



COUNTRYWIDE SIGNS SUMMARY:

TYPE OF FRANCHISE:	Van-based/Management
INDUSTRY SECTOR:	'For Sale' sign supply, erection & maintenance
IDEAL FRANCHISEE PROFILE:	You must be enthusiastic, self motivated, keen to succeed and relish the challenge of running your own business as part of a team.
COMPANY HISTORY:	Established 1998, franchising since 1998
NETWORK SIZE:	56
INVESTMENT REQUIREMENT:	£19,995
PRIORITY RECRUITMENT LOCATIONS:	Nationwide



Income building & a better lifestyle

Two friends discuss buying Countrywide Signs franchises

Countrywide Signs has been franchising the supply, erection and maintenance of 'For Sale' signs for 10 years and has a network of 56 franchisees nationwide. Its two newest franchisees are Colin Lancaster and Gary Millen, friends who quit their banking careers to become self-employed

Interview: Jess Sturman

“As a Business Manager for Lloyds TSB, I was the face of the bank and delegated the workload,” says Stafford-based Countrywide Signs franchisee Colin Lancaster (pictured above right). “Despite not having complete control if anything went wrong with a client’s account I would be held responsible. After 19 years in banking I began looking for a new challenge where I could work for myself and have sole responsibility.

“I liked the idea of franchising and working with a proven business model because I could spend more time running the business and less time learning the ropes, so I accessed the bank’s franchise database and researched different opportunities. Countrywide Signs have a high rating and excellent track record so I decided to investigate. The low investment and low overheads really appealed and I liked the idea of operating a van franchise from home.”

Colin decided to call his friend Gary Millen to discuss his new business venture and by the end of the phone call Gary was intrigued. Gary (pictured inset (right) with Countrywide Signs Sales Director John Ball) had also left his job and was looking for a new project where he was his own boss, had flexible hours to work around family commitments and did not have a three-hour daily commute.

Gary says: “I have been friends with Colin for years and share the same interests, so I knew if the opportunity suited Colin the chances are it would



suit me. I conducted my own research into Countrywide Signs online and was impressed. I invested in the Romford franchise because the work was not office-based and I liked the thought of being out and about.”

As part of the franchise package Countrywide Signs offers a comprehensive training programme, which includes shadowing a franchisee for two days as well as classroom sessions covering marketing and legal issues. Franchisees also have access to a solid support network. “The support system is excellent,” says Gary. “I know I can phone or email another franchisee or Head Office and get help with any problem. National Sales Manager Simon Smith has also visited both of us to make sure we are coping which has been great.”

The two friends have different aspirations for their businesses. Colin explains: “I did not invest in this franchise to make a lot of money, I opted to do this to have a better quality of life and watch my children grow up. By the end of year one I hope to achieve a turnover of £35,000 and in two years to have built up the van business to keep me and possibly one other employee busy.”

Meanwhile, Gary plans to expand his business as quickly as possible. “Over the next few years I plan to build my business to three or four vans and a small workforce,” he says. “By the end of year one I hope to reach a turnover of up to £45,000.” •

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



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