involved, regardless of what level, plays an instrumental role in how the industry progresses. In the last two decades, one of these companies

has seen their influence and position in the industry grow considerably. Since 1991, when Max Muscle first began opening retail locations, the company has emerged as one of the industry's impact players, largely due to their commitment to education.

The path to becoming one of the industry's top businesses is not unlike many other top companies in other fields. Max Muscle Sports Nutrition was founded in 1991. "We began [by] opening our own retail stores," explains Sean Greene, President of Max Muscle Sports Nutrition. Success wasn't immediate, but

it was clear they were doing something to distinguish themselves in the industry. Before long, they began licensing Max Muscle stores. From there, they branded themselves as "The Authority on Sports Nutrition."

In 2004, they took another monumental step in their development as a company when they sold off all of their corporate locations and converted their business model to a franchise system currently boasting more than 130 stores with more than 20 more in development. "We learned that having our own stores was not conducive to building a strong and

dedicated franchise system," relates Greene, who adds that they "wanted to focus [their] resources on supporting [their] franchisees." By making this change, this gave them the opportunity to change every aspect of their business "from operations, inventory and supply chain management, training and education to customer service and field support." Ultimately, the greatest change coming from this switch to a franchise system was that it helped them to fully discover and take advantage of perhaps their greatest strength in the industry – education.



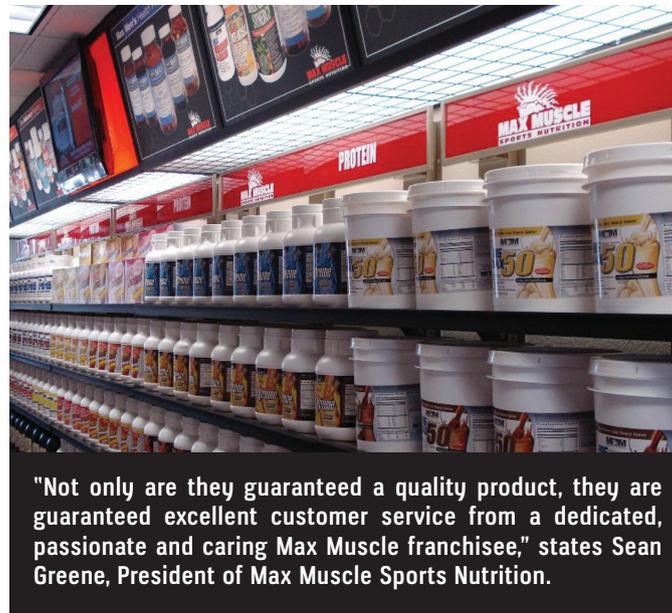
With their moniker being "The Authority on Sports Nutrition," it should come as no surprise that education is arguably the most important component to Max Muscle's success. More than anything else, it would appear that education is also what has separated them from most of their competition. "When a customer comes into a Max Muscle store, they are not just sold a supplement; they are educated on how to use the product, and, more importantly, how to get the best results," explains Greene. "We educate our customers on exactly what they need to do and which products are best for them to achieve their health and fitness goals," adds Greene.

To accomplish this, Max Muscle developed a set of criteria to ensure that each of their potential franchises has the ability and knowledge necessary to efficiently serve their customers before they are ever even considered as a franchisee. Essentially, all potential franchises are required to go through a qualification process. "For every 400 applications we receive to open a Max Muscle franchise, only one franchise is awarded," relates Greene.

Even after the franchise has been awarded, the franchisee is still required to meet several other prerequisites before they are brought in to the corporate office for store training.

"One of the most important prerequisites is the nutrition certification. Every single Max Muscle fran-

chisee becomes a Certified Fitness Nutrition Coach through NESTA," states Greene. The certification through NESTA (National Exercise and Sports Trainers Association) ensures that each new franchisee has the same standard philoso-



"Not only are they guaranteed a quality product, they are guaranteed excellent customer service from a dedicated, passionate and caring Max Muscle franchisee," states Sean Greene, President of Max Muscle Sports Nutrition.

phy and approach, as well as training and knowledge. It also ensures that each and every Max Muscle franchisee understands the vital importance of knowledge and education. According to Greene, "it doesn't matter if a customer goes to a Max Muscle store in Missoula, Montana or Miami, Florida,

each store in the MaxFormation Center areas where the trademark Max Meal Plans are created. These are customized nutrition plans crafted by Certified Fitness Nutrition Coaches that are designed specifically to suit the goals of each individual client they work with.

For Max Muscle Sports Nutrition, education is something that is taken very seriously by all levels of the company. After all, sports nutrition is a very fast paced industry. In an effort to keep their stores and their customers as up to date as possible, each store not only offers a monthly Max Sports & Fitness magazine for free, but Greene states that they have also added "several flat panel televisions throughout the store that play a fast-paced, entertaining DVD to educate our customers on in-store programs, products and services." In any industry, those that don't adapt quick enough run the risk of being an afterthought, and the importance of being ahead of the curve was something that was not lost on the company. Greene states that a few years ago, they realized that "product innovation was considered one of our weak-

they are going to get the same in-store experience and direction in achieving their goals." One example of Max Muscle's commitment to simultaneously educating and helping customers achieve their goals comes right at the front of

summer 2008 insider 45



nesses." With that in mind, they quickly searched for ways to correct that problem. "We needed to improve product development but at the same time made it clear to our franchisees that we would never sacrifice Max Muscle's integrity or values," explains Greene. To find the right balance, they turned to Dr. Phil Harvey to lead their Research and Development team in the position of Chief Science Officer, a position he previously held with the National Nutritional Foods Association. "Dr. Harvey was perfect for our culture because he came from an educational background, teaching as a professor at several top universities," explains Greene, as he reasserts his company's commitment to achieving success through education. The company has been happy with the results, citing that

Dr. Harvey "has developed several cutting edge and innovative products for the MMSN line that have really gotten the franchisees and our customers very excited about Max Muscle's product offerings."

Perhaps the most important thing they've learned over their 17 years in the business is the importance of superior customer service. Without a loyal customer base, success is simply not possible for any business. Without putting in tireless work, combined with a courteous and informative flare, cultivating that loyal customer base is practically impossible. Unfortunately, in the rush to get the products on the shelf quickly and less expensively, many companies lose sight of this fact and customer service is sacrificed. Greene observes this

happening in many places but insists that is not found at any Max Muscle location, adding that their "in-store experience exceeds [their] customers' expectations." He asserts that "in a marketplace where customer service has become a lost art, we have focused our business model on embracing our customer; serving their needs and helping them achieve their goals." Of course, any time any customer steps into a Max Muscle store they can also expect to find themselves exposed to all the education they would like on any given sports nutrition topic. As Greene explains, this is further proof of Max Muscle's commitment to "adding value to our customers' in-store experience through education and superior customer service." He adds that in his estimation, these ef-

forts are "what truly sets [Max Muscle] apart in an over-crowded industry of nutrition discounters."

Therefore, it is easy to see exactly how education has become the instrumental force behind the success of Max Muscle through its 17 year history. Thanks to their relying on knowledge and education, their goal of having 250 stores by 2009 certainly appears possible. It has been stated many times before that throughout life, we never stop learning. Max Muscle Sports Nutrition is not only testament to this fact, but also a shining example of the kind of success that is possible for those who take that lesson to heart.

Max Muscle Sports Nutrition single-unit, multi-unit and Master Franchises are available now. If you are into health & fitness and enjoy helping others improve their lives, this is the perfect opportunity to turn your passion into your career. Learn more at www.maxmuscle.com or 888-MAX-MUSCLE.



Max Muscle's dynamic new store design features state of the art building materials and slick visual elements for maximum impact. MaxFormation Center serves as the focal point of the store to emphasize the custom nutrition plans offered by Max Muscle Certified Fitness Nutrition Coaches. The front counter is flanked by a large flat panel television displaying a fast paced in-store DVD featuring all of the in-store programs, products and services offered by Max Muscle.