

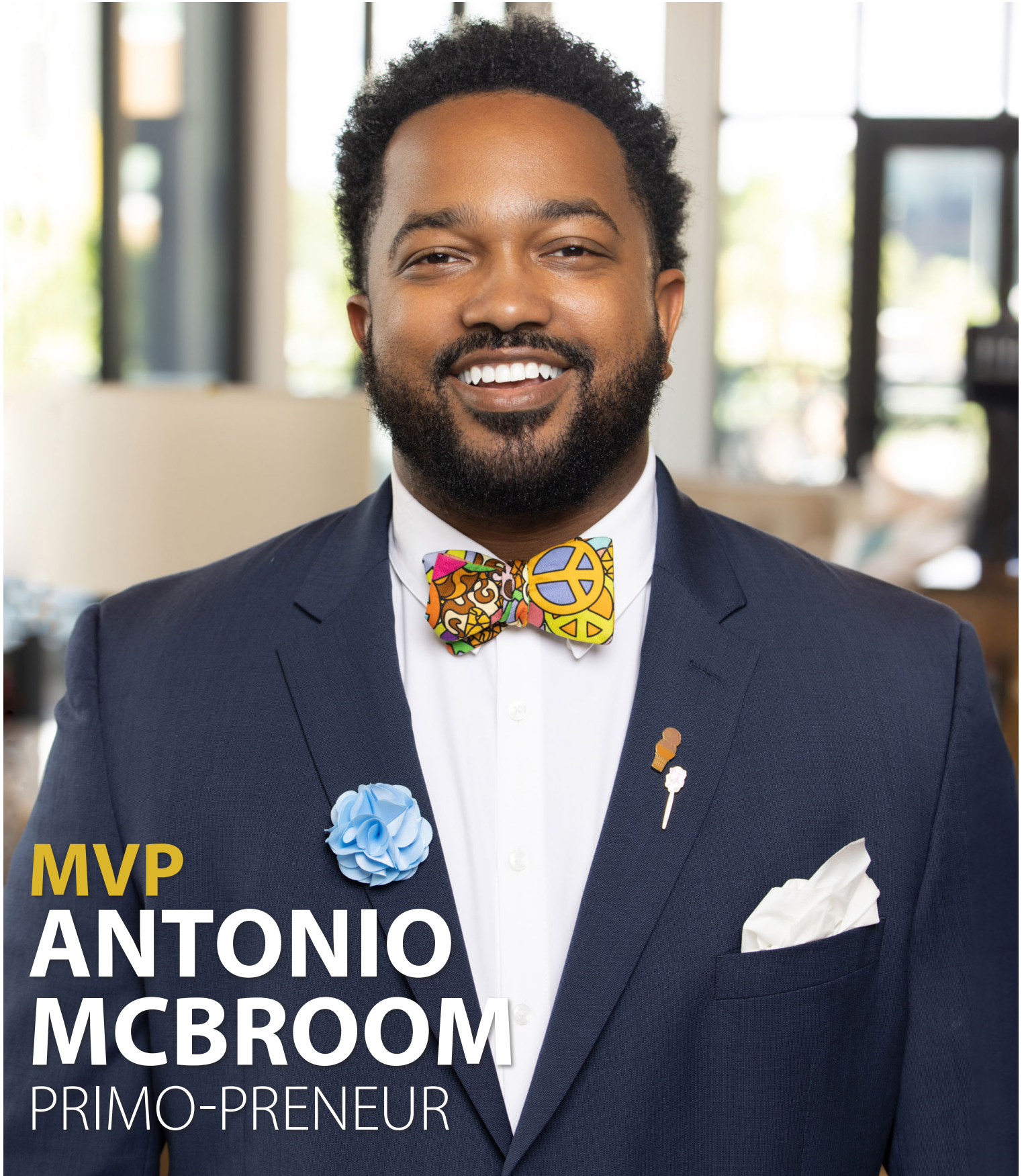
Multi-Unit Franchisee

ISSUE 3, 2023

MUOs embracing new tech tools

Building infrastructure for growth

2023 Multi-Unit 50 rankings



MVP

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READY TO FIRE UP THAT GRILL?

The MUFC's Tree of Wisdom

With so much discussion about artificial intelligence and the need for businesses to be technology-forward, we sometimes forget about the tried-and-true methods for growing our businesses and ourselves. The Multi-Unit Franchising Conference has always been the proverbial “Tree of Wisdom” for many of my friends and me.

Once I had multiple brands and multiple locations under my belt, I felt like I had already picked most of the fruit of personal and professional development at my brands' national conferences. Learning something new and impactful for my business was becoming more and more of a struggle as I matured with the brands.

During my first year of MUFC attendance 10 years ago, I realized that the MUFC was a bigger, more plentiful Tree of Wisdom from which I could pluck the fruit of knowledge and experience. The low-hanging fruit at this conference comes in the form of keynote speakers, breakout panels with the best operators and investors in franchising, and a Sponsor Networking Area for scouting out new franchise brands and understanding which established brands are aggressively seeking out good operators. (I personally have added two brands directly from the Sponsor Networking Area of this conference.)



After a few years of consuming all the low-hanging fruit you can collect at the MUFC, you mature and reach into the higher parts of the Tree of Wisdom. These pieces of fruit are the sweetest and most fulfilling on the tree. Around the third year of MUFC attendance, you start to form relationships with the faces you have seen from years past. Maybe you have seen someone speak on a panel. Maybe you both shared time in the same booth scouting out a new brand and comparing notes.

As you stretch for those pieces higher up on the tree, there are plenty of people who are happy to hand you the fruit that is just out of your grasp, or to show you the hidden stepladder in life to get to the same branch of the tree as them. At this level, you form friendships where you vacation together, go into business together, learn from each other, and celebrate together. The formation of lifelong friendships and partnerships is not uncommon at this level of the Tree of Wisdom at the MUFC.

Let this be your time to get back to building relationships and focusing on the abundance of fruit on every branch the tree has to offer at the 2024 Multi-Unit Franchising Conference, March 19–22, at Caesars Forum in Las Vegas!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jesse Keyser".

JESSE KEYSER
2024 MUFC Chair

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Shops

32
States

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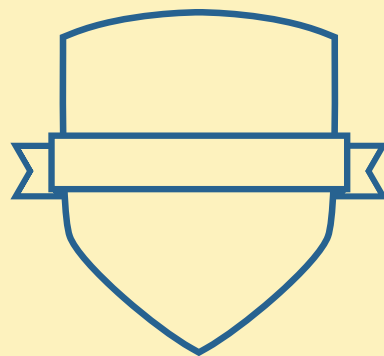
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INSPIRE





2023 MVP WINNERS

Recognizing this year's top multi-unit performers

Multi-Unit Franchisee magazine is once again proud to honor excellence in franchising with its annual MVP (Most Valuable Performer) Awards. The winners were celebrated on stage at this year's Multi-Unit Franchising Conference in Las Vegas.

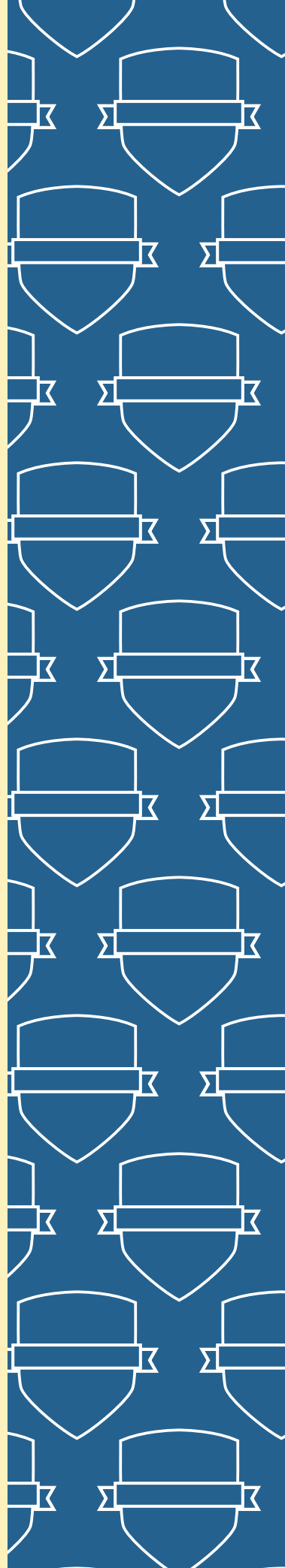
Selected from a lengthy list of nominees, this year's MVPs represent the country's best and brightest multi-unit franchisees, large operators, innovators, and original thinkers. Beyond excelling at growing their businesses and their brands, these franchisees support their communities and national charities and causes, exemplifying all that's good—and great!—about franchising on so many levels.

Each of this year's winners has a unique story to tell about their journey to success in franchising and in life—stories of their years of hard work, dedication, sacrifice, and eventual success.

From the books they read to their management philosophies, from their hiring and training practices to how they've weathered the pandemic, learn where they've come from, how they got where they are today, and where they're going tomorrow.

These 2023 MVPs are an inspiration to all and highlight all that's most valuable about franchising.

- **WYATT BATCHELOR**
Veteran Entrepreneurship Award
- **AUSTIN & LISA CAMPBELL**
Spirit of Franchising Award
- **MICHAEL CHALMERS**
Innovation Award
- **SCARLETT & JASON DALTON**
Influencer for Husband & Wife Award
- **ERIC DANVER**
Mega Growth Leadership Award
- **SHIRIN KANJI**
Multi-Brand Leadership Award (tie)
- **TONY MATTIACIO**
Single-Brand Leadership Award
- **ANTONIO MCBROOM**
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award
- **TABBASSUM MUMTAZ**
(winner of the 2023 American Dream MVP Award, was unavailable for a photo or profile at press time.)
- **SHAQUILLE O'NEAL**
Influencer for Former Pro Athlete Award
- **RAJ PATEL**
Multi-Brand Leadership Award (tie)
- **ALEX TYLER**
Noble Cause Award



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#97 Nation's Restaurant News Top 500 Restaurants**



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*Source: 2022 Technomic

**Source: 2023 Nation's Restaurant News

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“People are the heart of any organization. You must treat them with respect and provide them with the tools and opportunities for growth.”

MAN ON THE MOVE

Wyatt Batchelor is the 2023 Veteran Entrepreneurship MVP

Written by **SARA WYKES**



WYATT BACHELOR

Managing partner

Company: **MBN Brands**

Units: **65 Jimmy John's, 58 Burger King, 22 KFC**

Age: **36**

Family: **Wife Brenna, sons Bear and Colton, daughter Leighton**

Years in franchising: **4**

Years in current position: **4**



Wyatt Batchelor is the 2023 Veteran Entrepreneurship MVP (Most Valuable Performer), awarded for outstanding performance, leadership, and innovation by a military veteran.

Wyatt Batchelor is a man on the move. Following his graduation from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, he served three combat deployments in Afghanistan as a captain in the U.S. Army Special Operations Ranger Regiment. After that, armed with his West Point B.S. degree in economics, he moved into finance with Goldman Sachs. Following that, he took a position at Restaurant Brands International (RBI), where he was promoted to area franchise lead, overseeing 320 restaurants in addition to responsibilities for development, sales growth, and operations in his region.

He walked away from the RBI job to co-found MBN Brands, a partnership that today includes 8 food franchise brands and where Batchelor is managing partner.

Building an organization or a business from the ground up is never easy. His military training and experience, he says, taught him that “successful organizations operate with strict procedures and intense training.” He’d also learned that it’s imperative to have the right partners. “I have fantastic partners. Everyone has diverse skill sets, and we are complementary. So far, there have been no real challenges we haven’t been able to overcome.”

His time in the military also taught him that absolute transparency is invaluable. “Bad news does not get better with time,” he says. And, as much as anything else, his military life gave him “the discipline and many of the principles I need.”

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think you were recognized with this award? I believe military veterans offer tremendous value in the QSR industry. This is a business that succeeds via standard operating procedures. In the military, successful organizations operate with strict procedures and intense training. I believe we have created that type of organization at MBN Brands, and I have the privilege of receiving this award because of that.



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SUBS

SUITE 10A

*\$1.2 million Average Unit Volume (for traditional locations). Please refer to Item 19 of our Franchise Disclosure Document for complete numbers and information.

What core values do you think helped you win this award? Relentless work ethic, dedication to ongoing learning, humility, and integrity.

How important is community involvement to you and your company? Very. During Covid, MBN Brands donated tens of thousands of dollars to professionals working on the front lines. We also have continual partnerships with local VFWs in our markets, and we routinely do “round up” campaigns to help support the veteran community.

What leadership qualities are most important to you and your company? Confidence, competence, compassion, humility, and integrity.

PERSONAL

Formative influences/events: Football, West Point, and service time with the U.S. Army Ranger Regiment.

Key accomplishments: My beautiful family, West Point graduate, U.S. Army special operations, and co-founding MBN Brands.

Next big goal: Double the size of MBN Brands.

Hardest lesson learned: People are the heart of any organization. You must treat them with respect and provide them with the tools and opportunities for growth.

Best advice you ever got: Don’t worry about tomorrow. Win today, the key to get through any challenging time. The people who don’t make it through U.S. Army Ranger School are the ones waiting for it to end. The successful ones are just waiting for breakfast. Focus on how you are going to show up and win every day.

Favorite book: *The Score Takes Care of Itself* by Bill Walsh.

What’s your passion in business? Creating and managing successful teams.

MANAGEMENT

Business philosophy: How you do anything is how you do everything. Be meticulous about the details and the small stuff, and the big stuff takes care of itself.

Management method or style: Servant-style leadership. The best leaders I encountered in the military were the ones who were maniacally focused on training and advancing their subordinates. I believe what is good for the individual is great for the organization.

Greatest challenge: Creating culture.

COVID-19

What have been the biggest impacts of Covid-19 on your business? Learning how to be even more efficient in the business.

BOTTOM LINE

Annual revenue: \$160 million (approx.).

2023 goals: Grow margin and total portfolio size. ■

“THE BEST LEADERS I ENCOUNTERED IN THE MILITARY WERE THE ONES WHO WERE MANIACALLY FOCUSED ON TRAINING AND ADVANCING THEIR SUBORDINATES. I BELIEVE WHAT IS GOOD FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IS GREAT FOR THE ORGANIZATION.”





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Mike and Anna Dey
Franchisees



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“Community involvement is very important. We strive to give back as much as possible.”

FOSTERING COMMUNITY

2023 Spirit of Franchising MVP Award

Written by **SARA WYKES**



AUSTIN & LISA CAMPBELL

Franchisees

Units: **18 Sola Salon Studios**

Age: **43**

Family: **Married, 2 children**

Years in franchising: **17**

Years in current position: **17**



Austin and Lisa Campbell are the 2023 Spirit of Franchising MVPs (Most Valuable Performers), awarded for extraordinary and enduring performance, growth, and community giving. We spoke with Austin Campbell only.

Austin Campbell, who has been expanding his Sola Salon Studios business—despite the challenges of recent years—is an admirable example of how to infuse advocacy into business success. During the Covid pandemic, he was forthright with officials about beauty professionals’ ability to safely operate. He also supported the creation of an educational community center for Sola professionals, relevant beauty product companies, and educators to host classes and events. “We named it the Sola Creative Space,” says Campbell, “and it’s free to the Sola community to hold networking events, art classes, business classes, and personal gatherings.”

In addition, Campbell found a way to help others when he and his wife spent time at San Diego’s Ronald McDonald House. “We wanted to help other families and discovered an opportunity when we saw an empty salon space there,” says Campbell. “We renovated it and made the salon functional again, and our Sola San Diego partnered with the local Ronald McDonald House to open a studio inside.”

All this aligns well with Campbell’s basic ideas on how to conduct business. “I strongly believe that a successful business should be deeply rooted in its local community and actively contribute to its growth and well-being,” he says. “Engaging with the community not only benefits the individuals and organizations we support, it also helps to foster strong relationships, establish trust, and build a positive reputation for our company.”

MVP QUESTIONS

How have you raised the bar in your own company? My marketing manager and I went to the Capitol in the thick of Covid-19 to peacefully lobby on behalf of the industry—fighting for our beauty professionals’ rights to be open during the pandemic and safely operate.

What innovations have you created and used to build your company? We created an educational community center for Sola professionals, relevant beauty product companies, and educators to host classes



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MEETS FLEXIBILITY!**



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CARRYOUT & DELIVERY



*Figure reflects the average annual Gross Revenues for 105 of the 122 franchised Bonchon restaurants in the system that were in operation from January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022 (each a "Mature Restaurant"), as published in Item 19 of Franchise Disclosure Document dated March 7, 2023, as amended June 12, 2023. Of these 105 Mature Restaurants, 45 (43%) met or exceeded the 2022 yearly average Gross Revenues during the reported period, with the highest Gross Revenues earned being \$3,785,506 and the lowest Gross Revenues earned being \$424,677. The financial performance representation contained in Item 19 of our Franchise Disclosure Document dated March 7, 2023, as amended June 12, 2023, also includes the average and median annual Gross Revenues information for our Mature Restaurants in operation in the United States during the 2019, 2020 and 2021 fiscal years. A new franchisee's results may differ from the represented performance. There is no assurance that you will do as well, and you must accept that risk.

**CONTACT OUR TEAM
FRANCHISING@BONCHON.COM**

and events. We've named it the Sola Creative Space, and it's free to the Sola community to hold networking events, art classes, business classes, personal gatherings, etc. It also serves as a podcast room.

What core values do you think helped you win this award? I have always striven for excellence in every aspect of my business. From providing exceptional salon suites and amenities to delivering outstanding customer service, I have set high standards for my team and myself. Upholding integrity is crucial to me as a business owner. I believe in being honest, transparent, and ethical in all my interactions with my clients, beauty professionals, or the community. I also understand the importance of collaboration and teamwork in achieving mutual success. I have fostered a culture of collaboration among the beauty professionals in my salon community, encouraging them to support and uplift one another.

How important is community involvement to you and your company? Community involvement is very important. We strive to give back as much as possible. I strongly believe that a successful business should be deeply rooted in its local community and actively contribute to its growth and well-being. Engaging with the community not only benefits the individuals and organizations we support, it also helps to foster

strong relationships, establish trust, and build a positive reputation for our company.

After our daughter's CHARGE Syndrome diagnosis following her birth in 2013, we stayed at the local San Diego Ronald McDonald House. (CHARGE is a genetic syndrome that requires specialized treatment.) We discovered an empty salon space, which we renovated and made functional again. We partnered with the Ronald McDonald House to open a Sola Studio inside, where professionals volunteer to provide complimentary haircuts and other beauty services to families staying there. This studio is the only one like it in the entire country. It's our way of providing families with a little respite during times of adversity.

Our team also is partnering with the local children's hospital foundation to raise money to create a CHARGE Syndrome Center at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego that will provide concierge support and care for families who have a child with our daughter's genetic syndrome. We also sponsored the inaugural CHARGE Into The Future gala in April 2023 to benefit the CHARGE Syndrome Center at Rady.

PERSONAL

Key accomplishments: We are extremely proud to provide Sola Salon suites to more than 700 independent salon owners in the area.

Next big goal: Our team is looking forward to opening our 20th location. Located in Carmel Mountain Ranch in San Diego County, it will be the biggest Sola Salon in the country with 75 independent suites.

What's your passion in business? My passion for business revolves around empowering beauty professionals and fostering a thriving salon community. I am deeply committed to providing a supportive and inspiring environment for independent beauty professionals to pursue their dreams, build their businesses, and achieve success on their terms.

BOTTOM LINE

2023 goals: Our plan is to keep on growing annual revenue.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? By this time next year, we plan to have 25 open Sola locations across the county with the goal of continuing to grow in San Diego and beyond.

What are you doing to take care of your employees? We offer beauty professionals marketing support, price advising, and strategies to help grow their businesses. ■

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Mohamad Atieh
Multi-Unit Franchise Owner



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“Covid made us rethink our business model by using more technology. Technology has had the greatest impact.”

INNOVATION MAN

Michael Chalmers is the 2023 Innovation MVP

Written by **SARA WYKES**



MICHAEL CHALMERS

Franchise owner

Company: **Spherion Staffing**

Units: **9**

Age: **50**

Family: **Wife Kim, son Adam, daughter-in-law Cynthia**

Years in franchising: **13**

Years in current position: **13**



Michael Chalmers is the 2023 Innovation MVP (Most Valuable Performer), awarded for bringing a new and unique contribution to their brand.

At the age of 50, Michael Chalmers could be said to have 40 years of franchising knowledge to apply to the growth of his Spherion Staffing business. He grew up in a household involved in franchising, worked with his family, earned an MBA with a concentration in human resources, and spent time working for Spherion Staffing corporate before becoming a Spherion franchisee.

He has learned a thing or two along the way, especially about how to manage change, whether technological or otherwise. “In today’s environment, change is fast, and if you’re not changing, you’re going to be out of business.” He also knows that most people fear or resist change no matter how beneficial it might be.

“What I have found is that the most important thing is to make sure you are communicating with people clearly and often,” he says. “After that change decision has been made, the best I can do is most concisely explain, ‘This is why,’ and try to give them as much information as I can.” Ultimately, though, he says, “Your people have to trust the leader, and you have to trust your team. If they trust you and you bring in new technology, they are more apt to be willing to embrace it and move forward.”

Some might accuse him of overcommunicating, but he knows better, and his track record backs that up. “It’s really important that people understand what’s going on. If they know the plan, it’s easier,” he says. Involving people in that change process also has value because, he says, “Who better to look at change in something than the employees who do it every day?”

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think you were recognized with this award? I’m a strong supporter of the brand and always a leader in trying and using new technologies and processes provided by the franchisor. I’m also a past president of the Franchise Advisory Board.

How have you raised the bar in your own company? Helping to launch Spherion’s



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*This figure represents the net sales achieved for calendar year 2022 at five (5) affiliate owned restaurants and ten (10) franchised restaurants. **This figure represents the average EBITDA achieved for calendar year 2022 as a percentage of consolidated net sales at the same five (5) affiliate owned restaurants and nine (9) of the ten (10) franchised restaurants. *** This figure represents the Median Initial Investment to open the same five (5) affiliate owned restaurants and eight (8) of the same ten (10) franchised restaurants above, all of which were opened in Second Generation Sites. Second Generation Sites are restaurant locations where the operator utilized a premises that was previously operated as a restaurant and therefore requires less initial investment to open and operate. Most Angry Crab Shacks are opened in Second Generation Sites. Each of the included restaurants were open for all of calendar year 2022. This information appears in Item 19 of our Franchise Disclosure Document (FDD). You should review our FDD for details about these results. Your results may differ. There is no assurance that you will do as well.

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Sandy Mazur Excellence in Leadership Scholarship and developing innovations in recruiting during Covid.

What innovations have you created and used to build your company? Use of technology provided by the franchisor, process improvements, and team development.

What core values do you think helped you win this award? Innovation, passion, insightfulness, and engagement.

How important is community involvement to you and your company? It's huge. We do a lot in our communities in both financial giving and time. Helping to build and sustain our community is a key core value of our company.

What leadership qualities are most important to you and your company? Initiative, drive, creativeness, and compassion. These four characteristics are essential to our industry. It is a very competitive industry, so you always have to be driving for results. Yet we are in the people business, so compassion and empathy are vital to building strong relationships with our candidates, clients, and employees.

PERSONAL

Formative influences/events: I grew up with family who were in franchising, so that helped to develop my passion and understanding of the franchise model. During the recession of 2008–2010, I decided it was the right time to make a move and enter into owning my own franchise.

Key accomplishments: Winner of multiple Spherion Awards, past president of Spherion's Franchise Advisory Board, and growth of over 10x in revenue over 13 years. Three acquisitions: 2014, 2016, and 2022.

Next big goal: Continue growth of the company through organic expansion. Revenue growth goal of \$30 million annually.

Hardest lesson learned: You cannot always do everything.

Best advice you ever got: Buy low, sell high.

Favorite book: *Know Your Why* by Ken Costa.

What's your passion in business? Developing our teams and making significant positive impacts in the lives of our employees, our customers, and the communities we serve.

MANAGEMENT

Business philosophy: Always do the right thing.

Management method or style: Servant leadership.

Greatest challenge: Managing growth.

How close are you to operations? Weekly.

How do you hire and fire, train and retain? We are purposeful in who we choose to join our organization. We use a testing methodology to determine fit, along with multiple interviews. Candidates are also

interviewed by someone in the office where they will be working.

COVID-19

What have been the biggest impacts of Covid-19 on your business? Covid made us rethink our business model by using more technology. Technology has had the greatest impact. Being able to balance tech and touch is the most crucial part of what we do.

BOTTOM LINE

Annual revenue: \$22 million.

2023 goals: Increase revenue to \$30 million.

Growth meter: How do you measure your growth? Number of new clients and dashboards for KPIs.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years? Our 5-year growth strategy is to grow our business to \$40 million in revenue. In 10 years, I hope to have an exit strategy in place.

What are you doing to take care of your employees? We do many things. We recently incorporated a new EAP for our employees and their household members. We offer full benefits and a rich PTO policy. We invest heavily in training as well.

What kind of exit strategy do you have in place? Currently, I do not have one. I do have a plan in the event of something catastrophic happening to me. I do not have a transition plan from the business at this time. ■

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*\$1,245,078 Top 50% Average Net Revenues. \$992,613 System Wide Average Net Revenues. Based on our fiscal year ending 12/25/2022 and includes 950 Restaurants that were open for at least 12 months as of 12/25/2022. Excludes nontraditional locations and Restaurants that were not open for at least 357 days in 2022. This information appears in Item 19 of our Franchise Disclosure Document. Your results may differ. There is no assurance that you will do as well. This information is not intended as an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy a franchise. It is for information purposes only. The offering is by prospectus only. Currently, the following states regulate the offer and sale of franchises: California, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota (File No. F-9894), New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. If you are a resident of or want to locate a franchise in one of these states, we will not offer you a franchise unless and until we have complied with applicable pre-sale registration and disclosure requirements in your state. New York State Disclaimer: This advertisement is not an offering. An offering can only be made by prospectus filed first with the Department of Law of the State of New York. Such filing does not constitute approval by the Department of Law. CALIFORNIA DISCLAIMER: THESE FRANCHISES HAVE BEEN REGISTERED UNDER THE FRANCHISE INVESTMENT LAW OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA. SUCH REGISTRATION DOES NOT CONSTITUTE APPROVAL, RECOMMENDATION OR ENDORSEMENT BY THE COMMISSIONER OF CORPORATIONS NOR A FINDING BY THE COMMISSIONER THAT THE INFORMATION PROVIDED HEREIN IS TRUE, COMPLETE AND NOT MISLEADING. ©2023 Tropical Smoothie Cafe, LLC, 1117 Perimeter Center West, Suite W200, Atlanta, GA 30338.

“We are strong brand ambassadors who are always willing to help and listen and always looking to invest in our businesses.”

INFLUENTIAL COUPLE

Scarlett and Jason Dalton are the 2023 Influencer for Husband & Wife Team MVPs

Written by **SARA WYKES**



SCARLETT & JASON DALTON

Franchisees

Company: **Camp Bow Wow**

Units: **9**

Age: **Jason 48, Scarlett 53**

Family: **Boy and girl twins, 28, and son, 25**

Years in franchising: **15**

Years in current position: **15**



Scarlett and Jason Dalton are the 2023 Influencer for Husband & Wife Team MVPs (Most Valuable Performers), awarded for demonstrating excellence in franchising as husband and wife. We spoke with Jason.

Finding a market for Scarlett Dalton's mobile dog grooming business was never difficult, says her husband and business partner Jason Dalton. Driving a converted old postal truck with the brand's logo on its side, Scarlett was so in demand that people were approaching her at stop signs.

“She got so busy in just the first few months that we decided to take the Camp Bow Wow logo off the truck,” Jason recalls. A couple of years later, business was good enough for him to quit his engineering job and support Scarlett. She took on marketing and operations, and he focused on the financials and long-term planning.

With their quick success and a market demand that continues to grow, the Daltons work hard at managing the business while maintaining a good marriage. “It can take a lot of talking through,” says Jason. “It can be a compromise, but we are always together and we know how to keep things from going to another level” when issues do arise.

Their practical experience in working together is as needed now as it was in the beginning. Although Jason remains somewhat surprised at how big Camp Bow Wow has become, “We’ll keep growing as long as we keep finding good people.”

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think you were recognized with this award? We are a husband-and-wife team who are around each other 100% of the time, and our strengths are much different. That’s a huge advantage when running a business. Scarlett has always been an open book with fellow franchisees and has provided tremendous guidance to those just entering the business. She’s well respected in this brand.

How have you raised the bar in your own company? Attention to detail and focus on the customer and employees.

What innovations have you created and used to build your company? I’ve developed custom software to assist in daily operations of the business, tracking every aspect of our furry customers’ time at camp,



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and assisting employees with optimizing their operations.

What core values do you think helped you win this award? We are strong brand ambassadors who are always willing to help and listen and always looking to invest in our businesses to make them the best we can.

How important is community involvement to you and your company? Extremely important. We give back to local charities and shelters through dog-related events and donations.

What leadership qualities are most important to you and your company? Having a strong vision, setting expectations, empowering employees and giving them career paths to grow, holding ourselves as owners accountable as well as our employees to the same vision, and never asking an employee to do something we won't do. Most important is integrity in the relationships we've built over the decades.

PERSONAL

Formative influences/events: The opening of our first Camp Bow Wow in 2009 and subsequently expanding it to the current size in 2014. This allowed us both to focus full-time on our business and leave the 9-to-5 workforce.

Key accomplishments: I graduated with a B.S. degree in chemical engineering from the University of Tennessee. Scarlett earned a marketing degree from Southeastern Louisiana University, established the first mobile grooming business in Southeast Louisiana in 2004, and grew the business to where it is today with 8 open camps across 5 states.

Next big goal: Continue to grow the business through new opportunities from the ground up and/or the purchase of existing camps.

Hardest lesson learned: It's okay to not have all the answers, and there are no such things as non-work hours when you own your own business.

Best advice you ever got: Don't be afraid to gamble on yourself, and never stop looking after your own best interest.

Favorite book: *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas.

What's your passion in business? Building a legacy, using technology to make a difference in the day-to-day business operations, and providing career paths for employees who wish to stay with our brand.

MANAGEMENT

Business philosophy: Treat everyone as I wish to be treated, and be quick to learn and move on from mistakes.

Management method or style: Empower employees to be their best, and hold them accountable to the company goals.

Greatest challenge: Finding good employees.

How close are you to operations? Every day, we try to streamline and optimize operations to better the business, help other franchisees, and build the brand.

How do you hire and fire, train and retain? We are always hiring and working to upgrade our staff. We are quick to move on from an employee who doesn't show up for a shift or calls out frequently. We spend the

first two weeks training employees through our online onboarding software, and if we find a good, reliable employee, we are quick to promote and get them interacting with our customers as soon as they're ready.

COVID-19

What have been the biggest impacts of Covid-19 on your business? We had to close our business for several months, and the business was slow to come back post-Covid.

BOTTOM LINE

Annual revenue: More than \$8 million.

2023 goals: To break the \$10 million revenue benchmark.

Growth meter: How do you measure your growth? Year-over-year sales and daily dog counts.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years? Still doing what we love but branching out into other industries, such as real estate, food service, etc.

What are you doing to take care of your employees? We pay for them to go to corporate reunions. We bring our out-of-town managers to Mardi Gras all expenses paid. We send our district manager to several vacations a year with some out of the country. We do the usual Christmas parties and multiple dinner engagements throughout the year.

What kind of exit strategy do you have in place? In about 20 years, our plan is to leave what we've built to our employees and children. ■

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SERVANT LEADER

Eric Danver is the 2023 Mega Growth MVP

Written by **SARA WYKES**



ERIC DANVER

CEO

Company: **FGG Spa**

Units: **48 Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spas**

Age: **60**

Family: **Wife of 35 years, 4 children, 3 grandchildren**

Years in franchising: **28**

Years in current position: **8**



Eric Danver is the 2023 Mega Growth MVP (Most Valuable Performer), awarded for achieving excellence in growth and expansion.

Eric Danver brings nearly 30 years of franchise experience to his job as CEO of FGG Spa. With 48 Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spas in operation and a goal to hit 100, he begins with a basic tenet: The Golden Rule. It's long been part of his faith to live by doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, he says. Applied to business, it translates as knowing that the better he does for his Hand & Stone employees, the better performance will be.

Authenticity is another quality he keeps in mind. When he visits locations and speaks with employees, he says, “You really have to mean it. And those conversations will always include a thank-you for their hard work.” That approach is important in the kind of growth Danver has overseen. “We do a lot of acquisitions, and we know it takes time to build trust, so we make as few changes as possible in the beginning.”

Danver has another method of managing the asset Hand & Stone's employees represent. Every quarter, employees receive a survey to determine their likes and dislikes about working for FGG Spa. “We take that feedback and try to get better from it,” he says. “We might not be able to make everyone happy, but we get up and swing the bat every day.”

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think you were recognized with this award? We have more than doubled in size over the past 30 months and continue to grow with 10 spas already in 2023. We have 6 more in the pipeline that will close in the next 90 days.

How have you raised the bar in your own company? We strive to be the best we can be every day. We always maintain a focus of providing a world-class client experience (WCCE) for every guest who calls or comes into our spas. Blocking and tackling.

What innovations have you created and used to build your company? Nothing innovative. We just apply basic people skills to take care of our greatest asset, our team.



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What core values do you think helped you win this award? People are always Priority #1.

How important is community involvement to you and your company? Very. We always want to give back to those who live in our community and to those less fortunate.

What leadership qualities are most important to you and your company? Servant leadership: to genuinely value and care about all our internal customers and our team so that they, in turn, will take great care of our external customers, our valued clients.

PERSONAL

Formative influences/events: Being raised the right way by two great parents who have been married for 63 years and who are still a major part of my family's life and mine.

Key accomplishments: Raising our four amazing kids with my wife into four amazing adults who have the biggest hearts and who care and value all the people they come across in their daily lives.

Next big goal: 100 Hand & Stone locations.

Hardest lesson learned: It takes a lot of failures along the way to be successful.

Best advice you ever got: Enjoy my children while they are growing up because it is over in the blink of an eye.

Favorite book: The Bible.

What's your passion in business? To grow and be the best operators that our team and I can be.

MANAGEMENT

Business philosophy: To empower and value all team members. My goal is to always retain our greatest asset, our team members. Obviously, some people do move on, but my goal is always to have them reflect on how much they learned and grew and how great it was when they were with us.

Management method or style: Servant leadership.

Greatest challenge: Staying right-sized and humble in spite of any success.

How close are you to operations? I am in spas as often as possible because visibility is so important. As often as possible, the team needs to hear from me how valued and appreciated their hard work is.

How do you hire and fire, train and retain? We have a great internal recruiter who is critical for our new hires, and we have great processes in place for training and retention.

COVID-19

What have been the biggest impacts of Covid-19 on your business? Covid was obviously a huge challenge for our business along with so many others. The aftermath took some time to recover from.

Fortunately, our company and brand stood the test of time. We are back stronger than ever with continued great comparable sales growth.

BOTTOM LINE

Annual revenue: \$78 million.

2023 goals: To be at 55 units.

Growth meter: How do you measure your growth? Spa count, revenue growth, and comparable sales growth.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years? I want to grow the Hand & Stone business to hit 100 units over the next 3 to 4 years, while building a world-class health and business category with one or two other brands over the next 5 to 10 years.

What are you doing to take care of your employees? Everything we can because they are our greatest asset. We have a great culture and other benefits, including a 5% matching 401(k) and a robust PTO plan. We also pay 70% of our employees' health-care coverage.

What kind of exit strategy do you have in place? I would like to get a private equity deal done in the next 6 months to accelerate growth and develop another concept or two. ■

“AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE, THE TEAM NEEDS TO HEAR FROM ME HOW VALUED AND APPRECIATED THEIR HARD WORK IS.”





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“We embrace a mindset and value system that nurtures positive relationships and customer experiences.”

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL MANAGER

Shirin Kanji is the 2023 Multi-Brand Leadership MVP

Written by SARA WYKES



SHIRIN KANJI

CEO, President

Company: **Impact Holdings**

Units: **79 Rent-A-Center, 7 Neighborly brands (15 under development), 2 Marriott Hotel, 1 Hilton Hotel, 1 Hyatt Hotel**

Age: **43**

Family: **Wife Swathi, children Serena and Reya**

Years in franchising: **17**

Years in current position: **8**



Shirin Kanji is the 2023 Multi-Brand Leadership MVP (Most Valuable Performer), awarded for achieving brand leadership with multiple brands (tie).

In his quest to build a multi-brand franchisee organization, Shirin Kanji thought it made sense that a good manager in one industry could, with some extra training, become a good manager in another. So, rather than searching for managers from the outside, he decided to take advantage of the talent he already had working for him.

It's not only worked out, it's worked out spectacularly well. Last year Impact Holdings recorded \$130 million in revenue. With holdings that now include rental centers, hotels, and a multi-home and residential services group, Kanji wanted his managers to be multi-dimensional. “You need a blend of people,” he says, and relies on the strength of his training programs to pull this off.

Kanji says he looks for people who know how to connect with others and motivate them. “You don't necessarily need to be an expert in a certain industry like food or retail,” he says. In a tough labor market, he says it's an advantage to his group that, “as we add brands, it provides a fun path forward and growth opportunities.” Beyond the growth of his multi-brand company his approach has resulted in improved employee satisfaction and reduced churn.

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think you were recognized with this award? It was a surprise to receive this recognition, given how many great stories there are out there in the world of franchising today. We have been fortunate to achieve strong growth for our company across multiple brands in the past 5 years in particular. It's a big challenge to learn a single franchise business model and execute it consistently at a high level across multiple locations. It's another to do that for multiple franchise models across a large network of locations. This award is a testament to our corporate support team in Tampa and Atlanta, along with every team member in all of our locations across our portfolio.

What core values do you think helped you win this award? Our mission is to make an impact in the lives of our team members and customers. We embrace a mindset and value system that nurtures pos-



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itive relationships and customer experiences. One of our key core values, customer focus, enables us to leverage shared lessons across brands and locations to deliver the best experience for all of our customers, both internal and external.

How important is community involvement to you and your company?

It is a big part of what we do as a company. We encourage all of our team members to participate in their local communities and bring forth any ideas where we can better support these causes and leverage our scale and resources appropriately. This can range from supporting local charities and community organizations to hosting back-to-school supplies giveaways and fundraisers in our stores. Some of our best community involvement ideas have come from our field-level team members, and we love participating in these events.

PERSONAL

Key accomplishments: Diversifying our family business holdings over the past 8 years to better withstand the ebbs and flows of the domestic economy and other external factors such as Covid.

Best advice you ever got: “Time is the coin of life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.”

Favorite book: I recently reread *Blue Ocean Strategy* by W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne, which is perfectly topical for today’s volatile market conditions. I also read *Pitch Anything* by Oren Klaff. It’s a great read on how to prepare and execute high-level presentations for any circumstance.

What’s your passion in business? Watching careers develop and flourish within our company. There is nothing more sat-

isfying than someone achieving their goals and ambitions professionally and financially.

MANAGEMENT

Management method or style: At Impact, we strive to give our team members the tools and resources they need to succeed and then get out of their way. Trust in the process.

Greatest challenge: The consumer expectation for any product or service has moved so quickly the past few years. At the exact same time, our unit-level labor model has experienced its greatest challenges since I have been part of the business. Figuring out how to meet consumer demands while finding the right blend of technology, along with a high personal-touch customer-service model, will, I feel, ultimately win. It can’t be either/or, but a blend of both if we are being realistic about the future. Getting there, however, is the challenge for us all to figure out.

How close are you to operations? As a family business, we like to stay close to operations and ensure we are providing the right level of support and guidance to our leadership team, who do a great job in the day-to-day execution across our brands. With certain areas, such as business development, marketing, and risk management, we tend to take a more proactive role in the operation.

How do you hire and fire, train and retain? Our recruitment philosophy has evolved over time. We now focus more on aligning candidates with our company mission and brand-specific core values. We have found greater success hiring for attitude and training the skills versus hiring based on experience. When it comes to retaining and training, we have had our fair share of challenges, as many have in today’s labor environment. But we have worked hard to improve our benefits offering, the scope and

depth of our training programs, and to provide clearly defined career paths to produce the best place to work in each of our industry segments.

BOTTOM LINE

Annual revenue: \$130 million.

2023 goals: 10%-plus same store sales increase at portfolio level.

Growth meter: How do you measure your growth? Same store sales, net profits, and unit count.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years? In 5 years, I would like for us to be double the revenues we are now, and in 10 years, double that.

What are you doing to take care of your employees? Recently, we have taken a more proactive approach to developing a strong leadership and management team across brands and locations to enable them to develop their careers within the company. This has entailed investing significantly in various training and certification programs, backed by a commitment from company resources, to further support our team members’ continuing education and certification course ambitions.

What kind of exit strategy do you have in place? I am fortunate that an exit strategy is not something we have to really think about in our family business setting, but it does enable us to allocate resources and efforts across a long-term mindset for partnership and growth with our franchisor brand partners. ■

“WE ENCOURAGE ALL OF OUR TEAM MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.”





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Average Unit Volume of **\$885,335**



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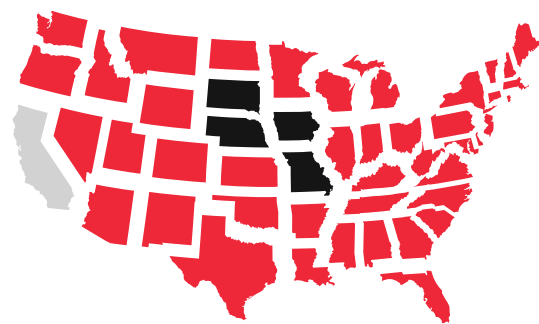
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*This is historical representation of what some of our franchised stores earned as described further in Item 19 of the FDD. This information is based upon 66 of 264 Drive-Thru Kiosks that were open during the entire 2022 calendar year and provided complete information. Your results may differ. There is no guarantee you will stay in business that long or that you will achieve the stated levels of same-store sales growth within that time period. See Item 19 of the FDD for more information.

**This is historical representation of what some of our franchisees have earned as described further in Item 19 of the FDD. This information is based upon 185 of 421 Drive-Thru Kiosks that were open during the entire 2022 calendar year and provided complete information. Your results may differ. There is no assurance that you will sell or earn as much. See Item 19 of the FDD for more information.

“I’m always willing to help other franchisees and develop the Ziebart brand in any ways I can.”

CAN-DO GUY

Tony Mattiaccio is the 2023 Single-Brand Leadership MVP

Written by **SARA WYKES**



TONY MATTIACCIO

President and CEO

Company: **The Mattiaccio Group**

Units: **10**

Years in franchising: **40**



Tony Mattiaccio is the 2023 Single-Brand Leadership MVP (Most Valuable Performer), awarded for achieving leadership with a single brand.

When Tony Mattiaccio became a father at an early age, he knew cobbling together a living from a pair of part-time jobs wasn't going to work. He needed a full-time position. That's when he connected with Ziebart. Today, the brand has 400 locations with 1,300 service centers in 37 countries. But in the 1980s it wasn't nearly as big.

Ziebart turned out to be the kind of place where a young person who showed some promise and worked hard could get ahead. Mattiaccio began working at a Ziebart franchise in Syracuse, New York, where he detailed cars and applied rust protection. Four years later, he was recognized for his work ethic and offered part ownership of a Ziebart location in Rochester.

In addition to the value of plain hard work, it's important to be "the guy people could count on to get the job done, whatever it was," says Mattiaccio, owner of 10 Ziebart locations and now grandfather of 10. He recently opened his first Ziebart outside of New York and plans to open more in southwestern Florida. Even with his eyes on the future, he still looks back with gratitude. "I couldn't be able to do any of it without the right people."

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think you were recognized with this award? I think it would be because of almost 40 years of personal consistency, trust, and hustle, as well as my clear dedication to the brand.

How have you raised the bar in your own company? We've grown from a 4-person operation to employing more than 200 people through continuous growth and opening multiple locations.

What core values do you think helped you win this award? My work ethic, integrity, and never-give-up attitude and having a clear vision and not allowing distractions. I'm always willing to help other franchisees and develop the Ziebart brand in any ways I can.

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Jerry Marshall

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Alex Melvin

"I've explored many franchising opportunities throughout my career and none compare to Buddy's turnkey model and dependable support."



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* This information reflects the Average Gross Sales and Average Free Cash Flow for the Top 25% of Buddy's Home Furnishings company-owned retail businesses which were in operation for the entirety of the 2022 fiscal year. Of the 36 retail businesses that were in operation for all of 2022, 9 were included in the Top 25% sample set and 2 attained or surpassed the Average Gross Sales and 3 attained or surpassed the Average Free Cash Flow as described above. We refer you to Item 19 of our 2023 Franchise Disclosure Document for additional information. A NEW FRANCHISEE'S RESULTS MAY DIFFER FROM THE REPRESENTED PERFORMANCE. This advertisement is not intended as an offer to sell, or the solicitation of an offer to buy, a franchise. Offerings made by prospectus only and in compliance with the applicable pre-sale registration and disclosure requirements in your state.
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How important is community involvement to you and your company? We put our community on a pedestal. We've contributed to organizations such as Make-A-Wish Foundation, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and local churches.

What leadership qualities are most important to you and your company? Lead by example. Give everyone the tools they need to continue to grow. Trying to help people become successful not just with Ziebart but in life as well.

PERSONAL

Formative influences/events: My parents are my biggest influences. I grew up in a blue-collar family where my parents worked two to three jobs six days a week to support our family. My work ethic began as a child after witnessing their hard work and hustling, never having a day off, and trying to make it in life.

Key accomplishments: My original key accomplishment was taking the work ethic and integrity instilled in me as a child and applying that to my first real, full-time job, which was at Ziebart in Syracuse, New York, as a rustproofer and detailer. I was recognized for my work ethic and four years later was offered part ownership of a Ziebart in Rochester. This was in the late 1980s.

Next big goal: My next big goal is to develop our new territory in Fort Myers, Florida.

For the first time ever, our group is venturing outside of New York to open its 10th location. Our goal is to develop southwest Florida with the Ziebart brand.

Best advice you ever got: The best advice I ever got is to work hard and never give up. I saw that in practice growing up with my parents' never-ending work ethic, and it's something I value every day.

Favorite book: Other than the Bible, my favorite book is *Every Family's Business* by Thomas William Deans.

What's your passion in business? I enjoy giving the same opportunities to our employees that were given to me along the way and seeing them take advantage of it.

MANAGEMENT

Business philosophy: Ensure an industry-leading experience.

Management method or style: It's key to have systems in place so that you can manage the system and easily train people. I think it's also important to be open to new ideas and ways of doing things.

Greatest challenge: The biggest challenge I've seen with ownership is juggling work and life to find that perfect balance.

How close are you to operations? Operations is always at the top of my mind every day because I got my start in operations with Ziebart.

COVID-19

What have been the biggest impacts of Covid-19 on your business? We learned a lot about safety so that it's on the forefront of our day-to-day operations. Today, safety awareness is better than it ever was. Additionally, the chip shortage and unavailability of vehicles has led to people putting a priority on protecting their vehicles so that they can last longer.

BOTTOM LINE

Growth meter: How do you measure your growth? So many different ways, but the obvious positive growth would be opening multiple stores.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years? The group hopes to continue expanding our presence in New York and Florida as we work to keep opening more locations.

What are you doing to take care of your employees? We offer great benefits for the employees and provide a clear path for growth through training and career opportunities. We want to be able to give our people the same opportunity that was given to me all those years ago. ■

“WE OFFER GREAT BENEFITS FOR THE EMPLOYEES AND PROVIDE A CLEAR PATH FOR GROWTH THROUGH TRAINING AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES.”



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* This information can be found in Item 19 of the 2023 Franchise Disclosure Document issued by WNW Franchising, LLC. The data reflects the calendar year beginning January 1, 2022 and ending December 31, 2022, and shows the data for 10 reporting stores which were open and operating 12 months as of December 31, 2022. 60% of reporting stores achieved or surpassed this figure. A new franchisee's results may differ from the represented performance. The discounted initial franchise fee applies only to franchise agreements executed on or before September 30, 2023; no other discounts apply. ** This information can be found in Item 19 of the 2023 Franchise Disclosure Document issued by PSP Franchising, LLC. The data reflects the calendar year beginning January 1, 2022 and ending December 31, 2022, and shows the data for 320 reporting stores which were open and operating 12 months as of December 31, 2022. 42.8% of reporting stores achieved or surpassed this figure. A new franchisee's results may differ from the represented performance. *** The discounted initial franchise fee applies only to franchise agreements executed on or before September 30, 2023; no other discounts apply. There is no assurance you will do as well. This is not an offer to sell you a franchise. Franchises are offered by prospectus only through the delivery of a franchise disclosure document. Certain states require that we register the franchise disclosure document in those states. The communication is not specifically directed to the residents of any of those states. Moreover, we will not offer or sell franchises in those states until we have registered the franchise (or obtained an applicable exemption from registration) and delivered the franchise disclosure document to the prospective franchisee in compliance with the applicable law. © 2023 PSP Franchising, LLC and WNW Franchising, LLC. All rights reserved.

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“We develop diverse businesses, communities, and leaders by creating growth opportunities.”

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

2023 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion MVP

Written by **SARA WYKES**



ANTONIO MCBROOM

CEO, public speaker, consultant, developer

Company: **Primo Partners**

Units: **15 Ben & Jerry's**

Age: **36**

Family: **Wife Katie, 2 children, Nia, 13, and Nox, 7**

Years in franchising: **15 as a franchisee, 4 as a scooper and shop manager**

Years in current position: **15**



Antonio McBroom is the 2023 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion MVP (Most Valuable Performer), awarded for demonstrating exceptional commitment to the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

There were two men in Antonio McBroom's life—his uncle and his barber—who encouraged him to think like an entrepreneur when he started his business career as a 15-year-old ice cream scooper at a Ben & Jerry's. Two decades later, McBroom has accomplished a lot: Big “O” Operator of the Year and two-time Global Social Impact Award Winner for Ben & Jerry's; Triangle Business Journal 40 under 40 Award; and Black Enterprise Magazine Franchisee of the Year. His company owns 15 Ben & Jerry's.

McBroom is now providing the kind of encouragement he received in his youth. “It's been rewarding work being able to develop young leaders, sometimes into business ownership, sometimes onto other career paths. That's what I love to do. It doesn't feel like work,” he says.

For McBroom, building his business is a way to accomplish additional goals. “In 5 years,” he says, “we want to be a 30-plus unit, \$25 million-plus operation with owner-occupied real estate, team-level ownership mentality and benefits, and a community impact strategy that leverages \$250,000-plus in annual reinvestment into racial equity and criminal justice reform work in our communities. In 10 years, we want to be a 9-figure MUMBO with partnerships with three best-in-category brands, three to five owner-occupied properties, and financial literacy, education, and planning through a full-time, seven-figure social impact fund.

“Our journeys are connected,” says McBroom. “I bring that to any endeavor I take on.”

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think you were recognized with this award? Because of the long-standing commitment to pushing the envelope for inclusion and equity in business. It starts with how I run and lead my own, and it includes the expectations and conversations I have with key partners I invest with.

How have you raised the bar in your own company? By pushing for world-class hospitality in our business endeavors. Primo

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has a double meaning. In Spanish, it means cousins, which my partner Eric and I are, but in Black urban culture, it means top-shelf, crème de la crème. From how we treat our guests to how we treat our team members, we push Primo.

What innovations have you created and used to build your company? The Primo Kulture Lab is our tried and proven way to create authentic culture at scale in a business. The PrimOS is a business operating system to help businesses with cash management, strategic planning, and tactical execution. It all falls under the PrimoWay: the full set of tools that will change Black business forever!

What core values do you think helped you win this award? Servant leadership.

How important is community involvement to you and your company? Community involvement and impact are at the core of what we do. We develop diverse businesses, communities, and leaders by creating growth opportunities for people like us to close the financial achievement gaps that exist.

What leadership qualities are most important to you and your company? Hospitality. Servant leadership. Vision. Fun. Passion.

PERSONAL

Formative influences/events: Morehead-Cain Scholarship to the University of North Carolina. Teach For America. Finding Christ and joining New Hope Church in Durham.

Key accomplishments: Big “O” Operator of the Year and two-time Global Social Impact Award Winner for Ben & Jerry’s; Triangle Business Journal 40 under 40 Award; Black Enterprise Magazine Franchisee of the Year; keynote speaker for Morehead-Cain Scholarship Final Selection Weekend; and keynote speaker for BlueCross BlueShield Day of Service with special guest Martin Luther King III.

Next big goal: Fusing real estate more with our business model through developing owner-occupied locations while expanding into additional flagship Ben & Jerry’s locations across the Southeast.

Hardest lesson learned: “Your main thing is to keep your main thing the main thing.” I learned the importance of focus early in my entrepreneurial journey when I was so focused on the seasonal weakness of my

business and invested in a co-brand to combat it. It failed quickly, and it taught me to refine my strategy of focusing on strengths. Instead of trying to drive revenue in a college town in the winter when all the students aren’t even in town, focus on how to maximize the season they are there.

Best advice you ever got: The journey is the prize.

Favorite book: *Twelve Pillars* by Jim Rohn.

What’s your passion in business? Leadership development. The process of coaching and servant-leading others from where they are to where they want to be gives me the most energy, enthusiasm, and fire to grow and get better.

MANAGEMENT

Business philosophy: Lead people and manage systems.

Management method or style: Servant leadership. Meet others’ highest priority needs first and the business will take care of itself.

Greatest challenge: The constant journey of self-mastery and improvement. Overcoming false, negative, and limiting beliefs that are often subconscious.

How close are you to operations? I come from an operations background having started as an ice cream scooper and spending some years in the scoop shop operation. As we’ve begun to scale, I’m not as hands-on with operations since I have other key roles as the CEO and culture champion. However, I keep a very close relationship with my leadership and management teams who operate the business.

How do you hire and fire, train and retain? Based on our core values of passionate, fun, servant leadership, resourcefulness, and knowledgeability. We look for candidates who align with these values and can be culture champions, and we fire when a team member is not meeting our bar in relationship to showing these values day in and day out. We train these values through our Primo Fundamentals, which are 30 key behaviors that show these values in action, and we retain by recognizing and rewarding team members based on these values and fundamentals.

COVID-19

What have been the biggest impacts of Covid-19 on your business? It actually

propelled us from good to great by showing our true measure during a time of crisis. We doubled down on our #1 resource, our human capital, and invested in world-class training and development while we were quarantined. In addition, we looked for unique opportunities to grow our footprint that weren’t there before.

BOTTOM LINE

Annual revenue: \$12.5 million to \$15 million.

2023 goals: Celebrate 15 successful years in business; win the great game of business by developing an overall critical number that our entire team is incentivized to hit; grow our organizational and cultural health; and improve in our process mastery at all levels of the organization.

Growth meter: How do you measure your growth? Growth is one of our three pillars (hospitality and servant leadership are the other two). Key ways we measure this are through our leadership development program participation and graduates, our annual sales, EBITDA, community partner impact and investment, and the diversity of our team.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years? In 5 years, we want to be a 30-plus unit, \$25 million-plus operation with owner-occupied real estate, team-level ownership mentality and benefits, and a community impact strategy that leverages \$250,000-plus in annual reinvestment into racial equity and criminal justice reform work in our communities. In 10 years, we want to be a 9-figure MUMBO with partnerships with three best-in-category brands, three to five owner-occupied properties, and financial literacy, education, and planning through a full-time, seven-figure social impact fund.

What are you doing to take care of your employees? We promote *The EOS Life* for our team of doing what you love with people you love, making a huge impact, and being compensated appropriately with time for other passions. We play the great game of business with our team to share the business success and align our interests as an organization.

What kind of exit strategy do you have in place? We’re building a multi-unit, multi-brand, multi-generational privately held business, so the exit strategy is in developing key team members, leaders, and succession planning. ■

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Shaquille O'Neal

“He loves the ability for an entrepreneur to select a franchise system and know that if they execute well they have a good shot at doing well for themselves.”

SLAM DUNK

Shaquille O'Neal is the 2023 Influencer for Former Pro Athlete MVP

Written by **SARA WYKES**



JOSH HALPERN CEO

Company: **Big Chicken**

Age: **44**

Family: **Wife, 3 kids**

Years in franchising: **6**

Years in current position: **2**



Shaquille O'Neal is the 2023 Influencer for Former Pro Athlete MVP (Most Valuable Performer), awarded for achieving excellence in franchising as a former professional athlete. O'Neal was unavailable by press time, so Big Chicken CEO Josh Halpern stepped in.

Josh Halpern met Shaquille O'Neal in 2015 through mutual friends and began a long, drawn-out process to follow up on a “Let’s work together” conversation. Halpern, with an MBA from Babson College, spent the earlier part of his career as a consultant and advisor until moving on to an enterprise called Beer Park, whose first location was on a Las Vegas rooftop.

When O'Neal called to ask if he wanted to help him ramp up Big Chicken, Halpern did not hesitate. O'Neal, says Halpern, is a big fan of franchising. “He loves the ability for an entrepreneur to select a franchise system and know that if they execute well they have a good shot at doing well for themselves.”

Big Chicken, he says, is unlike the other franchise brands O'Neal was involved in. The concept is based on the kinds of meals Shaq recalls as his favorites, and he is the largest shareholder. For O'Neal, Big Chicken is personal.

“Shaquille wants it to be his legacy,” Halpern says. “This is a brand rooted in his childhood, and our goal is to bring it to the world.” The first Big Chicken opened in Las Vegas in 2018, and in 2021 began franchising. Two years in, Big Chicken has about 300 units in development.

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think he was recognized with this award? Shaquille is someone who legitimately makes everything better for the people he is around. For example, he came into Papa John’s at the most delicate moment in the brand’s history and changed the narrative for the better.

What innovations have you and he created and used to build your company?

The way the franchise is growing is one of our more innovative approaches. We are building our supply chain so we can open anywhere in a short time.

What core values do you think helped him win this award? Shaquille’s values are well integrated into the franchise’s team. It’s about building an ecosystem, maintaining continuous improvement, cherishing the big

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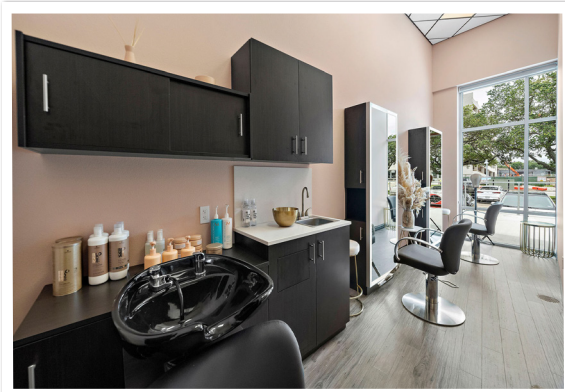
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Average Occupancy

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For more information contact Scott Krupa:
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wins loudly, and having serious discussions when you're not.

How important is community involvement to the company? O'Neal has his own foundation, and when it comes to kids, he wants to help shape their future.

What leadership qualities are most important to the company? Servant leadership is what it boils down to. It's moments like the one where I might ask Shaquille for a favor, and it's done. Or considering how he can touch others in a way that's special and will leave a mark in their hearts.

PERSONAL

O'Neal, says Halpern, is a values-driven human being whose history in athletics has formed some of his approach to life and business. Unsurprisingly, he often uses basketball metaphors to express what he sees as his franchise team's most effective way to work. "We're just like a basketball team," Halpern says. "We all play our own role, but we work together."

What also impresses Halpern is O'Neal's modesty about the thoughtful gestures he makes. "He never says, 'Look what I did,' but he took the time to make short videos to help the youth basketball team my son is part of," says Halpern. "He likes to put smiles on children's faces. And for him, it is still family first." Nor has O'Neal ever lost his passion for connecting with people. Halpern has seen him visit a Big Chicken, greet everyone and quietly slide his credit card across the counter to cover all the customers' checks. "He has never lost sight of who he is. He is just the most authentic person."

MANAGEMENT

Management method or style: Shaquille asks great questions and gets you talking about the business. If he needs to make a direct point he will. His focus is always on the guest. And if the guest loves our product, the brand and the franchisees are going to win, too.

Greatest challenge: I joke around that I have 99 things done for me because of

Shaquille and 99 problems because of Shaquille. What's happening now with Big Chicken—our development roster includes locations in the U.S. and the U.K.—doesn't happen unless you have Shaquille. We had to build up our supply chain quickly to keep up with the interest. Starting with only multi-units at first is another part of the plan. So have been pop-ups on cruise ships. It all came fast. We started financing and all of a sudden we had deals because how big Shaq is.

BOTTOM LINE

Growth meter: How do you measure your growth? Big Chicken's view is that if we are all pulling together, our franchisees could end up with strong top- and bottom-line results, not only fulfilling agreements but keeping on growing.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years? We are trying to operate business in the right way, to work with franchisees who are willing to listen to feedback. ■

"THE WAY THE FRANCHISE IS GROWING IS ONE OF OUR MORE INNOVATIVE APPROACHES. WE ARE BUILDING OUR SUPPLY CHAIN SO WE CAN OPEN ANYWHERE IN A SHORT TIME."

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“I’ve played a pivotal role in our aggressive development efforts that have resulted in the addition of 70 units in just 10 years.”

MAN ON A MISSION

Raj Patel is the 2023 Multi-Brand Leadership MVP

Written by **SARA WYKES**



RAJ PATEL

President

Company: **The Hari Group**

Units: **88 Dunkin’, 6 Dave’s Hot Chicken, 5 McAlister’s Deli**

Age: **35**

Family: **Wife, 2 kids**

Years in franchising: **11**

Years in current position: **11**



Raj Patel is the 2023 Multi-Brand Leadership MVP (Most Valuable Performer), awarded for achieving brand leadership with multiple brands (tie).

Without question, Raj Patel is someone who has never needed nudging. His father bought his first Dunkin’ the year Patel was born, so he has lived in the franchising world all his life. There were eight Dunkin’s by the time the younger Patel joined the business, bringing with him a college degree in accounting. Today, what has become The Hari Group owns around 100 franchise locations across three major food brands.

Patel says he has an entrepreneurial mindset and always knew what he wanted for himself. Today he is hard at work on a growth mission and is doing it with a particularly tough standard: Each location must be a success. Patel calls this smart growth and says he is not comfortable with any other way. “Everyone can get from zero to 100, but can you get there profitably without over-leveraging?” he says. “It does put a lot more pressure on each unit, and I make sure each location can fend for itself.”

What also distinguishes Patel is the attention he pays to other aspects of his business—and life. “I’m also committed to expanding my leadership skills whenever possible,” he says. Currently, he is serving on a number of boards at Dunkin’ and is involved in the Dunkin’ Joy in Childhood Foundation, an organization that works to bring joy to kids who are battling hunger or illness.

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think you were recognized with this award? Since being introduced to the industry at a young age by my father, a Dunkin’ franchisee, I’ve had a passion for restaurant franchising. This led me to partner with my father to form The Hari Group, an entity that spans three states and more than 100 locations. We’ve come a long way since our start, beginning with less than 10 units, and I’ve played a pivotal role in our aggressive development efforts that have resulted in the addition of 70 units in just 10 years. I’m also committed to expanding my leadership skills whenever possible. I’m currently serving on a number of boards at Dunkin’, including the Brand Advisory Council, the

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Development and Construction Advisory Council, the PAC Committee, and the FAC. I'm also involved in the Dunkin' Joy in Childhood Foundation, an organization that works to bring joy to kids who are battling hunger or illness. Through my work, I'm able to continue growing as a leader and showing others in the space, especially young entrepreneurs, what is needed to thrive within multi-brand restaurant franchising.

How have you raised the bar in your own company? There's always change around us, and I think staying ahead of it in today's environment is as important as ever. This is something I try to do as much as possible to continue raising the bar.

What core values do you think helped you win this award? Hard work, dedication, and the drive to succeed.

How important is community involvement to you and your company? Extremely important! We wouldn't be where we are today if it weren't for our community supporting us for all these years. They make it possible for us to grow, and we want to be very much involved in our communities.

What leadership qualities are most important to you and your company? Hard work is the most important. We want our leadership team to lead by example.

PERSONAL

Formative influences/events: My grandparents and parents have always been my biggest formative influences.

Key accomplishments: Expanding from 8 units of a single brand to the size we are today has been one of my biggest accomplishments.

Next big goal: Expanding Dunkin' to 100 locations and Dave's Hot Chicken to 20.

Best advice you ever got: Each location should succeed on its own for the company to be considered successful. If you have one location that is performing really well while another is struggling, you are failing at your job.

Hardest lesson learned: Same as above. All your locations must succeed individually for your company to grow and have great success. You won't bat 1,000, but you must figure out how to get close.

Favorite book: *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell.

What's your passion in business? I love the growth—both in the company and in our leadership team.

MANAGEMENT

Business philosophy: Embracing change and finding ways to grow, not just the company, but also the individuals who help make our company what it is.

Management method or style: I believe that hard work beats talent. If you can find someone who shows up day in and day out, you can train the "how."

Greatest challenge: Dealing with multiple personalities as well as the construction aspect of things.

How close are you to operations? I communicate and interact with the leadership and management team daily to ensure we are operating as efficiently and effectively as possible.

How do you hire and fire, train and retain? I feel like this goes with our management style of finding someone who shows up and is willing to do the work to grow as an individual. Those are always the people you retain the most.

COVID-19

What have been the biggest impacts of Covid-19 on your business? Apart from the sales aspect, it's been a struggle keeping up with the supply chain and staffing issues. We always want to meet our customers' expectations as they pertain to quality, so ongoing supply chain issues certainly posed a challenge.

BOTTOM LINE

2023 goals: 10% growth.

Growth meter: How do you measure your growth? Top line.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years? Grow to 125 units in 5 years. Where I'd like to be in 10 years is yet to be determined.

What are you doing to take care of your employees? Besides pay, benefits, and bonuses, we preach the importance of establishing a personal relationship with each employee in both our smaller and larger brands. ■

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MAN ON THE MOVE

Alex Tyler is the 2023 Noble Cause MVP

Written by **SARA WYKES**



ALEX TYLER

Owner operator

Company: **A-Train Swimming Co**

Units: **8 Goldfish Swim School**

Age: **34**

Family: **Wife Anna Tyler, daughter Lucy, 2**

Years in franchising: **11**

Years in current position: **11**



Alex Tyler is the 2023 Noble Cause MVP (Most Valuable Performer), awarded for passionate, unwavering support for those in need.

For Alex Tyler, learning to swim was, as the saying goes, as easy as falling off a log. “All my favorite memories have been around a pool,” he says. Not only were both his parents competitive swimmers, his father started his orthodontics practice right next to the very first Goldfish Swim School. Add in all those hours Tyler spent at the pool as a youth and it’s no surprise that after college graduation he decided he wanted to own his own Goldfish Swim School. He’d gotten an inside look at that first Goldfish school, and he was confident it would work for him.

What Tyler didn’t expect was what happened on his first trip to Belize. The beautiful setting, where many people earn their living by fishing, had an element that touched him: Swimming was not a widespread skill. He decided to change that. The next year he brought a few goggles and swim toys and set himself up in a shallow lagoon. Only a handful of people showed up, but the next day there were 40, and the next day there were 70. “Everyone had a blast,” he says, “and it really took off from there.”

As his Goldfish Swim School expanded, so did the Belize version. Tyler began to bring Goldfish employees with him, and they were changed by their experiences. “I watched them have an enlightening moment and leave a different person,” he says. What began simply has evolved. “I have brought 85 owners and managers from around the country down to Gales Point, Belize, to build homes, classrooms, libraries, and septic tanks and teach every kid in the village to swim.”

While Tyler has goals to establish more Goldfish locations, the unofficial swim school in Belize remains close to his heart. “My mission work shows my compassion and love for what we do,” he says. “I’ve given many an opportunity to experience a deeper meaning to teaching kids to be safer in and around water.”

MVP QUESTIONS

Why do you think you were recognized with this award? My mission work stands out in our system. In the past decade, I have brought 85 owners and managers from

around the country down to Gales Point, Belize, to build homes, classrooms, libraries, and septic tanks and teach every kid in the village to swim.

How have you raised the bar in your own company? I set a standard as one of the first franchisees that you can make a big impact as an owner operator. I was the GM for 2.5 years and worked every position. It was very important to me that the community I served knew who I was personally, and that I knew every member.

What innovations have you created and used to build your company? As a competitive swimmer and Olympic trial qualifier, I have had a hand in developing the curriculum we use to teach swim lessons.

What core values do you think helped you win this award? Integrity, compassion, and trust. My mission work shows my compassion and love for what we do. I've given many an opportunity to experience a deeper meaning to teaching kids to be safer in and around water.

How important is community involvement to you and your company? Extremely important! Goldfish Swim School franchises are hyperlocal businesses. We are there to provide services to the families in our community, but we also want to get to know them beyond what we provide in the pool.

What leadership qualities are most important to you and your company? I have always been someone who likes to lead from the front lines. It gives me an opportunity to understand more of what to expect from my team and connect to them more genuinely.

PERSONAL

Formative influences/events: I joined my church on a mission trip to Gales Point, Belize, where we built a homeless shelter for the village. While working in the village, I noticed that no one had formally learned how to swim, and most admitted they would be unable to save their own lives if they were to fall into deep water. Even crazier? The village is surrounded by water! I have returned every year since to teach more than 80 kids in the village how to swim and how to be safer in and around water. This mission over the past decade has hands down been the most formative influence of my career because it allowed me to zoom out and realize that our company's mission spans beyond our four walls.

Key accomplishments: I opened my first Goldfish Swim School franchise at 22 and was named IFA Franchisee of the Year in 2022.

Next big goal: Open six locations in Portland, Oregon.

Hardest lesson learned: I've learned many tough lessons over the years, but the first monumental lesson was giving control and ownership of tasks to those I had hired and trusted. As an owner/GM, I wore many hats and found it natural to have a hand in every decision in the beginning. It was difficult for me to step back and let my team run with what I had started at first, but once I committed and trusted my team members, I was able to expand to another location, rinse, and repeat. It is easy to see now, but if you don't genuinely trust your people, your business is going to struggle.

Best advice you ever got: Find a mentor! Running a business requires a wide range of skills and expertise. As a collegiate athlete, working with a coach was second nature to me. The same rings true to me as an entrepreneur. Find someone you trust to provide you with advice, answer questions, and help build your network of connections.

Favorite book: *Traction* by Gino Wickman.

What's your passion in business? My favorite thing about being an entrepreneur is that I get to be part of something I believe in. The services I provide are services that I love, and it's so fulfilling to be able to bring them to those who need them.

MANAGEMENT

Business philosophy: We do the right thing, make the right decisions, and treat people with integrity, compassion, and trust.

Management method or style: I run a coaching style of management because then our team is really a *team*. Coming from an athletic background, I find it natural to lead my team to achieve goals and perfect their skills so everyone can reach their full potential. This style of management gives us room to focus on long-term growth that will overshadow short-term mistakes.

Greatest challenge: Navigating through the Covid shutdown. I felt helpless in the face of government mandates and public perception. We were forced to shut down for 100 days and were only able to open with less than half of our previous operation. During the forced shutdown, I made it a mission

to keep in touch with every employee and did everything in my power to give them as much stability as I could. We reopened with an even stronger company culture and an unbreakable bond of trust between ownership and staff.

How close are you to operations? I am involved in the day-to-day but empower my leadership team to take 51% ownership of their specific areas of accountability. I tend to guide each manager of the business using KPIs that relate to their expertise. It is easy to get stuck in the weeds, and data-driven metrics help take emotion out of decisions that are not black and white.

How do you hire and fire, train and retain? Things have changed dramatically over the past few years in this department. We've had to adapt to hiring shortages and the ability to retain employees. During this time, we saw an opportunity to invest more in our employees who were committed to staying with us. We have given them chances to stretch for new heights that weren't on the table before. We have found some great managers and supervisors this way. Our training is extremely hands-on with approximately 80% done through shadowing. Training is complete upon passing a scored evaluation. Also, it's important to note that we evaluate our new team members monthly during the first 6 months to ensure consistency. Retention is a product of good culture combined with individual opportunity. We created a 6-month road map to show new hires what they can accomplish with great performance.

COVID-19

What have been the biggest impacts of Covid-19 on your business? It's very hard to pick just one. I would say we are still dealing with staffing shortages and limitations in comparison with the pre-Covid world.

BOTTOM LINE

Annual revenue: \$4.5 million.

2023 goals: Select site #1 for Portland, Oregon.

Growth meter: How do you measure your growth? Year-over-year KPIs.

Vision meter: Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years? In 5 years, open 3 locations. In 10 years, expand to 5 more.

What are you doing to take care of your employees? Listening! We bring in employees from every position to make sure we weigh all angles when making changes. ■

TOP 50 BRANDS

BY NUMBER OF MULTI-UNIT FRANCHISEES

RANK	BRAND	MULTI-UNIT ZEES	SINGLE-UNIT ZEES	TOTAL
1	SUBWAY	3,232	4,064	7,296
2	MCDONALD'S	1,736	334	2,070
3	THE UPS STORE	924	2,306	3,230
4	AFC	835	1,937	2,772
5	DUNKIN'	776	4,690	5,466
6	ACE HARDWARE	599	2,416	3,015
7	RE/MAX	581	765	1,346
8	GREAT CLIPS	576	243	819
9	HEALTH MART PHARMACY	556	3,192	3,748
10	H&R BLOCK	522	624	1,146
11	AMERIPRISE FINANCIAL	508	2,160	2,668
12	KELLER WILLIAMS	504	788	1,292
13	LIBERTY TAX SERVICE	492	680	1,172
14	DOMINO'S PIZZA	491	214	705
15	LITTLE CAESARS	483	266	749
16	VISION SOURCE	430	2,035	2,465
17	DQ GRILL & CHILL	397	1,062	1,459
18	HISSHO SUSHI	375	495	870
19	JACKSON HEWITT TAX SERVICE	349	164	513
20	JIMMY JOHN'S	348	766	1,114
21	ANYTIME FITNESS	337	1,542	1,879
21	CHICK-FIL-A	337	1,557	1,894
23	JERSEY MIKE'S SUBS	322	232	554
24	CENTURY 21	316	640	956
25	BURGER KING	313	183	496
26	SPORT CLIPS	300	118	418
27	SUPERCUTS	268	109	377
28	SERVPRO	261	696	957
29	BASKIN-ROBBINS	255	1,508	1,763
30	TACO BELL	254	233	487
31	FIREHOUSE SUBS	248	222	470
32	PAPA JOHN'S	235	350	585
33	MASSAGE ENVY	230	211	441
34	SONIC DRIVE-IN	222	328	550
35	EDIBLE	214	279	493
36	COLDWELL BANKER	212	425	637
37	SMOOTHIE KING	202	241	443
38	PAPA MURPHY'S TAKE 'N' BAKE PIZZA	200	209	409
39	SNOWFOX	193	700	893
40	WENDY'S	188	63	251
41	KFC	184	245	429
42	HUNTINGTON LEARNING CENTER	183	56	239
43	TROPICAL SMOOTHIE CAFE	178	391	569
43	WINGSTOP	178	79	257
45	COLD STONE CREAMERY	174	387	561
46	CLUB PILATES	170	126	296
47	EUROPEAN WAX CENTER	169	98	267
48	CULVER'S	168	293	461
49	DQ TREAT	166	741	907
50	MIDAS	154	231	385
50	KEYSTONE INSURERS GROUP	154	234	388

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Tim Augustine – Multi-Unit Franchise Partner

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TOP 50 BRANDS

BY PERCENTAGE OF MULTI-UNIT FRANCHISEES

RANK	BRAND	% MULTI-UNIT ZEES	MULTI-UNIT ZEES	SINGLE-UNIT ZEES	TOTAL
1	FIVE GUYS	97.96%	96	2	98
2	PANERA BREAD	96.43%	27	1	28
3	FRESHII	96.30%	52	2	54
4	PALM BEACH TAN	93.10%	27	2	29
5	JACK IN THE BOX	92.47%	86	7	93
6	SMARTSTYLE	92.00%	115	10	125
7	MIRACLE-EAR	90.99%	101	10	111
8	MCDONALD'S	83.86%	1,736	334	2,070
9	APPLEBEE'S	82.35%	28	6	34
10	FRONTIER ADJUSTERS	80.00%	104	26	130
11	COST CUTTERS HAIR SALON	77.78%	70	20	90
12	HUNTINGTON LEARNING CENTER	76.57%	183	56	239
13	GODFATHER'S PIZZA	75.66%	143	46	189
14	WENDY'S	74.90%	188	63	251
15	FREDDY'S FROZEN CUSTARD & STEAKBURGERS	74.47%	35	12	47
16	BARBERITOS	73.68%	28	10	38
17	MICHELIN COMMERCIAL SERVICE NETWORK	72.73%	24	9	33
18	BLAZE PIZZA	72.13%	44	17	61
19	SPORT CLIPS	71.77%	300	118	418
20	SUPERCUTS	71.09%	268	109	377
21	BOJANGLES	70.77%	46	19	65
22	VALVOLINE INSTANT OIL CHANGE	70.37%	38	16	54
23	GREAT CLIPS	70.33%	576	243	819
24	PLAYA BOWLS	70.00%	21	9	30
25	DOMINO'S PIZZA	69.65%	491	214	705
26	WINGSTOP	69.26%	178	79	257
27	SOLA SALON STUDIOS	69.23%	90	40	130
28	BURN BOOT CAMP	68.64%	151	69	220
29	JACKSON HEWITT TAX SERVICE	68.03%	349	164	513
30	CARL'S JR.	67.74%	63	30	93
31	CAPTAIN D'S	67.71%	65	31	96
32	PACLEASE	67.31%	35	17	52
33	PENN STATION EAST COAST SUBS	67.14%	47	23	70
34	SOTHEYBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY	65.94%	91	47	138
35	HARDEE'S	65.93%	60	31	91
36	LITTLE CAESARS	64.49%	483	266	749
37	AVIS	63.89%	23	13	36
38	EUROPEAN WAX CENTER	63.30%	169	98	267
39	BURGER KING	63.10%	313	183	496
40	HOMESMART	62.90%	39	23	62
41	BUDGET CAR RENTAL	62.86%	22	13	35
42	PANDORA	62.22%	28	17	45
43	RALLY'S	61.90%	26	16	42
44	FREEDOM BOAT CLUB	61.22%	30	19	49
45	FUZZY'S TACO SHOP	58.33%	28	20	48
46	JERSEY MIKE'S SUBS	58.12%	322	232	554
47	SUN TAN CITY	57.89%	22	16	38
48	RENT-A-CENTER	57.69%	15	11	26
49	CLUB PILATES	57.43%	170	126	296
50	STRETCH ZONE	57.14%	24	18	42

SOURCE: FRANdata. Brands with 25 or fewer franchisees were excluded.



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Multi-Unit Franchising's Main Event

Top multi-unit franchisees flock to MUFC '23

Written by **KERRY PIPES & EDDY GOLDBERG**



"Networking here is worth more than your net worth."

With those words of encouragement, Gary Robins, a Supercuts multi-unit franchisee and this year's conference chair, formally welcomed attendees to the 2023 Multi-Unit Franchising Conference (MUFC) at Caesars Forum in Las Vegas.

The event, held April 25–28, dealt a winning hand to the more than 2,200 people who attended, including more than 800 franchisees representing 250 brands, operating more than 15,000 units, and generating more than \$14 billion in systemwide revenue. Compared with 2022, overall attendance was up about 20%, and franchisee attendance spiked by some 25%. Franchisees had access to top-tier educational opportunities, brands, suppliers, and those all-important peer-to-peer networking opportunities.

Keynote speakers this year were Peter Diamandis, visionary, author, innovator, and XPrize founder, and Col. Nicole Malachowski, U.S. Air Force combat veteran, fighter squadron commander, and the first woman Thunderbird pilot. General sessions and breakout meetings offered timely and topical insights into operating successfully in the franchise space today.

The event has become the go-to conference for franchisees, franchisors, and suppliers to gather, talk shop, do business, and have some fun. That business took place informally in

the halls of Caesars Forum as well as in the Sponsor Networking Area, which has grown to fill two large meeting areas and set a new record for the number of exhibitors.

Teeing Off

The conference swung into action on Tuesday with MUFC's annual charity scramble-style golf tournament at the Arroyo Golf Club at Red Rock. The course rests high above downtown, offering a panoramic view of the Strip. That evening featured a franchisee-only get-together at Carmine's Italian Restaurant in The Forum Shops at Caesars Palace—always a great opportunity for franchisees to see old friends and make new ones.

Day 1, Welcome and Kickoff

A continental breakfast greeted attendees as they prepared for their first full day at

the event. In the opening general session, Robins encouraged everyone to make personal and meaningful relationships and to take advantage of the opportunities in store throughout the week. He also recognized the event's Platinum Sponsors, Jersey Mike's and Inspire Brands.

Next up was keynote speaker Diamandis, who wasted no time diving into his message of "Megatrends for the Exponential Road Ahead." Discussing the rapid growth of communication and sensors (e.g., satellites, 5G, IoT, watches that monitor body functions), he said, "Everything will be connected, everywhere, all the time." He also ran through present and future tech such as a new generation of robots, autonomous vehicles, artificial intelligence, 3D printing, and predicted that human longevity could be improved by decades, perhaps even longer.





A general session, “Managed Growth Strategies for Choosing a New Brand” followed. Multi-brand franchisees Rob Branca and The Falcons Group CEO Shamsu Charania, along with Aziz Hashim, founder and managing partner of NRD Capital, shared their experiences with adding brands to their portfolios to help balance and grow their businesses, with Robins moderating.

Their wide-ranging conversation touched on adding established vs. emerging brands, diversifying outside of your current sector, unit economics, succession planning, the value of a brand’s culture, build vs. buy, how to assess remodeling costs in a potential acquisition, the pros and cons of using brokers, the state of franchise lending, and more.

“Show me a great franchise brand and I’ll show you a great franchisee association,” said Hashim. “Your franchisees are your client.”

“I look at management to see if they’re running corporate stores—more than a few, not just a test store,” said Charania. He wants to know they can feel the pain, as well as the success of their brands.

And after years of running a large Dunkin’ operation, Branca is branching out into a pair of automotive aftermarket service brands to diversify his holdings.

A new MUFC feature followed lunch: two seasoned multi-brand operators shared their paths to success before a general session audience. Sean Falk discussed the various brands he has been with, the importance of being involved, and his foray into becoming a franchisor. He also talked about how his children are now joining the franchising business. Next, Damon Dunn shared his inspiring story of growing up in poverty before playing football for Stanford. After the

gridiron, he’s created a successful career in real estate and become a multi-brand franchisee across several states.

The next general session panel was “Succession Planning: Strategies for Your Next Chapter.” Kendall Rawls, director of development for The Rawls Group, moderated a group that included Paul Booth, Ace Hardware franchisee, brothers Jesse and Charles Keyser, franchisees with Sport Clips, Oxi Fresh Carpet Cleaning, and Ideal Image, and father and son Brent and Craig Veach, Del Taco franchisees.

The panel explored when and how to transition the business, creating a timeline, training those who will take over, and, importantly, ensuring your franchisors know your plan. Jesse Keyser commented, “We started thinking about how we would get out of the business the first day we opened.” (Keyser was named the 2024 MUFC conference chair.)

Paul Booth added, “Continue training your people, offer opportunities, reward, build a great culture, and communicate.” The session brought the day to an end, and the Sponsor Networking Area opened its doors with plenty of food, drink, and lively conversations to cap off a day of invaluable learning and networking.

Day 2, Thunderbird, MVPs, & Politics

The second full day ramped up with a continental breakfast buffet before ushering in the first of the day’s concurrent breakout sessions, which covered four areas: Growth, Legislative, Next Gen, and HR. Topics included “Strategies for Underperforming Units,” “How Franchisee Associations Protect Your Investment,” and “Create Opportunities for the Next Generation of Leaders.”

Next up was the MUFC’s second keynoter, retired U.S. Air Force Col. Nicole Malachowski, the first woman to become a Thunderbird pilot. Growing up in Las Vegas watching the Thunderbirds fly overhead, she said it was her childhood dream to fly one someday, despite the long odds. As challenging as your own path to success may be, try this on for size: there are only six Thunderbird pilots in the world at any one time. And before her, all were men. (Level of difficulty? Just try flying a fighter plane at hundreds of





miles per hour with your wingtips 18 inches apart from the next plane, sometimes upside down!)

Malachowski lit up the room with her life story, highlighting three core ideas that led to her success: courage, trust, and vulnerability. “The path to success is littered with failure,” she said as she recounted her many challenges and successes. Taking risks, believing in herself, and building trust with her team have defined her years of accomplishments.

“Nothing of significance is ever accomplished alone,” she said. When she began her Thunderbird training, one of her first big lessons was learning to trust the team of 125 people who took care of her plane (and her life). Addressing the rapt audience of franchisees, she emphasized how *every* job

in their own businesses is not only necessary, but critical to their organization’s success.

Despite other people’s expectations, prejudices, and biases—most telling her it would never happen for her—she eventually received encouragement from a key officer, pushed through her own fears, and made history. “Don’t ever write yourself out of the script—or anybody else,” she said.

Yet, beyond her aerial and leadership accomplishments, Malachowski said her proudest moment came as a squadron commander when she was able to change its culture to embrace vulnerability, which she called the foundation of elite team performance. “The thing that sets an elite team apart when things go wrong is that we can talk about it openly, transparently, and collectively,” she said.

Following her inspiring keynote, attendees gathered in a general session for lunch and the presentation of *Multi-Unit Franchisee* magazine’s annual MVP Awards as each winner stepped onto the stage to receive their award in recognition of their contributions to franchising and their communities. See their individual stories elsewhere in this magazine.

IFA CEO Matt Haller took the stage next to provide an update on how the IFA is combating threats to franchising in Washington, D.C., and at the state and local levels. He provided a quick review of a number of policy issues, including NLRB and FTC investigations of franchising, before welcoming a panel to the stage for a session called “Advocacy and the Value to the Bottom Line.”



Panelists were Ashley Coneff, head of government affairs and community engagement at Inspire Brands, Alex Johnson, a franchisee with Auntie Anne's, Cinnabon, and Scooter's Coffee, and Michael Lotito, co-chair of the Littler Workplace Policy Institute. Haller walked the panel through hot-button issues that included opposing the confirmation of Julie Su, President Biden's nominee to be the next Secretary of Labor; working to defeat California Assembly Bill 1228 (the Fast-Food Franchisor Responsibility Act); the NLRB and joint employment; and re-establishing the Employee Retention Tax Credit.

The bottom line? Every franchisee needs to be actively fighting anti-business legislation in their home cities and states and at the federal level. Said Haller, "If you think franchising is a great business model, I think it's worth fighting for because there are a lot of policymakers ready to take you down. It's *you* we need."

The Economy

FRANdata CEO Darrell Johnson followed on the main stage with his annual overview of the economy, and how he sees it affecting franchising over the coming year. Johnson said the "uncertainty meter" is way up this year and that franchise operators should

prepare for an "economic slowdown, sticky inflation, and high interest rates." Access to capital, he said, will remain tight and multi-unit franchisees will have to rely on diversification, flexibility, and agility to tackle uncertainty. Other observations included the following points.

- The labor market is becoming more complex, attributable to factors beyond wages.
- Strong consumer spending is fading as savings rates decline and the cost of debt increases; yet, while consumers are less optimistic about the current economic landscape, the current situation is better than consumer perceptions.
- Lenders are tightening credit boxes, making it harder and costlier to obtain business loans; banks that provided more than 40% of SBA loans in 2022 will be implementing stricter credit policies; and it's not just the cost of capital, but the time to underwrite a loan increasing as banks face additional headwinds.
- Today's new economic era is forcing permanent business model solutions, and franchisees looking to expand are choosing acquisitions over opening new units.

Wrapping up his presentation, Johnson took the opportunity to announce the 2022 FUND Score winners: Tropical Smoothie

Cafe, The Goddard School, and Primrose Schools. Honorable mentions were The Joint Chiropractic and Mountain Mike's Pizza.

Franchisees then headed into breakout sessions that included "Adding Service (Non-Brick & Mortar) Brands To Diversify Your Portfolio," "How the Big Guys Do It—Managing People in Large Enterprises," and "Build Your Infrastructure to Grow."

The Sponsor Networking Area reopened to end the day with another round of drinks, hors d'oeuvres, and the opportunity to network and check out what the exhibitors had to offer.

Day 3, Infrastructure & Growth

The conference wrapped up with a well-attended morning closing session titled, "Build Your Infrastructure for Growth—The Right Financial Partner Is Key." Glen Helton, a multi-unit franchisee with Burger King and TGI Fridays, moderated a discussion with Luis Ibarguengoytia, a multi-brand franchisee with Pizza Hut, Cru Food & Wine Bar, Ling & Louie's, Applebee's, and Panda Express, and Nicholas Marco, a franchisee with Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spa, Drybar, and Sweat 440.

Each shared their journey into and through franchising, speaking on the impor-





tance of finding the right lending partners, the importance of a good CFO, and keeping a watchful eye on their financials along the path to growth.

Customer Satisfaction

Franchisees liked what they saw and heard at the conference.

“Having been a Multi-Unit Franchisee magazine MVP Award winner in 2018, I’ve had the pleasure of returning to MUFC each year and getting to learn something new from the insightful panels and general sessions,” said Alex Johnson, an Auntie Anne’s, Cinnabon, and Scooter’s Coffee multi-unit franchisee. “The keynote speakers are dynamic and inspiring, and the networking is unmatched. In 2021, it was because of attending MUFC I found my third brand, Scooter’s Coffee, and became a multi-store developer in a new state. My portfolio continues to grow thanks to MUFC!”

The 2024 Multi-Unit Franchising Conference will return to Caesars Forum in Las Vegas March 19–22, 2024. For more information, visit www.multiunitfranchisingconference.com in the coming months. ■

Conference by the Numbers

Aggregated statistics from the 2023 MUFC

2,200+

Total Attendees Registered

800+

Franchisees Registered

250

Brands Represented

15,000+

Operating Units

45%

2 or More Brands

21%

3 or More Brands

80%

3 or More Units

60%

10 or More Units

358

Exhibitors & Sponsors (Combined)

\$14+ Billion

Total Annual Revenue

75%

Franchisees Seeking Other Brands

70%

Single-Brand Franchisees
Seeking Other Brands

3,000

Units Opening in the Next 12 Months

No Limits to Growth

A man in a dark suit is seen from behind, walking along a path that winds through a complex maze of tall, green hedges. The path leads towards a single, well-manicured tree at the far end of the maze, which sits on the horizon line. The sky is a mix of green and yellow, with soft, white clouds. The overall scene is surreal and evokes a sense of journey and discovery.

**MUOs CARVE THEIR
OWN PATHS TO SUCCESS**

Written by M. Scott Morris

Growing as a multi-unit operator requires a mixture of discipline and flexibility. Past business experience and advice from mentors can help, but challenges are guaranteed to stack on top of one another. However, there are a variety of ways to respond.

Some rely on debt or investors to grow. Nathan Garn, president of Sizzling Platter, says, "If something comes up that's opportunistic, having the ability to tap into resources through debt in a quick way is part of our strategy."

Others, such as Tara McLain, owner of the McLain Spa Group, take a deliberate approach, using cash flow from existing businesses. "Each business builds the next business," she says.

Money is far from the only concern. Is it better to build new units or acquire them from other owners? What kind of staffing is needed? Which brand or brands best align with the development strategy? What kind of infrastructure is needed for sustained growth? The questions go on, and different operators answer in distinct ways.

There will always be a place for single-unit operators willing to put in 50- and 60-hour weeks to serve their customers and build lives for themselves and their families. However, multi-unit operators have been growing their collective share of the franchise industry. According to FRANData, there were approximately 44,000 multi-unit operators in 2022, accounting for 53.9% of the franchised units in the U.S.

PASSION FOR THE GYM

Luke Andrus, CEO of Blue Star Investments, says membership-based franchises



Luke Andrus

CEO of Blue Star Investments



have unique challenges. His company owns 32 Anytime Fitness locations in 9 states. "Fitness is hard. It's not easy to run a gym. We're selling something that, even after you buy, you don't want to use it," he says with a laugh.

Even so, his company is aggressively pursuing more locations. "Our approach is let's be the largest Anytime Fitness franchisee there is," he says. "Right now, I'd say we are in the top five, but we're kind of on that line. One day, we're number six, one day, we're number five."

Blue Star uses a mixture of cash flow and debt to purchase existing locations and build new ones. The strategy focuses heavily on buying locations for several reasons—and because they come with members. "I can close on a location in seven or eight weeks, but it takes a year for me to build a new one," says Andrus. He prefers to purchase solidly performing units because, he says, "We'd rather take them from good to great than from bad to good."

Although his team has laid out a plan for growth, Andrus says, "It never goes according to plan." As the organization grows, his team often has to stretch and cover extra work. "We're always looking ahead and strategizing on what our next moves are," he says, "and what roles we need to fill. After we stretch ourselves a little bit, we bring relief to our teams."

Before joining Blue Star, Andrus worked at Anytime Fitness corporate, where he developed an appreciation for the executive team's approach to the business. "I give credit to great leaders like Chuck Runyon and Dave Mortensen, the two founders of Anytime Fitness," he says. "I've had the privilege of knowing those guys personally and being an employee of theirs. That's taught me how I want to be with my team."



You're not punching in and punching out. You have to be a beacon of light for every member that we have."



Shehzaan Chunara

VP of The Chunara Group



Andrus says he has a deep respect for the brand and its mission to transform lives, so he's able to encourage his management team to help members stick to their wellness goals. "I have to lead this company with passion and purpose because fitness is an industry of passion and purpose," he says. "You're not punching in and punching out. You have to be a beacon of light for every member that we have."

In addition to in-person meetings, Zoom, Slack, and other platforms are used to deliver the company culture. Employees also understand what revenue targets are expected each month.

"I've got to go in there and give them direction, and I've got to lead those guys and put them in a position to succeed," Andrus says. "We also bonus based on those goals. If we're not completely clear on what we expect from them, then they can't maximize their potential with us. We're doing them a disservice if we don't do that."

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The Chunara Group of Companies started in the mid-1980s with one restaurant. Now, there are more than 160. Most are restaurants, including Dunkin', Rally's, Kale Me Crazy, and BurgerFi. The company also owns Take 5 Oil Change locations.

Over the years, the Chunara Group developed its own pathway for growth. Shehzaan Chunara, the group's vice president, says the company works with operating partners who manage the units. "Anytime we have new partners that come in with us," he says, "they are coached and guided by our existing partners who have all the experience and have been with us for years and years. Whether



...as long as we feel good about the culture and direction of the brand, that would be another step toward pushing us to get into a new brand."

It's the paperwork or the operations, we'll find a partner that's within that brand and try to pair them up so they can learn directly from them."

As a company, the Chunara Group doesn't necessarily have a set plan of units to build or buy each year. Instead, it grows organically as partners present new deals. "We had significant growth the past two years," he says. "This year, we slowed down a little bit just because of the environment we're in. We'll see where the next year takes us."

The group's approach has been refined over the years. All deals go through the partnering process, and the Chunara Group retains a 51% interest in each new unit added. The company looks for brands that have relatively small and easy-to-operate footprints. "Nowadays, we don't like to be with brands that have big buildings that are 3,000 to 3,500 square feet," says Chunara. "We like a limited scope, especially where employees are cross-trained. The same person taking your payment can

make the food or provide the service if it's an oil change." A Take 5 Oil Change, for example, requires 1,500 square feet.

The company also shies away from expensive buildout costs and mandatory remodeling plans. "To build a Dunkin' is very expensive because you've got to remodel it every 10 years," says Chunara. "It's very expensive. The same with a Popeyes."

However, joining a new brand is about more than footprints and logistics. Chunara and his father meet face-to-face with the executive team of each franchisor to get a feel for the brand's direction and leadership team. Chunara says it's understood that executives can move around. "But, generally speaking, as long as we feel good about the culture and direction of the brand, that would be another step toward pushing us to get into a new brand."

The Chunara Group doesn't get involved at the store level, so individual partners are responsible for training and leading their employees. "The way we build a culture for our partners is by ensuring they have no ceiling for growth," he says. "If they want to grow more stores, I show them that there is literally no stopping with us. You can do as much as you can possibly ask for. You can grow as many units as you want. You can sell them when you want. You can leverage them using the bank if you want to go out and buy a piece of real estate, so the options are endless for our partners to grow with us."

FROM MEMBER TO OWNER

Tara McLain's relationship with Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spa began with self-care. She started as a member and was so impressed that she bought her own franchise. That was 11 years ago. She now owns five Hand & Stone spas in Florida.

McLain has taken a slow and steady approach to growing her business. "For me, personally, I use cash flow," says the owner of the McLain Spa Group. "A lot of people acquire debt and get investors involved, which is a great way to build a multi-unit company, but I have been able to do it with just the cash flow I have coming in from each business. Each business builds the next business."

When selecting new locations, demographics play a big part in the decision. She avoids areas that have too many potential competitors because that can make it hard to hire the employees she needs. "We have relationships with the various schools in all

of our markets," she says. "We encourage our therapists to bring on their peers and friends who are interested in working for a franchise concept. We also recruit on LinkedIn and Indeed. We find people everywhere."

She adds that every employee gets a background and reference check. "We don't just bring on anybody. We try to build a team of really awesome individuals who really believe in massage therapy, in skin care, and in the wellness of their clients."

The McLain Spa Group has two managers who support the aesthetics team at all locations, and each location has a massage manager on site. In addition, an operations manager oversees the locations and assists McLain as needed. It took a while to arrive at this management structure; she found out the hard way that managers need oversight as much as other employees. "When you grow, there are challenges," she says. "It was all trial and error. You learn as you go."



When you grow, there are challenges... It was all trial and error. You learn as you go."

For a time, she considered adding locations in Georgia but thought better of it because regulations for massage businesses vary from state to state. "When do therapists have to renew their licenses, and how many CEU hours do they need to have?" says McLain. "It's not that it's hard. It's just a lot to keep up with, and regulations can change."

Instead, she's expanding her Florida business in a different way. She bought the rights to build six Body20 locations. Body20 is an emerging concept that uses electro-muscle stimulation to increase the efficiency of workouts.

"Once you know how to run a membership-based business, I think the concepts are very comparable," she says. "That definitely helps. I wouldn't want to go into a food-based franchise, for example, because I know nothing about food."

By nature, multi-unit operators are problem-solvers. The day-to-day difficulties are



Tara McLain

Owner of McLain Spa Group





\$2.6 MM AVERAGE AUV*

(all stores... not just
the top quartile)



- 8-hour operating day
- 50% royalty reduction
for first 2 years

(for area development agreements signed by 12/31/23)

*average of all stores open full year 2022



Nathan Garn

President of Sizzling Platter



real, and so are the rewards. “It’s been a journey for sure,” she says. “It has not been an easy one, but it’s been good.”

AGGRESSIVE GROWTH

True to its name, Utah-based Sizzling Platter began in 1963 with the opening of a Sizzler. The company now owns 8 brands in 17 states and 2 countries. “Five years ago, we were at 400 locations,” says Nathan Garn, Sizzling Platter’s president. “We expect by the end of the year to be over 700 and be able to build from there.”

In 2019, private equity firm CapitalSpring became a majority owner. “They’re really good partners with deep restaurant experience,” says Garn. “I see that people from the outside would view it as a corporate structure. When you’re living it, you just view it as a business. You have partners, and everyone is working together to grow.”

“If we’re fair and do what’s right for them and their team, it’s logical for them to speak highly of us and recommend us to someone else who wants to exit.”



There are going to be ups and downs, so is it a team that we feel like we can get behind?”

Garn says many longtime franchisees are reaching the point where they’re ready to sell their businesses and retire. “I would say the vast majority of the stores that we acquire are from friends of ours who just call and say, ‘Hey, this is what I’m thinking. Do you guys have any interest?’”

At Sizzling Platter, each deal is treated as a form of public relations or marketing to other franchisees who might be looking to sell. “If we buy some stores from an operator in you-name-the-state, it’s a virtual guarantee that they know every other operator in the state,” says Garn. “If we’re fair and do what’s right for them and their team, it’s logical for them to speak highly of us and recommend us to someone else who wants to exit.”

To sustain growth, the company needs dependable staff members at its stores, so they strive to retain and encourage employees who have good track records at newly acquired locations. “We work really hard to try to provide upward mobility for those people and help integrate them into our company,” says Garn. “We view that as part of the value of the business we’re buying.”

On the financial front, the company has issued a corporate bond and has access to a line of credit. Existing cash flow also helps fund purchases and construction. As Garn said above, “If something comes up that’s opportunistic, having the ability to tap into resources through debt in a quick way is part of our strategy.”

In addition to buying existing locations, Garn says it’s important to keep building new stores. “There’s energy behind that. It’s part of being a good brand partner.” In addition to Sizzler, the company’s holdings are Little Caesars, Jamba, Wingstop, Dunkin’, Jersey Mike’s Subs, Cinnabon, and Red Robin. “We have targets where we feel like we can grow from an infrastructure perspective,” says Garn, “and we want to grow where the brand resonates.”

There also are practical concerns as the company grows. “We like small footprints,” he says. “Think of Jamba, Wingstop, Little Caesars, even Dunkin’. We’re now in Jersey Mike’s. Their real estate model is very efficient and their operating model is very efficient. And we really like the focused team.”

As the business continues to expand, it’s important for Sizzling Platter’s values to align with each brand’s values and culture, because joining forces with a new brand has the potential to become a long relationship. “There are going to be ups and downs, so is it a team that we feel like we can get behind?” says Garn. “Fortunately for us, we feel that way for every brand we’re in.” ■





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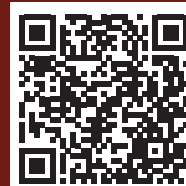
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*See item 19 in 2023 FDD for explanatory notes and details. Avg. Revenue, top 25%. This advertisement does not constitute a franchise offering or the solicitation to offer to buy a MassageLuxe franchise which may be made only after you receipt the MassageLuxe Franchise Disclosure Document, which must be registered within certain states. MassageLuxe franchises are offered solely by the means of the Franchise Disclosure Document.

A photograph of a futuristic restaurant interior. In the foreground, a young man with a backpack stands at a counter, interacting with a robot server. The robot is white and red, with a yellow helmet and a screen on its chest displaying the number '3'. The background shows other customers and a large window looking out onto a city street.

**WOULD YOU
LIKE TECH
WITH THAT?**

MUOs Embrace New Tools To Gain an Edge

Written by Colleen McMillar

Two decades ago, when Scott Scherer started his career at Jersey Mike's Subs, franchisees rang up sales on Sharp cash registers and tracked customer loyalty with punch cards. In today's brave new world, where chatbots take orders at restaurant drive-thrus and robots shuttle food, those methods from 20 years ago seem as ancient as abacuses and papyrus scrolls.

Technology has changed almost every aspect of the franchising world, from business operations and marketing to customer behaviors and expectations. Lately, the advances are coming at franchisees at such a fast and furious pace that it sometimes seems impossible to keep up. To stay competitive, franchise operators are deploying artificial intelligence, sophisticated apps, text automation, predictive analytics, and a host of other technologies aimed at improving efficiency and customer service.

At Jersey Mike's, which has more than 2,500 locations, the Sharp cash registers and punch cards were tossed long ago. Those relics have been replaced with a proprietary POS system and a mobile app that allows customers to easily keep tabs on loyalty points and to decide how they want to receive the restaurant's communications.

Tech advances also have made it possible for Jersey Mike's franchisees to more fully understand who their customers are, what days and times their restaurants will be busiest, and how to better control operational costs. "We collect tremendous amounts of data. We collect it from our own sources, as well as external sources," says Scherer, the company's chief information officer.

The information is used to help franchisees manage food and labor costs. The company also uses it in marketing. "We can anonymously follow a customer, let's say, through a Facebook ad that they click on, from there all the way through and see that they created an account with us and made a purchase," says Scherer. "We're able to use data to effectively market the right stuff to the right people."

Jersey Mike's already uses systems to analyze and improve franchisee operations and staffing, but data is only going to get better with artificial intelligence technology, Scherer says.

"We're looking into using AI to understand how many people are in the store, how many orders are pending, and then to help

give customers better pickup times so they don't get there and their food isn't ready, but also so we don't make it too early and the food gets cold," he says. "I think AI is going to be really good with things like that and labor scheduling," he says.

"We do have some pretty intensive labor software that does a good job of looking at historical data and trends, helping franchise operators build an efficient schedule so we're not overstaffing or, more importantly to us, so we don't understaff because we don't want to give up customer service."

That's the bottom line for many franchisees. It's not about just streamlining operations or addressing a labor shortage. It's about providing a better customer experience. And companies are getting increasingly more innovative as they seek ways to do that.

Robots at work

Last year, Chipotle Mexican Grill began testing "Chippy," an autonomous kitchen assistant from Miso Robotics that will make tortilla chips. At select Carl's Jr. and Hardee's locations, you'll find "Tori" taking orders. Some Popeyes and Panera Bread restaurants began testing the proprietary voice-ordering platform last year. Developed by OpenCity, Tori is said to take orders with 99.9% accuracy.

In May, Wendy's announced that it is testing an underground robot delivery system. The vision is this: Customers will drive into the restaurants' parking lots, pull into designated parking spaces next to instant pickup portals and confirm their digital orders. Then, in a matter of seconds, the food will be swooshed from the restaurant's kitchen to vehicles by robots using underground tunnels. If all goes well, the system, developed in partnership with Pipedream, a "hyperlogistics" company, should be operational at a Wendy's location later this year.

That's not the only tech update on the horizon for Wendy's. Soon, AI chatbots could be taking orders at Wendy's drive-thrus all over the country. The company worked with Google to tailor the technology, using Google Cloud's generative AI and large language models (LLMs) technology. Plans called for a June debut of Wendy's FreshAI at a location in Columbus, Ohio.

Investments in AI technology, such as automated voice-order systems, are steps in the right direction, says Wyatt Batchelor, managing partner of MBN Brands, which owns

150 QSR restaurants. (See Batchelor's MVP profile in this issue.)

The technology will be prevalent in the years to come, he says. But far less flashy modernizations have already transformed the food industry and continue to do so. "Technology touches virtually every aspect of the QSR business, whether it's the technology that's directing back-of-house staff what to cook, or it's your front-of-house systems, like your point of sale. It's all very important," says Batchelor.

Workforce management

Among today's franchisees, it's hard to overstate how embedded technology is in day-to-day operations. Take hiring, for example. The workforce management tool Harri has allowed Jersey Mike's to revamp how it recruits and onboards employees. Job seekers can now go through much of the application process digitally.

"The days of seeing someone come in and fill out an application are over. The Millennials and the group of people we're looking to hire really are engaged by the fact that you send a text message to a number and get a link to an application," Scherer says.

"You fill it out and the system will schedule an interview. You go in and do the interview, and when you're hired, you just go on to another link for all the paperwork. So all the onboarding paperwork is not done sitting at a desk with somebody with a pen and paper. The process of applying and being hired is all electronic and simple."

The introduction of so much new tech makes this an exciting time, says Batchelor. The challenge, he says, is to identify what's worth implementing, and when. "There are so many solutions for franchisees in the current market. The problem exists in selecting the proper resource that works, can be efficiently integrated, and is economical," he says.

"It takes time, effort, and resources to onboard various types of services. Once you get them onboarded, there's the process of training and incorporating the system into everyone's routine." Restaurant operators have to do their homework before making big decisions about tech, he says.

Customers in control

It's not just the food industry that's taking advantage of tech tools, nor is it just big franchises. Big Blue Swim School, which has 25



Casey Morford 
Chief Technology Officer
Big Blue Swim School

locations nationwide that teach children 12 and under, has developed proprietary technology that puts scheduling in the hands of its customers.

Through the company's website or mobile app, parents can see all open time slots, allowing them to book the most convenient times, says Casey Morford, chief technology officer. If parents want to enroll more than one child in the school, it's easy to plan simultaneous lessons. "That's kind of a big deal. Anyone with multiple kids knows how challenging it is to get your kids all in at the same time," he says.

Just as important: If scheduling conflicts arise, as they inevitably do, parents can cancel a lesson on their own and book a makeup session without having to involve a Big Blue employee. "We like to say that we want our customers to be able to cancel and reschedule a lesson in the time it takes you to sit at a stoplight—not that we want to encourage people to use their phones while driving. We just want it to be a quick and easy process where you don't have to call someone," Morford says. "We really just want to make things easy for families, especially families with kids who are constantly busy, constantly moving, and constantly on to the next thing."

Franchise operators also like that parents can access real-time updates on the progress their children are making. The easier it is

for parents to use Big Blue Swim School's technology, the more franchisees benefit, Morford says. Another benefit: franchisees offer feedback on how in-house developed technology can be made better.

"None of us is as smart as all of us," says Morford. "We get a lot of great feedback from our franchise operators in terms of feature enhancements and additions. We have a way for them to submit new feature requests as well as bugs that they find. Having a community to provide that feedback makes us all better and really just continues to advance us from where we were yesterday."

Big Blue's technology allows franchisees to access data that informs business operations, and the quality of that information will continue to get better as the tech advances. "We have an enormous amount of data around the behavior of our customers, the seasonality of the business, how our schedules look at certain points in the year. We're investing heavily into data analytics and expanding our reporting capabilities, which will really benefit our franchise operators," says Morford.

"For example, if we know the seasonality is trending upward, we want to make sure that they're staffed appropriately. And conversely, when we have periods where there's a downtrend, we don't want to overstaff. Using this data, we can better inform our franchise operators so they can optimally manage their business."

People always matter

However, while tech can do much to help franchisees, it's not the most important factor in achieving success, says Christopher Klebba, president and CEO of Northern Diamond Management, which owns 40 Smoothie King, Buff City Soap, and Altitude Trampoline Park units.

No amount of analytics will overcome not having the right people, he says. No tech tool can make up for a business owner not being present. It's clear to Klebba that franchise operators must lead by example, that they have to teach, and that they have to hold people, not technology, accountable. According to Klebba and the company's mantra, "Vision can't be taught, but it can be caught."

"If you're good at giving people life-changing skills, you're going to win in any industry. That's why we can go from smoothies to soap to restaurants to whatever, because it has nothing to do with the product," he says. "It's all about finding the right people,

changing their lives, and then letting them go get the results. Systems and data and analytics can never overcome the leader really willing to get after it, be disciplined, and let that trickle to people relentlessly."

In the end, franchisees need to know what their customers value, says Scherer, Jersey Mike's CIO. "For a concept like ours, robotics does not really come into play that much," he says. "There's currently nothing that we want to do robotically. We slice all of our meats and cheeses fresh right in front of you. We cook your cheesesteak right in front of you as well. And that's our brand, that's our culture. I don't think we want somebody to walk in and see a robot slicing their meat. They want to have that interaction. That's why they're there."

Franchisees get to know their customers in a way tech tools like robots or AI chatbots never can (at least not yet). So while a customer's food is being prepared at Jersey Mike's, says Scherer, "They're going to ask you how your kids did in the baseball game last week because they remember from the previous week that you were on your way to that baseball game. We like to share our lives with our customers. It's our brand and our culture that make us better. It's an experience rather than just a place to go pick up food." ■



Christopher Klebba 
President & CEO
Northern Diamond Management



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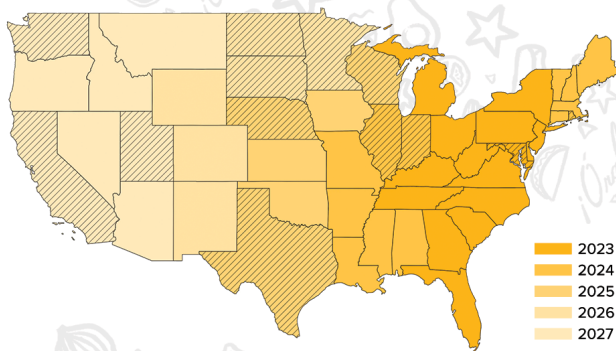


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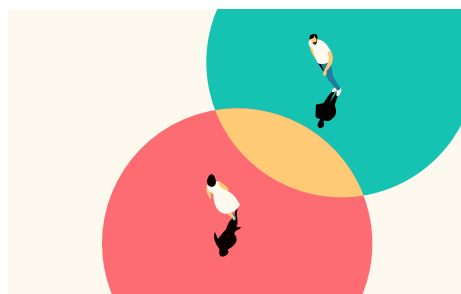
ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

CEOs on the front line

Written by **JOHN DIJULIUS**

With overall customer satisfaction in all industries dropping to 20-year lows—most likely caused by the Great Resignation—more and more CEOs have decided to spend time on the front lines to better educate themselves on what life is really like for customers and customer-facing employees.

What about you? Are you spending enough time experiencing your own customer experience?



Leaders go on customer journeys

Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi and Lyft CEO David Risher are spending time shuttling passengers. New Starbucks CEO Laxman Narasimhan is working as a barista each month. In 2022, DoorDash started requiring every employee, from engineers to CEO, to make food deliveries once a month. Khosrowshahi told the Wall Street Journal that his experience moonlighting as an Uber driver led him to “reevaluate every single assumption that we’ve made.” These leaders discovered that for the greatest understanding of customer expectations and their own customer support teams there is nothing like their own direct customer interaction.

Time in the trenches

According to a Pew Research Center survey, low pay, few opportunities for advancement, and disrespect on the job were the top reasons workers cited for quitting. For these reasons alone it is critical that senior leaders, as well as those corporate types who are

removed from the day-to-day operations of the company, spend adequate time working alongside customer-facing employees.

Going this extra mile is the only way to gain the most thorough understanding of both sides of the user experience. It is an incredible learning tool to better understand what a day in the life of both your customers and employees looks like. You also see firsthand the frustration, pain points, and bottlenecks customers and employees are dealing with. It organically leads to quicker response times in resolving customer issues and, ultimately, to higher customer satisfaction scores.

A positive customer experience always begins with a positive experience for your customer service agents. But unless you have executive sponsorship (aka buy-in), nothing will change. Having executives working on the front lines often leads to changes that improve both the customer and employee experience. And employees who feel fully supported are inspired to keep customers happy.

Workers: leaders are out of touch

According to a survey from e-learning and HR publishing platform eLearning Industry, the majority of employees feel their bosses are out of touch with what they need and want. That’s not a shock when you learn that CEOs spend only 6% of their time with frontline employees on average. Who knows better what customers want? A person who spends 6% of their time with the customer, or an employee who spends 100% of their time with the customer?

Spending time in customer-facing roles as a senior leader is no longer a luxury. It is vital to improving your customer experience and reducing employee turnover. When a CEO is present and willing to be in the trenches with their customer-facing employees—sleeves rolled up, elbow to elbow—it goes a long way toward improving employee engagement and retention.

Airbnb CEO as a host and guest

“To make a change, you have to touch the product, the policies, the service across all these different touch points,” says Brian Chesky, CEO of Airbnb. Chesky spent 6 months as a host and guest of his own business. “Last year, I started living in Airbnbs, and I stayed in like a dozen and a half over the course of 6 months,” Chesky told Fortune. He continued staying exclusively in Airbnbs for a year as the “ultimate guest” and started noticing how much the quality of the homes and experiences varied.

“You always want to work on something new, but when you have a service like ours, and so many people use it, it’s easy to forget what they actually want. You have to have their permission to do new things,” says Chesky. “A good lesson is: Fall back in love with your core business.” His embracing of the nitty-gritty meant making improvements while doing the less glamorous work; in his words, “being a glorified customer support agent.”

Final thoughts

Keep this in mind: Your primary customer is whomever you communicate with and who depends on the work you do.

Most businesses’ customer-facing employees have never been their customer, don’t know what it is like to be in their shoes across the entire customer journey, and have little empathy and compassion for how their own actions affect their customer. Yet all of these things are essential to customer relationship management, including the gaining and keeping of loyal customers.

As a result, today many of our consulting clients not only make a “Day in the Life” video for their external customers, they also make one for their internal customers to drive home this exact point. This dramatically increases employee engagement and builds a culture of empathy that, when built into your customer experience training, becomes the foundation of every world-class customer experience. ■

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

HIRING BLUES?

OUTSOURCING MAY BE YOUR BEST BET

Written by **GEORGE LESSMEISTER**

Does finding staff for your franchise business feel like a never-ending poker game trying to beat the odds? You post an ad and hope that luck deals you great applicants. Yet the deck is stacked against you with unemployment running at only 3.7% and job openings in the industry continuing to outpace hiring.

The waiting and hoping approach may not get you any applicants at all, much less the high-quality candidates you want. And how much time can you afford to spend on the search process? Maybe it's time to start a strategic outsource approach.

WHAT DOES OUTSOURCING HIRING LOOK LIKE?

Most people associate staffing companies with temps and hourly hires for the office. The reality is full-service staffing agencies also work in niche industries, including hospitality. Staffing firms are a great way to find permanent management and executive-level staff as well as hourly line team members.

You provide the job description, and the agency handles the recruiting, screening, and initial interviews. The agency then provides you with a slate of qualified, vetted candidates, and you complete the final interviews. Partnering with a recruiting firm reduces the time and resources needed to make a good hire, allowing you to focus on other areas of your operation.

WHEN SHOULD I OUTSOURCE HIRING?

Several situations exist where it makes sense to bring in outside help to fill your open positions. Is your business rapidly expanding?

Do you have questions about your hiring team? Is the search confidential or for a highly specialized role? Has there been a lot of turnover in this role? If any of these situations apply to your business, using a professional recruiting agency could be what you need.

RAPID EXPANSION

If your business is growing and opening new locations, you have a lot on your plate. You need to hit the ground running with trained staff in your new sites without compromising service at your existing locations. When you need to make multiple hires, especially at the management or executive level, a trusted hiring partner can get you the quality candidates you need while freeing you up to handle the rest of the expansion details.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR HIRING TEAM

Let's be honest. Sometimes, you're just not sure if your hiring team is up to scratch. They may be bringing you plenty of candidates, but if those applicants aren't a good fit, you're back to square one.

A recruiting partner with deep roots in the hospitality industry understands the business and knows how to recognize great talent. In addition, through connections built up over years, a good recruiting agency will have a network of experienced passive candidates who may not be actively searching for work but are open to offers. These candidates often bring stability and maturity to a workplace, as they are coming to a job out of sincere interest in the opportunity, not just the need for a job.

NEED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY

Sometimes you must keep an opening under wraps, especially for C-suite positions. You can't publicize the opportunity, but an outside recruiting agency can cast a wide net for you. If the agency has strong links in the industry, your search can be streamlined, as they may already have candidates in the pipeline who would meet your criteria.

HYPER-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

For a role requiring unique expertise, using job boards to find a candidate with a specific skill set is like looking for a needle in a haystack. An outside recruiting agency with experience in the hospitality industry can do the sorting and sifting for you, finding qualified candidates while saving you time and resources.

HIGH TURNOVER IN THIS ROLE

We all know that turnover among hourly staff is common, but if a salaried role undergoes continuous turnover, there may be a cultural mismatch between the candidates and the company. If your internal hiring team is continually bringing in candidates who ultimately don't match your company culture, you're going to have turnover. An objective third-party hiring agency may be able to help break that cycle by studying your company culture and finding candidates who would be an excellent match.

NEXT STEPS

Once you know when to outsource hiring needs, finding a recruiting partner you can trust is your next step. Look for a partner who will take the time to learn about your hiring goals and create a plan for finding the employees you need. ■

George Lessmeister is CEO and founder of LGC Hospitality, a national staffing firm headquartered in Indianapolis. LGC has offices in more than 40 U.S. cities. Team members work with hotel and restaurant leadership to place executives and temporary workers.



BEYOND BREAKEVEN

Plan for profit, don't just hope for it

Written by **BARBARA NUSS**

What is the most important financial skill you need to build an infrastructure for growth in your business? Benchmarking? Cash flow forecasting? Ratio analysis? Creating ninja-level spreadsheet formulas?

In our experience, the answer is none of the above. When it comes to financial management, reasonable minds may differ, and do. For us, it's mastering Breakeven Plus, a four-course series we've developed as the fastest and most effective way to hone what I call your "profit maker's intuition." Once you've dialed up that intuition, your ability to make the right decisions that lead to more profitable growth goes way up as well.

When savvy business owners have a decision to make, they don't spend hours agonizing over their numbers. They have what seems to be a gut sense about money-making choices that guide how they invest in and change their operations. But what we call a gut sense is actually a deep knowledge of how their actions around pricing and market positioning affect volume, and how operational investments and changes affect profit. This is knowledge so ingrained that it becomes almost intuitive—which enables them to act quickly, decisively, and proactively, protecting, if not bolstering, profits.

Are their decisions always brilliant? Maybe not, but they make brilliant decisions frequently enough to vastly outperform their competition.

How does it work?

So what is Breakeven Plus, and how does it differ from breakeven analysis? Breakeven is a formula that calculates the sales needed to hit the breakeven point, meaning a business is neither making nor losing money.

Breakeven Plus uses this breakeven formula as a starting point, adding *targeted profits* into the mix. The result represents the sales needed to reach your profit goal. Since profits are the lifeblood of any business at every stage of its life, why not set your goals based on the profit you desire and require?

In the short run, this analysis allows business owners to see how changes in price and costs affect their target profit and the volume needed to earn it. When analyzing expansion opportunities and planning for inflation or recession, we've found that mastering Breakeven Plus is a game changer. For example, it allows you to determine answers to questions such as:

- If we increase our prices, how much can volume decrease before losing any profits?
- If we cut prices to stay competitive, how much additional volume is needed?

- As we grow, what investments will we need to make in technology, equipment, or people?
- How much in sales do these investments need to create to not only cover their costs but make a profit?
- In inflationary times, if our suppliers increase their prices, what do we need to pass along, absorb, or cut to protect our profit?

Sense a theme here? Profits are not optional. Always plan for profit. Don't just hope for it.

Profit growth mindset

For the long-term viability of a business, seasoned business owners shift from thinking about what it takes to earn a profit to deciding how to best use profit to grow the value of their business. Profit is an important source of capital for every business. How much of it is already earmarked for debt repayment? What assets will you need more of, and will there be enough profit to reinvest in assets to support the growing business? If not, how much debt should you take on? How much will be distributed to owners as compensation, draws, or dividends, and when?

With a profit growth mindset, you can ask and answer these questions strategically because you are intentional about how you use profit and create your own pathway to growth.

Finally, when it comes to creating value for your business, profits are the key. Strong profits drive higher offers from prospective buyers, allowing owners to exit in style.

Bottom line

As an owner or investor, your ability to make smart, swift, profitable decisions is critical. If you are a manager, department head, salesperson, or a career builder, your ability to advance is based on your skill at building smart business cases for your causes. Those with a strong profit maker's intuition and mastery of Breakeven Plus will win out over those who don't. ■

Barbara Nuss is president and founder of Profit Soup, a financial education organization specializing in providing services to franchisors and franchisees to enable them to trust their numbers, focus on priorities, make better decisions, and earn more profit. She can be reached at barbara.nuss@profitsoup.com or 206-282-3888.





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BALANCING ACT

SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE

Written by **CAROL SCHLEIF**

Whipsaw (verb, informal): to subject (someone or something) to two very difficult or intense and often opposite forces either simultaneously or in quick succession.

If “whipsaw” doesn’t sum up the headlines from the past couple of years, we don’t know what does. It seems almost unfathomable that, less than 24 months ago, all the rage was over SPACs, meme stocks, and cryptocurrencies, helping to drive a raucous and risk-on market throughout much of 2021.

Barely 12 months later, as 2022 dawned, both stock and bond markets crafted the worst dual declines in nearly 100 years thanks to the invasion of Ukraine, double-digit inflation as the economy shook the spiderwebs out of its supply chain, and a sharp set of interest rate hikes that moved short rates from near zero to near 5% in less than a year.

Then 2023 emerged with a bit more optimism. As of this writing, tech stocks are sporting triple-digit gains from their recent bottoms, the S&P 500 has crossed back into bull market territory, and anything related to artificial intelligence is carrying on so exuberantly that it brings back memories of the dot.com era.

THE LONG VIEW

As headlines vacillate wildly from bullish to bearish and back again, what is a long-term investor to do? First, admit to yourself that market timing doesn’t work over the long term. Numerous studies show that those who trade too often fare substantially worse than if they had stayed put. Transaction fees, taxes, and the need to be right about both selling and buying at the right time get in the way of success. Even prognosticators who have been at this for decades are seldom right consistently. Many would-be soothsayers will admit that markets are unpredictable because they move up and down in response to the aggregate of human decisions.

The time may never “feel” right to get started. My career started in the early 1980s, and the one constant is that every year there have been dire headlines that would have prevented one from wanting to invest. Yet, the Dow Jones Industrial Average has grown from just above 1,000 back then to its current level, now approaching 35,000 as of mid-July. We frequently see new investors stay on the sidelines waiting for that “perfect” time to step in, when everything “feels” comfortable—only to realize that they’ve missed a sharp uptick and then try to wait for some pullback to get in. When the pullback comes, however, it still feels too scary, so they hesitate. Rinse and repeat.

FINDING YOUR COMFORT LEVEL

There are many ways to step in carefully and programmatically to ease this tendency to freeze. First, develop a long-term target based on what “fully invested and diversified in a normal market” looks like. Then, buy an initial slice of each asset category, setting calendar targets to invest consistent amounts on a regular basis (dollar-cost averaging). This simple programmatic approach can help take the emotion out of it. Better yet, once your comfort level with how your

portfolio responds and behaves takes hold, you can always accelerate if particular markets correct, or delay if they become too frothy. It’s amazing what putting some guardrails around your plan can do to ensure that you are able to participate in what Einstein reportedly called the greatest invention: the value of compounding.

As you are setting your mental expectations, it is important to remember that the financial media do not exist to make you feel comfortable about your portfolio. In much the same way that health magazines in January each year don’t make us confident in our skin, weight, workout regimen, or hair thickness, the financial media is there to gather eyes and ears, not necessarily to reassure us.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As you develop and implement your plan, focus on the factors you have some control over. For example, opting for low-cost mutual funds, ETFs, or trades; limiting taxable turnover; ensuring you are diversified by asset type, geography, and style; and ensuring that any funds you will need to cover expenses in the next two to three years are *not* put at risk in markets. Taking these steps can help you craft a plan that will aid your ability to withstand potentially being whipsawed down the road. ■

Carol Schleif is chief investment officer at BMO Family Office, a wealth management advisory firm delivering investment management services, trust, deposit, and loan products and services through BMO Harris Bank. To learn more, visit www.bmofamilyoffice.com.



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LEASE NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES

How to secure a favorable lease structure

Written by **JASON FEFER**

For franchise businesses, the lease is more than just a contract—it's the foundation of your operation, and it has to be strong enough to support your growth. From understanding the implications of tenant improvement allowances to negotiating optimal exit clauses, the way you structure your lease can significantly affect your long-term success.

The lease negotiation journey might seem daunting, but when approached with a methodical strategy and a well-informed mindset, it can lead to a deal that bolsters your franchise's longevity and success. It's more than just signing on the dotted line—it's a blend of art and strategy, where every step has profound implications for your business's future.

A successful negotiation begins with comprehensive market knowledge. Start by gaining an intimate understanding of the local real estate landscape. What are the prevailing rental prices? What terms are common in lease contracts? Which are the bustling business districts, and which are the quieter ones? This knowledge is your first tool of negotiation, enabling you to assess proposals with a critical eye and propose counteroffers that are grounded in market realities.

Couple this with the power of your brand. A reputable, proven brand can significantly enhance your bargaining position, offering the landlord assurance of a reliable tenant and potential customer draw. Use this to your advantage. Discuss your successes, share data on footfall and customer loyalty, and

show why your business is a great addition to their property.

In the dance of negotiation, it's not just about what you bring to the table, but how you present it. Relationship-building is a key undercurrent in any successful negotiation. Establish a positive rapport with your landlord. Open and maintain clear lines of communication, show understanding toward their interests, and demonstrate your commitment as a reliable, long-term tenant. This relationship can pave the way for more favorable lease terms and make future renegotiations smoother.

Bring in the expertise of a real estate advisor or broker. Their industry experience, negotiation acumen, and existing relationships with landlords can be invaluable. They can provide insight into aspects of the lease that you may overlook, negotiate terms that align with your business needs, and ensure that your lease is free from potential pitfalls.

In the end, remember that there's no one-size-fits-all approach. Lease negotiation is an art, not a science. Every negotiation will be unique, influenced by a host of factors, such as the property type, location, market conditions, and the personalities involved. Yet, with a deep understanding of your market, flexibility in your approach, leveraging your brand power, and ensuring robust protection of your interests through well-negotiated lease provisions, you're well on your way to securing a lease that lays a solid foundation for your franchise's long-term success.

Negotiating favorable rent rates, escalations, and lease durations

When stepping into the world of franchising, the first task franchisees face is to secure a lease that supports their business plan. For example, many franchisees aim to have their rent at or under 8.5% of their gross revenue. Every business and location may have vastly different overhead, so it's crucial to negotiate a base rent that aligns with your expected revenue as it relates to your expected overhead.

A common, and often effective, negotiation strategy is to offer to sign a longer lease term in exchange for a lower initial rent. This provides a landlord with the comfort of predictable income, but decreases your flexibility to leave the location should things go sideways in the future.

Another strategy to secure favorable lease terms is to offer to tie rent escalations—which vary drastically between different businesses and markets—to performance metrics or the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Remember, landlords usually own real estate to hedge against market factors such as inflation, so if you can help them achieve their goals, they're much more likely to return the favor. ■

For more tips and advice from this author—on tenant improvement allowances, the power of strategic exit clauses and renewal options, and a glossary of 20 essential lease terms for franchisees—see our online newsletter, the Multi-Unit Franchise Real Estate Report, at www.franchising.com.

Jason Fefer is an associate director of Marcus & Millichap's Net Leased Property Group on a large team alongside his partners Robert Narchi and Tyler Bindi. They structure sale-leasebacks and negotiate leases on behalf of some of the largest franchisees across all sectors, including the restaurant, automotive, and retail space. He can be reached at 818-669-2388 or jason.fefer@marcusmillichap.com.



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INVEST IN TECH

MAXIMIZE THE VALUE OF YOUR BUSINESS

Written by **CARTY DAVIS**

Multi-unit operators focused on running their business can lose sight of key drivers that improve financial results. Investing in and incorporating up-to-date technology is more important than ever, especially if you are considering a sale of your business in the near future. To remain relevant among the competition and maximize the value of the business upon sale, sellers should ensure that the technology for their business is keeping pace in today's dynamic environment.

Buyers also will want to ensure that any acquisition target has the appropriate technological infrastructure to compete. If it doesn't, sellers should not expect buyers to pay top value because buyers do not give sellers credit for initiatives that they implement post-sale.

Complete digital platform

The early winners during the Covid pandemic were brands that invested in technology. The best performers included concepts that had a complete digital platform offering online ordering, mobile ordering, loyalty, and third-party delivery capabilities. Valuations for brands that were not digitally ready have lagged behind brands that invested in technology early on.

These investments have continued to pay dividends as off-premises sales, particularly dining, continue to be favored by many post-Covid. Customers have become accustomed to the accuracy, speed, and convenience online and mobile ordering provide. Established leaders in technological innovation typically practice continual improvement to stay ahead of the competition and customer demand.

Big data and AI

To remain relevant among consumers and in the M&A market, brands must continue to evolve by investing in technological advancements, including big data and AI. Right now,

we are in the initial phase of AI's impact on business. Successful adoption of new ideas and processes will accelerate change at all levels of your organization at a pace no one has ever experienced. Brands and companies that best figure out how to incorporate and implement AI solutions into their businesses most quickly will have a clear advantage.

McDonald's has opened its first highly automated restaurant in Texas. The unit is smaller than the brand's average footprint and eliminates staff interaction with customers. Orders are placed through the app or a kiosk, and a conveyor belt distributes them through a drive-up window. Similarly, Wendy's is moving to an AI-enabled drive-thru, and Taco Bell is implementing an automated factory-like store. The best brands and leaders will use AI to reduce costs, enhance the experience, and generate a more cohesive growth strategy. These advances are still a work in progress, but expect rapid changes and adoption of technology that works.

Operators have been able to use behavior-related data gleaned from apps to provide customers with better, more consistent experiences at their stores, resulting in revenue growth. In real time, apps can provide customers with rewards, promotions, and enticements to try new products. Location services are another game changer for operators who use them. Apps and companies providing comprehensive location analytics can be extremely useful for operators looking to understand their customers and attract new ones. Location apps also help with site selection and can even reach potential candidates for employment.

Companies also are using technology to improve and enhance their relationships with employees. Technology can make scheduling, benefits, and PTO much easier to manage. Shift and store managers will be more successful as they become more comfortable with using tech tools.

Capital markets and technology

As technological innovation accelerates, buyers, risk capital, and debt will flow to the brands and franchisees that have best adapted to changing technology. Those with the management and staff to incorporate and drive future innovations will cut costs, improve service, and enhance the unit economics of their brands. Brands and their franchisees that have developed a strong technological infrastructure recognize that these enhancements improve not only the day-to-day management of the business, but also their prospects for a successful capital raise or premium valuation upon exit. If sellers want a premium in an exit or best alternatives in a capital raise, it is best to invest and incorporate enhancements before going to market. Buyers and capital sources rarely give credit for what might happen, especially when it comes to proposed technology upgrades and accompanying improvements.

Conclusion

What should brands and operators do now? First, allocate time and resources to evaluate different technology-related solutions. Pay attention to what is being done successfully at competing brands and in different, but related, industries. Make sure what you are implementing has been tested and provides value. Be an early adopter, but not a guinea pig, and be prepared to make corrections and adjustments.

Failure to adapt won't result only in reduced sales and profitability—it could make your brand obsolete. To maintain market share, brand leaders must focus on what's next. Implementing new technology enhancements is not a one-time undertaking. Technology is ever-changing and demands continual improvement, which is particularly important if you are looking to maximize the value of your business upon sale. ■

Carty Davis is a partner with C Squared Advisors, a boutique investment bank that has completed hundreds of transactions in the multi-unit franchise and restaurant space. Since 2004, he's been an area developer for Sport Clips in North Carolina with more than 70 units. Contact him at 910-528-1931 or carty@c2advisorygroup.com.

FRANCHISING UNDER THREAT

GET INVOLVED TO SAVE THE BUSINESS MODEL!

Written by **MATTHEW HALLER**

In many ways, the paths and opportunities for growth in franchising have never been greater. With developments in point-of-sale technology, improvements in marketing techniques, and advances in bookkeeping technology, there is no shortage of innovation blazing a trail forward for the franchise business model. However, for every powerful innovation, it seems there is an equally powerful threat to franchising coming out of Washington, D.C., and state capitals across the country.

Legislation regulating the private relationship between franchisor and franchisee, politically appointed bureaucrats making decisions for QSR owners, inquiries from the FTC designed to build a one-sided narrative based on a small number of anecdotes, and more are threatening the franchise model every day. The IFA is on the front lines of these fights, educating members of Congress, federal regulators, elected officials, and even franchisors and franchisees around the country on how franchising is a force for good in nearly every community.

The aggression against franchising is often born from a lack of understanding, including the common misperception that franchises are all big businesses and should be regulated as such. Franchising is a model created for growth and to reach new markets and consumers. This business model has the unique power to provide aspiring entrepreneurs with the ability to own their own businesses when they might not have had the tools or ideas to do so on their own. The model bolsters business ownership around traditionally underrepresented communities. Franchising has led to the creation of nearly 800,000 businesses and, as IFA's 2023 Franchising Economic Outlook showed, continues to grow at historic rates.

Franchising wouldn't be seeing this growth if its business model weren't working as well as it does. We're not saying franchis-

ing is perfect, and there are certainly areas for improvement, but the proposals directly targeting the business model are misguided at best. At worst they are an outright attack on the business equity you've worked so hard to build.



Take, for instance, the case of Arkansas House Bill 1783. Before the IFA and hundreds of brands spoke out against it, the bill was written to insert the state government into the commercial contract between private parties. It would have been the most extreme franchise regulation of any state. Fortunately, after the franchising community spoke out, the bill that was signed into law was merely a technical change to existing law; the worst of the proposal was spared. Unfortunately, what starts in one state tends to spread to others as we have seen with California's FAST Act. This is but one example of the many significant state-level threats that have arisen this year.

Now, franchising in California is facing yet another piece of legislation, Assembly Bill 1228. This legislation, which passed the Assembly on May 31 and was being considered in the Senate at press time, would establish joint liability between California QSR franchise brands with 100 or more locations nationwide and their independent franchisees. This is a direct retaliation for California voters speaking out to put the

FAST Act on hold until they can have a say. Joint liability would erode the heart of the franchise model and threaten the livelihoods and independence of tens of thousands of restaurants in the state.

And in Washington, D.C., the FTC just finished collecting comments through a recent RFI that consisted of a series of 75 questions on "Franchisors Exerting Control Over Franchisees and Workers" and clearly written with an outcome in mind. It is apparent this process was designed to yield incomplete and anecdotal accounts of franchise relationships rather than a holistic picture of franchising as it exists across the 800,000 franchised businesses in more than 300 industries. In addition, it could be used for future rulemaking against the franchise business model. To counter this, hundreds of franchisors, franchisees, and suppliers weighed in to share their positive franchise experiences, helping provide a more accurate and balanced approach than the FTC seeks.

With all these challenges and more on the horizon, the situation can seem daunting. But it doesn't have to be. As we know, franchising creates opportunities for growth unlike any other way of doing business, and the single most important infrastructure for protecting your business is advocacy. Elected officials do not understand your business the way you do, and your voice makes the difference. Whether it's the desired outcome in Arkansas, Californians stopping the FAST Act, or the franchising community working to ensure the FTC doesn't harm their businesses, speaking out to policymakers and advocating for the issues that affect your livelihood day in and day out can change the game.

To this end, IFA is here to help connect you with your government representatives and increase your impact in any way we can, from our grassroots network of franchise advocates known as the Franchise Action Network (FAN), to our Open for Opportunity Roadshow, to our flagship D.C. event, the IFA Advocacy Summit this September. Franchising needs you, your voice, and your advocacy to continue growing, and with it, your business will thrive and grow too. ■

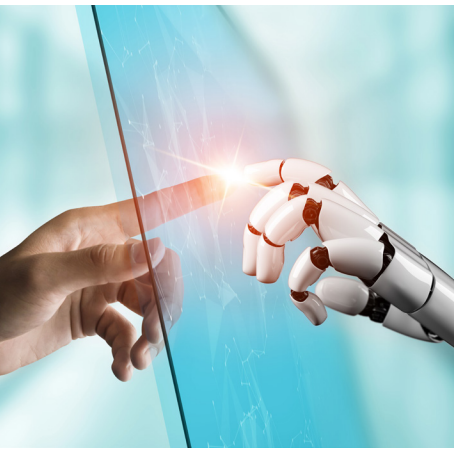
Matthew Haller is president and CEO of the International Franchise Association.

Disruptive Technologies

Multi-unit zees are key to optimization

Written by **DARRELL JOHNSON**

As a research company, we have the benefit of having lots of confidential information shared with us. Over time, it allows us to see less obvious trends that develop slowly, often barely perceptible to most, but that have important implications during times when dramatic changes confront franchising. With the impact that artificial intelligence (AI) tools will have, we are facing a dramatic change today. Two of the greatest concerns are the speed with which it is coming and the likely missteps it might cause.



AI is getting the most buzz of any technology ever, and we’ve had a lot of them. The consulting firm McKinsey estimates that more than half of worker hours worldwide are spent on tasks that can be automated. Of particular note to those of us who manage the execution of the franchise business model, McKinsey notes that about 75% of the potential value from generative AI will affect customer operations, marketing and sales, software engineering, and research and development. All of these functions are central to how we manage the franchise business model. Further, technology historically has solved efficiency issues that affected workers with less skill and experience. Generative AI is aimed directly at knowledge workers.

What’s on managers’ minds?

What does this have to do with our research observations? Earlier this year, we were asked by a Fortune 50 company to survey franchisor management teams. Our client wanted to understand what most concerned them. Here’s what we learned.

Ahead of the “risk of prolonged high inflation and economic downturn” (56%), they selected the rise of disruptive technology as their most concerning trend (58%). Within their disruptive technology responses were three frequent mentions: developing advanced analytics (62%), enhancing cybersecurity (48%), and automating work (45%). Two of these three were aimed directly at AI.

Multi-units and AI

Why is that significant to multi-unit operators? It’s easy to see what is happening on the surface of the water, in this case the growth of multi-unit (MU) operators over time. Understanding what is happening below the surface requires a better understanding of trends. I turn to the evolution of MUs and their importance as we confront AI.

MUs weren’t universally desirable decades ago largely because of the concern that they would be too hard to manage as they got bigger. That gave way for most franchisors as they saw the value of MUs in their systems. Their voices carried a lot of weight with other

franchisees, and they became more appealing to most franchisors.

Over time, MUs expanded into multiple brands, which presented the next evolutionary adjustment for franchisors. Initially, this expansion also was viewed skeptically, whether for competitive or simply selfish reasons. Many franchisors tried to discourage this trend in various ways with their own franchisees, but soon found franchisees of other systems attractive because of their experience at executing franchise businesses. So multi-unit and multi-brand franchising continued to grow. MUs gradually gained more negotiating leverage with brands, including experimentation with new products and processes.

Franchisors increasingly turned to MUs to improve their systems. What started as a take-it-or-leave-it relationship has evolved into a relationship where MU understanding of what works and doesn’t work is integral to how many systems adapt and expand. That brings me to another lesson from the Fortune 50 survey: MUs are key decision-makers for brand-wide technology strategies. See the table below for survey results.

Conclusion

AI is coming quickly, and that means risks such as privacy concerns, algorithmic bias, bad data, and simply wrong decisions. Having knowledgeable, experienced business people on the front line will increase the likelihood that missteps will be few and benefits many. ■

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.

HOW TECHNOLOGY DECISIONS ARE MADE					
Q: Can you rank the importance of key decision-makers when it comes to brandwide technology strategies and funding? (1 = least important, 5 = most important)					
	1	2	3	4	5
Franchisor’s technology dept.	7.7%	11.5%	23.1%	38.5%	19.2%
Franchisor’s executive office	7.7%	11.5%	7.7%	23.1%	50.0%
Technology advisory committee	15.4%	19.2%	30.8%	23.1%	11.5%
Marketing advisory committee	19.2%	26.9%	15.4%	19.2%	19.2%
Multi-unit franchisees	11.5%	11.5%	11.5%	30.8%	34.6%
Franchisee advisory board	28.0%	16.0%	20.0%	20.0%	16.0%



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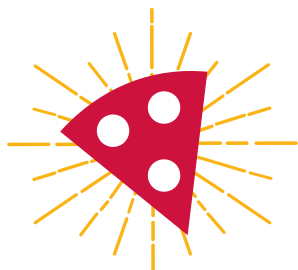
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**Marco's is the fastest-growing pizza brand based on the YOY unit growth, according to the 2021 NRN Top 500 Restaurant Ranking LSR Pizza Segment.
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