



Photo courtesy Mike Thorne

## Cashing in on Clutter

Don Freeman, Franchisee

**M**ost people know that one man's trash is another man's treasure. For Just Junk franchisee, Donald Freeman, truer words have never been spoken.

Freeman is Just Junk's first franchisee, serving the Hamilton and Oakville, Ont., markets by removing unwanted junk and disposing of it or recycling it as needed. Company founder, Mike Thorne, held various corporate management roles in Toronto. One day, while trying to figure out a way to remove old office equipment from his floor, inspiration struck. Everyone has junk, so why not capitalize on that market? Convinced of the business's potential, Thorne left his office job in 2003 to found Just Junk.

From the start, Thorne was determined to franchise his business. While he hauled away junk throughout the day, each evening was spent fine-tuning the operation, so another hard working businessperson could pick up the reins. It took Thorne four years to finally find the franchisee he was looking for in Freeman.

"We found Don's breadth of experience to be his strongest asset," Thorne says. "His can-do, will-do attitude was exactly what we were looking for in our first franchise partner. Don understood the systems would evolve greatly during our first year of operation and was excited to play a vital role in our evolution."

Freeman is also a veteran of the corporate world, holding high-level jobs with several family-owned businesses in the trucking, mobile paper shredding and fire protection industries. He credits Thorne and Just Junk chief operating officer (COO), John Netherway, for jumpstarting his leap into franchising.

"I was involved in operating both large and small businesses for many years, but I have never been a franchisee before," Freeman explains. "I never really felt that was the direction I would take until I found Just Junk."

Freeman opened his franchise in July 2007 and business boomed from the get-go, thanks to what Freeman confidently calls "the best launch setup in the industry." Though his days are long and his schedule jam-packed, Freeman says startup problems have been minimal. "In fact, the only real challenge has been keeping up with the demand," he says. "Business has been well above our initial expectations."

Hauling away old relics can certainly make for some interesting stories. Over the years, Just Junk has trucked away everything from a vintage Second World War shell casing to 15 truckloads of bingo dabbers to the back half of a sailboat.

"The wild and wacky discoveries never end," Freeman says, citing pianos and freezers as some of the more cumbersome items he's removed. "But I'm sure the most interesting surprises are yet to be uncovered." **cbf**