
Local insurer included in national list of best Hispanic franchises

By Anonymous

Published: 08/04/2010 - 08:41

Brownsville-based Pronto Insurance has made the World Franchising Network's list of Top 26 Franchises for Hispanics for 2010.

That's right, Top 26. The annual list usually stops at the Top 25, though this year an exception was made for a late-arriving yet equally qualified entrant, says WFN president Rob Bond, adding that next year things will be back to normal.

At any rate, 2010 marks Pronto's first appearance on the list, which Bond says is based on an analysis of factors including a franchise's historical performance, brand identification, franchisee satisfaction, training and support, and financial stability.

The data is combined with the percentage of franchises that are Hispanic-owned and the number of Hispanics in the franchiser's top levels of management. This year's list was published in the July issue of Poder magazine, similar to Forbes but aimed at the U.S. Hispanic and Latin American markets.

Pronto, a discount insurance firm founded in 1997, has only been in the franchise business about a year but has already launched 26 Texas franchises.

According to Viviana Ozuna, Pronto's franchise director, the goal is to open two new franchises a month. She notes that being recognized as a top franchise in Poder magazine is immensely valuable in terms of raising Pronto's profile.

What got them on the list, Ozuna adds, is the fact that — unlike most franchises — Pronto offers customized training to Hispanic franchisees.

Bond says franchising in general has taken a beating due to the recession, as it's gotten harder for would-be franchisees to get loans to go into business. That said, the number of Hispanic-owned franchises across the country is growing, as is the number of Hispanics in top management positions, he says.

"There is no question that the franchising community is increasingly aware of the economic power and underlying talents within the Latino community," Bond says. "They have a huge economic impact and I think that's certainly starting to be realized."

And Pronto, especially, is thriving not just in spite of the recession but seemingly because of it. Ozuna notes that Jackson Hewitt, bruised by the recession and in search of new products, has begun offering Pronto insurance alongside its tax preparation services at several locations.

"Our doorbell has been ringing," she says. "Demand is high because the recession is attracting more companies who want to co-locate with us."

Marco Saldivar, Pronto's operations director, says Pronto's business is booming for at least two reasons: Texas is getting serious about cracking down on uninsured drivers through the TexasSure verification program, and the recession is driving more and more people away from major insurance companies and to Pronto, which doesn't ask about credit scores, bank accounts and the like.

"This business, it truly is recession proof," Saldivar says. "The worse the economy does, the more people are price conscious of their insurance. They become very meticulous with their policy."