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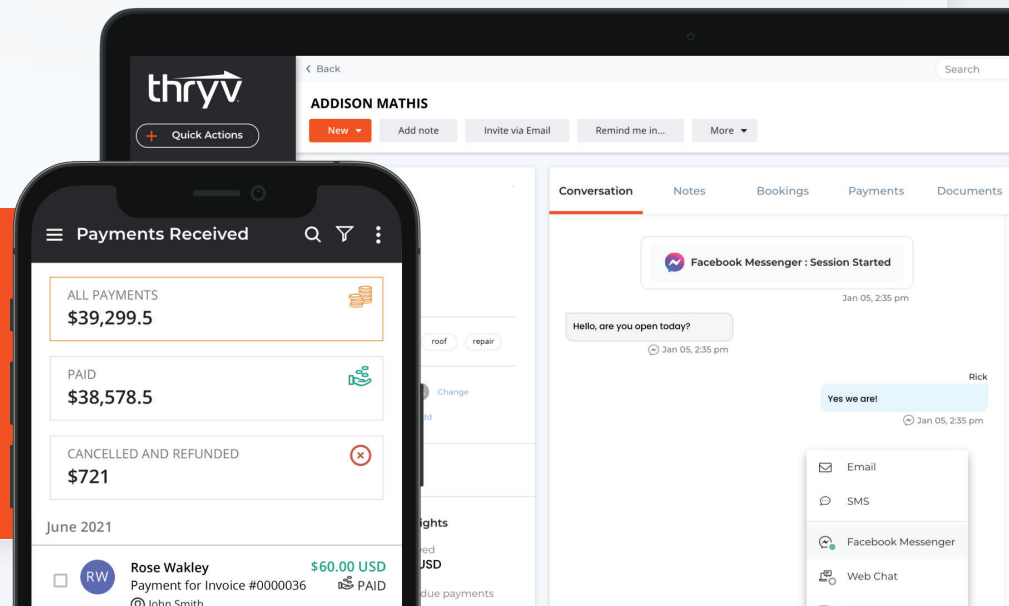
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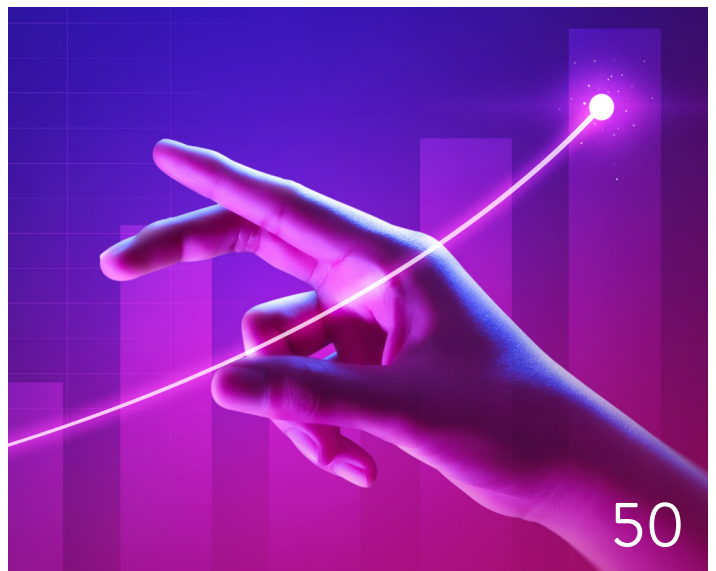
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Our Team

CHAIRMAN

Gary Gardner

CEO

Therese Thilgen

EXECUTIVE VP OPERATIONS

Sue Logan

EVP, CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER

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VP BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Barbara Yelmene

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVES

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MANAGING EDITOR

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WEB DEVELOPER

Don Rush

WEB PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Esther Foley Juliana Foley

DIRECTOR, EVENT OPERATIONS

Katy Coutts

SENIOR SUPPORT MANAGER

Sharon Wilkinson

SENIOR SUPPORT COORDINATOR

FRANCHISEE LIAISON

Leticia Pascal

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Michael Llantín

VIDEO PRODUCTION MANAGER

Greg Delbene

EVENT OPERATIONS MANAGER

Chelsea Weitzman

EVENT PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Lillian Swenor

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Art Coley John DiJulius

Bill Edwards Keith Gerson

Evan Hackel Matt Haller

Darrell Johnson Jack Monson

Andrew Seid

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Helen Bond Colleen Mcmillar

Sara Wykes

Article Inquiries

editorial@franchiseupdate.com

Subscriptions

subscriptions@franchising.com

408-402-5681

Bold Women in the C-Suite

Written by **KERRY PIPES & EDDY GOLDBERG**

“Bold Women in the C-Suite” is the focus of this year’s annual Women’s Issue. And grrr!., did we find some inspiring examples of bold women making a positive difference in franchising!

Making bold moves in leadership positions can be one of the savviest, most effective ways to build, sustain, and take a franchise brand to the next level. Being bold can help franchise leaders outthink and outsmart the competition, try a new strategy, implement leading edge technologies, or take a calculated business risk. It also can shorten the path to the C-suite, but not without risk leading to reward.

“The true meaning of courage is to be afraid, and then, with your knees knocking and your heart racing, to step out anyway—even when that step makes sense to nobody but you.”

Women have become franchise leaders in C-suites in many different sectors, even those thought of as traditionally “male.” Many have built successful careers not shying away from taking on big decisions. There were challenges, pushback, and unpredictable outcomes. But those who succeeded, through persistence and good fortune, became better leaders, built stronger brands, and inspired others along the way.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.”

For this issue, we asked 15 women franchise leaders to share their “bold” journeys in franchising. Their responses were candid and insightful and gave us a peek not only into their strategic thinking, but also into their passion for their brands, teams, and franchisees as they changed jobs, changed brands, and saw themselves changed in the process—all while staying true to their core values. And often, their paths took unexpected turns.

“We must be willing to get rid of the life we’ve planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us. The old skin has to be shed before the new one can come.”

Elsewhere in this issue, we dig into franchise marketing in 2023 with two feature stories: 1) how brands are building customer loyalty and improving the customer experience, and 2) how brands are using new media tools to assist them in their marketing campaigns.

Franchising continues to be a great place to live and work. We think the Q&As with these 15 female franchise leaders, along with all our other regular content, reinforces the unique power of the franchise model and the many ways it inspires both professional and personally. We hope it inspires you!

After all, when it comes to being bold, *“It is better to beg forgiveness than ask permission.”*



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15 FEMALE FRANCHISE LEADERS SHARE THEIR JOURNEY TO THE TOP

For nearly a decade now, we've celebrated women in franchising leadership positions. And in those years we've featured women founders, CEOs, CMOs, CDOs, CIOs, and many others who have shared the stories of their upward trajectory in the world of franchising. It's always inspiring—and a privilege—to hear their stories, and is something our team looks forward to publishing each year.

This year we look at women in franchising through the lens of being “bold” in their journey to the C-suite. How did they become who they are today? Who were their mentors? What was their unique path to achieving their business and personal goals? What “bold” moves did they make, and how did they deal with pushback? How did their choices affect not only their career paths and brands, but also their personal lives? Did they inspire others along the way to make their own bold moves? How?

Discover their stories in the following pages. Each is candid about where she's been: her challenges, failures, successes, core values, and more. Many now have become mentors and models for other women with similar goals and aspirations. And, of course, there's much more in the telling. We hope you enjoy their “up close and personal” responses to our questions. Perhaps you will be inspired to be bold in your own journey, wherever it may take you!





LINDA CHADWICK

Brand: Rita's Italian Ice & Frozen Custard

Title: CEO, President

Years in franchising: 30

No. of units: 550 in 31 states

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? It's less about bold moves, and more about making the right, strategic moves to accomplish goals and achieve success. I believe that it's important to plan out calculated risks, outside-the-box thinking, and evaluate risk and reward in elevating your business. This is an integral part of leadership.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. Appearing on CBS's "Undercover Boss" earlier this year to get an inside look at some of Rita's locations. As a result, I was able to award life-changing opportunities to these entrepreneurs and their staff, plus gain insight into areas of opportunities to create initiatives that will benefit the en-

tire system in the future. This gave me an opportunity to walk in our customers' shoes so to speak, to understand and witness their challenges, and that drives me every day. The insights I gained from this experience have motivated not only me, but the entire team, to continue to collaborate, learn, and drive solutions faster and more efficiently.

Our technology road map implementation was a bold move for us. The decision to initiate new and inventive ways of how we interact with our guests through our new app and bringing that technology to life was an important initiative that continues to evolve and elevate. Once we took the first step and created some wins, the team was even more confident to continue this quest.

Implementing a new look for the brand is another initiative we are undertaking. I have had success in previous roles and companies I've been involved with. Again, it's not really about being bold, it's more about the right strategic moves and calculated risks that will reward the brand that keeps guests coming back.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? Ultimately the reward is to achieve stronger sales and profits for our franchisees. Guest satisfaction that keeps guests engaged and coming back was our overall goal that we were able to achieve. With great teamwork, having clear expectations, and paying



WE ENCOURAGE BEING BOLD, WHICH WE IDENTIFY AS SHARING YOUR GOALS AND ASKING FOR WHAT YOU WANT. WOMEN HAVE TO BE ENCOURAGED TO SPEAK UP, TO LET THEIR VOICES BE HEARD."

attention to the data, the team was able to surpass our expectations.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? Our focus of adding a drive-thru option to walk-up locations has been a strong revenue builder. Our digital-first strategy and launch of the new mobile app for customers—which has upgraded the consumer experience and encouraged repeat business—has been successful, and we expect continued success.

Building a strong employee culture was at the top of the list, so our team can be proud of what they achieved and see positive results. They are the reason for the success we've achieved. We launched our Rita's Way program 3 years ago. The program highlights 34 fundamentals that we live by every day in all of our actions. I am very proud of this shift. Without a strong culture, we wouldn't be where we are today.

I am so proud of our roots and how the Rita's brand is nearly four decades strong. I believe that it's very important to continue to grow and yet stay true to our iconic red-and-white awning and our walk-up window, both of which are nostalgic brand attributes. This

look and feel keeps guests on the lookout for the red-and-white awning when they travel. This consistency has helped spread brand awareness and built loyalty from customers across the country.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? I wouldn't describe it as pushback. It's about collaboration and communication, about sharing the vision, the expectations, and incorporating feedback. Is it always easy? No. However, inclusiveness with the franchisees is so important. At the end of the day, it's their business and they want to continue to grow, but we are in this together. For me and the team, it is so important to be able to understand the franchisees' perspective and walk in their shoes.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? We have a formal mentorship program. We encourage being bold, which we identify as sharing your goals and asking for what you want. Women have to be encouraged to speak up, to let their voices be heard. It's such a thrill for me to witness individuals flourish. As an organization we participate in Linkage by encouraging women leaders to attend the Women in Leadership conference and take advantage of their educational programs.

What motivates you as a leader? I have a strong passion for franchising. Franchise businesses are throughout our neighborhoods, which many people don't realize. They provide job opportunities, give back to their communities, and grow their economic footprint. I don't take that lightly. As a leader, I'm motivated by leading a team that "brings it" every day. Their enthusiasm to deliver their best every day makes us stronger as an organization. I'm proud of their accomplishments and excited to continue to watch them grown and develop as individuals.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? I feel every woman leader in franchising should network. The Women In Leadership network is a valuable resource. Networking is an important part of growing as a leader. Unfortunately, so many women are apprehensive or feel they don't have enough time, but it really should be looked at as an opportunity to learn and develop, to discover what skills you need for growth. There are so many willing to help you on your journey. Don't be afraid to ask.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? I've had many mentors throughout my career. I am very grateful for every single one of them and the wisdom they shared with me. Sometimes I was not very quick to implement their advice, as it often meant stepping out of my comfort zone. When I did step out of that zone, it was just fine and allowed me to take more risks. As a woman, the best advice I was given, and it's still true today, is to learn how to say "No" and not feel guilty about it. My favorite quote that resonates with me, especially as a female, is by Eleanor Roosevelt. "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." We all need to quiet our inner critic, because if you're feeling inferior it's because you're allowing someone to make you feel that way.

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? Early on, one of my failures as a mom, wife, and career person was trying to do everything myself. I guess I thought I had to be Superwoman. I didn't ask for help. I didn't take the time to recharge myself, and I learned the hard way that I wasn't effective trying to take on everything alone. I didn't say "No," and, as a result, I acted like the victim. From that experience, I learned that I can't do everything all at once and do it well. I share that experience with young moms who are raising a family, taking care of parents, and trying to do it all, too.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? I would ask for help earlier in navigating my career goals. Life's a journey, it's not perfect. We aren't perfect as individuals. I wouldn't change anything along the way. As long as we can laugh at ourselves, have fun, and bring others along with us, then it's a great journey.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? Spend time with yourself, thinking and planning. I find it very valuable to shut out all the noise and map out a time to think, plan, and develop strategy for execution. For me, I go away and spend a couple of days so I can focus. That may not be practical for some, but I encourage you to do whatever it takes to shut off all the noise and focus on what's your next step, your next action, to be a better you and stronger leader. Enjoy the journey! ■



CAITLIN DONATO

Brand: Volofit

Title: COO, Area Developer/Franchisee

Age: 35

Years in franchising: 10

No. of units: 9 open, dozens in the pipeline

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? I think it's more about doing the small things right so that when the opportunity presents itself, you are in a position to be forward-thinking or "bold."

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. I left a very well-known and successful franchise fitness concept for an opportunity to grow a young brand. One of my top personal core values is growth, so for me jumping to a young brand looking to grow aligned with my values perfectly. However, to others, that jump may have seemed risky or scary. I guess it was, but to grow, either personally or as a brand, it's going to be risky and absolutely scary. That's the part that I love.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? I felt it was important to create a fitness concept and program offering that was truly for the masses and, for the first time in the industry, perfectly balanced.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? I think it has played a big role in growing the corporate team. A growing brand needs leaders who can help raise others up so that they have a chance to be bold.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? Call it pushback. Call it growing pains. A brand doesn't grow without it. I always try to rely on facts and logic. Let's document it and understand what must be changed to align on priorities.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? Early in my career I was empow-

ered by an amazing woman in the industry. She took me under her wing and helped me along several steps in my career. I have always been devoted to doing the same for talented women in this industry—whether helping female coaches understand that they don't have to stop at the aspiration of becoming a head coach when they can own their own studio, or helping guide and grow a corporate career.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? 1) Bring others up with you. 2) Learn from your critics and appreciate your supporters. 3) And, like I tell my kids, always, and I do mean always, be the hardest working "kid" in the room.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? I am not alone. Some I've met through the workplace and by listening to podcasts.

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? I have been a runner my whole life. One of my big scary, audacious goals for the past 12 years has been to qualify for the Boston Marathon. I have failed over and over and over again. Most recently, I trained for six months in the most intense training of my life. For all intents and purposes, I should have qualified. Every time-trial training run would tell you the same. The day of the race my body and the weather had other plans. Around all of my friends and family, I failed to qualify for the third time. After dusting off my pride and putting my ego aside, here is the lesson I learned: Know when to fail. You will not always

win. You might think you know the answer and you've done the research (or practice), but race day might have other plans for you. You have to be brave enough to know when to fail. Sometimes it's just as important as winning.

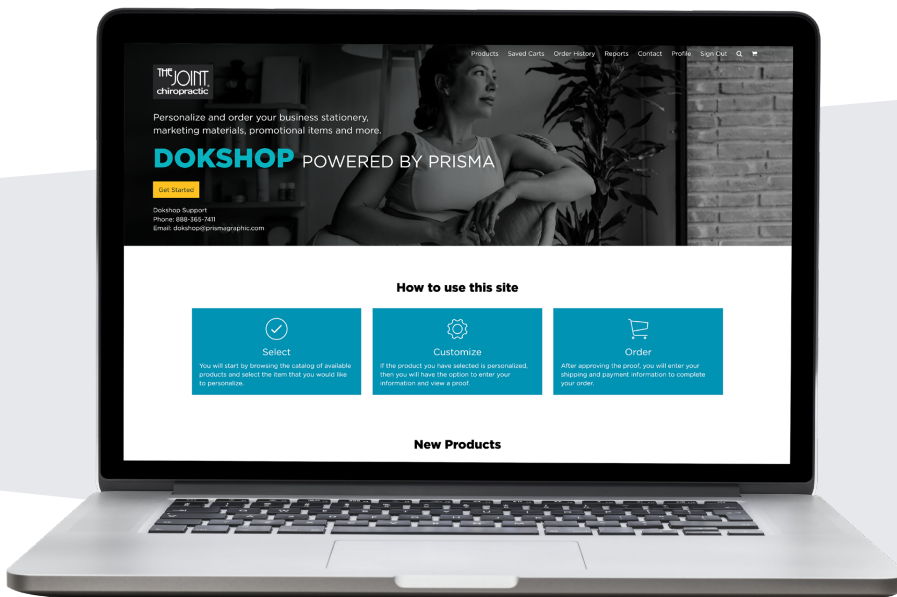
What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? As a single mom, making the decision to double down on my career is constantly a tough decision. There are only so many hours in a day, and the decision to lean into my career has often come at the cost of spending time with my young children. I like to assure myself that they have a strong mommy to look up to. However, the fact is I have sacrificed time—and, most importantly, memories—with them.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? I'd love to say nothing and that everything has led me to where I am now. But honestly, a ton. I would have done a thousand things differently. That's only because life doesn't always allow you to learn the lesson before taking the test.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? There will always be voices. It is up to you what you listen to. It's not always about being right, proving points, and being bold. This took me a long time to learn, and I'm still learning every day. Sometimes, if you pause and listen to the voices, you can extract value and learn from others. Listen to the voices that have lessons to teach and do your best to block out the ones aimed to knock you down. Also, your gut is always right. I wish I would have learned to trust mine a lot sooner. ■

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CHERYL FLETCHER

Brand: Tropical Smoothie Cafe

Title: Chief Development Officer

Age: 59

Years in franchising: 20+

No. of units: 1,200+

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? Making bold, calculated moves has been very important in my path to becoming a franchising executive, and I believe it's absolutely important for all woman to be bold as well. Bold moves happen when you push yourself outside your comfort zone and face new challenges head-on, while working cross-functionally and collaborating with a team. The "how you get there" is also very important.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. I have made several shifts that have affected my career path before joining Tropical Smoothie Cafe. At Popeyes, I chose to make a lateral move from director of investor relations to a whole new functional area of the business as director of franchise development. This was a significant advance-

ment for me, as I was able to oversee the real estate and franchise sales sides of the business, which ultimately furthered my growth. Even today in my current role, it's taken bold thinking and action to continue to expand the brand's steady growth.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? I very much enjoyed my role on the finance side, but I was a bit concerned with how this shift could affect my career. However, the leadership team saw my skill set and thought it could be great in other areas of the business. This move allowed me to play a key role in the brand's expansion.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? To fully understand how we can grow the brand successfully, I take a very disciplined, analytical approach to development. Also, I believe working as a team is critical. Something I always say when a new team member joins the organization is, "Welcome to the development team," because everyone plays a key role in our growth expansion to open new cafes with our franchise owners.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? With any change, there usually is some hesitancy. New processes and tracking are put into place that take more time to learn, so there can be a bit of pushback for the extra time and energy. However, this ultimately makes the brand much more efficient and effective.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? Currently, I am mentoring one of our construction managers, as well as playing a key leadership role with other women team members in the organization—which includes the franchisees as well. Our brand mission is to "Inspire Better," with an essential goal to help set up all our franchise owners for success, and this, of course, includes our female partners.

What motivates you as a leader? Working collaboratively and cross-functionally to drive results. I also enjoy playing a key role in others' advancement, leadership growth, and development—whether that is team members or franchisees. Specifically, being able to set franchisees up for success so they are able to continue to grow with Tropical Smoothie Cafe is something I place high value on.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? Continue

to mentor others by sharing experiences and challenges overcome, being a team player and working cross-functionally and being collaborative, and getting involved in the industry. I am a member of the advisory board of the Franchise Leadership & Development Conference, which has been a great way to build strong connections in the franchise space.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? The mentors in my life have played a key role in my success. There are so many from the franchise and restaurant industry who have inspired me. Cheryl Bachelder, my former CEO at Popeyes, and Alice LeBlanc, former chief supply officer at Popeyes, were both wonderful mentors during my time with the brand. At FRANData, Darrell Johnson, CEO, and Edith Wisemen, president, have given me great advice over the years. And, of course, Charles Watson—he is the one who brought me to Tropical Smoothie Cafe to be a leader, and through his leadership has helped me develop in this role.



MAKING BOLD, CALCULATED MOVES HAS BEEN VERY IMPORTANT IN MY PATH TO BECOMING A FRANCHISING EXECUTIVE, AND I BELIEVE IT'S ABSOLUTELY IMPORTANT FOR ALL WOMAN TO BE BOLD AS WELL."

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? In early 2017, I transitioned out of Popeyes. At the time, it made me feel a bit lost. Now, looking back, it was one of the best career moves that could have happened for me. This transition opened the doors to take what I'd learned to another growing brand, Tropical Smoothie Cafe. Since that time, we have expanded the team to more than 20 individuals, opened more than 600 cafes, and have expanded our opening pipeline to more than 750 projects for continued future growth.

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? When my eldest son was one, I made the decision to slow down and work part-time for a couple of years. It was hard, but looking back, it was one of the best decisions for me and my family. Today I have been married for more than 30 years and our two boys are now in college.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? Do the right thing and always be true to yourself. Focus on what you can do to be your very best, and give back to others. My mom instilled this in me; she always told me and my five siblings that we can do whatever we set our minds to. Finally, life is not a sprint—it's a marathon. Make sure you enjoy the journey along the way. ■



ALEJANDRA FONT



Brand: The Camp Transformation Center

Title: Co-Founder, CEO

Age: 50

Years in franchising: 6

No. of units: 109

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? Making bold moves is important if you want to make an impact in your life, business, and industry. If you are satisfied with the status quo, it's easy to remain the same. But if you desire more, it's imperative to take calculated risks, to feel uncomfortable and vulnerable.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. I started my business 12 years ago. Six years ago we began franchising the concept. Making the decision to move to the franchise model was bold. I had zero previous experience in franchising. I had experience in business, but franchising is a whole other monster. I got to a point in my career as an entrepreneur where I wanted more and felt I could deliver more value to the marketplace if I could leverage franchising to scale my business. The journey was amazing. I love the challenge of attempting to do something extraordinary.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? Going from a traditional business to a franchise model was a huge shift for the brand. It definitely made us more accountable, more process- and systems-oriented, more organized, and more robust.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? I knew a strong culture would be the bedrock of our success. Our brand has cultivated and developed a culture that makes people feel special. We achieve this by creating memorable experiences that build strong relationships with our fitness community. Our culture was developed to give us the opportunity to change people's lives. We are in the group fitness weight-loss space with 64% of our clients being female. Going through a weight-loss transformation requires a lot of support, empathy, coaching, and understanding. These are areas where women in general relate to well and feel comfortable at executing. For my two co-founders (my husband and my business partner), this culture wasn't intuitive. Since I was running the operations, I had the opportunity



to create the culture that was most similar to myself and that was welcoming and safe for women and men of all shapes and sizes.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? In the very beginning there was a bit of pushback because one of my co-founders came from a different school of thought. He had a male body-building background where the culture is much more rigid and harsh. I didn't feel comfortable behaving that way with our clients, so I created a culture that was more empathetic and understanding to a client's needs. That culture has evolved to an amazing life of its own.



“WE MADE A LOT OF MISTAKES, BUT WE ALSO QUICKLY LEARNED AND REALIZED WE NEEDED TO SEEK HELP FROM PROFESSIONALS IN THE FRANCHISE SPACE. THAT DECISION DRASTICALLY CHANGED MY LIFE.”

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? I am proud to say just over 50% of our franchise partners are female. I think our culture resonates very much with women.

What motivates you as a leader? What motivates me most is seeing profitable and happy franchise partners and working with a team that lives by our culture and is thriving in their roles. We have so much to offer our franchise partners, and so many oppor-

tunities to take advantage of, that not being proactive is a disservice to us all.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? Above anything, I believe women must take a seat at the table and allow their voices to be heard. Too many capable women suffer from self-doubt and insecurity. Women have a lot to offer and a viewpoint that is unique and valuable. Data is important, but gut also plays a role. Don't be afraid to listen to your gut. She knows what's up!

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? All my mentors have been people who mentor me from afar. They are authors, speakers, and businesspeople who have done extraordinary things in their careers that I learn from, look up to, and admire.

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? My biggest failure in franchising was not bringing on the right team with broad franchise experience from the outset. Our unit economics were very strong despite not offering a robust support and training program, which allowed our deficiencies to not be obvious. It wasn't until a couple of years into becoming a franchise company that we realized we were missing the right team to help our franchise partners thrive. Once we came to that realization, we've been able to attract talent with a proven track record. We are still looking to grow our team, but now we have a great structure in place.

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? Becoming a franchisor has been by far the toughest decision we have ever had to make. The vision at the beginning was to have a few clubs in our local market. I envisioned myself with five. Within a few years of operating, clients began asking us to sell them a franchise. We didn't know much about the industry. We made a lot of mistakes, but we also quickly learned and realized we needed to seek help from professionals in the franchise space. That decision drastically changed my life. I have grown professionally and am having an absolute blast building this company. It comes with stress and uncertainty at times, but I know that as long as we always double down on our client—the franchise partner—and their success and profitability, we will always win.



“WHATEVER DREAM YOU HAVE, YOU HAVE THE ABILITY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. THE YEARS AND MONTHS WILL GO BY ANYWAY, SO IF YOU WANT SOMETHING, GO FOR IT. REGRET IS A PAINFUL THING.”

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? I would not let a lack of self-confidence get in my way of acting on a decision. In the past, there were countless times when I would hesitate to speak up—and then someone else would participate, sharing exactly what I was thinking.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? Go for it! Whatever dream you have, you have the ability to make it happen. The years and months will go by anyway, so if you want something, go for it. Regret is a painful thing. You'll never regret going for it, but you will regret not doing anything about the life you want to live or the impact you want to make. Think of 85-year-old you: Do you want to look back and remember all the excitement, or do you want to remember that you wanted to do something but were too afraid to take action? I want to reminisce at the end of my life that I was the one responsible for making an amazing life for myself, not a perfect life, but one full of adventure and lived the way I wanted to live. ■

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Brand: Massage Heights
Title: SVP of Culture and Industry Relations
Years in franchising: 18
No. of units: 115

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? Making bold moves in one's career life is important regardless of gender. For women, it's not so much how important it is to do so, but rather recognizing how many women have been taught since childhood not to take chances, rock the boat, or embrace risk. I have always loved the sayings, "The universe rewards the brave" and "Fortune favors the bold." I learned early on that success in careers requires not only commitment, hard work, and focus, but also the willingness to plunge ahead even if the path is dark and unpaved.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. I am in the position I am today because 30 years ago I decided to leave

a safe, secure job in sales and marketing and attend massage therapy college. In 1992, massage and spa were not household words and considered suspect and on the fringe. To make this move in a time when neither were considered careers, or even viable jobs, was a big risk. On top of that, I received no support from family and close friends who, for the most part, thought I had lost my mind!

I have made similar moves in my 30-year career in spa and wellness. I was very successful as a practicing massage therapist and teacher for many years. I closed my business to move into the vocational school industry, learning to operate successful massage therapy schools. In 2005, I accepted a position with this unknown, new-to-market franchise brand—Massage Envy—another

career move that made my close circle of friends and family shake their heads. When I joined Massage Envy there were 30 locations opened. When I left 10 years later there were 1,100 locations open.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? For bold moves specific to one brand, I made several during my tenure with Massage Envy. Since this brand was the first model of its kind, we had no one to follow. We couldn't research how other brands had navigated the growth, unique challenges, opportunities, or operational structure and needs. We had to basically create strategies as we went. This type of oversight requires leaders who are creative, innovative, and not risk-averse. During my tenure, there were many bold

moves taken in developing services, employee acquisition strategies, vocational school outreach, industry relations initiatives, and franchisee training and support. The department I managed oversaw all functions that had to do with the back of the house (therapists, services, policies, training, etc.). Our industry relations outreach was so important in those days because the massage therapy community, including schools, associations, and therapists, were very resistant to our model of offering affordable massage services. Interacting with these groups was not for the weakhearted.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? My team and I created an industry relations and recruiting strategy that positioned us as leaders in the massage and spa industries. From our national marketing campaigns to our internal franchisee support programs, Massage Heights has built much brand recognition in associations, schools, and with massage therapists collectively, which supports our franchisee recruiting outreach.

Our contributions to industry nonprofit foundations and our unique programs like Outside the Room—a virtual show and podcast designed for massage therapists and estheticians—are creative approaches to promote our career opportunities and give back. We believe that it is important to be good industry stewards and do so through volunteer leadership and monetary donations. These external programs become even more successful by involving our franchisees. We spent much time in 2022 educating the system on industry relations and formed a Culture of Care Committee composed of franchisees who assist us in supporting and promoting all our outreach programs.

From our products and service department, we spent the year assessing the performance of our current menu and offerings and making many changes to ensure our franchisees continue to maximize profitability, while maintaining therapeutic and high-quality experiences for our guests.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? For product and service adaptations, there was some pushback from our network regarding the changes and updates. As a franchisee, sometimes it is difficult to see the entire national picture, and we did our best to share all the details of our decisions. In franchising, these types of situations occur often. I've learned as a leader that

the best approaches are honesty, openness, and patience. In addition, listening closely to opposing opinions is greatly beneficial as there could always be input that helps improve the approaches and decisions.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? In this stage of my career, it's all about mentoring the next generation of leaders. The corporate office has an amazing team of people who are passionate, intelligent, and dedicated. My focus is helping them learn and grow so they can become confident in their abilities and roles. It's important to coach and then step back to allow them to fully access their unique talents and power through their own success and even failures. We all can learn from each other every day. And while I am a senior executive, I am still learning and growing. I'm constantly in awe of the younger generations I work with as they continue to teach me as well.

What motivates you as a leader? I am motivated when I have a strong connection to purpose and when I am working alongside passionate, intelligent, and creative people. The business of Massage Heights is providing healing experiences to our guests to help them live happier, healthier lives. It doesn't get much better than that. In the 30 years I've been in the spa and wellness industries, I have always been driven by my deep belief in the power of hands-on therapeutic touch. I hold the work of massage therapists and estheticians in high regard and am so inspired by the differences they make every day through their skilled hands and compassionate hearts.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? Women are natural leaders. And while I'm a businesswoman and understand the financial and profitability models of successful franchises, I also know that powerful leading requires knowing how to integrate intuition, heart, and inspiration into our leadership roles.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? While I've never had a formal mentor, I have learned so much from the powerful women I have worked alongside and from spa and wellness leaders I have formed professional friendships with. I continue to be inspired by the executive team at Massage Heights, the industry association board members I work with, and all the

women leading the charge in the spa and wellness industries.

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? While I don't recall any "big" failures that negatively affected the brand I worked for or my career, there have been many times I've stumbled or made the wrong choices. In all these cases, I did learn quite a bit about communication, listening, planning, and paying attention to the details. I'm a big-picture gal, so I have the tendency to move full speed ahead and throw caution to the wind. This approach works sometimes, but to have a better outcome I've learned it's best to slow down and carefully think things through.

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? I made a very difficult decision 7 years ago. I was at the height of my career in an important leadership role for 10 years and truly thriving. But my mother was aging and with the position I had, I wasn't able to see her as much as I wanted to. I decided to step down from my role and focus on spending time with and helping to care for my mom. I moved into part-time consulting and spent 5 years doing that, which allowed me to be with my mom. This truly was the boldest career move I've ever made. And it was so worth it.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? In my career I have grown and learned how to become a better person, leader, and friend through not only my successes, but also my failures. It has been an amazing ride, and the only thing I would change is to commit to fostering more work/life balance as my younger years were spent focusing more on the professional aspects of my life and neglecting the personal.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? Leadership is more than just a title and pay grade. It's more than sitting behind a desk and telling staff what to do. It's about working alongside your team and leading by example. Know your worth and cultivate humility and curiosity. Seek out like-minded colleagues who will offer support and insights. Always keep learning. Take chances personally and professionally. Remember, every challenge and obstacle is a growth opportunity. ■



ROBIN GAGNON

Brand: We Sell Restaurants

Title: CEO

Age: 50+

Years in franchising: 10

No. of units: 37 franchisee-owned territories in 8 states,
2 company locations handling 45 states nationwide

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? Bold moves are a critical part of any woman's path to the C-suite. Women have the unique ability to empathize in the workplace and communicate in a very responsive and approachable way. The downside to that style is that it can be interpreted as a weak approach to business unless it is married with bold strategies that push brands forward.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. I finished my MBA with my sights set on a career path in Fortune 100 companies. This was after cutting my teeth in small companies at an early age. Despite success in the corporate world, I swapped my role as VP of strategic marketing with a Fortune 100 firm to launch our startup, We Sell Restaurants. At the time, there was no specialized approach to business brokerage for restaurants. There was no firm with the

discipline to say "no" to representing every vertical and there was no systemic technology to tie the approach together. That bold move paid off in our becoming the largest restaurant brokerage firm in the country, with franchisees across the nation and a corporate office that services 45 states. In addition, the profile of a business broker in the industry was overwhelmingly male (99%) and between 55 and 58. I challenged every single profile in the industry to outperform individually and for my firm.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with?

We disrupted the business brokerage industry. Before this brand, there were general brokers and there were people who handled restaurants, but there was no specific targeted approach to service one vertical in a unique way.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand?

I am always pushing forward and believe a brand that is not in forward motion and continuing to challenge itself and its team members is, in fact, falling back. I'm always trying to be on the bleeding edge of technological advances and improvements. I am also thinking of ways to leverage what we have developed in other ways for the franchise industry.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that?

At a certain level of success, there is always going to be pushback. It is simply not in my DNA to go slow or stop growing, so I am always pushing forward.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization?

I model behavior that encourages taking risks and learning from other women. I chair the IFA's Women's Franchise Committee, whose mission is to "promote women's participation in franchising by providing international networking opportunities for the exchange of ideas, resources, and experiences." I launched the Women in Franchising on Clubhouse, a weekly social meetup around topics where there is real sharing and community among the industry. Hosting this program each week provides connections for women building their careers, those ready to mentor others, and those who attend just to listen. I advocate for women in our brand. Despite real progress in the industry, the lion's share of transactions is still brokered by men. Our brand is changing that by recruiting female franchisees and promoting corporate team members who are setting industry records. We promote women within our organization and encourage them to be their best. That sometimes means coaching them around finding their voice, breaking out of a comfort zone, and pushing forward boldly.

What motivates you as a leader?

The success of our franchisees. Each time I see them grow from launch to success and create generational wealth for their family, I am so inspired and motivated to do more.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change?

Promote and advance women on your team. Mentor and coach women to be successful leaders. It is not an innate process and requires development and study. Give to others in the industry through the gift of your time, absolute focus and attention to their needs, and sharing of your talent. You will be an agent of change for those you help grow.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors?

I have been blessed with multiple mentors over the years. Some are directly related to franchising. Others are business leaders. I also have people I trust to just serve as a sounding board for ideas and to provide feedback.

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success?

One of my biggest failures is when someone I trusted, mentored, and coached to great results left the company and attempted to copy our business model despite a noncompete. It was devastating on multiple fronts. I felt the sting of failure because someone I had such faith in and taught so much could be so disloyal. It was financially costly to sue this individual as well. Ultimately, he was sanctioned, fined by the court, and ordered to pay all of our fees. As the events wound through the court system, I learned that the victory was not in the judge's ruling in our favor but that the things he was attempting to copy were in the past. We had continued to evolve the customer experience, the marketing, and the overall business model. Thus I learned that our brand and its success cannot be knocked off or imitated because of our commitment to continuous improvement.

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life?

I had to put franchise growth on hold for about 2 years when Eric, my husband and business partner, lost his hearing. Since his birth, Eric only heard through one ear, something most people never noticed. A relatively routine operation on his only hearing ear in 2018 resulted in total deafness. Over the next 2 years, he would ultimately undergo four operations before getting a cochlear implant and relearning speech and sound through this device. For those 2 years, he and I could communicate only through an Android phone and



WOMEN HAVE THE UNIQUE ABILITY TO EMPATHIZE IN THE WORKPLACE AND COMMUNICATE IN A VERY RESPONSIVE AND APPROACHABLE WAY."

Google's Transcribe feature since he did not sign or read lips. We had to really balance which things we could take on during that time. Ultimately, we made the decision to pause franchise growth and focus on getting his hearing to 100%. It was absolutely the right decision for our family.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently?

I'm not sure I would change very much about my journey. My small-business experience led me to my MBA and a bigger business approach. That came full circle to launching a startup brand in a niche no one knew about. Each path on my journey fed my confidence, knowledge, and belief in where I go next.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders?

Make friends. Attend industry events. Reach out to others and highlight and celebrate their successes. Don't wait to be asked. Step up. Take responsibility and shine in what you do. That will get you the attention to move to the next step. When you are given a responsibility, out-study and outperform. ■



AMMY HARRISON

Brand: Penn Station East Coast Subs;
previously Papa John's

Title: Vice President of Development and Strategy

Age: 45

Years in franchising: 23; 21 at Papa John's

No. of units: 319; 5,000+ at Papa John's

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? Absolutely! Being engaged and applying your knowledge and experience in your role is always expected as part of any job. However, I feel that having the ability to foresee potential roadblocks and to navigate through change and obstacles to better your organization is so important. Typically, this involves having a strategy and thinking in a new, divergent way to get the result you are looking for.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. One of the many reasons I decided to join Penn Station was their quality focus and talent-rich franchise community. It was clear to me that while the system was having a lot of success, there were still significant growth opportunities within markets that were previously considered to have reached full saturation. My strategy included using site analytic software to assess every DMA the brand was currently in. We then defined our franchise development areas and developed a more robust broker network. This allowed us to identify and make available hundreds of new development areas to current and prospective franchisees.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? From a franchise sales and development standpoint, I wanted to see Penn Station well-positioned for growth not only as a Midwestern, regional sandwich chain, but also as a national brand. With these changes, we are now well-positioned and have the resources and infrastructure to support this.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? Penn Station is both an analyti-

cal and a "roll up your sleeves and get it done" type of organization. Once something is decided on, the leadership team always looks for ways to help move it along.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? I don't think anyone truly loves change, yet we really did not have much pushback. We completely evolved the way we went to market with franchise sales and awarding new development territories. Franchisees who were already in the system, most already larger multi-unit operators, adjusted very well to the new process. One of my very favorite things to do in my role is working with franchisees who want to grow. I spent a lot of time early on walking them through the new process and showing them where we want to open new stores. This worked out extremely well, and our franchisees have embraced it because it simplifies and makes new store development easier for them. A large percentage of our franchisees are also now actively developing new stores as part of our new process.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? By always questioning why things are done a certain way. If the answer is "Because we have always done it that way," you probably need to gain a bit more understanding on that specific topic.

What motivates you as a leader? Achieving goals and getting things done. Seeing employees learn new skills.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? Franchising represents so many positive opportunities, from owning your own franchise to working with franchisors and franchisees.

Help others take advantage of new opportunities for growth and advancement. Listen well to your team, and remember to celebrate the wins.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? I am so fortunate to have had many amazing leaders and mentors in franchising throughout my career, from executive leadership to direct supervisors to peers, co-workers, and franchisees. I have worked with some very talented people, learned from all of them, and I am still learning today.

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? Probably being a bit too averse to risk at times and missing out on good opportunities because of it. Take some time to learn more, seek to understand, and then decide instead of just automatically saying "No."

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? I went from working for a very large company to a much smaller company. I was unsure if that would be the best fit for me. I'm now able to see from the perspective of both and have learned so much because of it.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? I can't think of anything I would change.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? Every challenge always represents an opportunity. True growth happens during the difficult times. ■

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MARCI KLEINSASSER

Brands: Budget Blinds, Concrete Craft, Kitchen Tune-Up, Bath Tune-Up, The Tailored Closet, PremierGarage, Aussie Pet Mobile, Advanta-Clean, Two Maids (all Home Franchise concepts)

Title: Vice President, Marketing, Franchise Development

Age: 56

Years in franchising: 30

No. of units: Budget Blinds, 1,427; Kitchen Tune-Up, 285; Advanta-Clean, 173; PremierGarage, 161; The Tailored Closet, 161; Two Maids, 120; Concrete Craft, 90; Aussie Pet Mobile, 78; Bath Tune-Up, 44

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? Bold moves that support company objectives and strategies, that are based mostly on data as well as a little intuition/gut, are important, regardless of whether you are on the path to the C-suite or not. Results are what will get you to the C-suite, or at least *should* get you to the C-suite.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. I believe I have made quite a few bold moves, but a few stand out. 1) Advising the executive team that a supplier partner chosen by the CEO was not working as a best-fit partner, and it was time to make a change. My advice was initially frowned upon, but once the RFP process started and the new partner was identified, hired, onboarded, and provided the desired results, the decision was extremely favorable. 2) Hiring someone whom a boss said they didn't feel was "the best candidate." I felt in my gut they were the best fit for the position and team and hired them. They proved to be not only a great fit, but went out and killed it and was promoted within the organization! 3) Walking away from a job offer one might say would have been the path to the C-suite. I strongly believe that purpose and passion are a must-have in life and in your career. If they don't align, then a job offer, no matter how perfect on the outside, will never be the perfect fit for you. This particular offer was not perfect for me. Making this difficult decision was tough, and bold.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? For the first two above, I envisioned those moves improving results and helping our brand(s) exceed our goals. The first move changed our brand at the time after building a new partner relationship. The partner brought an entirely new level of care, creativity, and

innovation to our brand, ultimately resulting in double-digit unit growth and exponential sales. The second move brought an increased amount of work and level of performance that resulted in improved franchisee satisfaction and results, improved brand validation, and growth. And the third mentioned above, well, I am where I am supposed to be, so personally it may have changed my "personal brand" for the best.

Which turned out how you expected? Which did not? Why? Changing partners is never simple. Add to that the personal relationship the existing partner had with the CEO, and I fully expected a bumpy transition. The move for change turned out better than expected because I was able to provide clear expectations, timelines, and deliverables to our leadership team, our outgoing and incoming partners, and our franchisees. Overcommunicating, checking in at key milestones along the way and asking how we were doing, and celebrating wins were keys to success and why the move turned out better than expected.

What motivates you as a leader? Helping others achieve their goals motivates me and inspires me to continue to lead and contribute to the future of the brands I am fortunate to lead. I am also motivated by the team around me who show such passion, dedication, and heart every day. Our team wants to grow our brands, ensure that the franchise owners that join our family are served in the best way possible, and have the tools they need to serve their customers.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? 1) Invest in yourself—never stop learning! 2) Don't be afraid to ask for a seat at the table. 3) Get involved. Join your local Women's Franchise Network, IFA committees, or any franchis-

ing networking group where you can learn and give back, too.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? Mentoring has played a huge role in my career and, quite frankly, my life. My dad was my #1 mentor and showed me work ethic. He was a business owner and a franchise owner. Most of my mentors have been former bosses or leaders I admired, and I didn't hesitate to ask questions or advice from them.

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? It was during a company downsizing. I had to decide who on my team to lay off, which is never an easy task. I had built what I thought was a dynamite team, and choosing who and how to break up a tight-knit group was heartbreaking and difficult. As a leader, I had to put my personal feelings aside and make the decision swiftly and confidently, and with compassion. Once the decision was made, the only thing left to do was move forward.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? Not too much. Everything I've done has all been a learning experience to get me to today. If I had to do something different, I would speak up sooner about something that does not look or feel right or ask for something that I want.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? Do what makes you happy, and then do that thing with all you have. Be humble and kind. Don't be afraid to ask questions and advocate for yourself. Take the time to invest in yourself—build knowledge and build your network. Last, don't forget how important mental and physical health are to your personal life and career progression. ■



SHANA KRISAN

Brand: Goldfish Swim School

Title: CMO

Age: 52

Years in franchising: 25

No. of units: 140

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? Of course it is! I not only believe that women should be a part of every area of marketing and business development, they should also be at the forefront of decision-making. Know your business model. Speak up! The representation of the consumer is one of the most important aspects of the business.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. I know who I am and what I represent (at "this" age). I don't consider my moves "bold," but more of an evolution of my understanding of what I should expect and how I should be treated, and, conversely, how to handle situations and work with people more successfully. Everything I have learned has led me to where I am and has developed me as a person as well as a mentor and leader.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? Goldfish Swim School was at a very foundational level when I started, but the foundation, the passion, the vision, and the ingredients to grow were there. I was able to bring all of my experience, trials and errors, and successes and mistakes with me. And I was at a place in my life and in my career where I felt confident in my ability to make a difference and help develop the brand for the future.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? I'm a big proponent of the adage, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." I lead by bringing in people who have passion, insight, ideas, and a teamwork mentality. And I believe in encouraging everyone to speak up and really invest in and take responsibility for the brand. I think my

biggest leadership opportunity is to help develop and integrate those ideas and remove the barrier to their implementation. Putting the right people in the right seats and trusting in them has allowed us to create some amazing work that has helped drive our company and our brand forward.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? We are all on the same page at the leadership level. Everyone has bought into the approach and has set high standards and expectations while providing the trust, resources, and encouragement necessary to propel us forward.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? I encourage everyone on the team to find the "love" and the "why" in what they do. It's not a woman thing, although there are a lot of women in our organization. You won't go wrong if you follow your passion and dedicate yourself to it!

What motivates you as a leader? Watching things grow! The brand share of voice, the awareness in our communities, the marketing plan, and franchisee success—and the people on the teams!

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? 1) Speak up! Be who you are and bring your authentic self and unique skills and ideas to the table. 2) Encourage, trust, and mentor others. 3) Share your successes, but also your failures.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? I really never had a positive mentor. That is the reason it's so important for me to be one!

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? One of my biggest failures was one of my greatest understandings: A resume is a jumping-off point. Culture and the ability to be a part of a team that has a consistent understanding of who they are and where they are going means more than the experience.

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? Change in general is difficult, but when it involves people, it's much more challenging. As the business evolves, the needs and direction of the department have changed over the years. And with team health and the objectives and values of the company in mind, I've had to make personnel changes that personally were hard to make. In the end, however, that often created opportunity that we parlayed into improvement and growth.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? I would understand my value earlier on. I didn't know what I was "supposed" to do in my career. It took me a beat to realize that there was value in being a holistic thinker and concentrating on the big picture and strategy, even if I wasn't a subject matter expert in an individual area.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? You know what you know. Don't question it. Don't quiet it. But be open to expanding it! ■



BARBARA MORAN-GOODRICH

Brands: Mr. Transmission, Milex Complete Auto Care, Multistate Transmission, Turbo Tint, Alta Mere, Dr. Nick's Transmissions

Title: Co-Founder, CEO, Chairwoman

Age: 57

Years in franchising: 32

No. of units: Mr. Transmission, Milex Complete Auto Care, 110; Alta Mere, 9; Turbo Tint, 4 with 50 in the pipeline

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? Making bold moves by anyone in business is definitely needed to move up the ladder and be on the path to the C-suite. The differences for women in making bold moves are the



“**MAKING BOLD MOVES SHOWS YOU ARE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS, THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX, AND BE A LEADER IN CHANGE. SITTING BACK AND FOLLOWING THE NORM DOESN'T SHOW OTHERS YOUR WILLINGNESS TO STAND OUT AS A LEADER.**”

challenges and hurdles they must overcome. Why? Making bold moves shows you are willing to take risks, think outside the box, and be a leader in change. Sitting back and following the norm doesn't show others your willingness to stand out as a leader.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. When I was a kid I never asked for permission, I just did what I wanted. I was willing to accept the consequences of my actions. So bold moves were just a part of my life. When I was confronted with an issue that needed to be resolved, I'd present solutions. If they weren't accepted, I'd go back to the drawing table to figure out what I missed in my presentation and start over until it was accepted. I think that is one of the first bold moves. I just didn't accept "No" for an answer. I came back at it over and over and stuck my neck out. I think the biggest bold move I made was buying my parents' shares in the business. This was one of the scariest moments in my life. I was a single parent of two children and realized that I needed to make a significant change in my life. I wanted to see a dynamic shift in our business and franchise system. I couldn't do it without fully committing to being all in as the majority shareholder.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? I envisioned our relationship with our franchisees being one of collaboration, trust, and consultation. I believed support services were drastically changing and that we needed to embrace technology to be able to provide the most effective services. I also felt we needed

to focus on helping franchisees understand their smart numbers as well as problem-solving when issues arose.

Which did not? Why? What didn't work was thinking I could transition our culture to one of collaboration, trust, and being consultative with some of the franchisees we had in our system. They didn't want to be a part of a collective group in working toward success for everyone. They didn't want to change the operation of their businesses from the past to the future.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? It has helped the brands not only grow, but also has helped many of our franchisees to find success in their businesses and a return on their investments. Through collaboration, trust, and consultation with our franchisees we've developed our new brand, Turbo Tint. This would not have been possible if we hadn't already built strong relationships with our franchisees.

Was there pushback? In the beginning there was a great deal from some of the franchisees who didn't want to change our relationship. How we handled this was to work through each franchisee's reasons for disengagement. Some eventually found that they wanted to be engaged and saw positive results; others decided this wasn't the business they wanted to be in anymore.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? We have a philosophy in our company that those we want to work with take initiative, have creativity and an inde-

pendent mind. We want team members with the wisdom to question something and allow our values to guide them when dealing with difficult decisions. For us to have this culture, we must truly embrace this through our own actions and leadership. We're all going to make mistakes and should recognize this will happen when asking others to take chances. So when we take a chance and it doesn't work out, we have to be okay with it and help them to find solutions. One of the fastest ways to lose credibility is by saying you want people to take initiative and then find fault when they do.

What motivates you as a leader? By nature I'm an advisor, consultant, and connector. My motivation is the positive results I see when we have a franchisee achieve great success, or a team member elevate their confidence and skills. I just feel honored to be a part of helping them and being a mentor.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? 1) Take chances in sharing your opinions and ways to solve problems. 2) Don't stop when presented with challenges or hurdles; you have to figure out a way around them and be willing to make mistakes. 3) Embrace your fears and fight to overcome them.

What role has mentoring played in your career? The mentoring I received played a major part in where I am today. If it weren't for those individuals, I would not have had the confidence to take the risks I did.

How did you meet your mentors? It started with my mom. She was my first mentor in showing me how to work through being invisible in a man's world (the automotive sector). Many of my mentors I ran after (literally!) and asked if I could talk with them. After a while it naturally turned into a friendship.

Describe one of your biggest failures. My first marriage. My ex-husband and I both failed each other and our children. There's so much I could say about this and my role in the failure. However, it won't change the outcome at this point.

What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? When there is resentment between people, recovery is extremely difficult to overcome and forgive. I've learned to take time to reflect on my actions at the end of day and how they affect those around me.

I think about whether I truly listened to others and thought through decisions to the best of my ability. Overall, the biggest lesson I've learned is to be reflective in my actions (or inactions) and how they affect the outcome.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? In life we always want to rethink our decisions and ask, "If I had to do it over again what would I change?" As if we had total control of every outcome. We don't. We take chances and fight like hell to get to our goal. Would I change anything? Sure. It would have made it easier to get to where I am today.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? I would say be an advocate for yourself. It's okay to be afraid of stepping out of the norm. Just don't let fear stop you from taking those steps. ■



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WE'RE ALL GOING TO MAKE MISTAKES AND SHOULD RECOGNIZE THIS WILL HAPPEN WHEN ASKING OTHERS TO TAKE CHANCES. SO WHEN WE TAKE A CHANCE AND IT DOESN'T WORK OUT, WE HAVE TO BE OKAY WITH IT AND HELP THEM TO FIND SOLUTIONS."



HEIDI MORRISSEY

Brands: Kitchen Tune-Up and Bath Tune-Up

Title: President

Age: 55

Years in franchising: 19.5

No. of units: Kitchen Tune-Up, 272; Bath Tune-Up, 43

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? I think bold moves are important for anyone's journey in franchising. Bold moves encourage people to step out of their comfort zone and achieve things they might not have thought possible.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. I changed careers from teaching to direct sales and then moved into franchising. That required a move across multiple states with a young family to work in a family business. That was probably one of the most difficult choices I have had to make. Once in the franchise space, rebranding Kitchen Tune-Up in my second year there was pretty bold and came with challenges, but, ultimately, more rewards. Setting a new model



MAKE IT A TOP PRIORITY TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AND PRIORITIZE SELF-GROWTH. ALSO, DON'T TRY TO DO IT ALL. HIRE HELP IF YOU NEED IT. AND SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO WANT TO SEE YOU SUCCEED."

for our franchise (from owner-operator to owner-manager) was at times slow-moving, but looking at where we are today, the move was worth the time and energy.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? With a shift in the Kitchen Tune-Up model, we were able to help our owners scale their businesses much easier and faster. Internally, I saw we needed to grow our skill sets and training to meet the new model.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? I think just bringing a female into the leadership of the brand was a *huge* change. It offered a different perspective to the needs of our customers and our franchise owners. When I was VP of marketing and sales, it gave our brand a new look and feel, and the language became more "feminine" instead of just talking about our services. Today, I'm often told that I'm tough but caring, and that the owners know I'm driven to be a good steward of the brand and help it grow to benefit them.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? There will always be push-

back, external and internal. Usually, it just means I have not done a good enough job explaining what is in it for *them*. Pushback can be helpful and, as a leader, you have to be open to hearing different perspectives in order to grow.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? By sharing bold ideas and empowering them to try things. The ideas may not always work, and I have a list I share with them of times that I tried something that was not successful. But if we learn from everything, then we chalk it up as a "tuition moment" and move on.

What motivates you as a leader? People. I love watching my team grow their skills, and I love watching a new owner go from training to thriving very quickly. Every day I wake up as excited as when I first started. Every new training school is a thrill, and every new hire brings a new dimension to our organization.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? 1) Have a voice. Speak up, have something to say. That means listening to podcasts and reading books and magazines so you have something to contribute. 2) Be willing to take a chance. Things may not always work out the way you want, but that shouldn't stop you from taking chances. 3) Become an expert in people. Ground yourself in gratitude and be bold about thanking others and sharing with others. Don't get caught up in a scarcity mentality. There is more than enough for everyone, and others' successes in our industry help make our industry as a whole more successful.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? I have had so many mentors. Most were not traditional in nature. I didn't have official mentor sessions, but people shared so much with me at the IFA when I was first learning. When joining Home Franchise Concepts with its parent company, JM Family, there were so many people who stepped in to help me navigate the journey and broaden my perspective.

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? When I was about a year into franchising, I had an interaction with a franchisee where I was not open to listening to

their needs. They decided to leave the system, and I felt horrible for them and for us. That was the day I decided to ask questions and always understand that you never know the other person's life and what shapes their perceptions of the world.

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? Probably, to sell the company and stay on as president after it was family-owned for 33 years. Moving to new owners, new processes, and a new boss was jarring, but my life is *so* much better now. We have hired more support. I have an amazing extended team that comes to work to support our brand, and our parent company, JM, has been supportive, gracious, and generous. I really did win the lottery on this decision.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? I don't know if I would do much differently, because everything I have gone through has brought me to where I am now.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? Make it a top priority to care for yourself and prioritize self-growth. Also, don't try to do it all. Hire help if you need it. And surround yourself with people who want to see you succeed. ■





AMY PHILLIPS

Brand: Altitude Trampoline Park
Title: President, Chief Marketing Officer
Years in franchising: 3+
No. of units: 85



How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite?

Making bold moves is an important part of leadership, especially for women on the path to the C-suite. You have to get comfortable with making tough, yet informed decisions and be willing to take the risk and rewards associated with them. Bold moves can lead to both company and personal success, depending on the "move." But overall, being bold only means having the confidence in doing what you've learned to do, and reinforcing the idea that no decision is too bold if you know it's what's best for you or the company. Be confident in your ability to make decisions, and in your team's ability to do what's best.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. One is introducing what was initially called the "Power Combo" to Dave & Buster's more than 15 years ago, which would become one of their most successful campaigns to date. It's still in play now, and one of the primary initiatives incorporating food and fun for their consumers. In another example, I was at Main Event Entertainment when it was purchased as a traditional bowling alley by Ardent Leisure (which sold Main Event to Dave & Buster's in April 2022). In that transition, I was tasked to build a family

entertainment center and take Main Event from a traditional bowling alley to a leading family entertainment center. To make this happen, I had to make many bold decisions. We tripled the size of the company and created the award-winning FUNpass for the brand, which is still used in various ways today. A third example is working with a franchisor-led concept at Altitude and NRD Capital, which involved far more stakeholders than I had previously worked with, and encompassed a different marketing and leadership approach than I had experienced in past roles.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with?

When making bold moves, I always envision the positive outcomes: increased revenue, successful campaigns that remain current to the brand today (such as the sales center at Dave & Buster's and the membership program at Altitude), and introducing a new, competitive concept to the country with Drive Shack. All of these achievements were able to come to fruition because I had to get comfortable with making bold moves.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? I feel it has helped expand Altitude beyond a traditional family entertain-

ment concept and into more of a destination in its own category. Our guests have begun to look at our parks as destinations, as part of their normal everyday or weekly activities. Among groups of existing members who used to come in once or twice a year, through new initiatives and programs we're now driving them to visit almost twice as often or more. Another recent example is our change from labeling ourselves as a "trampoline park" to "family entertainment." Altitude has evolved in recent years and we're continuing to become an all-access destination with activities for all types of family members, opening the pathway for families to be active and have fun together. We've removed "trampoline park" from our logo and messaging. This has allowed guests to really understand who we are now. Last, the introduction of incredibly strong leaders on our team has propelled us forward. At the end of the day it takes a whole team, and I've worked closely with other department heads and leaders in the franchise space to breathe new life into the company.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? There definitely was pushback during some of those key times in our evolution, but it hasn't necessarily been a bad thing. The way we get around those challeng-

es is to always look at things from different perspectives, especially when the pushback is coming from a good place. We consider questions such as: Is now the right time? Is this the move we want to make to get to where we want to be? Is there another way to achieve this? The removal of “trampoline park” from our logo got some pushback, specifically from franchisees who had been with the brand for a long time. But when it came down to it, we made the decision based on consumer data that showed what our guests are looking for in an active family destination, which all pointed to what we are doing with Altitude today: expanding the concept to an all-access active family destination.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? By paving a way for women to grow and giving them the confidence to help them achieve more than they thought was possible. Our CEO, Mike Rotondo, has done a phenomenal job of recruiting smart and strong female leaders. In my role, I am to show them that they can make bold moves and do whatever they set their mind to. One of our current team members is a great example. She used to work for me in a role that was outside franchising. From the beginning, I’ve instilled in her the idea that there is nothing she can’t achieve. To do that, I help my female peers identify what it is they are good at and enjoy doing within the organization. From there, I work to empower them and pave a way for them to make bold moves and grow within that space. In this specific instance, she had little knowledge about franchise development but was becoming much more passionate and interested in it. I helped her grow in that area and allowed her the space to explore and make bold decisions, despite the possibility of mistakes along the way, and I completely believed in her. Today, I believe she is well on her way to becoming a great franchise development leader. The lesson is that when you are allowed to make bold moves by other leaders, it really gives you the confidence to do bigger things and get excited about what else you can do.

What motivates you as a leader? By far, the success of our franchisees. It’s profoundly motivating to be a witness or participant in launching a new initiative and then see a franchisee experience success from it. That’s what I get the most excited about. Whether I or someone else’s team did it, the motivating factor for me time and again is helping

our franchise partners build a legacy and wealth for their families. Another aspect that inspires motivation for me is seeing all the potential we have as a brand, and that we are only just beginning as a leader in the franchise family entertainment space. At this point, we feel that we truly have the right partners in place and so many things we are working on that make me incredibly optimistic about what the future holds. Whether it’s POS changes, new automation, investments in technology, or new marketing plans, the opportunities we have in front of us to advance Altitude beyond where it is today are incredibly inspirational.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? 1) Make opportunities in franchising known. I have made it a goal for 2023 to introduce franchising and all of its amazing benefits to aspiring female entrepreneurs everywhere. I look forward to showing women leaders that they can be successful and achieve their ideal lifestyle through franchising. 2) Female leaders in franchising also can drive change by allowing other women to make bold moves and give them the space to grow. Giving other women the confidence and agency to explore new paths, ask questions, and make bold decisions can make a lasting impact, whether it’s a family member, co-worker, or friend. 3) Another big component in driving change among female leaders is supporting other women and providing mentorship. Mentorship has always been incredibly important to me. I was given my first mentor long ago in a previous role, and it’s allowed me to pay it forward by sharing my learning, lessons, and experiences with other women looking to improve their lives or careers.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? Mentorship has played a huge role in my career. I’ve had so many mentors in my life, beginning when I was in college and interning at companies where I made friends with my past mentors. I am so lucky to have a great resource of alumni from my collegiate years, and mentors from past organizations I’ve been involved in. Our CEO, Mike Rotondo, also was an important mentor to me. When I was introduced to the role, Mike went above and beyond to cheer me on and lead me down the right path. Then, when he became my boss, he introduced me to my next mentor, Susan, whom I continue to learn from and look up to today.

What is one of the toughest decisions you’ve had to make, and how did it affect your life? It was centered around a position I held at Drive Shack. I had moved to New York City to help create and launch the brand while working with Fortress Investment Group. It was absolutely a tough decision for my family for me to commute and relocate to NYC while still based in Dallas. It proved to be an incredible move and opportunity, working with some of the brightest minds in the country. And while working with the private equity company, I was able to work with other key brands within Fortress’s portfolio. This gave me valuable experience in creating a publicly traded company, and opening and creating the first prototype of the brand. I also was involved in the purchase of all the American Golf locations—which Drive Shack would eventually purchase before the brand opening its first location, and that was incredibly insightful—as well as in creating proprietary games for the brand and working with developers around the world to create a one-of-a-kind experience. Though the decision to relocate was tough, it resulted in a positive effect on my life as a professional, and the know-how and skills I took from the experience were well worth it.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? I don’t know that I would do anything differently. All of the accomplishments, mistakes, lessons, wins, and bumps in the road have led me to where I am today, and I wouldn’t change that for anything.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? First, use data to reinforce your ideas and thoughts, especially when needing to get buy-in from others on something more out-of-the-box. Second, be confident in what you know and lean on your mentors, friends, and associates to bring knowledge in areas you lack. You don’t have to be an expert at everything; it helps to have trusted peers around you who can teach you along the way. Third, learn one new thing each month. To me, continuous learning is something I value greatly and is a trait that allows you to keep growing no matter what field or position you are in. And last, seek out successful female leaders as mentors. Use your network to learn from and support other women who are blazing their own paths. ■

HR

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MJ RIVA

Brand: Pizza Factory

Title: CEO

Age: 65

Years in franchising: 30+

No. of units: 107

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? All leaders should be willing to make bold moves regardless of gender. To me, bold for a woman is speaking up and standing up to have her voice, ideas, and opinions heard. Sometimes you can read a room and quickly identify the climate. I believe in pushing the boundaries of your comfort zone.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. Taking a legacy brand and rebranding it while implementing new programs and technology where there were none. These were huge steps toward what I believed to be necessary for the brand's evolution.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand? My goal was to make the brand more competitive and relevant to consumers. This would allow us to take it to the next level with new programs and technology for both the corporate office and the franchisees' locations.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? Being a franchisee and franchisor has helped encourage the franchisees to buy into the brand. You will never please everyone, and change isn't something most people enjoy. But I believe trust is earned, and communication is extremely important to make sure you are transparent with your goals and "why" you are working toward them. Then follow up with the facts that back up the success of your endeavors, or have the humility to embrace when you have not succeeded or have had to choose another path.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? There can be pushback in certain situations, but keeping an open line of communication and listening to feedback is important, even if you disagree.

How are you imparting a culture of

boldness to other women in your organization? I encourage all employees to have a voice in the restaurant and at a corporate level. Education is important as well, not only for the knowledge you will get, but also for the confidence. When drowned out by others' voices, I encourage women to make their voices heard. Speak up, disagree if you do, and fight harder for your view.

What motivates you as a leader? Challenges drive me, regardless of what they are. I want solutions and push hard to find them, no matter what. I do not like to settle with a "We can't do that" or accept when a goal is said to be unattainable from the knowledge we currently have. There are a lot of resources and smart people out there who can help us achieve them.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? Women have different styles of leadership. We can bring change by being who we are, encouraging women to go after that job they want and changing the perception that you have to be "hard" to be a good leader, or that you have to push down who you are. Women have the ability to multitask, handle stress, and bring a new approach to leadership.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? Mentors, if they are the right ones, are beneficial when it comes to the times you need someone to talk to and to give advice. They are encouragers, supportive, and hopefully very honest with you. I was very fortunate to have Steve Olson as my mentor, and he had those characteristics.

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? I created a team and tried to make it work at the corporate level. I waited

too long to remove this team and start over. It wasted time and put the schedule of my goals back a couple of years. I learned I could not make a round peg go in a square hole, no matter how much I wanted it to. Sometimes I allow my compassion to get in the way, and I still work on that, because this is a business.

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? Becoming CEO of Pizza Factory from the position of a franchisee. I feel responsible for the franchisees and their investments, and it can be very daunting. I am learning, after 10 years, that balance in my personal and business life has to be more equal, which is hard for me. It is difficult to turn it off. My decisions will not be embraced by all, and I am okay with that, but if one struggles I have a hard time accepting that. I want to fix it, but I can't always fix it. Unfortunately, business success is never guaranteed. These are not just businesses; they are people.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? I would have had more mentors, go out of my comfort zone, reach out to more people, and build relationships sooner. I would also let go of team members who weren't a good fit sooner. I would have paced myself better initially, taken more time off, and given myself a break—not from others or the job, but from me. I tend to put very high expectations on myself.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? Be yourself, don't back down, and don't be intimidated as you make your way. Remember, your physical and mental health is important, and your relationships should be more than just business ones. Be humble and keep a sense of humor—no one does it alone. ■



PAIGE ROBINSON

Brand: American Family Care
Title: Vice President, Franchise Development
Age: 37
Years in franchising: 15
No. of units: 300

How important is making bold moves in a woman’s path to the C-suite? Everyone has heard the adage, “More deals get done on the golf course than the board room.” It’s true. One would hope and expect that merit, ability, and performance would outweigh all else. I don’t believe that you must be the loudest person in the room, but your actions should speak loudly enough to make a very bold statement.

Describe bold moves you’ve made in your career. Making the jump from fast casual dining to healthcare franchising was quite the shift, especially with absolutely zero healthcare experience.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? When I made the decision to go all-in from supporting multi-unit franchisees to the franchisor side, it was my goal to elicit positive change by improving the franchisee experience. I didn’t know much, but I knew that the franchisees would be a wealth of knowledge and feedback. I made it my mission to meet as many franchisees as possible, create relationships with them, and learn how we could best help and support them through our rapid growth.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? After several years at AFC, I decided to become a franchisee in another vertical with my husband. Understanding from a franchisee and small-business owner’s point of view has been instrumental in the way I approach candidate development and the approval process with our team. The top priority is to protect the integrity of our franchisees’ investments and the brand.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? There wasn’t any pushback from our C-suite leadership! We are absolutely aligned on bringing in only the very best franchisees and bettering our support structure year over year to provide value and gain trust.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your

organization? Since my promotion to vice president in May 2022, we’ve seen many other women being promoted to executive-level roles. I wasn’t the first, and I certainly won’t be the last. We have an amazing group of women (and men!) who are bullish on the success of our brand and our franchisees. That culture is infectious!

What motivates you as a leader? My goal is to encourage and inspire the team around me to accomplish their goals, both personal and professional. It gives me so much joy to witness the team’s successes, but the real motivator is when we can work through challenges together and come out on the other side as stronger and more confident leaders.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? Don’t simply ask for a seat at the table. Pull up a chair and provide value! There are many organizations women can be a part of in franchising to drive positive change. Join one. I love Dolly Parton’s quote, “Find out who you are and do it on purpose.” To me, that means standing up for what you believe in, and doing it with integrity.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? My mentors have always challenged me to think outside the box. I have often found that my mentors and I have genuine shared interests outside of business, which makes it easier to stay in touch. For me, it’s art, wine, music, and travel. I’ve met most of my mentors through franchising!

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? I failed at my first job post-college. I attribute the failure to distraction and an unclear path for my future. Before then, I’d never had to shoulder the responsibility of failing something so important. That was the turning point. I’m grateful that it happened early, because it

gave me the humility I needed to listen and absorb good work habits. There is very little that you can’t accomplish with hard work and a positive attitude!

What is one of the toughest decisions you’ve had to make, and how did it affect your life? The goal is to avoid disappointing anyone, but it ends up creating so much additional stress. Saying “no” is powerful and healthy. Once I learned how to use that word to set healthy boundaries, life has become much more manageable.

If you could do it all over again, knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? If I had one opportunity to go back in time, I’d write down or record everything that my grandparents shared and taught me about life and business before they left this earth. That said, I believe that every single experience in life leads you to the present moment. No regrets here! Only gratitude for the lessons I’ve learned along the way.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? We finally hear the amazing rallying cry of women supporting women in the marketplace, and it’s just starting to catch up to where I believe franchising has been for as long as I’ve been in the space (15+ years). The level of support and cheerleading that you receive in this business is unsurpassed. I’ve been nurtured, mentored, and supported from day one by the leaders in this industry, which ultimately gave me the confidence to know I could succeed. When you have a question or make a mistake, there is an entire support system ready to help you and lift you up. There’s no sense of cutthroat mentality in franchising. My advice, above all, would be to get involved. Find something you’re passionate about supporting and dive in. I have recently become a member of the Pride Franchise Leadership Council, and I am so excited to dig my heels in and support our mission of fostering awareness and providing franchise opportunities for the LGBTQ+ community. ■



ABBY TAYLOR

Brand: Playa Bowls
Title: Co-Founder, Chief Marketing Officer
Age: 33
Years in franchising: 7
No. of units: 165

How important is making bold moves in a woman's path to the C-suite? Making bold moves is a crucial part of any woman's path to the C-suite. In my situation it was always about doing whatever was necessary to protect the growing brand at Playa Bowls while sustaining brand authenticity. To maintain our original vision, which was rooted in a passion for surfing and adventurous travel, it was important for every location to exude that aesthetic as our journey unfolded and we began to rapidly expand across the country. To protect what my partner Rob and I had created, we had to be bold and be

the loudest in the room when taking these big risks.

Describe bold moves you've made in your career. Early on in our journey, we signed some sizable leases, with no road map or guarantee for what was to come. I always knew Playa Bowls would be a success, but committing to something like that was a brave step at the time.

How did you envision those moves changing the brand you were with? I knew signing big leases in well-known locations with tons of foot traffic and eyes on

the location would help us gain visibility for our growing brand. My intuition in taking these daring steps told me that this would elevate the brand into a household name on the Jersey Shore and were necessary to take us to the next level.

How has your leadership helped evolve the brand? I really believe I am a true representation of the brand and our mission to bring superfruit bowls to the masses using only the freshest, highest-quality ingredients while providing an amazing in-store brand experience. I don't take that responsibility lightly and I hope that my passion

for healthy foods, surfing, and our culture comes through to every single person I meet. As the brand has grown exponentially and we have made the move into successfully expanding as a franchise, I've started looking at Playa Bowls as something much bigger than I had ever dreamed or imagined. I now look at the weight and influence of each decision I make, and how it will affect my team around me and all of our franchisee partners. I want to bring ideas and initiatives to the table that continue to inspire and benefit everyone involved in the brand and have surrounded myself with smart and savvy businesspeople to bounce ideas off to achieve just that.

Was there pushback? How did you handle that? In terms of signing the big leases, my dad told me I was being outrageous and asked if I was sure that's what I wanted to do. Looking back, he was concerned (as any parent would be) and was preparing me for the consequences of taking a sizable risk, looking out for my best interests. Rob and I knew it was the right move, and I listened to my gut instinct to evolve Playa Bowls to what it is today—a national successful brand with 165 locations and counting.

How are you imparting a culture of boldness to other women in your organization? I truly believe that I've shown all the women in my organization that we are just as capable as men (even more so) of creating the life they always wanted. We need to be able to speak up in a room full of men when we are not being heard. Working hard to sustain that mindset and to keep pushing the envelope even when things are not going as planned is a strong suit of mine, and I hope other women in my organization take notice. When I speak up in uncomfortable situations or throw out a wild idea that may not end up working out exactly as I envision, at least I am strong in my convictions and not afraid to be bold and take risks!

What motivates you as a leader? Seeing how many people's livelihoods rely on Playa Bowls. It's wild to think this little food cart on the side of the road in Belmar, New Jersey, now employs hundreds of people who share our love for the brand. Although growth comes with immense pressure, I am confident that the decisions I make that affect everyone in our organization set us up for success. It truly motivates me to see store employees move up to store managers, then territory managers, and then on to operate their own franchises. A lot of people have

been working at Playa Bowls for years, and I love to see them feel inspired to grow with us.

What are some ways women leaders in franchising can drive change? So many of my team members and franchisees are such strong, business-minded entrepreneurs. I see the power they have over making positive moves that have influenced how we do business. As a leader, mentoring younger female employees to see the great opportunities there are in franchising for themselves is a great way to influence positive change in the franchise industry for women.

What role has mentoring played in your career? How did you meet your mentors? Growing up, my uncle owned a very successful business. So when I found that I was struggling, I would reach out to him for advice. No matter what type of business someone is involved with, we tend to face similar challenges and obstacles. My uncle would use his experience and guide me to make the best decisions for me.

Describe one of your biggest failures. What did you learn, and how did it contribute to greater personal or business success? I don't really consider anything a failure. Every mistake is an opportunity to learn and grow, and there have been many made along the way as any entrepreneur would attest. I instill this message to all my direct team members, and I truly mean it. Some of my biggest "failures" have been hiring candidates too quickly who were not a fit for the brand. This really taught me to take my time in the hiring process, as challenging as that may be at times. Since recently solidifying our brand's missions and core values, I have used that as a guide to find the right people moving forward. Finding people you can work and collaborate with is really important for me.

What is one of the toughest decisions you've had to make, and how did it affect your life? I would say making the decision to bring in private equity. This company is and has been my baby since 2014, and it was hard to decide if that was something I was ready to give up control of. It was a lot of late nights staying up and really thinking through the pros and cons. It was a stressful time, but I could see how quickly Playa Bowls was growing, and it was the right time for me to mitigate the risks of a growing business. Luckily, I am extremely involved in the business, and protecting what Rob and I have



MAKING BOLD MOVES IS A CRUCIAL PART OF ANY WOMAN'S PATH TO THE C-SUITE."

created allows us to remain creative and work on projects we are passionate about.

Taking on our PE partners allowed us to make a lot of good connections and hire strong team members. It was really a pivotal point for us, where we recognized the need to strengthen our infrastructure with strong talent and really focus on nationwide expansion and leading in the acai bowl segment. This shift has allowed us to implement structured teams and be more strategic with our franchisee partners, while remaining authentic to our roots—an actual cart on the side of the road in Belmar, New Jersey.

If you could do it all over again knowing what you know now, what would you do differently? I wouldn't change a thing. Starting your own business is hard work. I did not go to school for business or franchising and had no clue what it entailed. There was no playbook to follow. Learning lessons along the way is part of the journey. We have so many funny stories to reflect on, like going to the grocery store and asking if you can buy cases of bananas, or biking to the farmers market at 2 p.m. on a busy summer day to wipe them clean of the strawberries they had in stock, and not knowing about product distribution. We always made it work and evolved with each part of the process. A lot of people are so afraid to take the leap of faith and make these bold moves, but I think we need to take risks to see rewards. Overcoming challenges, learning from your mistakes, continuing to better yourself on a personal level, and surrounding yourself with people who understand the vision is a realistic path to success.

What advice do you have for aspiring female leaders? Women can do anything, and we do it with grace, and that gives us an edge. Women are kind and strong forces to be reckoned with! Never let anyone tell you that you cannot do something, because I really believe that if someone like me can, anyone can. ■

Driving Force

Ford's Garage revs up for growth

Written by STEVE SHLEMON

The Ford Motor Company has a rich history as one of the country's most important manufacturers. That history also translates to a pretty cool dining experience, as Ford's Garage has proven over the past 10 years at its growing number of restaurants across the U.S.

In 2012, the original Ford's Garage opened in Fort Myers, Florida, less than a mile from Henry Ford's former winter home. Since then, the company has expanded to include a total of 21 locations across five states (Florida, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Texas). Here are some of the things that make our brand what it is today.

The unique power of Ford. When Ford's Garage opened, there was no affiliation with the automotive pioneer. The concept later caught the attention of the carmaker, resulting in a unique licensing agreement between the two companies. Today, Ford's Garage is the first and only restaurant concept allowed the rights to Ford's iconic blue oval logo, as well as other Ford brand assets and historical photos.

Unparalleled vibe. The Ford's Garage experience is unlike any other and attracts a very broad market. It's not pretentious. It has a great vibe and energy along with a great burger, craft beer, and comfort food selection. It is a very comfortable, inviting environment that's unique to the casual dining space.

Each restaurant is designed to look like a gas station from the 1920s and is filled to the brim with Ford memorabilia, including vintage vehicles, fixtures, and gas pumps, as well as a Model T or Model A car suspended above the center bar. Servers sport mechanic shirts. Blue shop cloths double as napkins. Even the bars inside our restaurants are decidedly vintage, mixing Prohibition-era elements like brick, richly colored woods, and hand-hammered copper bar tops. More unique features, too numerous to list here, make Ford's Garage a fun place to visit and take pictures. Every aspect is branded, and it's a lot of fun for everyone.

Nostalgic, handcrafted American fare. Our menu drives broad guest appeal with nostalgic, handcrafted American fare. Burgers are the main draw. Black Angus beef (and a vegetarian option) are coupled with all-natural aged cheeses, fresh toppings, and sauces on artisanal buns branded with the Ford's Garage logo. The restaurants also specialize in popular comfort food options like homemade meatloaf, chicken wings and tenders, onion rings, and macaroni and cheese. Lighter fare such as fresh salads, grilled chicken, and seafood options are also available. The bars highlight 100+ types of beer, including more than 30 drafts on tap, with an emphasis on local microbreweries. There is also an extensive liquor selection with creative specialty drinks, wine, cocktails, and nonalcoholic options.



Revvng the engine on expansion.

Growth is really accelerating with the largest unit development push in our company history. We're incredibly proud of how far we've come and are excited about where we're going. With our many Ford-inspired design cues and first-rate food and service, Ford's Garage promises to continue to inspire additional locations all across the country.

Our expectation is to open around 10 new restaurants in 2023 and then 10 to 15 stores per year beginning in 2024. We're drawing interest from our core group of franchisees, new franchise operators, and Ford dealerships that want a restaurant in their town. We also will be expanding with corporate and joint venture locations. Development deals have already been signed in Florida, New York, New Jersey, Texas, Ohio, Michigan, and Kentucky.

In terms of size, our restaurants range from 6,500 to about 9,000 s.f. The sweet spot is roughly 7,500 s.f., with 240 to 250 seats and about 1,500 s.f. of exterior patio space. Each restaurant has between 95 and 115 employees.

We look forward to welcoming new franchise development partners to the family and serving up even more of our burgers nationwide with a side of automotive history. Including a franchise fee of \$70,000, the total investment to open a Ford's Garage restaurant ranges from \$1,461,800 to \$6,353,000. ■

Steve Shlemon is president of Ford's Garage.





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“I give my people a lot of freedom. I try to hire people who are great in their field and who can do it better than I could.”

Head of Lettuce

Leading Salad Collective’s 3 “better for you” brands

Written by **KERRY PIPES**



DARDEN COORS CEO

Company: **Salad Collective (Mad Greens, Snappy Salads, Tokyo Joe’s)**

Units: **65 (27 Tokyo Joe’s, 25 Mad Greens, 13 Snappy Salads)**

Age: **51**

Years in franchising: **4**

Years in current position: **9**

You might say Darden Coors’ tongue is planted firmly in her cheek, at least some of the time. After all, she’s referenced herself as the Head of Lettuce and CEO of Salad Collective, a “con-saladated” group of franchise brands that includes Mad Greens, Snappy Salads, and Tokyo Joe’s.

All kidding aside, Coors (*yes, that Coors*) left a career in law that included a variety of legal counsel positions with public and privately held Coors-family enterprises and spent 4 years as assistant general counsel for Einstein Noah Restaurant Group. This was the job that piqued her interest in the fast casual restaurant world.

She joined Salad Collective in December 2013, when the Coors family enterprises purchased a majority stake in Mad Greens. She led the company’s growth and market expansion, its merger with Snappy Salads in 2019, and its acquisition of Tokyo Joe’s in 2022. Today, the Salad Collective includes three brands and 65 restaurants.

Coors, who describes her leadership style as “thoughtful, collaborative, and deliberate,” says the company is ready for more growth. “We are launching franchising efforts for Mad Greens in 2023 and are bullish about adding more units with the support of experienced multi-unit operators,” she says.

In addition to adding franchisees and units, she says the company plans to add corporate stores, build a new prototype store, and devote more energy to digital transactions this year. And if they can acquire another brand that adds value to the Salad Collective, it could become part of the mix, too.

LEADERSHIP

What is your role as CEO? I am the primary point person for our board and our ownership groups. Additionally, I set the direction and long-term goals for the team and the brands, as well as the priorities and vision for the company.

How has Covid-19 affected the way you have led your brand? Covid-19 really brought our team closer together with everything we went through and improved my collaboration with them on the big questions. I also believe it shifted my leadership focus to be employee-first rather than customer-first. The pandemic brought my attention to the well-being of our employees to a whole new level.

Describe your leadership style. I would say I’m thoughtful, collaborative, and deliberate. I am a lawyer-turned-restaurant-executive and haven’t been able to shake the habit of overanalyzing things. As part of that, getting input from different people and perspectives in our organization is really important to me. My favorite question to ask employees in our restaurants is, “How can I help you?”

If we don't know a problem or a pain point exists, we can't solve it.

What has inspired your leadership style? My dad really inspired my leadership style. He was a lot more outgoing than I am and loved to bring fun into the workplace as a leader. He adopted the motto at his company, "Fun Happens." I like to keep that in mind as part of my approach to leadership as well. He understood that the jobs people were doing for his company were hard, so he tried to make it enjoyable and be as approachable and engaged with his employees as he could. I admired that a lot, and think I bring my own spin on that to my leadership style. One of our company values is, "Have Work at Fun."

What is your biggest leadership challenge? Truthfully, being in charge and the ultimate decision-maker doesn't come naturally to me. However, I have had great mentors to guide me, as well as surrounded myself with a strong team who balance me out and make my job easy.

How do you transmit your culture from your office to frontline employees? It starts with hiring the right people and building a strong culture-forward team at every level of the organization. We have always felt we had a great culture, and in 2022 we spent a lot of time to capture it and put words (and songs!) to it by engaging people at every level. It was an amazing and powerful exercise. One of our values is "Shoulder to Shoulder." We work alongside each other to train, teach, and support each other. We don't get caught up in titles. We roll up our sleeves and get done what needs to be done—and have fun doing it. So, for us, to perpetuate that, we look to hire team players, individuals with positive attitudes, those who smile and laugh and find joy in their work. Ultimately, you have to train up or weed out the people who haven't bought in to the culture you work so hard to build. Culture has to be a benchmark and measuring stick for everything we do.

How can a CEO help their CMO develop and grow? There has been a lot of disruption to traditional marketing in recent years. You have to challenge your CMO to try new things and be okay with it not yielding the results you want because they were able to learn something regardless. Another important way you can help them grow is by encouraging them to build their commu-

nity of peers through networking opportunities—help them see what others in their position are doing, what external resources are available and worth the investment, benchmark our marketing against peers, and really make us all better at what we do.

Where is the best place to prepare for leadership: an MBA school or OTJ? I fall squarely in the on-the-job camp.

Are tough decisions best taken by one person? How do you make tough decisions? For me, collaboration is key when it comes to making tough decisions. At the end of the day, I know it is on me, but I will actively seek out input before I make a final decision. I want to hear from multiple voices in the organization—from IT to marketing to accounting so I can appreciate the full impact.

Do you want to be liked or respected? Respected. I don't *need* to be liked. That said, in some ways, part of my job is to be liked. People work for people and not companies. I think my role is head cheerleader as much as anything else, but respect has to come first, and then you can earn the title of being liked.

Advice to CEO wannabes: Don't think you know it all. Listen and stay in touch with your frontline employees.

MANAGEMENT

Describe your management style. I give my people a lot of freedom. I try to hire people who are great in their field and who can do it better than I could. We have an open office environment, which encourages collaboration and gives people the flexibility to do their job the way they see fit.

What does your management team look like? It consists of four women and two men, so we are a female-forward organization. We also have a high percentage of women in the general manager roles of our restaurants, and I'm really proud of that. My management team includes the VPs of ops, HR, marketing, IT, and finance/accounting.

How does your management team help you lead? They are experienced and confident in their areas of expertise so they constantly keep me informed. We also get along with each other well, which is key. There is a lot of mutual respect and open communication between us, but also healthy debate.

Favorite management gurus: Do you read management books? Lately, when it comes to individuals, Simon Sinek is one

of my favorites. Otherwise, I try to grow through connecting with other CEOs, especially those local to where I am.

What makes you say, "Yes, now that's why I do what I do!"? We start each meeting off with a "Mad Story" or a "Snappy Snippet" where we celebrate an admirable action a team member has done. It's really inspiring and makes you realize how much people care and what great people we have who live out our culture every day.

We work alongside each other to train, teach, and support each other. We don't get caught up in titles. We roll up our sleeves and get done what needs to be done—and have fun doing it.

OPERATIONS

What trends are you seeing with consumer spending habits in your stores? Consumers are spending more with our restaurants digitally than ever before. This has made us rethink how we communicate and connect on a personal level with our guests. Additionally, I think consumers value convenience and customization more than ever, and that works well with our restaurant and our technologies.

How is the economy driving consumer behavior in your system? I think the customer mix shifts a bit with an economic

downturn. Being in the fast casual space, you get people trading down from casual or fine dining into fast casual, and people trading down from fast casual to fast food or eating at home. However, grocery prices are elevated, so for now I think people aren't as quick to move away from the convenience of eating out when it's as expensive as it is to eat at home.

The next 12 months have a lot of unknowns in the economy—like whether we are in a recession or if a recession is coming. But I'm optimistic. Fast casual is a nice niche to be in when there's uncertainty in the economy.

What are you expecting from your market in the next 12 months? The next 12 months have a lot of unknowns in the economy—like whether we are in a recession or if a recession is coming, and how long will it last. That's the hardest part, because high interest rates could affect how people spend their money and what they can allocate to eating out. But I'm optimistic. Fast casual is a nice niche to be in when there's uncertainty in the economy. The other unknown is the state of the supply chain and if we get price and availability stability. We are going to remain focused on top-line growth and manage what we can control.

Are commodity/supplies costs any cause for concern in your system? In 2022, we saw big fluctuations, and commodities were not as stable as in the past. Hurricanes, fires, diseases, and other natural disasters as well as labor supply have affected this. There definitely have been concerns and pressures on our system and business model. We are hopeful those things settle down a bit, but it's a big unknown how long that will last.

In what ways are political/global issues affecting the market and your brand?

The current employment and environmental legislation are often a big topic in our industry, along with supply chain. We just have to continue to be aware of what's going on and take them into consideration as we plan for the future.

PERSONAL

What time do you like to be at your desk? I like to be there at 9 a.m., but usually I'm there at 8:30.

Exercise in the morning? Wine with lunch? Typically, I walk the dog every morning and that is my time to get my thoughts together and plan my day.

Do you socialize with your team after work/outside the office? Not necessarily, because we all understand that everyone has their own lives, kids, and activities, and we don't all live that close to each other.

Last two books read: In the middle of reading *The Infinite Game* by Simon Sinek as well as *Love Does* by Bob Goff, which touches on generosity.

What technology do you take on the road? My phone and my laptop.

How do you relax/balance life and work? There are a few things I do—play tennis, walk the dog, listen to true crime podcasts, and watch murder mystery shows. I'm also a new empty nester. My son was very active and had his activities to go to after school, which naturally became my hobbies. So now I am looking for new ones.

Favorite vacation destinations: I'm not a beach person, but if I can vacation with an ocean or a body of water, that is ideal. Northern Europe has been one of my favorite places to visit.

Favorite occasions to send employees notes: I have three different occasions I like to send employees notes: after we implement a new software, solve an issue, or hit a goal

for HR; when the team is the "Mad story" for the week; and celebrating work anniversaries.

Favorite company product/service: The Don Quixote salad with shrimp, Mad spice avocado, and creamy ginger dressing.

BOTTOM LINE

What are your long-term goals for the company? For Salad Collective to be a multi-brand, culture-forward restaurant group. We want to be thoughtful and long-lasting by growing in a smart way, bringing forward approachable, healthy food options to America and beyond.

How has the economy changed your goals for your company? I don't think it's changed them more than delayed them slightly over the last couple of years. We spent most of 2022 preparing for new unit growth again for Mad Greens and investing in our culture and our people. We completed the acquisition of a new brand, Tokyo Joe's, and inherited a great team of people there. Growth through acquisition has always been part of our strategy, and we had that on hold in 2020/2021 because of the economic and global situation.

Where can capital be found these days? We are not actively in the capital market.

How do you measure success? For me it has always been more related to things like is our organization healthy, are we developing people, do we have the right talent we need to accomplish our goals, and do we have staying power? We can always find a way to meet financial goals, but if it is only in the short term, that's not really success.

What has been your greatest success? Building and developing the team we have with the comradery and high culture that goes along with it.

Any regrets? Not believing in myself sooner.

What can we expect from your company in the next 12 to 18 months? We are launching franchising efforts for Mad Greens, which is a big step, so we can expect many exciting things coming down the pipeline: signing on franchisees, building one or two new corporate stores with the new prototype, as well as a greater focus on digital transactions. Also, we're always looking to add new brands to our current portfolio at Salad Collective. ■

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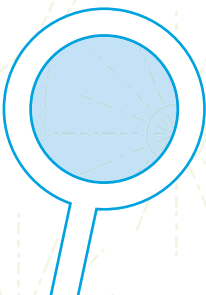


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“Ultimately, I’m not afraid to make the right decision for the business and the brand even if it’s not the popular decision.”

Frenchies Revolution

“Culture is not a fluff thing, it’s everything”

Written by **KERRY PIPES**



STEPHANIE COFFEY

Co-Founder, COO

Company: **Frenchies Modern Nail Care**

Units: **23**

Age: **56**

Years in franchising: **15**

Years in current position: **5**

Stephanie Coffey is a visionary leader who saw a need to shake up the \$14 billion nail care sector. Identifying some fundamental issues in the space, she set out to offer a healthy, clean environment for guests and team members, along with a top-tier guest experience. And that’s exactly what she did in 2014, when she and her husband, Guy, co-founded Frenchies Modern Nail Care.

Today, she serves as COO of the emerging brand, which has 23 locations and slow-and-steady post-pandemic plans for growth. One of the first things that becomes clear about Coffey is her passion for helping franchisees

pursue their dream of owning their own studio. Perhaps that stems from a previous position she held as a franchise consultant with Anytime Fitness, where she coached more than 140 franchisees who owned a combined 560 clubs. She also served as president and SVP of franchise development and support for Waxing The City.

As a membership-based concept, Frenchies has been a real disrupter, says Coffey. “Customers are attracted to our nontoxic products and variety of healthy, unique offerings. The beauty industry as a whole has seen a focus on consumers demanding organic, nontoxic options for the beauty services and products they use every day, and Frenchies is delivering on both fronts.”

With Covid in the rearview mirror for now, Coffey says unit growth is back on the table and she expects to add one unit per month this year. The brand is also looking to add new products to its line that can help keep costs down and quality up.

LEADERSHIP

What is your role as co-founder and COO? My role as co-founder is to grow and push our brand forward. I’m responsible for crafting and executing our strategic plan to meet our goals. I do this through sound decision-making, leading our small but mighty team, developing key partnerships, and, most important, supporting our franchise owners while they are on this journey with us.

How has Covid-19 affected the way you have led your brand? We have been successfully promoting our “clean and healthy” services to separate ourselves from the typical nail salon experience since our inception. We have not changed our business model—we just focused on reminding customers of our health and wellness benefits that were present pre-pandemic and are now arguably more important than ever. Even before the pandemic hit, all new Frenchies studios installed leading-edge energy recovery ventilators, the kind you see in hospitals that remove stale air and pump in fresh air, critical for fighting infection. And we didn’t stop there. Each client has a personal ventilation system at

every manicure and pedicure station, guests and specialists wash their hands before every service, all metal tools are sterilized through a three-step process that includes a medical-grade autoclave to kill 100% of bacteria and viruses. And we have never used pedicure bowls with jets that are impossible to thoroughly clean.

Describe your leadership style. I would describe it as more of a coach approach, especially in my role. I spent several years supporting franchisees in every aspect of growing their business. It is critical to provide candid feedback to all constituents, hold franchise owners and team members accountable, and drive the business forward. I want to coach and develop individuals into being the best version of themselves so they can contribute to their business, their families, and their communities.

What has inspired your leadership style? I've been fortunate to have had a varied and successful career in many different industries: technology, distribution, and franchising in both large companies and startup environments. I've learned and grown with each company and position I've held. What has made me successful is that I listen to the team and customers to understand the industry and its business drivers, and then I roll up my sleeves and get to work. Over the years, I've been recognized for being a visionary and a gritty executer who quickly establishes trust with my teams. I lead from the front, do whatever is necessary, and rally my teams toward a common goal resulting in success for all involved.

How do you transmit your culture from your office to frontline employees? Culture is not a fluff thing, it's everything. It's incredibly important, and I believe it starts in the franchise recruitment and development process. It is imperative that everyone involved in the brand aligns with your values, mission, and purpose. We have built our processes, education, and resources around these company attributes and reinforce them in everything we do.

How can a you help your CMO develop and grow? The CMO role for a franchise, specifically an emerging franchise brand, is imperative. To ensure the integrity of the brand is maintained, amplified, and visible, the CMO should be looped into strategic conversations on all key issues and initiatives. Recent research has shown that many CEOs

believe CMOs are some of the most qualified candidates for the CEO role. I believe that comes from the close relationship these two positions hold. Nothing happens without marketing and communication across the company, and the ability to collaborate closely with your CMO speaks volumes to the long-term success of any initiative.

Where is the best place to prepare for leadership: an MBA school or OTJ? I believe both are important. Graduate school provided a great foundation for me in terms of learning the ins and outs of business and all of the facets that go into running a successful company. However, the skills I learned by working side by side with people in the trenches was invaluable for helping me grow my skill set and putting those things into action.

Are tough decisions best taken by one person? How do you make tough decisions? As a leader, the tough decisions always reside with you. At the end of the day, the results are your responsibility. How you get to making that difficult decision involves a lot more than just your thoughts and perspectives. I tend to make tough decisions by talking through things with our leadership team and my co-founder, who also happens to be my husband, to get a variety of perspectives. But, ultimately, I'm not afraid to make the right decision for the business and the brand even if it's not the popular decision.

Do you want to be liked or respected? Earning the respect of my team, franchise owners, strategic partners, and industry colleagues is critical to our success. As a franchise brand, our entire team must be viewed as professional, competent, and productive. This evokes respect for each other, for our industry, and ultimately for our brand.

Advice to CEO wannabes: When you see an opportunity, have faith in yourself and take the leap! Your career is not a straight upward incline. It has dips, it has flips, and it has leaps that are learning opportunities that will mold you into being a better and stronger leader.

MANAGEMENT

What does your management team look like? We have a small but talented team that is well-versed in franchising. We are intentional about being very strategic and focus on initiatives to move the brand forward while also being available to support our franchise system.

How does your management team help you lead? We are fortunate in that our team has worked with each other for more than 10 years. The level of respect, trust, and caring for one another allows each of us to speak our mind candidly—whether it's about something in general, something specific to that person's expertise, or even if it's not in that person's area of responsibility.

Favorite management gurus: Do you read management books? *Profitable Partnerships* by Greg Nathan, *Rework* by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson, and *Speed of Trust* by Stephen Covey Jr.

What makes you say, "Yes, now that's why I do what I do!"? Seeing franchise owners win in business and in life.

OPERATIONS

What trends are you seeing with consumer spending habits in your stores? We are experiencing that our guests want and are willing to pay for an exceptional guest experience. That is why we created a "6-Stage Guest Experience Cycle" that we coach on and execute daily in our studios. Guests are drawn to our clean studios and our healthy alternative to the typical nail salon.

How is the economy driving consumer behavior in your system? Historically, the beauty industry has been deemed a recession-proof industry. Consumers find beauty services to be more self-care than an indulgence, and nail services are considered an affordable luxury.

What are you expecting from your market in the next 12 months? We expect continued growth—grow the revenue in our franchise locations as well as the number of franchise owners in our system. During Covid, we put franchise sales on the back burner while we supported our existing owners in navigating the challenges associated with the pandemic. That focus paid off and we are proud of how well our studios are doing, which provides us the momentum to ramp our sales efforts back up.

Are your franchisees bullish or bearish about growth and adding units? As an emerging brand, our franchise owners understand the need for our system to grow and the benefits it will bring them. Those who signed on with us early have already begun to see the benefits of purchasing power, added services, and sharing of ideas that help the brand and their businesses grow and evolve.

Are commodity/supplies costs any cause for concern in your system? I think any company not concerned with the rising costs of supplies is kidding themselves. Covid and the economic environment have put a ton of pressure on costs for any type of business. For this reason, we invested strategically early on to get our own supply chain moving to be able to provide our own branded product line. As an emerging brand this was a stretch, but we have already realized cost savings for our franchise owners in the consumables used in our studios. We also work very closely with our vendor partners to source items to keep costs down as best as we can.

In what ways are political/global issues affecting the market and your brand? As a highly regulated industry with little oversight to ensure that brands are playing by the rules, the Covid era put a spotlight on the beauty services industry and its impact on the economy. While many businesses were allowed to reopen, the additional regulations required for salons and spas resulted in business closures and an exodus in talent because of the social distancing and extra costs to do business. While restaurants and bars seemed to have a voice at the table for support, the beauty industry was left in limbo to try to figure things out on our own. The long-term challenge is that the consolidation of the industry, paired with upward pressure on wages by states across the country, resulted in price increases as a necessity by salons just to keep up. These impacts are making consumers more selective about the beauty services they maintain, and the businesses they deem they get the best value from.

PERSONAL

What time do you like to be at your desk? I am on the go and making calls with franchise owners, strategic partners, my team, and our studio from the time I wake up at 6 a.m. Sitting at my desk doesn't necessarily translate into productive time for me. My primary focus is connecting with the professionals who make our brand what it is, and ensuring they have everything they need to be successful.

Exercise in the morning? Wine with lunch? Yes! I am committed to taking care of my body and try to keep to a morning exercise regime. But I will also enjoy a glass of wine at lunch if the situation presents itself. It's all about balance.

Do you socialize with your team after work/outside the office? We are intentional about creating opportunities to connect outside of working hours. We have quarterly team events to enjoy each other's company and to build a deeper bond. It's important for the culture of our brand.

Last two books read: *The Wealthy Franchisee* by Scott Greenberg, *Empire of Pain* by Patrick Radden Keefe.

What technology do you take on the road? My iPhone and my reMarkable notebook. My laptop is always with me as well, but not always the charger for some reason.

How do you relax/balance life and work? I love dinnertime with my family and we make it a priority, especially with my husband and me both running Frenchies. It's important to be present for each other and our sons. During dinner, we all share our "pit & peak" of the day. I also enjoy hiking, skiing, tennis, yoga, and spending time with family and friends.

Favorite vacation destinations: I have two favorite vacation destinations. One is South Seas Island Resort in Captiva Island, Florida. I started going to this special place in grade school with my grandparents and family, and the yearly tradition continues with countless cousins and their families. Another special destination for me is our cabin in northern Minnesota. We love spending time there with family enjoying water activities, lazy boat rides, making s'mores, and picking blueberries.

Favorite occasions to send employees notes: Birthdays, service anniversaries, and annual cabin retreat.

Favorite company product/service: Technology: My reMarkable notebook has been a favorite of mine for the past year. Clothing: Aviator Nation has the comfiest, most stylish loungewear.

Beauty: Frenchies—my hands and nails are selling opportunities. How they look really makes a difference.

BOTTOM LINE

What are your long-term goals for the company? We are the market leader in providing a nontoxic nail care service. My goal is to continue growing the brand with a focus on delivering an outstanding guest experience, ownership opportunities to others in their local markets where they can give back to their communities, and grooming and

providing opportunities to a team of beauty professionals. I love the Frenchies brand for everything it brings to franchise owners, our guests, the team, and the community.

How has the economy changed your goals for your company? Out of the gate we grew really fast and far exceeded our expectations and projections. Without Covid affecting that, we would have been on track to continue that pace. Covid made us step back and focus on the health of our franchise owners, their local stores, and employees, and on how we provide unparalleled service, including sanitation standards, to our guests. We are now focused on adding to our system in a slow and steady pace so we can maintain that focus.

Where can capital be found these days? For franchise owners, SBA loans are a dependable option. For franchisor systems, there seems to be a lot of interest from family offices and PE groups.

How do you measure success? 1) How profitable our franchise owners are and where they are headed. That drives the success of our business. 2) How much time I have with my family.

What has been your greatest success? Personally, my husband. Hands down, he's the biggest win ever for me. Professionally, growing Frenchies from an idea to what it is today in full view of my sons. There are ups and there are downs; our sons have seen my husband and me handle them all while staying true to our values.

Any regrets? None. Lessons have been learned from each experience and, to one degree or another, everything leading up to the present has shaped who I am. I'm always trying to improve and am far from perfect, but I am good with who I am and what I stand for in this world.

What can we expect from your company in the next 12 to 18 months? We expect to add one new franchise location to our system every month. We are also focused on adding more products to our branded product line, which supports a healthy beauty brand and allows us to control costs and the quality of the products we use in our studios. ■

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WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2023

Legislative threats to franchising abound

Written by **MATT HALLER**

When it comes to public policy, nobody understands better than you that the odds are stacked against franchised businesses. Singled out because so few truly understand the franchise business model, lawmakers often unfairly target franchises as “big business” rather than the local businesses they are. That’s why the IFA exists: to protect your business while enhancing and promoting the entire franchise sector.

With members as our chief advocates, we work for you to provide the platform, resources, and connections necessary to reach the lawmakers and influential figures who can move the needle on policy priorities in Washington, D.C., and in individual states. In 2022, the IFA worked to stop some of the most serious threats to franchising to date—achieving an historic year for advocacy wins in favor of franchising, while keeping our focus on legislative and regulatory challenges that may take shape in 2023 and beyond.

At the start of 2022, when the federal government remained under one-party control, the IFA prepared for potential headwinds armed with new research, powerful member stories, and the strategic vision to stop whatever challenges might arise.

When David Weil was nominated in January to serve as administrator of the Labor Department’s Wage and Hour Division, a position he held in the Obama administration, the IFA immediately stepped into action to prevent his confirmation. Based on his previous tenure and anti-franchising book, *The Fissured Workplace*, Weil can be viewed as the human embodiment of the joint employer standard and other policies that pose a direct threat to franchising. To stop the nomination, the IFA brought to-

gether powerful coalitions of business leaders and activated membership to reach out to their lawmakers so they understood how damaging his confirmation would be.

Thanks to this advocacy, Weil was the only nominee during this administration to be defeated on the Senate floor—and on a bipartisan basis. “The nearly yearlong opposition campaign from the business community was spearheaded by the International Franchise Association, which blasted Weil as the ‘intellectual godfather’ of so-called joint employer rules that seek to hold corporations accountable for franchisees’ labor practices,” noted Politico.

Although Weil’s nomination no longer posed a threat, the NLRB proposed a joint-employer standard that would resurrect the harmful 2015 standard, which cost franchises billions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of jobs, and led to a 93% increase in litigation. The IFA continues to apply pressure urging the NLRB to withdraw this rule, and has gathered a bipartisan group of U.S. House and Senate members to oppose the rule, along with a broad cross-section of third-party groups that includes the national Black and Asian American chambers of commerce, and more than 3,000 franchises to weigh in on the harm this would bring to their businesses.

Also on the regulatory front, we have worked to ensure that the FTC Franchise Rule, the chief regulation governing franchising, is preserved in substantially its current form during its decennial review. Prioritizing the issue at the Franchise Action Network (FAN) annual meeting, IFA members held more than 200 meetings with members of Congress, resulting in bipartisan letters from 67 House members and 14

senators to the FTC, which acknowledged it will take the concerns of the franchise community into consideration when reviewing the Rule.

The issues didn’t stop at the federal level in 2022. In California, the IFA focused on the existential threat posed by the FAST Recovery Act (AB 257). Affecting QSRs, the bill would have created an unelected council of political appointees to set labor standards for the sector, as well as create a joint-employer standard that would erode franchising in the state. Thanks to the IFA and coalition efforts, the bill was amended to strike the joint-employer provision, lessen the number of affected restaurants, and give businesses more of a voice on the council. However, with the bill’s overly broad language, concerns remained about the authority of the council over business owners. Thus, after the bill was signed into law, the IFA immediately led a coalition to petition and gather signatures to take the measure to voters. With 1 million Californians weighing in over the course of a few weeks, the FAST Act has been stopped until voters have a say in November 2024.

In addition to the FAST Act, franchise relationship bills popped up in New Jersey, Oregon, and another in California. All were defeated, at least for now. What these bills and this past year have shown us is the importance of our members and the entire franchising community using their voices to educate lawmakers about franchising and how the policies they put forth affect businesses and the people they serve and employ.

After the active legislative year of 2022, and with the midterm elections in the rear-view mirror, 2023 will bring a divided Congress—and the final rejection of the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act.

Looking ahead to 2023 and beyond, the IFA will continue to advocate for Congress to stop regulatory overreach of the administration and ensure that bills such as the FAST Act don’t spread.

It is our hope that with your help our elected leaders will come together, work in a bipartisan manner, and support their local franchise businesses and all they do for the communities they serve. ■

Matt Haller is CEO and president of the IFA.



GO "ALL IN" ON FRANCHISING IN 2023

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Partnership event with MFV Expositions/Comexposium

LEGAL SYMPOSIUM May 7-9 | Washington, DC

IBA/IFA JOINT CONFERENCE May 9-10 | Washington, DC

MFV INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE EXPO June 1-3 | New York, NY

Partnership event with MFV Expositions/Comexposium

FRANCHISE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE June 20-22 | Atlanta, GA

Partnership event with Franchise Update Media

MFV FRANCHISE EXPO SOUTH September 8-9 | Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Partnership event with MFV Expositions/Comexposium

LEADERSHIP SUMMIT AND FRANCHISE ACTION NETWORK (FAN) ANNUAL MEETING September 11-13 | Washington, DC

FRANCHISE LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE October 18-20 | Atlanta, GA

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EMERGING FRANCHISOR CONFERENCE November 1-3 | New Orleans, LA



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BUILDING LOYALTY

How 5 brands are curating
the customer journey

Written by COLLEEN MCMILLAR



In the life of U.S. consumers, there's no shortage of businesses willing to dole out discounts, freebies, and other perks in exchange for loyalty. Earn your choice of free food and drink. Rack up points toward delicious goodies. Refer a friend and get rewarded. Join and receive members-only exclusive offers.

Kiddie Academy CMO Nicole Salla is convinced that the surest way to attract and keep customers is to make it personal. Very personal. In ways both large and small.

"The best companies—the ones that are able to do customer loyalty right—are really focused on the person and what their experience is," says Salla. Those companies, she says, "are very intentional about mapping out the customer journey and trying to break down any barriers that they have."



NICOLE SALLA

For franchisees, building a long-term relationship with consumers requires a deep understanding of who's coming through their doors, whether they operate a quick-service restaurant that emphasizes politeness and efficiency or a gym that tailors workouts to meet members' goals.

At Kiddie Academy, that process starts before prospective clients ever set foot into one of their educational child care centers. When parents sign up online for a tour, a team member contacts them to gather some basic information. "This allows us to communicate with them so we can make sure that when they come in we're addressing their personal needs," says Salla.

Once a child is enrolled, parents receive daily updates on their youngster's day

through a communication portal, Academy Link, that keeps parents informed. "It tells them how their child's day is going, from what the child ate to how long their nap time was," says Salla. "But, more importantly, we hear from our parents that they love receiving pictures throughout the day of their children engaged in their learning activities."

Relationship-building doesn't stop there. Franchisees also get to know the parents, whose children can range from 6 weeks to 12 years. Satisfaction surveys start within the first month and are sent periodically thereafter. With more than 300 locations in 33 states, Kiddie Academy is "looking constantly at customer sentiment, especially when it comes to our key brand attributes," says Salla. "For example, what is the customer sentiment toward the quality of the curriculum and the health and safety measures we provide?"

After all, you can't meet customers' needs if you don't know what they are. "Even in transactional types of businesses, whether coffee shops or restaurants, the ones that have been the most successful have really understood that it's about getting to know their customers," she says. "It's understanding customer needs, what their journey is into their location, and what their experience is like while they're there."

TECHNOLOGY WILL HELP

From yesteryear's S&H Green Stamps to today's Starbucks Rewards, businesses have always looked for ways to keep customers coming back.

Steve Schulze and his then-wife, Alexis, co-founded Nekter Juice Bar in 2010 in Newport Beach, California. They had a good idea who their customers would be, and the couple knew what they wanted to do: make healthy products that tasted good, keep the menu simple, and make their restaurant affordable.

Their concept was well-received by their health-conscious, Southern California community. Today the business has grown far beyond: Nekter Juice Bars are in more than 20 states, with 330 locations open or in development. Alexis Schulze continues to help lead the company forward in her role as chief visionary officer.

In 2016, the franchise began developing an app that could provide more insights into their customers and their habits. Schulze says

Nekter's loyalty program and the information gained through it have been key to the brand's expansion and keeping customers happy.

"In our space in particular, and even in the industry, we're probably a couple of years ahead when it comes to the technology aspect and the loyalty aspect of it," he says. "Pre-2016, we were like everybody else."

Back then, customers would get a punch card and, after a certain number of punches, they'd get a free item. "Obviously, you don't get any information or data from that little punch card," says Schulze. "So we decided to go all-in on technology."



STEVE SHULZE

By the end of 2022, more than 1.3 million people were using its app. Members receive nutritional information, an ability to easily customize orders, exclusive offers, birthday freebies, and points that lead to discounts. It also allows customers to skip the line and order online. "It very much personalizes the whole process," says Schulze.

Franchisees also benefit from the app in a number of ways, he says. "From an operational standpoint, the labor metrics and the data you get from it are just tremendous because you can efficiently run your labor."

The company has partnered with Fetch, a consumer engagement platform, to build an even more interactive app that will be introduced this summer and will allow Nekter to target its offers to fit each app user's buying history. "As an example, if you like juice, and I like bowls, they've developed offers that cater to what your palate might be," he says. Soon, he says, "We can get to the point where virtually every single order can be customized."



JODI BOYCE

LOYALTY PAYS OFF IN GROWTH

Teriyaki Madness introduced its loyalty program 5 years ago. Since then, it's grown from 12,000 customers to 465,000. There are, of course, advantages in being able to reach people who have already expressed an interest in a product, says Chief Marketing Officer Jodi Boyce.

"These are people who have opted in. They're people who want to hear from us," she says. "Any time we send out an offer or we send an email, we see an immediate reaction from those people. They are usually pretty big TMAD fans. They are spending more and they are coming in more often."

The coronavirus pandemic nudged more customers to order online, especially older people and people who weren't used to ordering through an app, no matter how convenient. The company will use information gathered from the people in its loyalty program to improve the experience of all their customers, she says. At the end of 2022, Teriyaki Madness had 130 locations, with another 60 expected to open this year.

"The loyal members we have are extremely loyal," says Boyce. "We can send out a survey and say, 'Hey, we're trying to make some improvements. What can we do better?' They are loyal guests, so they like to be asked these types of things, and they are very responsive. It goes a lot further than just 'We want your dollars.' We have a relationship with them. They are our guests, and we try to treat them like that so we have them for years to come."

ENSURING CUSTOMERS FEEL VALUED

Not too long ago, Nancy Bigley was at a

Texas location of The Little Gym, a brand that focuses on the physical development of children aged 4 months to 12 years. It happened to be the last day that one of the children would be attending. He had been coming for years, and his older brother was enrolled before him. The older brother had been an outgoing child, always in the mix of things. But the younger boy had started the program shy, hesitant to interact with other children. Over time, he blossomed.

As Bigley, The Little Gym's CEO, listened, the boys' mother recounted their story. She spoke about the connection she felt to the facility and the closeness she felt to the other moms there. "She was very nostalgic about it because she'd seen so much growth in her children. It was such a great blessing that I happened to be there to hear her story," says Bigley. "We try to get them in early so that moms really can see the benefits that happen over the course of time." What also happens over the course of time is that communities develop.



NANCY BIGLEY

For The Little Gym, which has more than 350 locations in the U.S. and abroad, that's the aim: to create personal relationships that benefit the families and the company alike. It's one of the reasons behind the company's policy that children under the age of 3 attend classes with parents or grandparents, and that they stay with the same classmates.

"We know everybody's names. We know the kids' names. We know what's going on in the family. We want to be a part of their lives. We want to understand what's happening in their lives. If they're going through tough times, it's good to be aware of that so we can

be extra sensitive," says Bigley. "It's a community with us and our team. It's a community with other moms. And it's a community with children. That's our primary focus: making sure our moms and kids feel like it's *their* gym, and that they feel at home when they get there. And that is, by far, the biggest advantage we have."

To help make that happen franchisees pay attention to the little things. When a mother is getting out of her car and juggling two kids and a diaper bag, team members will rush to the door to help. "She has her hands full, she has a lot going on. So we're always about service first and how do we get to the door and open it, so she doesn't have to juggle. And when she's in the gym, how do we look for other opportunities to help her out and make her life easier? That's constantly a focus for us throughout the day, for every single team member," says Bigley.

"That's really where we place so much of our training and focus because that's certainly what helps with our member retention and referrals. A lot of our business growth has been because our parents love our program so much and they're seeing so much value that they start sharing that with other parents. It's a wonderful thing."

Those are the things that the company relies on to keep families coming back.

LOYALTY MUST BE EARNED

Angelique McMillan, vice president of marketing for Handyman Connection, understands that without great service there is no loyalty—especially in tough economic times. The company, which connects skilled craftspeople with people looking to complete home projects, has been operating for 31 years in the U.S. and Canada and has more than 60 locations.

"You have to provide an exceptional brand experience, more so now than ever, to make you stand out among the competition," she says. At the same time, Handyman Connection wants to give their customers incentives to use their craftspeople again.

The company is piloting a loyalty and retention program that will reward customers for completed work, as well as for referrals. Also, she says, "We have a series of ongoing email marketing ecosystem campaigns that communicate with customers so that we're staying top of mind with them as much as possible."



ANGELIQUE MCMILLAN

Exceptional service, combined with a loyalty program, will reap big benefits for franchisees, she says. It could also make Handyman Connection less vulnerable to competition. “Many new competitors have come into the marketplace and are now offering discounts to earn customers,” says McMillan. “The goal is that our customers will have solidified their

own discount within our network through our loyalty and retention program.” This has two benefits, she adds: “to help retain our existing customers and to help continue to grow our customer base through the referral aspect of the loyalty program.”

LOYALTY IS EARNED

In the end, loyalty must be earned, and providing a good customer experience is what will do it, says Bigley. “You can go to a lot of different places and the core product has to be there, whether that’s food, or, in the case of The Little Gym, our curriculum. That has to be top-notch and then the service is really what makes it stand out. It makes people loyal. It makes them want to come back,” she says.

However, she adds, “That gets sloppy a lot of times in businesses. You get busy, you grow, and you think you don’t have to focus on it as much. But that’s when you have to focus on it even more. It stands out when it’s harder to maintain that service level, but you still go above and beyond.” ■



KEEPING UP WITH THE CHANGES

Today’s customers are not the same as yesterday’s, says Nekter’s Schulze. Expectations have changed over the years, accelerated by the changes wrought by the pandemic. “There’s a much higher demand and expectation for personalization, customization, and made-to-order specificity. Years ago, you’d just go in and order a ‘Number 3’ from a fast-food place,” he says.

Now, he continues, “It’s an evolving process. The first iPhone was, ‘Wow, look at this!’ But they continue to evolve. What we have on the phone in 2023 compared with what we had 15 years ago is dramatically different. And I think the same thing with these apps and restaurants. You’re going to see an evolution. People are using canned apps. I think, as time goes on, you’re going to see a lot more customizations. It’s going to be like your own personal chef making your own personal item when you want it, how you want it, presented or delivered how you want it.”

DIGITAL DEVELOPMENTS

Making the most of evolving technologies

Written by **Helen Bond**



Before the pandemic, the thought of selling a home virtually, without an in-person visit, was a foreign concept to Epcon Communities, a homebuilder with a network of more than 80 franchisees.

These days, Epcon considers itself a well-oiled digital marketing machine. Video, virtual tours, and other new media tools, adapted to meet Covid-related restrictions, are part of an everyday arsenal of integrated digital marketing solutions bringing the brand's communities to life no matter where buyers live.

"We must be excellent storytellers through our words and images," says Rob Krohn, vice president of marketing for Epcon Communities and Epcon Franchising.

Franchise brands are increasingly leveraging "new media"—the all-encompassing term for any communication delivered digitally—to drive awareness, engage, convert, and future-proof business for the long haul. It's part art, part science, and part serendipity. Keeping up keeps modern marketers on their toes.

"Marketing is not rocket science, but it's getting close," says Krohn. "It changes and evolves constantly."

Roughly 5.1 billion people (63.5% of the world's population) use the Internet, with two-thirds of everyone on the planet projected to be online by year-end 2023. One result is that most people research products, services, and places online before they buy or dine. As inflation continues to squeeze consumers' purchasing power globally, delivering the right message to the right people at the right time on their preferred media, has become paramount for franchise marketers.

Epcon has spearheaded growth in the 55-plus housing market with a complete marketing mix. Most of Epcon's marketing spend these days falls under "digital," regardless of region, and then is adjusted to fit the local market. Along with traditional outlets (direct mail, newspapers, magazines), the brand's digital tools currently include virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and proptech tools, along with SEO efforts, paid search, organic social, geo-targeting, and industry portals.

Krohn, who hails from an agency background, says many of the technologies and platforms called new media aren't really new. Instead, he says, "They're going through middle-age changes as they've evolved." What has changed, however, are brands' abilities to ex-

pand their reach, efficiently track and measure results, and adjust their digital efforts to meet local market needs—despite today's growing movement to better safeguard personal data.

"It used to be you could be very specific in your targeting, but recent moves on privacy by some of the big players have made that more difficult," says Krohn. "That's where having quality first-person data from many years of tracking our marketing efforts and understanding our buyer demographics is very helpful. We don't have to guess."

SO LONG, SILOS

Taking the guesswork out of marketing is one of the most significant benefits of new media. Consumers' digital journeys have transitioned from all things digital to interacting and buying based on personal preferences. Customers expect—and even demand—convenience, simplicity, value, and a mobile-friendly seamless experience, whether offline or on. "Set it and forget it" just won't cut it in 2023.

Andriana Gavrilovic, senior vice president of marketing for Radiance Holdings, the parent company of Woodhouse Spa and Sola Salons, says rule number one for any brand is an integrated cross-channel marketing approach.

Creative assets can no longer live in a silo, says Gavrilovic, whose brands "package up" creative strategy and mission-driven values for various purposes, whether social media, display advertising across publisher sites, or any other communication tactic aimed at reaching and engaging customers.

"Think about how the digital space has evolved and where your consumers are," she says. "They're on Netflix or streaming TV, listening to a podcast, or streaming audio services. They're on Amazon shopping. They're in all of these different digital spaces."

And that's exactly where marketers must be. "Making sure you're on several ad exchanges and working with an agency that has access to all these different ad exchanges is mission-critical," she says. "It's no longer just Google and Meta. We've moved on and become more sophisticated."

CONTENT STILL RULES

The message still matters. With 70% of consumers preferring articles over ads, content remains essential in digital marketing, and there's a need for a lot more of it.



ROB KROHN

Epcon Communities & Epcon Franchising
Vice President of Marketing

Freddy's Frozen Custard & Steakburgers uses a full-funnel digital strategy across owned, earned, and paid channels. Social media platforms, online digital advertising, and streaming services are woven into an overall approach based on the content and tools that perform best.

"While so much better than the days of only traditional media, one major difference and challenge is the sheer amount of content required to consistently feed correct messaging," says Laura Rueckel, Freddy's chief marketing officer. "The days of the one big 30-second spot that went everywhere are long gone, literally shifting to hundreds of pieces of content needed in just one year."

New media play a crucial role in the national marketing efforts of the Kansas-based fast-casual chain, which continues to expand at a record pace. Tailored ads to targeted audiences and performance data on the back end enable Freddy's to respond in real time and optimize its marketing spend.

"It's essential to understand your target audiences and have a clear strategy for how we're talking to guests and the message we're delivering," says Rueckel. "Also, constantly monitoring the data allows us to quickly pivot our message or platform if something isn't performing to the level we expect."

All these efforts also can help with attribution for brand marketers' eternal quest to track the customer journey. "We're seeing more tools that allow us to follow the jour-



LAURA RUECKEL

Freddy's Chief Marketing Officer

ney of the guest from when they first see an ad through their visit to our app, website, or arrival at the restaurant," she says. "I expect continued improvements in the metrics and the ability to measure success by telling us the best way to engage with the guest."

WORKING WITH INFLUENCERS

With so much space to fill and so many different types of consumers to reach, more companies will forge partnerships with content creators and influencers to promote brand awareness and connect and grow business.

It makes sense. Despite the growth in both data and privacy concerns, TikTok continues to expand its user base, boasting well over 1 billion active monthly users and serving up business tools to make it easier for brands to take advantage of the leading short-form video platform, which has also become popular for social search.

Great Clips is one of many brands increasingly focused on using influencers on TikTok and Instagram, which is making marketing waves with Instagram Reels.

"From major campaigns, like our back-to-school campaign to ongoing drumbeat content, authentically partnering with influencers has proven to be an engaging and effective way to reach new audiences," says Lisa Hake, vice president of marketing and communications at Great Clips.

Influencer marketing and content creation don't have to be high-level. Curated and us-

er-generated content from subject matter experts, employees, guests, and customers is being tapped to sell, engage, educate, and create brand connections. Then there's the new buzz over AI-generated content and its potential applications.

Sola has found a built-in source of professional beauty industry influencers among its community of 20,000 independent stylists through its Faces of Sola program. Launched in 2015, the program relies on a vibrant group of selected stylists to help promote the brand.

Gavrilovic sees brand community as the "holy grail" for authenticity. "We've created this dedicated space through all of our marketing channels for people to come together to learn, to grow, for mentorship, education, and to connect with other beauty pros," she says. "And I think that is what creates stickiness. If you don't have a brand community, your customers will leave, and their days are numbered."

SOCIAL MEDIA TO ORDER

Great Clips' franchisee-facing social ad platform, which earned a 2022 Digiday Technology Award, provides a self-service, on-demand marketing path to drive customers to local salons owned by the brand's 700-plus franchisees across the U.S. and Canada.

In minutes, owners can tap into a set of branded ad templates they can customize and use to launch paid social ad campaigns on Facebook and Instagram. In the first seven months after the platform's launch, more than 400 campaigns were published, with a 70% greater click-through rate than the industry average and a 77% lower cost per click when compared with the industry average, according to the company.

The brand's digital marketing lineup also includes email campaigns and always-on search. Using always-on marketing to manage Google listings, organic search, and paid search ads allows Great Clips to reach customers, potentially with a discount, at the right time and place.

"Search is often the first step in a salon visit," says Hake. "So it's crucial that Great Clips salons are present when someone is searching for a local salon."

A PERSONALIZED FUTURE

The collapse of the traditional marketing

funnel and the rise of analytics have flipped the script in how companies acquire and retain customers and will continue to develop as marketing moves toward a cookieless world. Programmatic media buying has helped data-driven brands see more opportunities every step of the way.

"For Woodhouse, we have 80 locations, and we're looking for luxury spa-goers who are ages 35-plus," says Gavrilovic. "I can build and buy these audiences across all these platforms, so there's absolutely no wastage. I'm not getting irrelevant customers. I'm hyper-targeted. I'm buying the audience, not the space."

The use of data, particularly in digital, is here to stay, says Ken Fitzpatrick, CEO of the Digital Marketing Institute, who sees increasing use of AI-guided tools for automation and personalization at scale.

"Customers want personalization in how you approach them," Fitzpatrick noted on a recent 2023 Trends in Digital Marketing podcast. "Doing that at scale is difficult unless you really understand the data you have, put that data into a tool, and use that to automate your communications to your consumers—to automate things like next best action, identifying on the basis of what your customers have done in the past what they might do next, and personalizing the messages you give them."



ANDRIANA GAVRILOVIC

Radiance Holdings'
Senior Vice President of Marketing

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BUDGET, STRATEGY, AND PLANNING

At Radiance, marketing teams began crafting plans for 2023 digital marketing strategies last September for its two brands. “It’s easy to be enticed by the next big thing,” says Gavrilovic. “However, marketing success still comes down to budget, strategy, and forward planning.” She stands by her long-held version of the 80/20 rule: spending 80% of her budget on media and 20% on creative production.

“Digital media is how you get your brand voice and message out. It is your distribution engine. It’s your blowhorn,” she says. “If you know exactly where you’re going, what audiences you’re buying, the rest of it is cake. You can build your wider integrated marketing strategy around your distribution engine, which is your digital engine.”

Finally, given a choice, don’t cheap out. To attract and keep customers, recruit and support franchisees, and achieve their desired

results, franchisors must continue investing in their marketing teams and budgets.

“I see too many business owners ask one person to be a webmaster, copywriter, strategist, data analyst, accountant, and social media expert,” says Krohn. “If you find a unicorn who can do all these things, you should probably pay them a lot more than you do. Homebuilders don’t ask their drywall people also to do roofing, plumbing, and electrical. You hire the best people you can afford to do what they do best. Marketing should be treated the same way.”

No matter how you choose to manage them, new media marketing technologies, tools, and platforms will continue to transform how franchise brands market to boost brand awareness, engage with customers, sell products and services, and grow their systems. With technology continuing to advance more rapidly every year, one thing remains certain: more change, full speed ahead. ■



4 NEW MEDIA MARKETING TRENDS

Adapting to change continues to be the name of the game in the ever-evolving world of new media marketing. Here are four trends franchise brands can expect to see in 2023 as marketers look to create more personalized, interactive, and omnichannel consumer experiences.

VIDEO—AND MORE OF IT.

With 86% of businesses using video in marketing, it’s no longer if, but how to best use video to inform and connect. The top channels for explainers and social media video content are YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Industry pros predict more brands will capitalize on the use of short-form videos made popular through TikTok and Instagram Reels.

SOCIAL MEDIA, INFLUENCER, AND CONTENT MARKETING.

Expect brands to increasingly strive to rise above the digital noise with influencers, brand advocates, and user-generated content. Content marketing remains a vital strategy with greater focus on valuable and meaningful messaging.

AUTOMATION. AI, OH MY!

Brands will continue to adopt more tech-driven tools as businesses look to automation to improve efficiency in a tight labor market. Among them are marketers’ use of automation and data to shift to signal-based marketing designed to anticipate customers’ needs, and more inroads with conversational marketing and enhanced AI content creation, highlighted by the viral arrival of AI-chatbot ChatGPT.

BOOSTING BRAND IDENTITY.

With the decline of global reach and the ongoing popularity of infinite scroll platforms like Instagram and TikTok, brand value will reach a new high in 2023, according to Meltwater’s 2023 Marketing Trends guide. Brands that get clicks will use in-depth consumer and audience intelligence to create authentic conversations with consumers. “Additionally,” the guide notes, “creative interactive content, short-form video, holistic brand experiences across platforms, and responsive customer service and engagement will continue to be critical brand differentiators.”



Marketing Maven

On a mission to expand the brand

Written by **KERRY PIPES**

Smoothie King made some big moves last year. Following the opening of its 1,400th location in September and the signing of 145 new development agreements, the brand hired a trio of top industry executives to help the health-and-fitness QSR brand grow to the next level. One of those key hires was Marianne Radley as the brand's new CMO. Radley, no stranger to franchising or marketing, arrived with a wealth of knowledge and experience in global marketing, advertising, and product innovation.

Radley came to Smoothie King after serving as chief brand officer for Pizza Hut. She also spent time at Monster Energy as SVP of global marketing, and at Anheuser-Busch as senior brand manager for Budweiser. Now she's helping lead Smoothie King's marketing efforts as the brand looks to grow in key markets such as Cleveland, Denver, Phoenix, New York, and Charlotte.

As CMO, she says, "My objective is to ensure that our brand has a clear and consistent marketing message, that our brand voice is distinctive, and that our brand story is relevant. Building our community of brand fans depends on not only the quality of the smoothies we serve and the guest experience we provide, but also on the quality of our creative and content."

Describe your role as CMO. I am a steward of the brand, the customer, the franchisee, and our CEO Wan Kim, making sure the brand story is being told in a meaningful and effective way at every customer touchpoint. By overseeing all the marketing, branding, and media efforts for Smoothie King, my objective is to attract and bring distinct relevance to the brand through storytelling, while ensuring we are maintaining integrity through every customer experience.

Marketing today is all about personalization, localization, and customization. Customers' needs are constantly evolving, and it is crucial to dig into customer segmentation and understand how they prefer to digest content.

What's the most challenging part of being a CMO today? I always say that everybody is a marketer. Everyone responds to products and creative differently, and marketing is extremely subjective. The challenge for a CMO is to quiet the noise and to use a balance of trusting your gut and relying on data to drive your marketing approach.

What are the most important keys to being an effective CMO leader today? 1) Understand the customer journey at all touchpoints. 2) Take risks and don't be afraid to be bold and create friction with new ideas. 3) Make sure the initiatives you spearhead are leading to profitability and ease of service. (Being skilled at cost optimization is a requirement, not a "nice to have.") 4) Be nimble, agile, and learn from your mistakes. Some of my greatest successes were born from my biggest mistakes.

How do you prepare a marketing plan and execute the strategies? I have a vision of what I'm trying to do and how I see Smoothie King evolving. However, I must

first understand what our current challenges are. I ask myself many questions including "What is the objective?" and "What are we trying to accomplish?"—whether that is increasing brand awareness, customer traffic, sales, or other extenuating circumstances such as navigating a pandemic. Then I assess what leading indicators we can put in place to measure these main objectives.

How do you measure marketing results and effectiveness? Plans and measurables must be clearly managed and communicated to our teams and franchisees. If the landscape changes, we are nimble and we adapt. Marketing effectiveness is measured by outcomes and how well our strategies increase revenue and profitability, while decreasing the cost of customer acquisition. Thanks to real-time data, we are able to gather important metrics, which can determine the short-term and long-term ROI.

Discuss your core consumer marketing strategies and objectives. Some of our marketing strategies are focused on traditional and nontraditional media, building out our loyalty program, investing in technology and app enhancements, and driving more grassroots experiential marketing initiatives.

How do you go about creating a customer-centric marketing and brand philosophy? The most crucial point here is to integrate yourself with the customer journey. I am always in an information-gathering mindset—regardless of whether I'm on the clock or not. I am constantly looking at industry data, learning the nuances of the customer and how they are purchasing, as well as considering how they consume information. I personally enjoy striking up conversations with other shoppers to pick their brains about what influences them, how they interact with our brand, where they spend their time online, and what brands they purchase.

Describe your marketing team and the role each plays. Smoothie King's marketing team includes a variety of departments. The Digital & Loyalty team manages our customer journey through our digital platforms (brand website, brand app, CRM, and our loyalty program). They help drive our digital strategy through customer relationship management programs and email support. Brand Marketing oversees our brand positioning: advertising, media, value

message, partnership integration, and agency management. Research & Development works on menu simplification and innovation, product development, cost reduction on ingredients, food safety, and quality assurance. Partnerships & Communication handles all brand ambassadors and works with corporate communications partnerships, which include social marketing agencies, public relations agencies, and others.

Why is it so important for the marketing department to have a personal touch when it comes to helping the brand connect with franchise prospects? Personal touch is an important part of a brand's storytelling. The marketing department must create that "red thread" or core idea that tells the brand story, so that it is infused in all aspects of our business model, from corporate stores to local franchises. When your brand has and maintains key values and ideals, you're able to form a much stronger bond with those in your system, as well as with consumers who interact with your brand. This connection creates more natural relationships, especially with prospective franchisees, which helps our sales and development teams attract new leads and eventually furthers development for the brand.

How does this help your franchise sales and development effort? Smoothie King is seeking franchisees who are passionate about the business and the products we serve. Our marketing helps showcase our core differentiators, so they have a true understanding of our brand before investing. Through our pillars and brand story, we're able to form these personal bonds that go beyond a franchisee's financial investment. When franchisees are able to emotionally make that connection to the brand through marketing, they better understand the purpose-driven mission and vision, which helps create better consumer experiences.

What ways/tools do you rely on to do this? Being an active participant in franchisee discovery days is an effective way to help make that personal connection to the brand. I also meet weekly with our chief development officer to stay up to speed on his team's initiatives and to discuss how marketing can support them. I am also mindful and well-versed on the financial commitments prospective franchisees are being asked to make to be part of the Smoothie King family.

No matter how great the marketing is, the guest experience, which includes customer interaction, speed of service, and product quality, must be memorable. Every time a franchisee interacts with customers, they are marketing the brand. A franchise marketing department can only do so much; a memorable guest experience is what truly drives sales and brings customers back.

Do today's prospects expect more from the franchise marketing department?

What, and how do you provide it? New franchisees do rely heavily on marketing to share our brand story and drive traffic to their stores. However, that is only part of the evolving expectations of today's franchisees. No matter how great the marketing is, the guest experience, which includes customer interaction, speed of service, and product quality, must be memorable. Every time a franchisee interacts with customers, they are marketing the brand. A franchise marketing department can only do so much; a memorable guest experience is what truly drives sales and brings customers back.

How is today's consumer and marketing data helping you fine-tune your marketing initiatives?

Marketing today is all about personalization, localization, and customization. Customers' needs are constantly evolving, and it is crucial to dig into customer segmentation and understand how they prefer to digest content. In doing so, we can be more deliberate with marketing and deliver more effective and relevant content.

Describe the evolving role of social media in your brand's marketing efforts.

We're more focused on social media than ever before. The consumption rate of social media marketing is so immediate and allows us to target more effectively and experience immediate consumer engagement. We can then leverage this feedback and immediately tweak current practices, as opposed to waiting 30 days for feedback on a static

billboard or print advertising. Social media gives us the ability to quickly fine-tune our strategies to create a targeted approach that resonates with our guests.

How do you work with other internal departments, and does technology help?

We work very closely with the operations team and meet with them daily, discussing what initiatives are driving sales and how we can further develop our marketing initiatives to build sales. To ensure our marketing goals and objectives are aligned with planned future growth, we also work hand in hand with the franchise development team and with other departments as well. Technology is the bedrock for increasing sales and loyalty. If you don't have adequate infrastructure, you're losing digital sales.

Do you see vendors as business partners? Why/why not?

I do. I think any vendor we do business with, whether that is with creative or digital agencies, should have the best interests of our business in mind. These relationships are strategic partnerships that everyone can benefit from. I strongly encourage our vendors to ask, know, and understand how our business is performing. Being invested in the growth of the business is an important piece to building successful partnerships.

How have marketing strategies/tools changed over the past decade? How have you adapted?

Digital and social media have played a large role in the transformation of our marketing strategies and

tools. This has helped brands maintain consistency and authenticity by giving them the opportunity to put messaging out quickly and frequently. Customers have always been smart. However, they now have easy access to engage directly with a brand and to gather information in a matter of seconds. If you're not authentic, then you'll be challenged by your customers pretty quickly. That is why we place a great deal of our marketing muscle into digital innovation so our message is always delivered seamlessly to the consumer.

Also, marketing strategies and tools have changed because the customer journey has evolved, and they receive information much faster. To gain brand loyalty and trust, customers require consistency in their experiences. Brands like Smoothie King have adapted our marketing by remaining committed to providing positive brand touchpoints, nurturing the customer with a personalized experience, and delivering ease of access to the brand, all while speaking directly to them with relevance. Additionally, the fast-paced cycle of information that must be available to customers has made marketing a much bigger investment today when looking at buys on Meta and TikTok, which has unfortunately limited smaller players.

What advice would you offer to aspiring CMO executives?

CMOs should always be able to step into the mindset of their customer and recognize the need for ideas that resonate with the overall consumer, as opposed to just themselves. As a marketer, it's also important to keep in mind that you should not only be creative, but effective. Ask yourself how you will measure the success of what you're doing. What is the ROI from your marketing efforts? Last, I have learned to trust my gut and work across different categories. There are so many factors contributing to marketing a brand; it is crucial to work within different roles and positions that will give you a 360-degree marketing approach. This will help you feel more comfortable in the efforts you spearhead and will give you confidence in your strategies. Don't chase the paycheck, chase the experience and you'll grow and evolve much further than before. ■

Which media channels will you focus on for your marketing in 2023?



M. BARRY WESTRUM

Chief Marketing Officer
Taco John's International

In 2023, we are planning to get back to basics and revisit traditional media. Traditional still gets scale and can be very targeted to our key geographies.

Our media mix is 70% TV commercials, and we plan to introduce more video across all of our channels. According to Insider Intelligence, U.S. adults will spend 54% (3 hours, 7 minutes) of their daily video time with traditional linear TV. Next year, Taco John's will introduce 15-second spots instead of our usual 30-second spots, allowing us to bring to life our secondary brand messages around our value and breakfast offerings.

In addition, we will use these spots beyond traditional TV to share across ad-supported streaming services such as Apple TV to reach more targeted audiences with higher viewership too. This gives us exciting choices on where to place these media dollars.

We're also getting very hyper-local with our connected/OTT TV messaging so that we can geotarget, giving us the ability to dive into the rural areas and hit our exact footprint. We are also going to explore more spend in digital channels like Meta and YouTube.

Another exciting channel we will focus on in 2023 is our loyalty program. Last year, we launched a new points-based loyalty program with Punchh, and we've seen more than 30% growth in transactions featuring consumers earning or redeeming points.

We will look at leveraging this program even more this year to start building growth in online ordering. We know that loyalty members are our biggest opportunity for growth, and that by building membership through digital ads, incentives, and by driving engagement, we can create more frequency.

During the holidays we ran a successful campaign that included "12 Days of Deals," where members got a free or reduced item every day. We see this as an opportunity to engage with our biggest fans and plan to build on this momentum in 2023.



Expanding marketing analytics is paramount moving into 2023 and beyond. Brands must evolve into more predictive modeling by focusing on reinvestment per customer as well as on segmentation.



LESLIE MONSON

*Chief Marketing Officer
Ballard Brands*

We'll focus on digital enhancements through social. As we plan for the elimination of cookie tracking, brands must invest in social listening and increased localized engagement across all platforms. One of our goals is to leverage more community and group-based social interactions.

At PJ's Coffee, we often talk about the warmth that goes into every cup. And that's not just coffee we are talking about. It's community relationships, care for our neighbors, and spreading pure joy to and with our customers. Our NIL program lineup and content creator programs more closely align our brand with the communities we serve. We want to make sure our brand remains authentic and stays closely connected to our loyal fans and community partners in the upcoming year.

Expanding marketing analytics is paramount moving into 2023 and beyond. Brands must evolve into more predictive modeling by focusing on reinvestment per customer as well as on segmentation. This is a key area of focus for us as we work to evaluate and expand our loyalty offerings moving into the future. We've been able to dive into relationships more deeply with our consumers. I encourage brands to know what channels generate responses and exploit them! We must meet the consumer where they wish to engage with us and provide offerings that resonate with their personal preferences and historical ordering habits.

We'll also be branding at a hyper-local level. Bringing the Spirit of New Orleans and the Soul of Coffee to the masses is the basis of our business at PJ's Coffee. In an effort to spread that localized feel with the Southern hospitality found in New Orleans, we've identified two digital partners that will more closely connect our individual franchised locations with their DMA through social, display, and retargeting. Those new digital partner relationships kick off this year, allowing us to build on our current tech stack while providing franchise system transparency. Consumers care about convenience, frictionless transactions, and localized service and engagement. Ensuring we meet those deliverables through every touch point is vital.

(Ballard Brands is the parent company that owns PJ's Coffee of New Orleans, which is their biggest franchise brand. Leslie Monson is the CMO of all Ballard Brands concepts, which include PJ's Coffee.)

CHANGING CHANNELS

SOCIAL MEDIA KEEPS EVOLVING—ARE YOU?

Written by **JACK MONSON**

At the 2022 Franchise Leadership & Development Conference, I had the pleasure of leading a panel on effective marketing and communications tools that featured Brett Larimer (Skyhawk Sports Academy), Micah Loseman (Right at Home), and Dustin Thompson (Del Taco).

We started by reviewing my not-so-scientific results from an informal survey of several franchisors at the IFA Annual Convention in February in San Diego. When asked about marketing channels, many franchisors had named one channel as “mostly for kids,” “a dying fad,” and “having no real value for my franchise brand.”

What channel were they talking about? TikTok? BeReal? Something newer? No. It was Facebook. Wait... Facebook? Only for kids? Yes. You see, this survey was indeed done at IFA in San Diego, but not in 2022. *It was done in 2009!*

In 2009, many brand leaders were skeptical about social media in general and Facebook specifically for B2B marketing. Facebook was still seen by many as a college student network with few users over 35, and it didn't yet have a paid targeted advertising model. The 2022 crowd was shocked at how wrong the 2009 crew had been about Facebook's potential and how much things had changed in 13 years.

Which channels in 2023?

Many marketers are quick to label groups of people and put them into silos. Boomers think one way, Millennials think another, etc. But my view has always been that painting tens of millions of people with the same brush and assuming they have monolithic behaviors is not targeted marketing. In fact, it's just lazy marketing.

In 2023, that kind of thinking will make you miss out on reaching many great candidates for your franchise and consumers for your products and services. Massive numbers of TikTok users are 50 and older. LinkedIn is getting younger. Twitter is more diverse than ever. How unproductive it is to assume any of these platforms are limited to just one generation!

We must get away from the idea that Facebook is “only for Grandma” and TikTok is “only for Gen Z.” That's as silly as saying that only one age group uses a product because they discovered it first. Imagine saying only Boomers drink wine and only Gen Xers own iPhones.

The right tool for the right job

Which tools and social channels should your brand engage right now? The difficult answer is all. Your target audiences, regardless of age, are more fragmented than ever and are spread across all of these places. Here are some tips to reach as many people as possible wherever they are spending screen time.

LinkedIn. Unlike the other tools on this list, focus on your own personal profile rather than your brand's company page. If you're not active there daily—actually, multiple times per day—are you even still in franchising? Start posting something valuable every day, immediately. If you can't create or even curate content every day, that's okay; just interact with your contacts' posts. Who are the smartest people in your network you are aligned with? Like, comment, and repost their content. It's good for you and good for them. LinkedIn is the world's greatest networking reception, and there's no cost to enter outside of a little time and energy. But please stop looking at it as a sales push. Your InMail and unsolicited direct messag-

es are doing more harm than good. Share good content, engage with others, and skip the spam.

Facebook is the broadcast TV of social media. While it may not have the “cool factor” it did a decade ago, most consumers' eyeballs are on this screen at some point in a week or month. The real question is not how your audience is using Facebook, but how are you serving your messages on it. If you're relying on organic posts, you're not reaching anyone. There's no such thing as a Facebook strategy that is only organic. You must spend on some paid ads or skip it completely.

Instagram has a similar feel for businesses as Facebook with organic content not reaching large numbers anymore, but with one big exception: Reels. Every organic post your business makes should now be a video. It will automatically be posted as a Reel, which will be shared to more audiences who—and this is the important part—do *not* already follow your brand. Just like TikTok.

TikTok. This where the best organic reach is happening and why Reels is chasing it. On other channels, your content is seen only by people already following you or your brand, or in some cases, by people searching for your topic or tags. TikTok, however, is pushing your videos to large numbers of scrollers who have never heard of you or your brand. YouTube owns the space of how-to videos, but TikTok is now the place for people looking for advice. Use that to your advantage and share your brand's valuable information—often.

Twitter. Don't sleep on this one anymore. This is the best example of how fast things can change. For the past few years, I've been waving brands away from Twitter as it has become a nasty space for political shouting matches and personal attacks. But in the new era, Twitter may be just the entrance point for a larger social media vision. I'm not recommending spending any ad dollars yet. But please claim or reclaim your brand's space and get ready for what may be next. ■

Jack Monson is the owner and host of Social Geek, home of the top podcasts in franchising, including “The Franchise News Podcast” and “Social Geek Rock Stars.” He has been helping franchisors and franchisees with digital marketing for 15 years.



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The Art of Listening

Making connections in business and life

Written by JOHN DIJULIUS

When younger, I wanted to socialize only with people who shared my interests: customer service and baseball. Not very broad! I had zero curiosity, zero interest in learning about the other person and what interested them. I thought I was great at building relationships because I talked a lot. Sadly, it was me doing the majority of the talking about... me.

Thank goodness I evolved—and learned the hard way. When you talk only about what you know, you never evolve, never learn, never become more well-rounded in multiple areas that enhance life and make you more enjoyable to be around. Here are a few pointers on how to do that.

Navigating divisive topics. Back in the day, the rule of thumb was, “Don’t talk religion and politics.” Today, too many divisive issues can send people into a heated debate, even prompting personal attacks on anyone with an opposing opinion. But these complex topics can spark great conversations, especially when people have opposing viewpoints. How else can we learn fundamental skills for meaningful conversation and future discussions about hot-button issues?

Listen like you are wrong. So how do we have constructive conversations? We have to train ourselves not to defend our ideas, but rather to explore new ones. One of the best (but hardest) things is to listen like you’re wrong—whether with an irate customer, significant other, or anyone with a different opinion. I might be the only person who argues with someone who agrees with me! I get worried when everyone in the conversation appears to all have the same opinions.

Curiosity is a superpower. Those strongest at relationship-building are extremely curious. They’re eager to learn about others and their experiences. They’re curious

not only about subjects that interest them, but also in the unfamiliar. They truly enjoy learning about what makes humans tick.

The best relationship builders are detectives in their conversations, seeking clues to what makes the other person unique. “Highly empathic people have an insatiable curiosity about strangers,” says Roman Krznaric, author of *Empathy: Why It Matters, and How To Get It*.

The authors of the book *Superconnector: Stop Networking and Start Building Business Relationships that Matter* explain: “Connectors have small talk with a purpose. They are never just engaging in conversation for the sake of conversation.”

People with insatiable curiosity become investigative reporters, wanting to learn about other people’s lives and passions. Being curious forces you to have fierce attention during conversations.

Fierce attention leads to a balanced discussion. If you ask a question and don’t ask two to three follow-up (clarifying) questions, odds are you weren’t paying fierce attention. Maybe you just asked the question to be polite, like “How was your weekend?” Or perhaps you were dying to answer it yourself. When talking with others, aim for a 4:1 ratio of questions asked to those answered.

The art of listening and the best use of language. “Listening to understand is often the only way of showing people they are special and that you care for them,” says Rich Simmonds in his blog *The Art of Listening*. “If you are unable to connect with people to the point that they can trust you, they will not follow you as a leader or give you the opportunity to serve them as a leader (or as a salesperson, for that matter). These are the basics of a relationship, and trust will only be sustainable in the safety of a relationship.”

Without listening with the goal of understanding, we don’t learn about others’ insecurities or, for that matter, our own. And insecurities are something we all have in common. As Simmonds points out, “It is our task to show people we care, not so that we can blatantly manipulate them into using our product or service, but rather by listening and trying to understand them where they are.” Empathetic listening will help us determine what people really need so we can provide it in a way tailored specifically for them, resulting in a situation where everyone wins.

Ask questions, listen up. How can you perfect the art of listening? Ask fascinating, probing questions, follow-up questions, and even more questions. Then be silent and let the person speak their piece. You learn valuable insights not from asking one question, but through an unstructured back-and-forth. As Tom Peters notes in *The Excellence Dividend*, “If you ask a question and don’t ask two or three follow-up questions, odds are you weren’t listening to the answer. A good listener becomes invisible; makes the respondent the centerpiece.”

Peters dedicates an entire chapter to listening. “Attention is one thing. Fierce attention resides on a different planet.” He believes fierce attention is of such high degree that the person responding to you feels totally engrossed and as if the focus is completely on them. Rather than merely listening or improving your listening skills, Peters advocates making fierce listening your number-one strategic goal, the primary trait differentiating you from everyone else.

Don’t listen so you can decide when to chime in with your own opinion. Listen to actually understand. These two statements can dramatically help: “Tell me more” and “Help me understand.” ■

John R. DiJulius III, author of *The Customer Service Revolution*, is president of The DiJulius Group, a customer service consulting firm that works with companies including Starbucks, Chick-fil-A, Ritz-Carlton, Nestle, PwC, Lexus, and many more. Contact him at 216-839-1430 or info@thedijuliusgroup.com.

Sales Booster

Top 7 reasons franchise sales teams fall short

Written by **KEITH GERSON**

Over the past 3 years, the world has changed drastically, starting with franchise buyers' attitudes and expectations. If you want to survive in this dynamic world, you must be open to change. Here are seven areas to consider in 2023.

- 1. Sales personnel give up on new leads far too soon.** The data we've aggregated and anonymized on franchise sales results from more 700 franchise brands has shown that many franchise sales programs have an unspoken "three strikes and you're out" program. This is problematic given research showing that a potential buyer must see a message at least seven times before they'll be provoked to take action. In fact, to get a prospect to the finish line, the number of touches can easily escalate to 20+ omnichannel exchanges (phone, texting, email, etc.). The call to action is to sit down with your marketing team and come up with an omnichannel series of outreaches and campaigns combined with content-rich material you can use to nurture a prospect.
- 2. Your sales content is neither timely nor relevant.** Providing great content isn't enough. Instead, it's necessary to have the right content unveiled at the right time. So many franchisors have content designed to bring the prospect to the initial call, but as discussions progress it's necessary to have content specific to each stage of your sales process. This content should include how to read an FDD, preparing for discovery day, how to conduct due diligence when speaking with current and former franchisees, etc. This also will help you understand how engaged your prospects are by looking at their open and read rates in your CRM or marketing software.
- 3. Franchisors must put themselves in the prospect's shoes.** It's important to

understand the emotional state of a buyer from their initial discovery/research phase to the evaluation/comparison stage and finally to the decision/purchase stage. Each stage brings its own emotional highs and lows, and though brands may differ, prospects' questions and concerns are often the same. It's important to ensure that the content you are making available can be found in multiple channels for prospects seeking more insights into your brand.

- 4. Realign your hierarchy of communications.** There was a time when nothing worked better than the telephone. Today's prospects typically won't answer the phone if they don't recognize your number. Conversely, SMS text messaging response rates are 45%—295% higher than responses from phone calls. Email is further downstream, with response rates of only 6%. Text messaging can significantly increase your booked call rates. And, once the call takes place, virtual calls such as Zoom or Teams are the most effective way short of a face-to-face meeting. Virtual calls also allow you to record the sessions, which can provide your prospect with a meeting recap, and your head of sales with a way to evaluate sales effectiveness through these "game tapes."
- 5. Stop throwing good money after bad.** According to Franchise Update's 2023 Annual Franchise Development Report, franchisors have recruiting budgets that average \$225,240 with a median of \$143,000. With the average cost of a lead at \$155, and the cost per sale reported at \$10,086, it's critical that you know your cost per lead and cost per sale by source—so you can starve things that don't work and feed those that are working. FranConnect's Annual Franchise Sales Index Report breaks down and ranks the top lead generation sources based on their individual lead-to-

sales conversion rates. If you're not doing this, chances are you're spending with sources that provide a substandard ROI.

- 6. Your salespeople are asleep when buyers want to engage.** Our research shows that 68% of sales appointments are made outside of traditional sales hours (evenings, weekends, and holidays). Our data also shows that 65% of the franchise sales that did occur were those that were engaged within the first 4 hours of a prospect expressing interest. This means that a franchisor either needs to call upon technology such as AI-driven SMS text messaging, or consider having sales personnel working split shifts. Personally, I'm a fan of going the technology route.
- 7. Sales executives fail to pay heed to critical KPIs.** There are certain metrics that everyone seems to gravitate toward, such as leads generated and sales closed. These tend to be lagging indicators. The most underrated KPIs are leads by source, applications completed by source, and initial booked—and kept—appointments. This can help you starve the sources that aren't working in favor of those that are. Our data shows that the challenges in lead generation aren't in the quantity and quality of those leads, but in the fact that they are getting trapped, and even ignored, within the sales funnel.

Conclusions

Many of the best practices discussed in this article are neither revolutionary nor difficult to put into play. The key is to develop "muscle memory" to achieve your best results. It is my hope and desire that your team members are held accountable for using your systems and tools (such as an effective franchise sales CRM) and that you, as sales leaders, "inspect what you expect."

With these recommendations in hand, I believe that 2023 can be your best year in franchise sales yet!

Keith Gerson, president of franchise operations at FranConnect, has more than 45 years of executive-level expertise creating and building leading franchise systems. His most recent book is "The Franchise Book of Mentors." To learn more, visit franconnect.com.

How is the possibility of an economic recession affecting your growth plans for 2023?



RYAN REEVES

Vice President of Franchise Sales and Development
Boston's Pizza

Franchise growth is still a top goal for us here at Boston's Pizza Restaurant and Sports Bar ("Boston's"). To meet our goals in 2023, we're taking three main factors into consideration. One of the many great things about franchising is its resiliency. In our 60-year legacy of operating in Canada and almost 23-year legacy in the U.S., this is not the first storm we have faced. As we prepare for the worst and hope for the best, I am optimistic about the new possibilities of expansion ahead of us in 2023.

First, even in an economic downturn we typically see new candidates enter the prospect portal looking to pursue new or different entrepreneurial interests outside of what they may have been doing previously. This interest from non-traditional leads can spur new development opportunities, which we saw during Covid when we received an influx of interest from franchisees in the hotel/hospitality space. If a recession becomes significant and affects travel, we predict to see more and more hotel owner-operators looking to shore up their food and beverage offerings on site.

The second element we're taking into consideration is building materials. The pandemic created massive strains on the cost (and sometimes the availability) of furniture, equipment, and construction materials for

our restaurants. In contrast, a recession can bring some of those costs down significantly. In partnering with savvy franchisees who also recognize this opportunity, we can develop new locations at a reduced cost and come out ahead once the dust settles. With this, we also predict that there will be an opportunity to take over endcap and inline development spaces in 2023. As we saw during Covid, we expect to see a spike in second-generation site inventory availability, allowing us to move into great markets without having to develop from the ground up, thereby cutting costs.

Last, on average, our lead-to-deal close window is 18 weeks (4½ months), which means that to meet our 2023 franchise expansion goals, leads will have to be generated by the beginning or middle of August to have the best chance of closing before the end of the year. Understanding that it takes time to move prospects through the entirety of the sales funnel, we will be allocating a heavier portion of our annual spend to the first and second quarters to give our sales team the appropriate time it takes to nurture prospects. This also means we are still full throttle in our expansion efforts and—despite the economic forecasts for this year—we're prepared to invest in the long-term growth of this brand to ensure a strong foundation for the future.



We are still full throttle in our expansion efforts and—despite the economic forecasts for this year—we’re prepared to invest in the long-term growth of this brand to ensure a strong foundation for the future.



JEFF HETSEL

*President & COO
Cici's Pizza*

Cici's Pizza is uniquely positioned for success in recessionary times. For more than 37 years we have remained “The Best Pizza Value Anywhere,” providing our guests with a high-quality, all-you-can-eat pizza, pasta, salad, and dessert buffet for one low price. Cici's also offers a variety of experiences to our guests with games, birthday parties, takeout, and delivery. The value our concept offers is highly competitive and has proven to perform well during a recession. We will continue to fight to keep our prices competitive in the marketplace while working to further refine our offering.

We accomplished a great deal in 2022! We hit 10% positive sales versus 2019 and were 31% positive over 2021's sales. We launched our first brand commercial in 4 years, which capitalized on the buffet, the game room, and our unique offerings. To add a more fun and whimsical approach to the brand, our “Endless Pizzabilities” brand campaign features our new spokesperson, C.C. Pazzini. We reignited our LTO program with pumpkin spice cinnamon rolls and a 28-inch pizza called Piezilla.

As we look ahead to 2023, we're moving full steam ahead, targeting growth across the country through aggressive incentive

programs. Our primary focus is new store growth with an initial incentive of a \$15,000 franchise fee and a royalty of 2% in year one. Second, we are aiming to reopen stores that closed during Covid. The reopening incentive is a \$5,000 franchise fee and a royalty of 2% in year one. These two incentives include a stair-step royalty over the course of 4 years. We also are offering incentives for multi-unit development, veterans, and referrals.

Not only do we have great incentives, we also are focusing on the expansion of our game rooms. This has attracted new franchise prospects and will remain a key priority for our brand. We are also in the process of developing a new to-go store prototype that will create new options for current and potential franchisees. These to-go units provide an additional revenue stream and offer a new way for us to serve our guests.

With 295 operating locations and additional locations in our current development pipeline, we are excited about our expansion opportunities in 2023.

Attitude Is Everything

It's a positively important asset!

Written by EVAN HACKEL

Many considerations come into play when selling franchises to new owners. First of all, do they have the financial resources? This, of course, is a given and must be among the first you think about when seeking new owners for your franchise.

After that, other crucial considerations come into play. Have your potential owners successfully run businesses in the past? Do they have applicable technical skills? Do they have a proven ability to hire, train, and supervise employees? Have they worked in retail or another business with skills that transfer to running a franchise like yours?

What about attitude? It's only later in the selling process that most think about attitude. In my opinion, a positive attitude is the most important asset any franchise owner can have. Owners with a positive attitude do much more to establish and build on your success, because they naturally:

- Sell more of the products or services you offer
- Delight customers and drive repeat business
- Do a better job at hiring top-performing employees
- Have the resourcefulness to recover from slow business cycles and bounce back
- Encourage higher retention among the people who work for them
- Want to cooperate with you and representatives of the franchisor

Attitude is a game-changer. If you populate your franchise with owners who are positive, they will lift others and lead them to excel. On the other side of the equation, negative owners can drain the energy out of everyone around them. Negative owners in a franchise can literally kill your chances of success.

How to evaluate attitude

Ron Willingham, author of *Integrity Selling for the 21st Century* and other excellent books, has devised a very simple way to evaluate the effects of attitude on employees' behavior.

1. Evaluate the person's expertise—how much they know—on a scale of 1 to 10.
2. Evaluate their experience—how long they have been doing this kind of work—again on a scale of 1 to 10.
3. Assess their attitude on a scale of 1 to 10.
4. Add together the numbers from the first two steps, then multiply the result by the number from the third step. Two examples:

Potential owner A rates an 8 in expertise, an 8 in experience, and a 2 in attitude. Her overall score is then 32.

Potential owner B rates a 2 in expertise, a 4 in experience, and an 8 in attitude. Her overall score is then 48.

Willingham's approach shows that you can hire someone who has skills relevant to your needs and 30 years of experience, but who still will not create value for you if they come with a negative attitude.

If you award a franchise to someone with a can-do attitude and very little experience, they have the potential to be much more productive than a franchisee with far greater experience and skills, but a negative attitude. You can apply this same approach to anyone you hire at headquarters and to the people your franchisees hire in their locations.

Sample screening questions

Here are three effective questions to use as you explore and uncover whether potential owners have a positive or negative attitude.

- “How would you describe your personality?” Listen carefully as your potential franchisee answers this question. Do they talk about having a good attitude or being positive?

- “Can you tell me about the people you like to work with?” When a potential owner talks about personality traits, does attitude or positivity come up? People tend to like people who are much like themselves.
- “When you run into an issue at work, how do you handle it?” Do they focus only on the issue at hand? Or do they talk about the importance of mindset and positivity?

As you consider how you will screen and recruit potential owners, you will think of other questions that will help you weigh and evaluate their attitudes.



Like attracts like

I have been fortunate to know several CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and many high-level executives at multibillion-dollar organizations. Two things they all have in common are great interpersonal skills and highly positive attitudes. You like to be around them. You're inspired by them.

Perhaps it's time for some self-reflection. Are you a positive person? How can you shift to improve your score on the attitude scale? People with great attitudes are attracted to people with great attitudes.

I urge you not to let attitude be an afterthought, something you consider last in your selling process, or not at all. Attitude truly is an amplifier that will lift the overall success of your entire franchise system. ■

Evan Hackel, a 35-year franchising veteran, is CEO of Tortal Training and principal and founder of Ingage Consulting. He is a speaker, author, and host of “Training Unleashed,” a podcast covering training for business. Contact him at evanspeaksfranchising.com, follow him at [@ehackel](https://twitter.com/ehackel), or call 781-820-7609.

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Who Can It Be Now?

Creating an effective franchisee candidate profile

Written by **ANDREW SEID**

Recruiting franchisees into your system is the lifeblood of all franchise brands. That's why building out a franchisee recruitment process is one of the first major investments an emerging franchisor makes. Whether that happens by hiring an experienced internal franchise salesperson, bringing on a consulting firm to help craft that process, or wading into the vast and sometimes choppy waters of franchise broker networks, this often involves a significant expense.

Of the many effective and efficient ways to spend your franchisee recruiting dollars, one of the more overlooked steps is crafting a thorough franchisee candidate profile to determine the specific types of candidates you should be spending those dollars to seek out. Understanding the type of person, people, or entity that is specifically well-suited for *your* brand will save you time and money, both of which are in short supply at all levels of a franchisor's journey. Many franchisors with otherwise great brands will fail in franchising because they simply took on as franchisees anyone with a checkbook and a pulse.



So who are they?

Obviously they must have the requisite financial backing to be able to afford to build out, open, and run the business. Have the candidate fill out a personal financial statement providing you with their net worth, liquidity information, any debts, potential sources of capital, etc. While there are ways of finding funding for an undercapitalized candidate who otherwise fits your profile, ensuring their financials are in order is typically the first step... but not the most critical.

What's more important is understanding the various elements that make an effective franchisee in your system. Here are some important questions to consider.

Does your business or industry require candidates to have specific experience? This can differ from brand to brand, even within a particular industry. Some brands will prefer a franchisee to come in with a particular set of skills or experiences. Others may want a "blank canvas" franchisee they can train who won't bring along any bad habits.

Do they fit your brand culture? Often this is difficult to determine until the candidate has interacted in person with you and your staff, typically at a discovery day. To know if there is a good fit, be sure to express your brand's culture fully and encourage candidates to embrace it early in the process.

Do they understand their local market? One of the prime benefits for franchisors is leveraging a franchisee's knowledge and understanding of their local market. Do they have relationships with other local businesses? Do they understand the real estate environment and shopping patterns?

Will they be participating directly in the business? Is this the type of business that requires the franchisee to be a daily part of the operation, or can they simply be the investor and bring on an operating principal or manager to run the day-to-day? This is often

determined by the unit economics of your brand, as there simply won't be a significant enough profit margin for the franchisee to make their desired return if they have to hire someone to serve in that role.

Does your business or industry require franchisees to have a particular passion? Understanding a business, or even having specific experience in it, does not always mean a franchisee will be successful. Sometimes there has to be a particular internal drive that comes with a candidate's passion for your brand or industry. We've focused heavily on this element when working with educational and other child-focused brands, boutique fitness concepts, elder care, and other businesses where the product or service carries increased emotional value for both consumers and practitioners.

And who are you?

One key area where many franchisors fail is doing a proper self-evaluation of who they are as a franchisor—not simply of their brand and products or services, but what their own skill set is as a franchisor. When it comes to supporting franchisees, what are your strengths and weaknesses? And how do you determine what they are?

If you lack a particular skill set, take the opportunity to look for that skill set in your franchisees. Perhaps you are a food concept and your core competencies are in product sourcing, managing the KPIs and margins, and other back-of-house elements, but you struggle teaching and training people how to run kitchens. If so, look for franchisees who have experience running kitchens—particularly kitchens with operations similar to yours.

If you have been unsuccessful developing effective marketing outside of the area you first developed your business, prioritize franchisees who can bring their own marketing expertise to their local operation. Lean into your strengths and find franchisees who can help supplement the areas where you are weaker. ■

Andrew Seid is senior consultant at MSA Worldwide. Contact him at aseid@msaworldwide.com or 860-604-9189.

SBA Rules

Proposed changes will alter franchise lending

Written by **DARRELL JOHNSON**

SBA-guaranteed lending to franchisees is a vital source of capital, constituting more than a fifth of all SBA (7)a funding. For some time now, the SBA has vetted franchise brands for affiliation concerns, essentially assessing whether the terms and conditions defined in franchise agreements are consistent with a government program aimed at supporting small businesses. While reviewing such arrangements, the SBA also determines whether the franchise brand meets general eligibility and lien priority requirements.

The SBA recently proposed doing away with franchise affiliation reviews, instead using ownership/control as the basis for determining affiliation. In so doing, the SBA would stop reviewing franchise agreements altogether. The SBA has long recognized the difficulty of objectively reviewing franchise agreements for affiliation. Eliminating that effort altogether (and with it, the SBA Franchise Directory) will certainly make it easier for franchise systems to seek access to SBA lending programs. Although there are technical reasons why this change may cause long-term problems for franchising, the immediate concern is the impact it will have on SBA lenders.

When the SBA created the Franchise Directory in 2018, it communicated that it would also be vetting for franchise business eligibility issues, thereby eliminating concerns lenders had around possible denial of loan guarantees based on franchise business models. The SBA's vetting eliminated the need for lenders to individually review a franchise system's business model for eligibility each time a loan was being considered.

Examples of these issues include discrimination, collateral issues emanating from franchise contractual agreements, passive business models, religious business practices, and so forth. Even more fundamentally, determining what is or is not a franchise

brand subject to such a review will become harder. If this proposed rule is enacted, the burden going forward—and therefore the risk—shifts from the SBA to lenders. And we all know lenders don't like additional risks.

Further, the SBA's current approach was a one-to-many assessment that the SBA did for franchise lenders. By losing that efficiency, lenders will most likely be far less willing to consider adding a brand they have not previously known to meet SBA eligibility guidelines. This is particularly concerning for emerging brands and brands with smaller investment levels that are very reliant on local bank SBA funding.

It is also concerning because local lenders would be less inclined to do the extra eligibility work in the future for an occasional franchise loan. Local lenders that do only one or a few franchise loans each year represent a significant volume of overall franchise access to the SBA programs.

Finally, it would make brands with small investment levels more vulnerable to losing SBA lender interest. Even very active SBA franchise lenders (program lenders) may be affected. Franchise program lenders often create relationships with a finite group of franchisors to finance many businesses for a single brand.

Effects on SBA lending

If this change is enacted, how will we deal with the unintended consequences of eliminating affiliation reviews? While less than ideal, if we can't continue to address eligibility on the front end with the SBA conducting such reviews, we'll have to address it on the back end, based on repairs and denials the SBA makes through its Loan Processing Centers and National Guaranty Purchase Center.

The good news is that FRANData's Franchise Registry has much of the history of the SBA affiliation/eligibility decisions. With a

little cooperation from the SBA in communicating future decisions emanating from these centers, the Franchise Registry will continue to provide repair/denial decisions based on factors associated with franchise business models to lenders on behalf of its franchisor clients, thereby giving lenders much more comfort that there will not be guarantee repairs/denials based on franchise business models in the future.

This will be the third time FRANData's Franchise Registry has helped to ensure a continued flow of SBA lending capital to franchisees. The Registry came into existence in 1998 as a consequence of lenders' frustrations with having to individually determine franchise system affiliation and eligibility. Lenders were making inconsistent determinations, which in turn was frustrating to franchisors as they often received conflicting requests from different lenders. And, for the next two decades, the affiliation/eligibility process went through the Franchise Registry.

In 2017, the SBA issued changes to that process, vetting brands directly and listing those approved on an internal list called the SBA Franchise Directory. After a couple years of transition confusion, that process did what was intended, and the Franchise Registry continued to be relied upon by lenders for understanding franchise risks.

Now the SBA is proposing to replace affiliation with an ownership assessment, shifting both the ownership and eligibility burden onto lenders to address. Once again, the Franchise Registry will be the bridge between franchise business model issues and lender willingness to lend to brands.

The SBA's purpose with the rule change is to remove itself from the administrative business of systematically vetting franchise business models. However, in so doing, they are shifting the burden of determining eligibility onto lenders. Tracking repair/denial decisions based on factors associated with franchise business models seems to be the best way to preserve this key and vital flow of capital to franchisees. ■

Darrell Johnson is CEO of FRANData, an independent research company supplying information and analysis for the franchising sector since 1989. He can be reached at 703-740-4700 or djohnson@frandata.com.

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE YEAR AHEAD

Global franchise development ranked by country

Written by **BILL EDWARDS**



Each year as I begin to write this article, I look back on what affected global franchise development in the previous 12 months. After four decades in international business, the broad impact of a war in Europe, high levels of inflation, rising interest rates, fears of recession, and political mistakes all lead me to say that it's never been more important to very carefully choose which countries franchisors choose to enter in 2023. Despite all that, there are signs of spring, and there certainly are countries where new franchise development is doing well.

The analysis for this outlook on specific countries draws on input from more than 30 international information sources, from franchisors we poll, and from our associates on the ground in more than 20 countries.

Some positive trends are beginning to appear. Rental rates for good retail properties have declined in most countries. Some nations are coming out of the pandemic fast and seeing strong local investor interest for new franchises. Some governments are actively encouraging small-business growth, which directly affects franchising. Supply chains are showing signs of calming.

Perhaps most importantly, I am finding local companies that see today's conditions as a chance to acquire and grow new brands with lower startup costs. With all this in mind, let's look at the potential for new franchise development in several normally franchise-friendly countries in 2023.

Australia—This is one of the world's most franchised countries, but there are considerable regulatory issues with bringing a franchise into the country. Nevertheless, there is strong interest in new franchise investment.

Brazil—The economy is recovering and there is a new, outward-looking government that is an unknown as far as new investment policy and small-business focus.

Canada—The longtime challenge of finding regional or country licensees in Canada—with roughly one-tenth the population of the U.S. spread over a slightly larger land area—persists. There also is the challenge of finding well-capitalized investors willing to invest in a new concept.

Chile—Formerly lauded for its strong appetite for foreign franchise brands, the current political and economic turmoil means little local investor interest in new projects for now.

China—As China gradually reopens, certain franchise sectors will see regional licensee interest rise once foreigners can easily enter and travel around China, especially outside its largest cities, such as Shanghai and Beijing.

Egypt—Despite its sometimes negative portrayal, malls are going up everywhere, tourism is returning, and the new capital city has lots of available retail space for franchised businesses.

India—This country is projected to have the world's highest GDP growth in 2023. Nevertheless, challenges remain to find, qualify, and sign licensees who will follow franchise systems.

Indonesia—This nation has an aspirational middle-class consumer population approaching 80 million that communicates using social media and is open to foreign brands. We expect to see strong franchise system growth here in 2023.

Italy—Another new government brings hope for new economic development. Most new franchise activity is in the northern part of the country around the manufacturing center of Milan.

Japan—Major business cultural shifts are occurring, with large corporations seeking to diversify by acquiring franchises. The younger generation is far more entrepreneurial and open to new ideas and business models.

Korea—Difficult franchise-related laws and regulations remain an entry barrier for foreign franchises. Sectors remain controlled by very large corporations, and the half-life of foreign F&B brands remains short.

Mexico—Mexico City and Monterrey are showing strong new investment interest in known franchise brands. Existing licenses are making the most of better real estate availability and pricing to open new units in middle- and upper-class areas.

New Zealand—The most franchised country in the world (based on the number of franchise locations per capita) remains open to new brand entry. However, the cost of money and inflation make people a bit reluctant to make new investments.

Peru—A normally strong market for foreign brands is going through political turmoil that will cause local businesses to postpone new investment.

The Philippines—This country is seeing strong GDP recovery from the pandemic and a more business-friendly new government, leading to renewed interest in foreign franchise brands. Watch the existing multi-unit, multi-brand operators (MUMBOs) to see if they use current local conditions to add units and brands.

Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary—The war in Ukraine all but stopped interest in making new project investments in 2022. This may continue through 2023.

Saudi Arabia—Restaurants no longer need separate areas for families and young men, which has a very positive impact on the bottom lines of new restaurants. Restaurants

have women servers for the first time. The government sees franchising as a way to create many new jobs for Saudis. It is possible to get a visa online in a few minutes. As a result, there is renewed interest by foreign brands in this large, well-to-do market.

Spain—With an economy doing better than most other European Union countries, there is good interest in franchise brands in the F&B, fitness, property management, business services, and even medical franchise sectors.

Thailand—The rapid recovery of the critical tourism industry is the key to whether investors are willing to consider new franchise development in 2023. There is a preference for Asian F&B brands, although well-known Western brands also do well, especially in big cities where there are lots of tourists.

United Arab Emirates—At the November Global Restaurant Leadership Conference there was strong positive interest in new development in the UAE and other Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

United Kingdom—For new F&B brands entering the U.K., investors and funding banks want to see skin in the game from the foreign franchisor. Space availability and lower cost are a plus.

Bottom line

Although there are global, regional, and country-specific challenges to finding, qualifying, and signing new international licensees in 2023, there are real opportunities in selected countries. ■

Editor: A more comprehensive version of the table below, with additional countries and categories, can be found on the EGS website.

William Edwards is CEO of Edwards Global Services (EGS) and a global advisor to CEOs. EGS offers a complete international operations and development solution for franchisors, based on experience, knowledge, a team on the ground in more than 40 countries, and trademarked processes based on decades of problem-solving. Contact him at bedwards@edwardsglobal.com or +1-949-224-3896. Read his latest biweekly global business newsletter at www.geowizard.biz.

The 2023 EGS GlobalVue Country Ranking

| COUNTRY | 2023 GDP Growth (Projected) | Market Size (Customers) | Legal Concerns | Ease of Entry | Political & Economic Stability | Ease of Finding Investors | Overall Ranking |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| AUSTRALIA | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2.3 |
| BRAZIL | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2.3 |
| CANADA | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2.2 |
| CHILE | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2.0 |
| EGYPT | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.7 |
| INDONESIA | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.7 |
| ITALY | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2.0 |
| JAPAN | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1.8 |
| MEXICO | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.8 |
| NEW ZEALAND | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2.0 |
| PERU | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2.7 |
| PHILIPPINES | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1.7 |
| SAUDI ARABIA | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1.8 |
| SPAIN | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1.7 |
| THAILAND | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2.0 |
| UAE | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1.8 |
| UK | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1.5 |
| USA | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.5 |

Busting 2 Lead Gen Myths

Don't let them keep you from closing more deals

Written by **ART COLEY**

Lead generation is always a hot topic in franchising, and this year will be no different. If you're on track with signings year to date, congratulations! That is a big deal. Typically, early into the year franchise companies are behind on signings and move into catch-up mode, which rarely works. If you are not on track and think you have a lead generation problem, read about these two lead gen myths. If they hit home or sound familiar, take a deeper look. Fulfilling the vision of your brand depends on successful new franchisee recruitment.

Myth #1: We need more leads. This is the easiest and most-used excuse for poor recruitment results, and data often proves it is not true. While it might deserve to be on the list of potential problems, "We need more leads" often masks poor efforts in nurturing and educating in the appointment-setting phase, as well as low step-conversion ratios by recruiters with candidates going through the brand's discovery process.

What to do. Focus on the activity and data between a lead at the top of the funnel and a Step 1 with the candidate and your recruiter (typically a 45- to 60-minute call or Zoom session). Find out what percentage of leads and inquiries are communicating with the team member assigned to respond and develop new leads. You want to see at least 25% of all leads responding in some

way. (We've found across the industry that significantly fewer than 10% of leads never communicate in any way with a representative of the franchise company.) Of course you think you need more leads if you're getting only a small fraction of inbound inquiries to communicate with you. Invest resources and focus on what is happening after the lead comes in. You might be surprised by what you uncover.

Myth #2: Signing on with franchise broker groups is the solution. Many of the brands we work with use franchise broker groups. And in the right situation, this can be a great solution. Often, these groups do well generating candidates to go through your process. However, if your recruitment sales program is broken, franchise broker groups won't fix it. It is not their role. You'll sign up, get excited, get some candidates, and then find out over the next few months that the solution isn't working as you expected. "Why?" you ask. Most often, the root cause of the problem lies in your process.

What to do. Get the data on how many Step 1's (see definition above) it's taking to get a signing. If the conversion from a Step 1 to a signing is below 5%, or the ratio is greater than 20:1, something is off in how recruiters are taking a candidate through the process. Franchise brokers are a candidate generation source. They are part of your

marketing efforts, but they do not sell your franchise! Their purpose is to present you with a qualified candidate. A quality broker has extracted critical information, educated the candidate on franchising, and discussed your brand at a high level. You should not expect more.

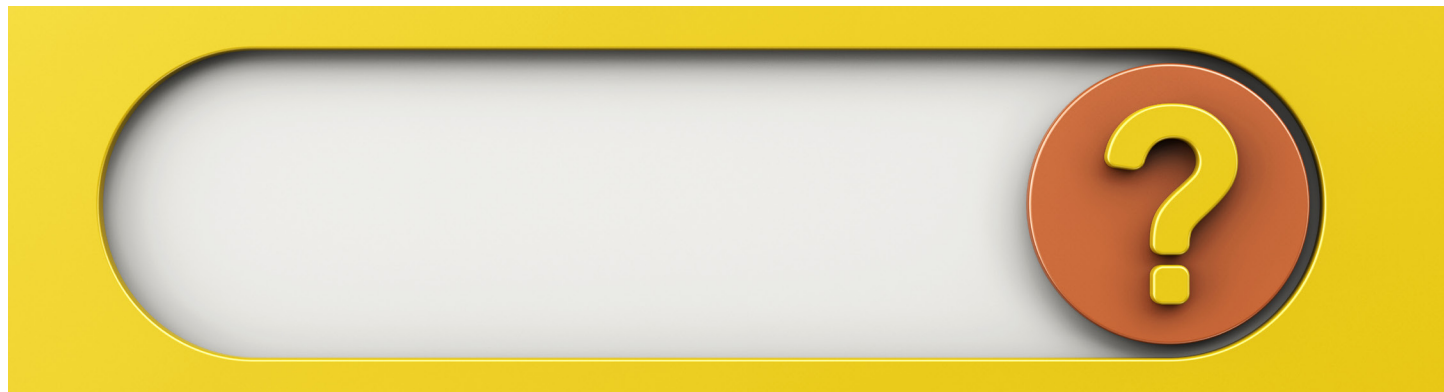
There are excellent franchise broker groups and individuals out there. But understand that you must take care of the rest. This is because franchise brokers are different. In other industries, the broker is often responsible for finding the buyer and taking them through the sales process. Think of a business broker or a commercial real estate broker. Franchise brokers do not work like that. While they might assist at times in the sales process, their primary function is providing you with candidates for *you* to take through *your* sales process.

Lead generation is not going to get easier. Successful recruitment in 2023 is going to require a bigger and different investment with lead generation—combined with excellent data collection and analysis that drives targeted training and coaching on the right skill sets, behaviors, and competencies. Don't forget to start with the data.

Let's go to work! ■



Art Coley is CEO of CGI Franchise. Using the proven Recruitment Operating System (ROS), his team helps franchise companies implement and execute a predictable, repeatable, and sustainable new franchisee recruitment program. Based in Temple, Texas, they work with brands worldwide. Contact him at 281-658-9409 or acoley@cgifranchise.com.



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