

How local Subway franchise Amishi Patel weathered the pandemic to keep her doors open and her people employed

FAIRFIELD, CA, USA, February 1, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When Amishi Patel opened up her first Subway franchise in 2007 with no experience, she was determined to become a successful female entrepreneur. Thirteen years, a lot of challenges and a mini-empire later, Patel reflects on surviving the COVID-19 pandemic, and digging into the same toolbox to survive.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Patel had clearly achieved her goals: she owned multiple successful Subway franchises – in Suisun City, Fairfield, Vacaville and Dixon – and was a working, married mother of two. She had found a healthy work-life balance and had the support of her family and staff to manage her hectic lifestyle.

Like most small business owners, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Patel immediately felt its impacts. Sales dropped by 40% and she was struggling to keep her restaurants afloat.

While navigating the uncertainty that the pandemic brought to her family and her business, she struggled under the burden of keeping all of her team members on payroll. Patel said. “Even though we were going through a difficult time, I knew my employees relied on this income to support their families. They were going through the same struggles we were, and I felt a great responsibility for them.”

Patel knew survival meant she must act quickly. Within the first days of shelter-in-place she had created a new business model for all of her stores to follow: optimize for minimal contact, promote online ordering through third-party delivery, and enhance catering service through local business outreach. She also ensured her customers and team members felt safe early on, by implementing safety precautions such as installing Plexiglas throughout all her restaurants, and educating staff regularly on new safety procedures.

As an extra step to ensure her team members' job security, Patel worked with Subway corporate and her local development agent office, the Letap Group, to apply for the PPP loan. Like many other small businesses, Patel struggled to get the loan approved; the process took close to two months. “From the period at the beginning of the pandemic until the PPP loan arrived was the toughest time managing the cash flow,” Patel said. “Keeping everyone on payroll was very challenging but I’m happy I made the commitment.”

Patel also reached out to Solano SBDC for the guidance and attended Senator Garamendi weekly calls. According to Patel, Solano County grant program benefited her business with safety improvements and repurposing several processes around the online, app or third-party ordering. Following months of hard work, Patel's sales are now back to 90% compared to pre COVID-19 sales.

"We are building back up again," Patel said. "I've always stayed focused on my core priorities – maintaining food, customers and my team members' safety. My customers can see that, and they respond to it."

"We are extremely proud of Amishi's resilience and commitment to her team members throughout the pandemic," said Akki Patel, president of the Letap Group, which supports hundreds of locations throughout northern California and Nevada, and also is a local franchisor for Subway. "She has persevered in an incredibly challenging environment and is the perfect example of what hard work can achieve."

Patel is grateful in particular for the flexibility Subway has afforded her as a franchisee, particularly during the pandemic. "Maintaining a healthy work-life balance, especially throughout the chaos, is something not everyone has been able to achieve," she said. "Being a mother and a female entrepreneur is not impossible – but it requires a lot of planning and support even in regular circumstances -- from my family, from my team, and from my corporate sponsor. Being a franchisee has provided me with the ability to set my own schedule, and also critical access to the support network that helps me navigate these challenges."

Patel makes it a priority to extend the same opportunities for her team members, offering flexible schedules to her staff, especially the working mothers at her franchises. "I have always believed that there shouldn't be limitations for women to succeed in business and in life," said Patel. "Women are equally capable of doing everything; I'm just providing the additional support they might not get elsewhere. We've weathered this together, and I want us to rise and succeed together."

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