

Global Franchise

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EXCEPTIONAL
EDUCATION
FRANCHISES



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OF QSR
EXPANSION**

**FOUNDER TO
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Innovation, growth, and a final call!

Welcome to this issue of *Global Franchise*, where we explore the ideas, people, and opportunities shaping the future of international franchising as we near the conclusion of 2025.

Education is booming worldwide, and our lead feature looks at how brands committed to learning are evolving to meet the growing global demand for accessible, high-quality services. We also turn our focus to the QSR sector, where non-traditional spaces – from airports and campuses to leisure destinations and even military bases – are fast becoming the next growth frontier. We also spoke to QSR brands seamlessly blending high tech with good old-fashioned customer service and hospitality, a winning blend that's going to carry this exciting sector into the next decade.

Technology continues to transform how franchises operate, and in our deep dive into the franchise tech stack we break down the tools redefining everything from customer engagement to operational efficiency.

If you're after a wider perspective on international expansion, our European report (page 32) explores where momentum is building and what's driving growth across this diverse continent of opportunity.

But before you dive in, a quick but important reminder: **time's running out to enter your brand into the Global Franchise Awards 2026**. These awards celebrate the very best in global franchising from breakthrough brands to established international powerhouses and recognize who's setting new standards for excellence. This is your chance to be seen, celebrated, and part of something truly international. Full entry details are on page 74 – don't miss your moment.

At *Global Franchise*, we're proud to be a peer-driven magazine built on shared experiences, expert insights, and honest conversations from across the international franchising community. Whether you're growing a brand, exploring a new opportunity, or simply keeping an eye on what's next, I hope this issue leaves you informed, inspired, and ready for the exciting road that lies ahead.

Happy reading,

Charlotte Smith

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 @globalfranchise

**NEXT
ISSUE
ON
SALE:**

February
2026

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Enter for a chance to be judged best in the world
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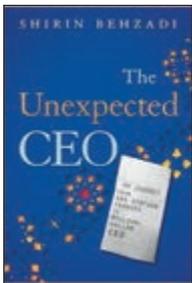
READING



The Insider's Guide to Innovation at Microsoft

Dean Carignan and JoAnn Garbin

The Insider's Guide to Innovation at Microsoft lifts the curtain on how one of the world's most influential tech giants tackles breakthrough ideas – and occasional missteps. Written by two seasoned Microsoft innovation leaders, the book reveals real strategies and repeatable behaviors behind successes like Xbox and the rise of Bing in AI, while candidly exploring lessons from projects like Windows Mobile. Packed with exclusive interviews and practical insights, it's a compelling playbook for anyone aiming to build and lead innovation that lasts.



The Unexpected CEO

Shirin Behzadi

From fleeing Iran as a teenager with nothing but a suitcase to leading a billion-dollar franchise empire, Shirin Behzadi's story is as gripping as it is inspiring. *The Unexpected CEO* chronicles her journey from a Los Angeles gas station

THE GUIDE

Global Franchise USEFUL RESOURCES

From smart business books to must-go global events, here's what should be on your radar next



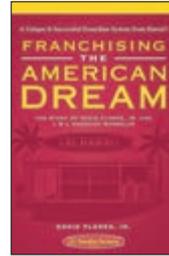
to the helm of Home Franchise Concepts, where she expanded to 1,700 territories and achieved a nine-figure exit. Behzadi blends memoir and business playbook, sharing lessons on resilience, leadership, and strategic growth forged through poverty, illness, and upheaval. Her systems-thinking approach to franchising makes this a powerful read for entrepreneurs seeking purpose beyond profit.



Different: How the Power of Different and AI Can Amplify Your Brand

Varsha Amin

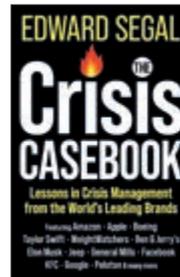
Varsha Amin's *Different* is a bold manifesto for anyone who has ever felt underestimated. Blending personal storytelling, brand strategy, and practical AI insights, Amin shows how individuality isn't a weakness but the key to influence. From her own journey with dyslexia to advising tech giants like Apple and Microsoft, she proves that authenticity drives success. Packed with real examples and actionable tools, *Different* empowers readers to harness AI and personal branding to transform invisibility into impact. A timely, inspiring read for leaders, creatives, and underrepresented voices ready to stand out.



Franchising the American Dream

Eddie Flores, Jr.

Eddie Flores, Jr.'s *Franchising the American Dream* is equal parts memoir and business guide, sharing how he grew L&L Hawaiian Barbecue from a single Hawaii drive-inn he bought for his mother into a 230-location franchise across the USA and Japan. Flores writes with warmth and candour about his immigrant journey, the risks he took, and the unconventional choices that put franchisees first. His story is both inspiring and practical, offering encouragement and real-world lessons for anyone chasing their own version of the American dream – a concept that can be embraced in the UK too.

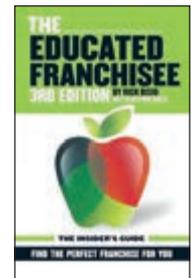


The Crisis Casebook

Edward Segal

Edward Segal's *The Crisis Casebook* is a smart, timely guide to navigating the unpredictable world of PR disasters. Backed by endorsements from former White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry and columnist Eleanor Clift, Segal

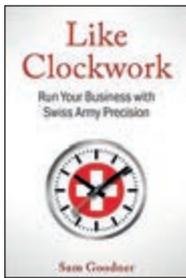
draws on decades of experience with brands like Ford, Humana, and Ogilvy PR to unpack real-world crises and the lessons behind them. From social media firestorms to botched apologies, he reveals what companies must do – and avoid – to protect their reputation and future. Packed with practical strategies and cautionary tales, this book is essential reading for leaders everywhere, including UK businesses facing today's volatile media landscape.



The Educated Franchisee

Rick Bisio, Mike Kohler, and Jennifer Gehlhar

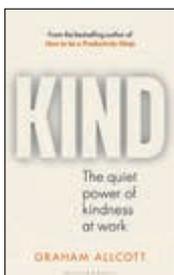
The Educated Franchisee is an easy-to-follow, practical guide for anyone considering franchise ownership. Instead of drowning readers in jargon, it lays out a clear, step-by-step process for finding a business that truly fits your lifestyle, goals, and values. The authors share real-world insights on evaluating opportunities, avoiding costly mistakes, and asking the right questions before you commit. Whether you're leaving corporate life or starting fresh, this book makes the complex world of franchising feel approachable to aspiring franchise owners worldwide.



Like Clockwork

Sam Goodner

In *Like Clockwork*, serial entrepreneur and former Swiss Army officer Sam Goodner shows how to replace chaos with precision and build a business that thrives long after its founder steps back. Drawing on lessons from leading multi-million-dollar companies and his service in the elite Swiss Mountain Grenadiers, Goodner shares practical strategies for creating systems, motivating teams, and scaling with discipline. His military insights translate into clear, actionable principles that any leader can apply. Whether you're an entrepreneur or a manager, this book is a smart, engaging guide to running a company that operates with Swiss-watch reliability year after year.



KIND

Graham Allcott

Category winner of the 2025 Business Book Awards, *KIND* by Graham Allcott makes a compelling case that kindness isn't weakness – it's a strategic

Global Franchise AWARDS 2026

— Recognizing excellence —

Global Franchise Awards 2026

The Global Franchise Awards celebrate the standout brands redefining what excellence looks like in franchising. With a respected global judging panel and categories across every sector, a win signals credibility and opens doors to new investors, partners, and expansion opportunities, culminating in a high-profile gala at the IFA Convention in Las Vegas. Enter, be seen, and unlock your next chapter of growth. Turn to page 74 for details on how to get involved.



advantage. Drawing on psychology, neuroscience, and management research, Allcott shows how empathy and trust create psychological safety, which in turn fuels creativity, sharper decision-making, and stronger employee loyalty. Far from fluffy, kindness emerges as a 21st-century leadership superpower. With practical tips and “Eight Principles of Kindfulness at Work,” this insightful guide helps leaders build cultures where people thrive, and proves that profitability and compassion can grow hand in hand.

NETWORKING

IFA Annual Convention

The biggest date in the global franchising calendar – and for good reason. It's where franchisors, franchisees and suppliers come together to swap ideas, stay ahead of emerging trends and celebrate everything the industry is achieving. Across three packed days, delegates can dive into practical workshops, inspiring keynotes and smart business strategies designed to help brands grow with confidence. It's also one of the best



places to build real connections with people who understand the franchising journey. Everything you need – education, support and community – is all under one roof. The 2026 event lands in Las Vegas from February 23-25.

Multi-Unit Franchising Conference (MUFC)

If you're focused on scaling your franchise footprint, the Multi-Unit Franchising Conference – taking place March 24-27, 2026 in Las Vegas – is where you'll want to be. Built by multi-unit franchisees for their peers, the event delivers expert sessions that go beyond theory – you'll find spotlight tracks on everything from operations to tech, real estate, and leadership. With 300+ franchisor brands exhibiting, it's also a smart place to explore your next concept or brand partner. And the networking? Unmatched. Whether

you're just adding your second unit or running multiple brands, MUFC provides the community, insights, and inspiration you need to take things to the next level.

Franchise Expo Paris

Franchise Expo Paris has long been a launchpad for franchise success across Europe – and in 2026, it's set to raise the bar again. From March 14-16, Paris Expo Porte de Versailles will bring together over 500 French and international brands, thousands of investors and ambitious entrepreneurs looking to scale across the continent. It's a one-stop hub for discovering growth opportunities, mastering expansion strategies and building relationships that open doors far beyond France. Whether you're entering Europe for the first time or accelerating regional development, this is where the next chapter of your franchise journey begins.



UPCOMING EVENTS

2025

EMERGING FRANCHISOR CONFERENCE

November 10-12, 2025 | Nashville, TN

2026

IFA ANNUAL CONVENTION

February 23-25, 2026 | Las Vegas, NV

MULTI-UNIT FRANCHISING CONFERENCE

March 24-27, 2026 | Las Vegas, NV

INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE SHOW - LONDON

April 17-18, 2026 | London, England

IFA LEGAL SYMPOSIUM

May 17-19, 2026 | Washington, DC

IBA/IFA JOINT CONFERENCE

May 19-20, 2026 | Washington, DC

FRANCHISE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE

June 2-4, 2026 | Atlanta, GA

IFA ADVOCACY SUMMIT

Sept. 14-16 2026 | Washington, DC

THE IFA WORLD FRANCHISE SHOW

Sept. 25-26, 2026 | Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Partnership event with Fortem International

FRANCHISE LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

October 6-8, 2026 | Atlanta, GA

EMERGING FRANCHISOR CONFERENCE

November 9-11, 2026 | Nashville, TN



IFA26

CONVENTION

evolve.

FEBRUARY 23-25, 2026 | LAS VEGAS, NV



Scan here to learn more about these events and plan your year with IFA!

iFA INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION
franchise.org/events

SUSAN VALVERDE

What I wish I'd known

Coming to the U.S. as an immigrant has shaped every aspect of how I lead, especially in empathy and creating opportunities. I understand what it's like to navigate unfamiliar systems, to interpret not just language but also expectations, and to work twice as hard to prove yourself. In franchise support, I focus on removing barriers, and helping each owner develop in ways that suit their unique strengths. Just as we personalise learning for students at Sylvan, we tailor our support for franchisees and team members alike.

One thing I wish I'd known early on about running a business in underserved communities is how crucial it is to stay adaptable and inventive. We had to step outside our comfort zone and rethink our approach – introducing payment plans, pursuing grant funding, and discovering new ways to make our programs accessible. Many of those solutions evolved into best practices still used across the Sylvan system today, proving that challenges often ignite innovations that transform how we serve families.

Having been a franchisee gives me a frontline perspective. I understand the daily challenges of running a center, which helps me ask questions that others might overlook, like whether an initiative genuinely addresses a franchisee's core challenge and whether it's practical enough to be adopted. My aim is to keep every plan actionable, scalable, and focused on meaningful results for both our owners and the brand.

We have a robust pilot process. Every new idea undergoes alpha or beta testing with a diverse group of franchisees across markets and experience levels. Their feedback helps us refine concepts, identify blind spots, and concentrate on tools and resources that add value. At Sylvan, innovation isn't about constant change – it's more about evolving thoughtfully and collaboratively, with franchisees at the center.

“Sylvan is more than a business – it's a calling. And I am proud to have answered it”



Susan Valverde

is Brand President of Sylvan Learning. Arriving in the U.S. from Mexico at age 12 without knowing English, Susan turned her passion for education into purpose. A former top-performing Sylvan franchisee in some of the nation's poorest counties, she joined the corporate team in 2016. Today, she continues advancing the 500+ unit franchise alongside its parent company Unleashed Brands, the leading youth enrichment platform.

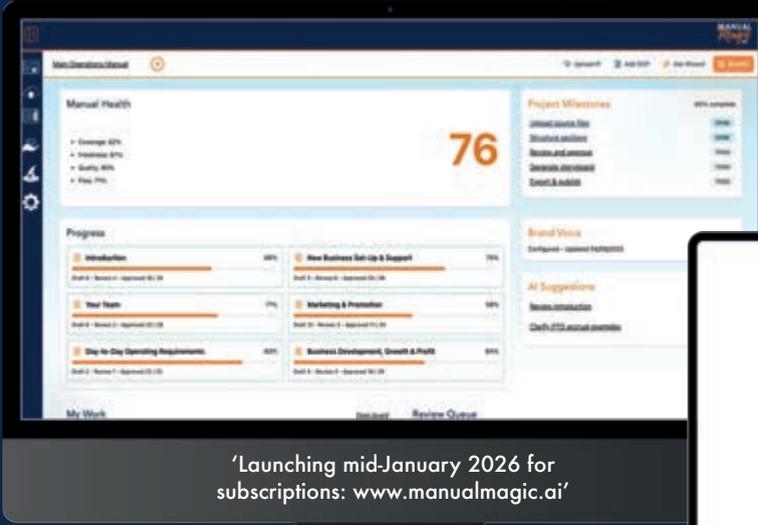
I'd advise my younger self to trust your voice, even when you're the only one in the room who sounds like you. Confidence doesn't come from having all the answers; it comes from showing up again and again with curiosity, preparation, and a clear sense of purpose.

What still surprises me is how much leadership is about managing energy and emotion, not just strategy. This work is deeply personal to me, and the most challenging days are often about helping people stay hopeful and aligned through uncertainty. I continue to grow by staying curious, listening even when it's uncomfortable, and surrounding myself with people who challenge my thinking. Most importantly, I focus on supporting our incredible franchisees because when they succeed, their impact extends far beyond the business.

I'm motivated by knowing that what we do at Sylvan genuinely transforms lives. We're not just about teaching academic skills – we're rebuilding confidence and helping children realize their potential. That kind of impact is rare and deeply meaningful. I hope my legacy is one of belief, so that every franchisee feels they are part of something important, every child feels seen and supported, and the brand grows not just in reach but in the depth of its impact. Sylvan is so much more than a business – it's a calling. And I am proud to have answered it.



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'Launching mid-January 2026 for subscriptions: www.manualmagic.ai'



“Manual Magic AI® amplifies your expertise, it doesn't replace it.”

Penny Hopkinson, CEO, Manual Magic AI Ltd

“Manual Magic AI is a real innovation for franchising! It takes the overwhelm out of building an Operations Manual organising your SOPs in minutes and you end up with a living, searchable manual that protects your IP, drives compliance, and helps franchisees hit the ground running! So, if you're serious about scaling or standardising, Manual Magic AI isn't just worth keeping an eye on... it's worth getting on the Waiting List for.”

- Pip Wilkins, CEO, the British Franchise Association

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FROM THE SOURCE...

Rob Price

The CEO of Youth Enrichment Brands, parent company of School of Rock, i9 Sports, and SafeSplash Swim Schools, on building a culture that cares

At Youth Enrichment Brands (YEB), we aim to change lives, and our commercial objective is to reach more kids. That clarity keeps everything aligned. There's no confusion or currency exchange required to understand how our purpose feeds our business goals. For some large organizations, purpose has to be built around commercial objectives. In our case, it's simple – our purpose *is* the driver.

Working in a purpose-led, service-based business has taught me that the day-to-day interactions with customers and franchisees can't be programmatic. There's a lot of situational awareness and improvisation required. It's not like inventory management or statistical process control – though those things matter too. It's about institutionalizing *judgment* and the *whys* behind what we do, so people can make abstract decisions with clear guidance. You have to explain not just *what* the policy is, but *why* it exists.

As YEB has grown globally, I've learned the importance of creating opportunities for genuine connection. At

School of Rock (SoR), we've invested in large-scale, in-person events like Summerfest in Milwaukee and the All Stars Tour, and expanded them into global experiences. We've also built new gathering points outside the U.S., like Rock in Rio in Lisbon, which brought in schools from around the world. Alongside that, we hold weekly calls with owners, monthly webinars, and pilots including franchisees across continents. These moments help us stay connected as one community.

I often say I want to be the question, not the answer. That might sound ironic, since I'm explaining it, but it's how I try to lead. I focus on three simple questions in nearly every interaction: *How's the team doing? How are you doing? What can I do to help?* Those questions anchor everything. If you rush into advocacy or tactics, you might miss the most important insight.

I also use questions as diagnostics. *Have you considered this? Have you talked to so-and-so? Why is this*

the approach? Why do I sense frustration when you describe this? Those inquiries can feel intense, but they sharpen clarity and help people grow. It's still management – it just comes with a question mark instead of an exclamation point.

The biggest connection between my previous time at SoR and what we're now all doing together at YEB is the mission itself. We're addressing what author Jonathan Haidt calls "the devolution from a play-based childhood to a phone-based childhood." At School of Rock, I saw firsthand how music education could be a therapeutic, transformative

experience. Now, I see that same potential in our other brands – sports, swimming, academic camps. The principle is the same: helping kids rediscover play, connection, and confidence.

For emerging founders or new CEOs, my advice is to do the work to map your values to how you actually create value. The world doesn't lack admirable values, but too often, those values don't connect to what the product or service delivers. When your business and your beliefs don't align, your team feels it. But when they do, every day becomes a chance to live those values and test them in action.

OFF THE RECORD

I love music. I'm a pretty decent piano player, but still an underconfident guitarist, so I practice a lot.

- I'm a voracious reader of nonfiction. I've recently read *The Anxious Generation* and *Nuclear War*, and I'm about to start *Dopamine Nation*. I find these topics more thought-provoking than depressing.
- I'm a huge fan of the funk/soul band Vulfpeck. Since moving to Nashville, I've become a bit of a bluegrass fan too and, if the opportunity ever came up, I wouldn't mind being the keyboardist for Steely Dan.



SIX IDEAS.

Shelly Sun Berkowitz

Lessons in scaling, succession & letting go – from a franchise founder who’s done it

After nearly two decades building BrightStar Care into one of America’s leading home care and medical staffing brands, Shelly Sun Berkowitz understands how to scale, and how to let go. In 2025, she sold a majority stake to Peak Rock Capital, remaining a material shareholder and board member. The experience – both strategic and deeply personal – inspired her new advisory firm: **Founder 2 Founder**. Shelly now helps entrepreneurs navigate their own transitions, from rapid growth and succession planning to the emotional and complex process of selling, while preserving their vision and legacy.

1 BUILD SUPPORT BEFORE YOU SELL

What’s one thing franchise founders often get wrong when trying to scale quickly? It’s starting to sell franchises before building the infrastructure to support them. If a franchisee fails to start strong, they risk running out of cash before reaching break-even, making strong, KPI-driven support from day one critical to their growth and success. Otherwise, struggling franchisees give poor references, killing your sales pipeline.

The critical mistake is waiting too long to hire support personnel. Franchise coaches need at least six months within a brand to blend their experience with the system’s nuances, meaning by the time you act, you’re already nine months behind. The solution is building your support systems and understanding your KPIs before scaling, not after.

2 START SUCCESSION PLANNING BEFORE BURNOUT

Most outsiders underestimate the emotional and physical toll on managing pressures from multiple stakeholders. That grind accumulates – and many founders don’t recognize burnout until it’s too late. I learned this the hard way, juggling a divorce, COVID pressures, and family challenges before realizing how depleted I’d become. If I had self-assessed sooner, I would have been more thoughtful about succession planning and taken the time to look internally and externally for the critical qualities and experience. Ideally, begin a CEO search 18-24 months before a potential sale if you don’t plan to stay operational for another three to five years. Otherwise, your options narrow, and trade-offs more likely in the new leader’s culture and core values, geography, experience, and strategic alignment.

3 START SOONER THAN YOU THINK

Get brutally honest about your remaining runway. If your buyer is private equity, their typical hold period is four to five years, and they’ll expect the CEO at sale to stay for at least three of those. Challenge yourself on how much time and energy you realistically have left – and work backwards from there. If you have one to two years left, start finding your successor now. You’ll need at least 18 months of overlap before any sales process. If you have five years, begin planning three years out by bringing in a strong COO or president, giving you time to see if they can transition to CEO. The signal isn’t about being “ready to exit” – it’s about being proactive to protect your business and financial future.

4 WHO’S REALLY IN YOUR CORNER?

You can find service providers or advisors to handle almost every part of a sale or scale-up, from investment banks to run the process to consultants to triage due diligence. But the reality is that most of these providers – even your own management team – get paid only when the deal closes. They earn more if you sell to the highest bidder, regardless of whether that deal protects your legacy.

No one will have the founder’s best interests as their first priority. For me, it wasn’t just about economics – it was about finding a buyer aligned on core values, someone who would prioritize quality and ensure franchisees had access to the right resources. But everyone around me had a vested interest in me selling, no matter the buyer fit. The pressure can be immense when incentives are misaligned. I couldn’t find anyone whose interests truly aligned with mine – that’s why I started Founder 2 Founder, to be that sounding board and guide for other founders facing the same challenge.



BREAKING FUNDING BARRIERS **5**
 Access to capital remains one of the biggest barriers for women-owned businesses. Focus on programs designed for female entrepreneurs. I tapped into the Illinois Department of Economic Development and partnered with institutions like First Women's Bank and Brightwood Capital, both dedicated to women-led ventures. Be proactive - join women's business groups and seek recommendations. Opportunities do exist, but they require searching.

6 **DON'T LOSE YOURSELF IN THE BUSINESS**

If I could go back to the beginning, I'd tell myself to keep my personal identity distinct from the business.

Throughout my founder journey, how I identified as a person and as a business leader became completely intertwined. I didn't realize the problem until after the sale, when separating my life from the business became far harder than it should have been.

It took over five months for me to be able to fully access personal emails, tax returns, and records spanning two decades because everything had become so integrated and complicated.

But uncoupling goes way beyond systems - it's emotional too. When your identity is "the founder," stepping away can hit you like an existential crisis.

Keep separate systems, boundaries, and a life beyond the business. Your future self will thank you for it.



SLIM CHICKENS®

CAMBRIDGE CIRCUS - DOWNTOWN LONDON



BREAKTHROUGH BRAND. Breathtaking Numbers.

WHY FRANCHISE WITH US?



Strong Unit Economics



Simplicity of Operations



Passionate Support Team



Excellent Branding



Entrepreneur
2025 Franchise 500 (#81)



Franchise Times
2025 Fast & Serious Winner



QSR
Best Franchise Deals 2025



BIRMINGHAM TRAIN STATION



SWANSEA, UK



SWINDON, UK

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20

**education
franchises
rewriting the
textbooks**

With the global education franchise market set to soar past \$280 billion by 2031, brands aren't just keeping pace - they're setting the standards

A market that keeps growing...

The smart money's on learning in 2026. Here's why education franchises are on the rise globally

In 2025, education isn't just a public priority – it's becoming one of the most exciting opportunities in franchising. For investors, entrepreneurs, and career changers looking to build something meaningful, the education sector is ticking all the right boxes: high demand, recurring revenue, and the chance to make a lasting impact.

Across the world, parents are spending more on learning than ever before. Whether it's tutoring to fill learning gaps, coding classes to future-proof careers, or enrichment programs that boost creativity, the appetite for education keeps expanding.

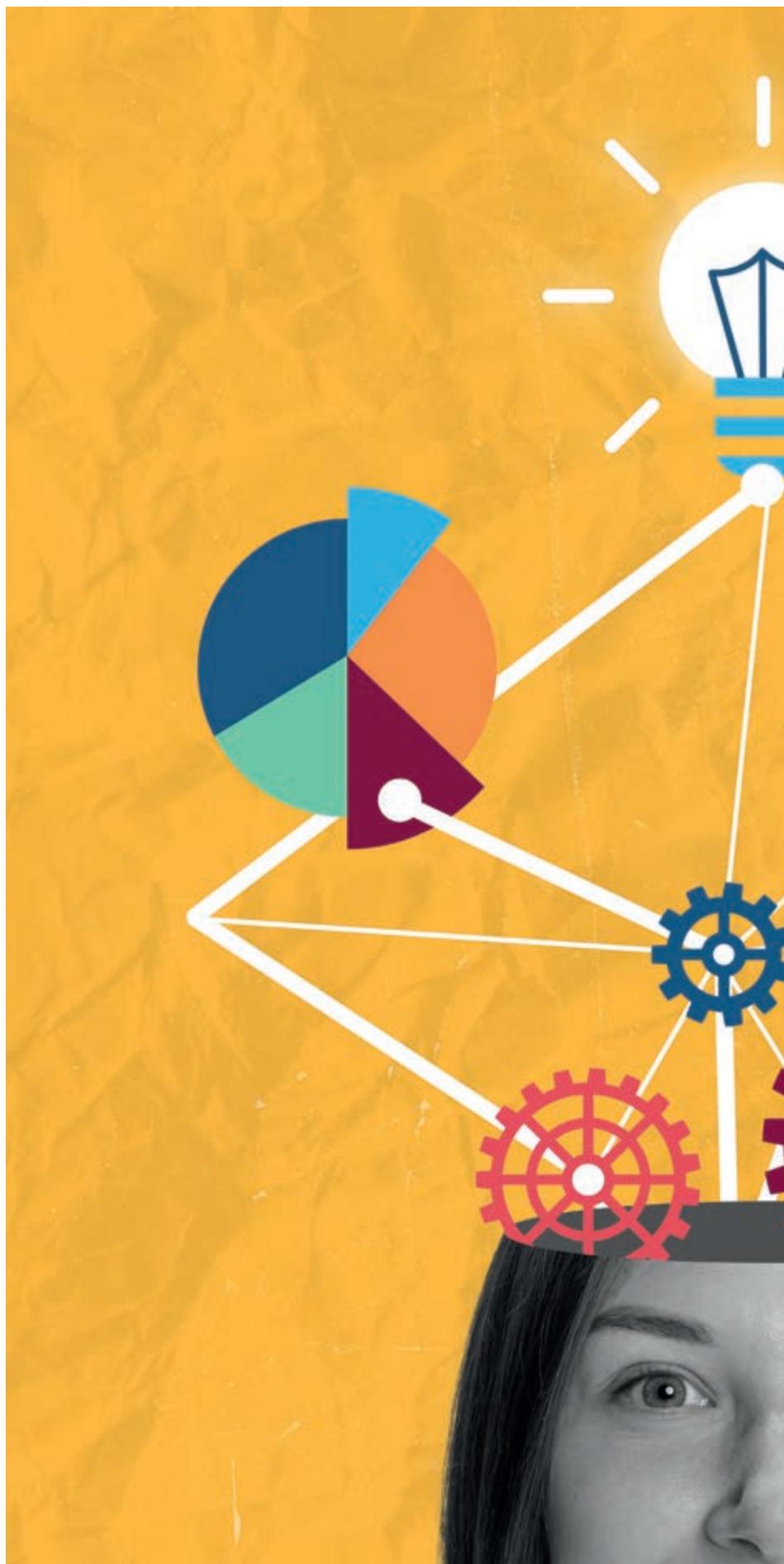
According to *Business Research Insights*, the global child education franchise market is worth more than \$160 billion today – and it's projected to hit \$282 billion by 2031, growing at a healthy 8.5% a year. That's serious momentum.

What's driving it? A mix of global trends: rising academic pressure, the growth of middle-class families in developing markets, and a shift toward lifelong learning. Simply put, parents want more for their kids – and they're willing to invest in it.

Why franchises fit so well

For would-be entrepreneurs, education franchising offers the best of both worlds: proven systems and a purpose-driven mission. You're not reinventing the wheel, you're joining a network that already knows how to market, recruit students, train staff, and deliver results.

It's a model that scales well, too. Franchisors handle the curriculum and tech; franchisees focus on relationships and results. That balance has made education one of the most resilient categories in franchising – less dependent on inventory, more focused on long-term enrolments and community trust.



“Education franchising hits a rare sweet spot – it’s profitable, purposeful, and adaptable. For anyone looking to grow internationally, this is a sector that delivers both financial and human rewards”

What’s driving the boom?

The real story behind the numbers is how quickly the sector is evolving. Technology is transforming how education is delivered, with hybrid and digital platforms opening the door to new audiences, reducing start-up costs, and extending reach far beyond local classrooms. At the same time, parents are increasingly turning to private education options to fill the gaps traditional schools can’t cover, particularly in areas like STEM, coding, and creative skills. And because education is a universal language, franchises that can adapt their content and delivery to local markets are scaling rapidly across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

And it’s not just about after-school tutoring anymore. Brands are branching into early childhood education, language immersion, and even test prep for adult learners. Wherever there’s curiosity, there’s opportunity.

If you’re looking to invest, 2025 is shaping up to be a strong year for education brands that combine personalization, technology, and real-world outcomes. Digital-first models are cutting overheads and making delivery more flexible than ever. At the same time, adaptable curricula are helping brands localize quickly and stay relevant across different markets. Many franchises are also benefiting from recurring tuition models that create steady, predictable revenue streams. And with purpose-driven branding on the rise, more parents and franchisees are drawn to businesses that deliver genuine impact as well as profit.

And here’s the real appeal: education spending rarely slows down. Even during tough economies, parents keep investing in their children’s learning, making this one of the more recession-resistant categories in franchising.

The fine print

Of course, not every education concept is created equal. Success depends on the strength of the brand, the quality of the curriculum, and how well franchisors support their network. Regulations differ from market to market, and competition is rising fast, particularly from new online-only models.

But for the right investor, those challenges come with plenty of upside. The best education franchises don’t just sell lessons – they build futures, communities, and lasting value.



18

Mathnasium Learning Centers

GLOBAL, 12 COUNTRIES

With more than 1,200 locations worldwide, Mathnasium is transforming how children learn math – making it engaging, personal, and confidence-building and giving franchisees a scalable, tech-smart business that changes lives, one equation at a time.

Snapology

GLOBAL

Snapology makes STEM fun through hands-on programs that use LEGO®, K'Nex, and robotics to help children explore science, technology, engineering, arts, and math in creative ways. Ranked the No.1 children's STEM enrichment franchise by Entrepreneur's Franchise 500® for four consecutive years, Snapology fosters a lifelong love of learning.

Sylvan Learning

GLOBAL

For over 45 years, Sylvan Learning has helped millions of students reach their potential through personalized tutoring. Blending certified teachers with adaptive technology, Sylvan delivers measurable academic growth – up to three times faster than average – across 700+ global locations and 5,000 school partnerships.

*The 2024 value of global education franchising is estimated at **USD 160 billion***

Celebree School

UNITED STATES

Celebree School combines early education with innovation, ensuring consistent, personalized instruction, while connecting families and teachers. With a robust Career Pathways program and employee retention, Celebree delivers both learning outcomes and scalable growth.

High Touch High Tech

GLOBAL, 12 COUNTRIES

High Touch High Tech brings science to life through hands-on STEM experiences for preschool to middle school students. With nearly 30 years of success, its proven franchise model blends education and entrepreneurship, empowering franchisees to inspire future innovators while building scalable businesses.

BāKIT Box

UNITED STATES

BāKIT Box brings culture, creativity, and connection into the kitchen with award-winning baking kits for kids. Each box blends global recipes with hands-on STEM and social-emotional learning, helping families explore the world from home and redefining how families learn about culture through food.

Ivybrook Academy

UNITED STATES

Ivybrook Academy is transforming early childhood learning through a blend of Reggio Emilia and Montessori philosophies, elevated by a storytelling framework that makes every lesson meaningful. Teachers create personalized “learning arcs” around each child’s interests, turning curiosity into confidence.

*The edtech market is projected to grow to **\$605 billion** by 2027*

What’s driving growth?

Several powerful trends are propelling the child-education franchise market forward:

- **Universal demand for education:** Across cultures and economic levels, parents are investing more in tutoring, enrichment, language and STEM programs.
- **Hybrid and digital learning models:** The shift toward online

or blended teaching formats (coupled with in-person delivery) expands reach and reduces infrastructure cost.

- **Skills-driven programming:** Franchises offering coding, robotics, STEM, language fluency and soft skills are capturing new segments and staying ahead of curriculum shifts.

Little Kitchen Academy

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

The Montessori-inspired cooking academy where kids build independence, confidence, and healthy habits for life. Partnering with global brands and charities, from BIRKENSTOCK and IKEA to One Tree Planted, the academy empowers students to make choices that nourish themselves and the world.

Manor Tutoring

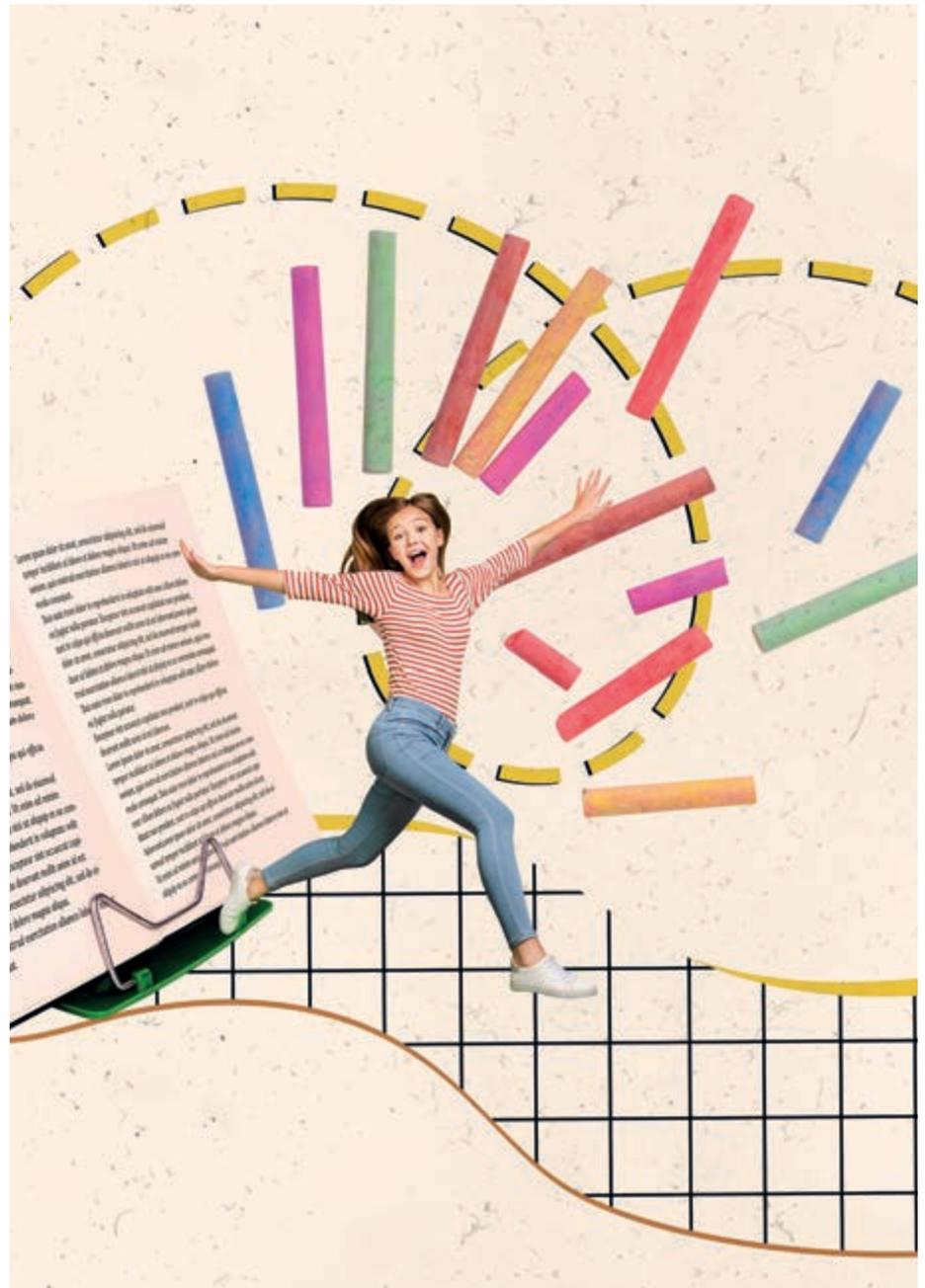
UK

Manor Tutoring was founded on the belief that education builds confidence, organization, and emotional resilience. Through a blend of tutoring, executive function coaching, and social-emotional support, Manor helps all students, including those with neurodivergent or ASN/SEN needs, thrive in and beyond the classroom.

The Seasons Art Class

UK, EUROPE, USA

The world’s leading adult art class franchise, inspiring creativity across the UK and beyond. With 130+ branches and thousands of students attending weekly, it offers structured, confidence-building courses for adults of all abilities, proving that art, friendship, and self-expression are truly universal.



Why education franchises are winning worldwide

Smart, scalable, and meaningful, education franchises are proving you can grow a business and make a difference at the same time. Here's why investors are paying attention:

- 1. Learning never goes out of style**
Parents everywhere value education. As incomes rise and job markets get more competitive, the appetite for tutoring, language learning, and enrichment programs just keeps on growing.
- 2. Proven models, real results**
Brands like Kumon, Mathnasium, and Helen Doron English have cracked the code for consistency. They've built systems that work across borders, making it easier for new franchisees to launch, scale, and see steady returns.
- 3. Local feel, global knowledge**
The best education brands don't copy-paste their programs; they adapt them. Whether it's Eye Level fine-tuning its curriculum or The Little Gym adjusting its classes for cultural preferences, localization is what keeps families coming back.
- 4. Skills for tomorrow's world**
STEM, coding, and languages are the new essentials. Franchises like Code Ninjas and NovaKid are preparing kids for a tech-driven future – and parents are eager to sign them up.
- 5. Hybrid is here to stay**
Learning doesn't have to happen in a classroom anymore. Brands such as Sylvan Learning blend in-person support with digital learning tools, giving parents and students full flexibility.
- 6. Built to last**
Education tends to weather economic ups and downs better than most sectors. Families might cut back on luxuries, but rarely on learning. For investors, that means consistent demand and stable returns.

Water Babies

UK, IRELAND, CANADA, THE NETHERLANDS, CHINA, USA

Water Babies teaches more than 80,000 babies a year through 70+ franchises worldwide. A certified B Corp™ and multiple award-winner, it sets global standards in baby swimming, combining expert teaching, safety, and developmental benefits for families across six international markets.

Scholars Education

CANADA, USA, BERMUDA

A global tutoring leader with 88 locations and growing. Recognized nine years running as a Franchisees' Choice winner by the Canadian Franchise Association, Scholars combines proven curriculum, personalized learning, and community impact as it prepares for expansion across new international markets.

The Little Gym

GLOBAL

An international leader in the kids' gym franchise industry, The Little Gym capitalizes on over 45 years of hands-on experience, early childhood research, and thoughtful parental feedback. The result? An impactful legacy of fostering growth, confidence and social skills in a safe and nurturing environment and enabling children to thrive.

School of Rock

GLOBAL

School of Rock is a global leader in performance-based music education. With 389 schools in 16 countries (with agreements for expansion to 23 countries) and a steady 10% growth in 2024, SOR continues to foster personal growth through music, empowering students with life skills beyond the stage.

By 2031, the child education market is predicted to be worth almost USD 282 billion

EDUCATION IS QUIETLY BECOMING ONE OF THE FRANCHISING'S FASTEST-SCALING INDUSTRIES - GROWING

80%
A YEAR





FRANCHISOR & INVESTOR OPPORTUNITIES

If you're looking to build or expand an education-focused franchise internationally, here's where the opportunity landscape is richest:

- **Emerging markets:** Regions such as Southeast Asia, India and parts of Latin America offer wider white-space, rising middle incomes and unmet demand for quality supplemental education.

- **Low-capex, high-scalability models:** Digital delivery and online hybrids mean lower physical infrastructure, making franchising both faster and less capital-intensive.

- **Recurring-revenue business models:** Tuition, memberships and repeat enrolments offer predictable cash flow, while intellectual-property-based offerings (e.g., curriculum, software) reduce reliance on inventory or location-heavy costs.
- **Resilience in downturns:** Education typically fares better than many sectors during economic slowdowns.

Huntington Learning Center

UNITED STATES

A leader in K-12 tutoring and test preparation with approximately 300 locations across the U.S. and plans to extend globally. The brand has a legacy of nearly five decades in delivering educational excellence with its franchise model focused on quality and consistency, supported by a strong family-oriented culture.

Logiscool

HUNGARY, EUROPE, ASIA, AFRICA, AMERICAS

Logiscool is a global leader in digital education for children and teens. Through its proprietary Scoolcode platform, it teaches coding in a fun, accessible way, building creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration, along with strong franchise support and international recognition.

Tinker Labs

UK, EUROPE, CANADA

Tinker Labs caters for hands-on learning that inspires creativity, collaboration, and innovation. Its STEAM-based programs blend science, tech, engineering, art, and math through real-world projects. With an expanding global footprint, Tinker Labs empowers the next generation of problem-solvers to explore, create, and thrive.

Stagecoach Performing Arts

UK, IRELAND, USA, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, HONG KONG, SINGAPORE, SOUTH KOREA, MENA

Through expert-led classes, creative collaboration, and a supportive learning culture, Stagecoach inspires the next generation through a creative education that nurtures self-expression and confidence.

Tutor Doctor

NORTH AMERICA, UK, EUROPE, LATAM, UAE, SOUTH AFRICA, AUSTRALIA

Redefining personalized education through one-to-one tutoring that meets each student where they are. Innovative programmes include school partnerships and tailored learning plans, ensure every student – and every franchisee – makes a lasting impact.

Tierra Encantada

UNITED STATES

Tierra Encantada focuses on early childhood education through a holistic Spanish immersion experience that nurtures both intellect and empathy. Each center combines play-based learning, chef-prepared global meals, and culturally rich classrooms, empowering children to grow, connect, and thrive in a global society.

Jason Priestley & Naomi Lowde-Priestley

The Hollywood couple bring star power and purpose to franchising with the launch of their Studio Pilates in Sylvan Park, Nashville

For Jason Priestley, star of 90s hit show Beverly Hills 90210, and his wife Naomi, former Hollywood make-up artist, a shared passion for Pilates led them to launch a Studio Pilates studio. “We’ve always believed in the power of movement to transform lives – especially after personal experiences with back injuries,” explains Naomi. “Jason broke his back in an accident in 2002, and I’ve dealt with my own ongoing back issues too. Stepping into entrepreneurship gave us both the freedom to build something meaningful, on our own terms.”

Co-founder and CEO Jade Winter adds, “It’s incredibly special to welcome Naomi and Jason to the Studio Pilates International family. They are the type of franchisees who raise the bar, and I know they’re going to inspire others, both future clients and future franchise partners.”

Why open a Studio Pilates International in Nashville?

Jason: We fell in love with the method – it’s efficient, results-driven, and accessible to all levels. It’s Pilates for everyone!

Nashville felt like the perfect fit: vibrant, growing, and we wanted something to root us as here. The timing aligned with our desire to build something meaningful that merges fitness,

community, and lifestyle.

How did your experiences with Studio Pilates International win you over?

Naomi: The workout is next level – scientifically backed, incredibly structured, and accessible without sacrificing challenge. But what truly won us over was the vibe: warm, empowering, and globally consistent. You walk in and feel supported from day one, whether you’re a beginner or a fitness pro.

What’s it like going into business as a couple?

Jason: I just turn up for classes and let Naomi do the rest!

Naomi: Ha! Not true – but close. In all seriousness, it’s been a wild but rewarding ride. We’ve learned how to divide and conquer based on our strengths. There’s definitely a learning curve when your personal and professional lives overlap, but we’ve found our rhythm. We check in often, support each other’s blind spots, and have a shared vision that keeps us aligned – even when things get chaotic.

What do you each bring to the business that the other doesn’t?

Naomi: I’m definitely the worrier – I’m always thinking 10 steps ahead, checking details, and making sure we’re prepared for every scenario. I bring the energy

and creative hustle, and Jason brings the grounded presence that keeps us moving forward with clarity.

Jason: I try to be a little more steady in my view of the business. Together, we balance each other out.

What surprised you most about the franchising world?

Naomi: “We were genuinely surprised by how much support and structure there is. It’s not just about opening a business – it’s about joining a community with proven systems, mentorship, and a shared mission. You’re never alone. One of the best parts has been connecting with other Studio Pilates franchisees – fellow business owners who get it, who’ve been through it, and who are always willing to offer advice or encouragement. It truly feels like a team.



QUICK-FIRE QUESTIONS

Biggest business pet peeve?

Jason: Unnecessary meetings

Dream client?

Naomi: Someone who’s never done Pilates and leaves obsessed

Most-used phrase?

Naomi: Let’s pull out the calendar

Reformer workout soundtrack that never fails?

Jason: A throwback 90s remix, clearly!

Climbing the corporate ladder getting you down?



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A ROADMAP FOR...

navigating franchisee conflict

Tensions can arise even in the best systems. Here's how to face challenges head on and build trust, not resentment, in your network

01

Listen first, react later

When conflict surfaces, it's natural to want to defend your position, but the smartest first move is to listen. Let the franchisee feel heard without interrupting or dismissing their frustration. You might discover a misunderstanding, or something valid that needs attention. Listening doesn't mean agreeing – it's just showing respect, and it's often the first step in defusing tension before things escalate.

02

Clarify the facts

Emotions can cloud the real issue. Before jumping to conclusions, take a step back and gather the facts. Is this a systems problem? A communication breakdown? Or something more personal? Ask questions, look at the data, and make sure everyone's working from the same version of events. When you ground a conversation into reality, it becomes easier to move toward a solution that feels fair for both sides.

03

Stick to the agreement

In the heat of a disagreement, it's helpful to revisit the franchise agreement and operations manual – not to point fingers, but to realign around shared expectations. These documents aren't just legal tools; they're the foundation of your model. If something isn't working, maybe it's a signal to review or revise, but using the agreement as your starting point helps take the emotion out and restore clarity.

04

Act early

Most conflicts don't explode out of nowhere. Tensions, more commonly, build up over time. Pay attention to early warning signs: franchisees withdrawing from meetings, missing benchmarks, or venting on private forums.

Check in proactively and ask how things are going. A simple "How can I support you?" can go a long way in stopping resentment from taking root, and shows that you're invested in their success, not just their performance.

05

Follow up

Even after a disagreement is resolved, the relationship may still feel a bit bruised. That's why follow-up is key. Schedule a quick call or site visit, send a thank-you note for their openness, or acknowledge any positive changes they've made. It doesn't have to be a big gesture – just something that says, "We're still in this together." It's often in the manner of the aftercare that trust gets rebuilt.



FOOD & DRINK

Slim Chickens: building a global legacy

Slim Chickens is scaling worldwide with strong operators, flexible formats and a chicken-first concept that keeps fans coming back

Investment range for global franchising:

\$750,000
USD+



26



international expansion has proven challenging. Slim Chickens, however, is charting a different course, one rooted in adaptability, strong local partnerships, and a clear commitment to food quality.

GLOBAL GROWTH ON BIG STAGES

Slim Chickens has established a rapidly expanding global footprint, with more than 325 opened restaurants across the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Turkey, and Malaysia.

The UK has become the brand's most visible international market, where Slim Chickens has grown to more than 80 locations. They also have plans for significant expansion across the UK and Europe in 2026. High-traffic destinations such as Cambridge Circus in London have given Slim Chickens exposure not only to UK guests but also to millions of international travelers passing through the city.

This strategy of pursuing visibility in major hubs extends across Slim Chickens' international portfolio. The brand is actively working on several airport locations across Europe and the Middle East, with Düsseldorf Airport in Germany slated to open in 2026. Serving 20 million passengers annually, Düsseldorf represents the type of global stage where Slim Chickens can build awareness and brand recognition at scale.

In Southeast Asia, Slim Chickens recently debuted in Malaysia with the Temokin Group, a proven restaurateur that has previously scaled brands. Located in Subang Jaya's lively SS15 district, the opening marks the brand's first entry into the region and showcases how Slim Chickens adapts to meet cultural expectations while delivering its core Southern-inspired hospitality.

Slim Chickens is also planning to continue its expansion in Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, including new development deals in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, while targeting North America beyond the U.S., with Canada and Mexico in the near-term pipeline. With more than 40 new global openings expected in 2026 and a goal of opening 100 restaurants annually by 2028, the brand is accelerating at a pace matched by few in the fast-casual category.

S

lim Chickens is doing what few restaurant brands can: expanding globally while protecting the identity that made it successful at home.

Built on hand-breaded chicken and Southern hospitality, the brand began franchising in 2011. Early growth was steady, but momentum accelerated quickly, turning Slim Chickens into a global powerhouse.

The brand grows with intention, choosing experienced operators and tailoring its award-winning model to local markets. The chicken-first menu and house sauces anchor every location, while cultural adjustments keep the brand relevant in new regions. The result is a concept that feels both familiar and fresh across every market.

For many American restaurant brands,

“Our model works because it balances brand integrity with flexibility,” said Sam Rothschild, Chief International Officer of Slim Chickens. “We don’t try to copy-and-paste the U.S. playbook into every market. We adapt thoughtfully while making sure every Slim Chickens restaurant delivers the quality and hospitality we’re known for.”

PARTNERS POWERING EXPANSION

A critical factor in Slim Chickens’ international growth has been its partnerships with proven operators. Leading the charge in Europe is Boparan Restaurant Group, led by CEO Satnam Leihal, which has grown Slim Chickens to more than 80 UK restaurants since signing its first agreement in 2017.

“There was really no fast-casual chicken concept like Slim Chickens on the market,” said Leihal. “The quality of the product makes it the hero and helps us deliver strong performance in every market we open in.”

Under Leihal’s leadership, Boparan has focused on high-visibility locations that spike brand recognition. Iconic destinations across the UK, such as the Trafford Centre and Wembley Arena, some of the highest footfall destinations in Europe, have given Slim Chickens an outsized presence in a compact market.

Few franchisor-franchisee relationships mirror the trust and transparency that exists between Boparan and Slim Chickens. Rothschild and Leihal’s candid, collaborative approach has created a foundation for expansion that is both fast-moving and sustainable.

WHAT SETS SLIM CHICKENS APART?

At its core, the Slim Chickens experience remains the same whether in Arkansas, London, or Kuala Lumpur: hand-breaded tenders, 14 house sauces, and a Southern-inspired atmosphere that feels warm and welcoming.

At the same time, the brand has demonstrated cultural sensitivity through menu innovation. In Malaysia, Slim Chickens replaced mac-and-cheese bowls with rice-based bowls to better suit local preferences. In Poland, a hot cheese sauce will be introduced as a side, while UK and Malaysia restaurants feature halal-certified chicken to meet customer needs.

Marketing is another differentiator. Slim Chickens’ campaigns are designed to resonate culturally and globally, from limited-time Jurassic Park meals to UK features on Chicken Shop Date with movie stars to pop-up events in the U.S. with bands like All-American Rejects. These initiatives keep the brand in the cultural conversation, connecting with younger audiences and reinforcing its relevance far beyond the menu.

Operationally, Slim Chickens ensures franchisees are equipped to deliver at a high level, with detailed training, a robust learning management system, and hands-on support from regional teams. Real estate strategies are tailored to malls, lifestyle centers, high-footfall areas and drive-thru locations.

“Hospitality and food quality are always at the center,” said Rothschild. “That’s how we make sure Slim Chickens feels authentic in every corner of the world.”



FRANCHISE OVERVIEW

Established:
2003

Number of outlets:
320+

Locations of units:
U.S., Europe,
Southeast Asia,
Middle East



THE INVESTMENT CASE

Slim Chickens is earning the attention of sophisticated multi-unit operators worldwide. The brand reports strong unit economics and nearly a 25% increase in global restaurant growth. This is a powerful signal of confidence from within the system.

For Leihal, the metrics are clear. “The true measure of success is a Slim Chickens restaurant that sells a lot of chicken. That demand translates into high sales volumes, strong guest metrics, and strong returns,” Leihal said. “That’s why we continue to invest and expand. There is enormous room to grow the brand in Europe and beyond.”

The brand’s investment appeal is further reinforced by its accessible startup costs, streamlined fee structure, and reputation for quality food and service. Slim Chickens continues to earn industry-wide recognition, with media coverage from outlets including QSR, Franchise Times, Global Franchise, and Entrepreneur.

Slim Chickens seeks partners who bring operational expertise and a long-term vision for growth. The ideal candidates are multi-unit, multi-brand operators who recognize the potential of a chicken-first concept with proven scalability.

GLOBAL LEGACY IN THE MAKING

Slim Chickens presents a rare opportunity to grow globally, offering prime multi-unit territories, a passionate leadership team, and a world-class franchisee support system.

Learn more about available markets at slimchickensfranchise.com.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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WHERE QSR GROWTH IS HEADED NEXT

As urban rents climb and consumer habits evolve, food brands are looking to expand away from the beaten track. For many QSRs, growth now lives in the spaces in between

What began as a side strategy – a kiosk in an airport or a café on a campus – has become central to the next phase of QSR expansion.

From travel hubs and hospitals to universities, leisure parks, and even military bases, non-traditional venues are fast emerging as the new growth frontier for ambitious food brands, combining steady foot traffic, high visibility, and customers ready to spend.

In an increasingly crowded marketplace, these spaces offer something few others can: sustainable growth with lower risk. Once considered peripheral, they're now shaping the very core of how QSR brands grow.

Yet as operators rush to secure their share of this new terrain, one question remains: is the future of food franchising truly found off the beaten track?

Rethinking location

The traditional restaurant model – high-rent, high-traffic, street-facing real estate – has long defined the gold standard for QSR growth. But as consumer habits evolve

and the economics of urban retail shift, the meaning of a 'prime' location is being rewritten. Today's franchise investors are looking beyond conventional spaces, uncovering new opportunities in places once considered secondary or underutilized.

Subway, the world's largest QSR chain by restaurant count, has been among the first to recognize this potential. Its smart growth development strategy focuses on what its global chief development officer, Mike Kehoe, describes as "building restaurants in the right location, image, and format." This approach has resulted in a significant rise in non-traditional development, from airports and rail stations to universities and hospitals.

According to Kehoe, non-traditional locations currently make up approximately 25% of Subway's global footprint and are responsible for between 20-30% of the brand's total sales. For a brand with more than 37,000 units worldwide, that means thousands of sites operating successfully in spaces once considered secondary. "We're stepping up convenience as we

expand our grab-and-go offerings in North America and testing the platform in other international markets," Kehoe explains. "From a consumer perspective, in travel hubs, Subway is a top choice for travellers seeking a convenient, great-tasting meal on the go. Additionally, our brand's reputation for offering affordable, better-for-you options makes Subway a perfect match for non-traditional venues such as hospitals, universities, and airports."

Non-traditional expansion is no longer a side strategy for Subway, but central to the brand's long-term growth plan. Of the 10,000 new global restaurants slated to open under its current program, as many as 2,500 could take shape in travel hubs, campuses, and institutional venues, redefining how and where QSR brands operate.

Embedded demand

The International Air Transport Association projects that global air passenger numbers could double to 8.2 billion by 2037, with around half of all travelers purchasing food or drink while in transit. Meanwhile, the U.K. Office of Rail and Road reported that station-based catering retailers generated more than £700 million in 2019-2020 – before accounting for post-pandemic recovery. Together, these figures underscore the vast potential of transient, high-volume environments where proximity, speed, and convenience often outweigh even brand loyalty.

For QSR operators, travel hubs such as airports and stations promise the holy trinity of convenience: built-in traffic, predictable consumption patterns, and minimal marketing costs.

Yet the non-traditional opportunity now extends well beyond airports. Across North America, operators are increasingly targeting military bases, university campuses, and leisure destinations, locations that combine consistent foot traffic, captive audiences, and an everyday demand for fast, reliable dining.

Safe bases for growth

Few environments offer the stability and predictability of a military base. For global brands testing new formats or compact menu innovations, these locations provide a uniquely controlled ecosystem,

BUSINESS WISE

Top five advantages of non-traditional QSR locations

Built-in footfall: Airports, campuses, and hospitals guarantee a steady stream of daily traffic, reducing reliance on street visibility.

Predictable patterns: Military bases and universities offer fixed schedules, supporting precise forecasting and efficient staffing.

Smaller footprints: Compact modular formats reduce real estate costs while maintaining profitability.

Digital integration: Self-ordering kiosks, loyalty apps, and grab-and-go systems align perfectly with transient environments.

Portfolio diversification: For investors, non-traditional spaces create a balanced growth model that complements traditional store networks, reducing exposure to urban rent fluctuations.



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29

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marked by consistent daily footfall, long dwell times, and limited direct competition.

Subway's investment in low-cost, space-efficient formats, some requiring as little as 400 square feet, has allowed franchisees to succeed within military and government sites where every inch counts. These venues not only ensure steady trade from a resident workforce and rotating personnel but also help brands demonstrate operational resilience in tightly managed environments.

Japanese fast-casual brand Pepper Lunch also underscores the long-term potential of institutional environments. "There's been a Pepper Lunch for the last seven or eight years at the U.S. military base in Guam, with a second store on its way," explained global co-CEO Troy Hooper, who is leading the legacy brand's North American expansion.

From an investment standpoint, military bases offer a rare combination of low risk and high visibility. With built-in populations, extended operating hours, and dependable demand, they provide an ideal platform for stable, scalable growth. For franchisors, they serve as the ultimate testing ground, delivering operational consistency, minimal external disruption, and

valuable exposure to globally mobile consumers who often carry their brand preferences wherever they go.

Capturing loyalty early

If military bases offer stability, university campuses offer renewal. Across North America, campuses have become incubators for the next generation of QSR consumers – tech-native, health-conscious, and increasingly values-driven. These environments combine steady daily foot traffic, habitual purchasing behavior, and the opportunity to build brand loyalty at a formative age.

Pepper Lunch views university campuses as central to its long-term growth strategy, capitalizing on both their density and demographic influence. "Up to 60% of our customer base is under 35," says Troy Hooper, "making it very clear where there are opportunities, such as on or near university campuses."

By engaging young consumers where they study, socialize, and form daily routines, the brand establishes early connections that can evolve as its audience matures. "There actually are three distinct markets to follow," Hooper explains. "The young crowd based around universities and the hyper-urban market; post-university 24-

"QSR franchise investors are uncovering new opportunities in places once considered secondary"

to 30-year-olds who have moved off campus or away from downtown areas; and maturing millennials relocating into the suburbs." This progression, he adds, creates "brand affinity and longevity... a roadmap of white space to grow and mature with our customers over time."

For franchisors, this generational continuum offers a rare strategic advantage: the ability to follow consumers throughout their life stages without reinventing the brand every decade. Subway, for instance, is already capitalizing on this pattern. Its grab-and-go offerings and integrated digital platforms – interactive kiosks, upgraded apps, and enhanced loyalty programs – resonate with the fast-paced, mobile-first habits of Gen Z. In campus settings, such innovations position QSRs not just as convenient dining choices but as



integral parts of student life.

Focus Brands recognizes this opportunity too. The group, whose portfolio includes Auntie Anne's, Cinnabon, and Jamba, is investing heavily in modular, co-branded 'express outlets' for university campuses. These compact units bring multiple brands under one counter, maximizing return per square foot while catering to the variety-seeking, time-pressed student market.

Meanwhile, Experiential Brands' 2024 rollout of new university openings across the U.S. reinforces this approach, highlighting how higher-education environments have become vital testing grounds for emerging food concepts. Compact layouts, streamlined digital ordering, and minimal prep kitchens make these venues ideal for pilot programs and limited-menu launches before wider rollouts.

Adapting to smaller footprints

Operating in a non-traditional venue isn't as simple as cutting square footage. It requires a full rethink of equipment, supply chains, and staffing models. That's why brands like Little Caesars have focused heavily on innovation in footprint and format. The company's 2024 announcement of new campus locations across the U.S. highlighted the operational efficiency of its 'Pizza Portal' technology – a digital locker system that lets customers retrieve pre-paid orders without staff intervention.

These smaller, semi-autonomous formats not only reduce labor but also allow franchises to open in constrained environments like student centers, hospitals, airports, or stadiums, where traditional buildouts would be impossible.

For investors, this convergence of technological agility and operational simplicity signals an industry-wide evolution. As consumer convenience takes precedence over traditional dining, QSRs are becoming more portable, efficient, and experiential than ever before.

New era of flexibility

While global brands like Subway and Pepper Lunch are expanding into travel hubs and campuses, others are finding success by reimagining how QSR can fit within existing retail ecosystems. Chicken Cottage, a UK-based franchise

The smart appeal of non-trad spaces

• Lower overheads:

Smaller footprints and shared utilities with host venues reduce rent and energy costs, helping operators achieve profitability faster.

• Simplified operations:

Streamlined menus, reduced equipment, and centralised supply chains make training easier and service more consistent.

• Faster setup:

Pre-approved sites and modular layouts mean units can be built and opened within weeks, not months.

• Flexible investment:

Options such as revenue-share agreements or shorter leases help franchisees manage capital efficiently and test new markets.

• Built-in audiences:

Partnering with transport hubs, universities, and service plazas guarantees consistent daily trade and strong brand visibility.

• Work-life balance:

Compact units often operate on fixed schedules with fewer late nights, attractive for experienced and first-time franchisees alike.

with a 30-year legacy and a strong position in the international QSR sector, brings another dimension to the conversation around flexibility. The brand has successfully translated its appeal into a variety of non-traditional formats, from compact kiosks to store-in-store models across gas forecourts and premium retail locations.

"Our format is highly adaptable," explains Sadaf Kazi, head of franchise development at Chicken Cottage. "We offer compact, concession-style units that fit neatly within retail spaces such as forecourts, premium shops, or petrol stations. Even in smaller footprints, our operational systems ensure consistent quality and fast service."

That adaptability, she adds, has proven itself commercially. "Across all these locations, from shop-in-shop formats to kiosks and drive-thrus, our model has consistently delivered strong sales and positive customer feedback, showing that Chicken Cottage is flexible, adaptable, and well-suited to a range of retail environments."

As non-traditional expansion accelerates, the competitive advantage will belong to brands that balance flexibility with consistency. "Pepper Lunch is a very simple concept to execute, allowing for any operator of any experience level to produce excellent results," Hooper notes. This simplicity comes from automation and supply-chain

ownership, allowing uniformity across hundreds of sites with minimal staff.

A similar philosophy is driving Subway's tech-driven evolution. "We continue to enhance our menu and provide an elevated in-restaurant and online experience that delivers added convenience and value for guests," Kehoe states. "Last year, we shared the rollout of an integrated digital experience in key European markets, including interactive self-serve kiosks and a refreshed app and loyalty program that ensures a consistent experience across platforms."

The result is an emerging generation of QSRs that can thrive anywhere without compromising the core brand experience. For franchisors, the challenge is not just in finding space but in adapting to its constraints, mastering the art of compact design, and meeting consumer demand wherever it appears. For investors, it's a reminder that the future of franchising won't be confined to the main street – it will be wherever people gather, travel, study, and serve their nations.

In that sense, the QSR industry's next phase of expansion is not simply about geography. It's about mindset – a willingness to look beyond the obvious, to meet consumers in the spaces where life already happens. And in doing so, the sector may yet discover its most dynamic growth frontier yet.

THE EUROPEAN ADVANTAGE

A nighttime photograph of a city waterfront. The scene is dominated by the reflection of city lights on the water. In the foreground, several boats are docked at a pier. The background shows a mix of modern and traditional architecture, with streetlights and building lights creating a vibrant, illuminated scene. The sky is a deep blue, suggesting dusk or night.

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Global franchisors are finding fresh markets, strong partners, and long-term potential in a continent primed for opportunity



In Europe, a quiet transformation is reshaping the way brands grow – one that’s defined by innovation, collaboration, and cultural exchange. Across the continent, franchisors are finding that success depends on more than a scalable business model. It requires a deep understanding of local nuance, and a willingness to adapt global ambitions to regional realities.

At the heart of this evolution is the European Franchise Federation (EFF), an organization working to unite Europe’s diverse markets under a shared vision of ethical, sustainable growth. With 24 official EU languages and more than 300 regional dialects, Europe’s landscape is complex – yet to the EFF, that diversity is exactly what makes it one of the most exciting environments in the world to build a franchise.

“When diverse markets and concepts combine, they unleash powerful drivers for growth,” says the EFF. “Our mission is to connect markets, build bridges, and help entrepreneurs develop enterprises that thrive locally while competing globally.”

EFF President Matthias Lehner has witnessed that dynamic firsthand. Having built a fitness franchise across four continents, he believes franchising’s strength lies in its balance of structure and flexibility – a model that can cross borders without losing its local soul. “I speak not only as an advocate for the sector, but also as someone who has lived it, he says. “This journey reflects the extraordinary potential of franchising to create concepts that resonate internationally while staying relevant locally.”

Today, Europe’s franchise community stands at a pivotal moment. Expansion opportunities abound, but so do challenges: fragmented regulation, economic uncertainty, and persistent misconceptions about the sector’s value. The EFF’s role, therefore, extends beyond advocacy – it’s about ensuring franchising remains a trusted, resilient, and sustainable route for brands looking to grow across one of the world’s most diverse and dynamic markets.

Diverse landscape

Europe’s franchising landscape is a mosaic of distinct cultural, economic, political, and legal environments. Among the 18 national franchise federations that make up the EFF, each represents a market with its own consumer habits and regulatory nuances – and each demands a tailored approach for any brand seeking to expand.

In Scandinavia, for example, Jan Fraggstedt of the Swedish Franchise Association notes that “consumers enjoy high purchasing power, are digitally advanced, and operate in an environment where entrepreneurship is supported by policymakers. Franchise concepts that emphasise sustainability, design-led innovation, and convenience tend to thrive.”

The Benelux region, comprising Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, stands among the most competitive franchising markets in the world. According to



Charlotte Oude Reimer of the Dutch Franchise Federation, “markets in our region benefit from clear legal frameworks and a long history of both domestic and international brands operating successfully.”

However, she also notes a growing level of political scrutiny. “Not all policymakers are fully aware of the specificities of the franchise model,” she explains, adding that debates in one market can easily spill over into neighbouring countries.

In 2023, Delhaize – one of Belgium’s biggest supermarket chains – made headlines when it announced plans to franchise all its stores. The decision sparked a wave of protests from trade unions, who urged the government to step in.

Yet behind the backlash lay a clear business imperative. For Delhaize, franchising wasn’t just a strategic option – it was a survival play in an increasingly volatile retail market. Moving to a franchise model promised greater efficiency, stronger local ownership, and renewed profitability. According to Carine Janssens of the Belgian Franchise Federation, the data backs this up: franchised outlets often deliver twice the turnover of company-owned stores, and in some cases, even three times as much.

The fallout continues to ripple across Belgium and beyond, reaching even the European political stage.

“Europe has long been a continent of contrasts – and that’s exactly what makes it such fertile ground for franchise growth”



MARKET BY MARKET

As reported by Jack Weber, director at Franchise Match

Germany - the €147B powerhouse with strong demand for services, senior care, and B2B concepts.

Portugal - Europe's fastest-growing franchise market, with +20% growth in 2024.

Spain - a top-5 global franchise market with deep experience and fast-moving trends.

The Nordics - high-spending consumers and room for digital-first, health-driven brands.

Italy - growing fast but with cultural and regulatory complexities.

The Netherlands - one of Europe's most structured, trend-driven, and export-ready markets.

Get set up for global growth

Europe's franchise market is changing fast, and smart franchisors are seizing the moment.

- The biggest growth is coming from service, wellness, and digital-first brands that match Europe's lifestyle shift.
- Success isn't about size; it's about understanding local culture and adapting to how people live and buy.
- Strong infrastructure, skilled talent, and open borders make expansion easier than ever.
- Markets like Portugal, the Nordics, and the Netherlands are proving ideal launchpads for new brands.
- Franchises that are fast, healthy, sustainable, and tech-savvy aren't just growing - they're defining Europe's next chapter.

Centre-left groups in the European Parliament have argued that Delhaize's restructuring risks undermining worker protections and weakening long-established labor standards. Trade unions and labor organizations have also raised alarms over potential job losses, citing procedures under Belgium's "Renault law" for collective redundancies.

For the European Franchise Federation, cases like this highlight the urgent need for better understanding of franchising at both national and EU levels. While franchising remains one of the most effective vehicles for entrepreneurship and job creation, misconceptions can distort policy debates and lead to overregulation. The EFF's work, therefore, is not just about promoting growth - it's about ensuring that franchising is recognised as a legitimate, transparent, and sustainable business model across all European markets.

Emerging markets

Moving toward the Mediterranean, Southern Europe presents a different kind of opportunity. Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece all boast vibrant hospitality and leisure sectors, driven by strong tourism economies. Here, seasonal demand shapes business operations, with brands needing to adapt to fluctuating volumes throughout the year. According to the EFF's Italian members, "Southern European consumers often value in-person experience and social connection, creating opportunities for restaurant, café, and retail brands that emphasise atmosphere and community engagement."

Further east, in the former Yugoslavian states, franchise growth is accelerating alongside rising disposable incomes. The region is steadily converging with Western European norms, fueled by infrastructure upgrades, EU integration, and growing investor confidence. Croatia's retail, food service, and service sectors, for example, are expanding rapidly, with homegrown franchises demonstrating strong innovation and international potential. As Dr. Ljiljana Kukec of the Croatian Franchise Association (FIP) explains, "Croatia and our region offer first-mover advantages for quality brands ready to adapt to local markets. Now is the time to seize the opportunity and be

EUROPE BY NUMBERS

180,000+

franchise outlets across the continent

24,600

active franchise brands

TOP MARKETS:

Germany, France, United Kingdom

2.6M

people employed in franchising

part of this growth story.”

Across all regions, one trend stands out: the growing influence of sustainability and digital-first engagement. Whether it's ordering food through an app, subscribing to home services, or using mobile wallets for loyalty programs, European consumers are increasingly engaging with brands through omnichannel touchpoints.

Multi-sector rise

Franchising in Europe is no longer confined to its traditional food and beverage (F&B) roots, although that sector remains a formidable force. Today, franchising has evolved into a dominant business strategy across a wide range of industries, each powered by its own unique drivers of growth.

F&B continues to lead the way in unit numbers and consumer visibility. While fast-food brands remain strong, fast-casual concepts that balance speed, quality, and healthier menu options are gaining ground. At the same time, ghost kitchens and delivery-first models are redefining competition, particularly in densely populated cities. Specialty coffee, artisanal bakeries, and vegan or plant-based brands are also carving out loyal audiences across both mature and emerging markets.

The fitness and wellness sector is thriving too, powered by growing health awareness and a demand for flexible, accessible workout options. Low-cost gym chains, boutique fitness studios, and wellness service franchises – from yoga and Pilates to recovery therapies – are multiplying across the continent. Hybrid models that blend physical spaces with on-demand digital training are particularly resonant among Europe's mobile, tech-savvy consumers.

Education franchises are also gaining momentum, driven by the need for supplementary learning in competitive academic environments and the growing emphasis on workforce reskilling. From children's programs and language schools to professional certification centres, these brands are tapping into both private household spending and corporate training budgets.

Meanwhile, several niche sectors are quietly emerging as strong contenders. Pet care and grooming services are flourishing as pet ownership rises and consumers seek reliable, professional providers. And experiential entertainment – from escape rooms to VR venues and interactive gaming



Is your franchise ready for Europe?



Jack Weber is director at Franchise Match, helping franchise brands expand in the Netherlands and Europe.

Franchise brands in Europe are now generating more than €300 billion annually, cementing the continent as one of the most lucrative and mature franchise economies in the world. But the story isn't just about scale – it's about transformation.

Fast-food chains and traditional retail outlets no longer define the European landscape. In 2025, Europe has emerged as a dynamic growth hub for service franchises, wellness concepts, digital-first models, and sustainability-driven brands.

Across the continent, consumer expectations

are shifting at speed. Urban lifestyles, the demand for digital convenience, and growing awareness of health and environmental impact are reshaping how Europeans live, eat, and shop. Franchises that respond to these evolving values – through smarter operations, technology integration, and authentic sustainability – are the ones scaling fastest.

In recent years, countries such as Germany, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands have seen record levels of franchise activity. Germany alone now generates an estimated €147 billion annually through

franchising, supported by strong consumer confidence and a well-established legal framework. Spain hosts over 1,300 active franchise brands, while Italy added more than 4,600 new franchise locations in 2023, signaling steady investor confidence and demand for local entrepreneurship.

But Europe's franchise growth isn't only about expansion – it's about evolution.

Service-based franchises are gaining ground rapidly, from tutoring centers and fitness studios to cleaning, repair, and home improvement services. As populations age and urbanize, the appetite for convenient, trusted, service-led businesses has never been stronger.

Meanwhile, wellness and health-oriented concepts are booming. Europe's



consumers are prioritizing physical fitness, mental wellbeing, and preventive care, creating fertile ground for brands offering gym memberships, yoga classes, recovery therapies, or nutrition-focused solutions.

Digital-first franchises are also redefining customer engagement. From app-based memberships to hybrid online-offline delivery models, brands that blend technology with personal service are meeting Europe's tech-savvy consumers where they already are - on their phones and devices.

Finally, sustainability-driven franchising is moving from trend to baseline expectation. In markets such as the Netherlands and across the Nordic countries, environmental awareness isn't a selling point - it's a requirement. Brands that can demonstrate genuine eco credentials, from sourcing to supply chain, are being rewarded with customer loyalty and

regulatory goodwill.

Europe's strength lies in its diversity. Mature economies like Germany, France, and the UK offer scale, sophistication, and robust infrastructure, ideal for international brands seeking credibility and reach. Meanwhile, high-growth markets such as Portugal, the Nordics, and the Netherlands provide easier market entry, lower saturation, and consumer bases that are both affluent and open to innovation.

For investors and franchisors alike, the key lies in alignment. Success in Europe depends not only on having a strong brand but also on adapting to the nuances of each local market, from regulations and labor laws to cultural habits and consumer expectations.

Europe's franchise market is becoming not only larger but also smarter. The continent's multilingual, mobile workforce supports cross-border growth; its digital infrastructure

accelerates scalability; and its mix of developed and emerging economies offers a balance of stability and opportunity.

For franchisors ready to think strategically, Europe represents a gateway to both market diversity and brand resilience. It's where scale meets sophistication, and where today's global brands are shaping the next chapter of international franchising. The opportunity is clear: franchises that combine operational excellence with cultural adaptability can build a strong, sustainable footprint across the continent.

The question isn't whether Europe is ready. It's whether your franchise is.

If you're an international franchisor looking to enter the Dutch market or an existing brand ready to scale, let's connect and discuss how we can accelerate your expansion. Email jack.weber@tachyons.nl or call international +31 85 - 0282 003.

cafés - is capturing the attention and leisure spend of younger audiences across the continent.

Hotspot for expansion

Europe has long been a continent of contrasts - and that's exactly what makes it such fertile ground for franchise growth. Mature economies sit alongside fast-emerging ones, each with its own rhythm and opportunity. For ambitious brands, it's a region where expansion can happen at scale, and innovation can find its next audience just over the border.

World-class infrastructure, reliable transport links, and advanced digital connectivity make Europe one of the easiest places to do business globally. Add to that a skilled, multilingual workforce that moves freely across markets, reducing barriers for training and cross-border management, and you have the foundations for scalable, sustainable growth.

From a regulatory perspective, countries like the UK, France, and Germany have spent decades refining the frameworks that support franchising. Their national associations provide trusted education, guidance, and mediation, creating the kind of stability that gives investors and entrepreneurs confidence to grow.

But it's Europe's consumers who truly set the stage. High purchasing power in established markets sustains premium concepts, while expanding middle-class populations in developing economies fuels demand for aspirational brands at accessible price points. It's a marketplace defined by diversity - one where a global household name can thrive right alongside niche, specialist operators.

Market access adds yet another advantage. The European Union's single market allows brands to move seamlessly across borders, while non-EU nations like Norway, Switzerland, and the UK remain deeply connected to their continental neighbors through strong trade and investment links.

Perhaps most importantly, franchising in Europe has come of age. Education, funding, and support networks are mature and offer a ready-made ecosystem for new entrants to flourish from day one.

For global franchisors, Europe isn't just another growth market - it's a strategic hub where brand visibility, cultural adaptability, and operational excellence converge. With the right partners and a sensitivity to local nuance, the continent offers not just expansion, but evolution, and a chance to shape the next chapter of international franchising.

INSIGHTS INTO THE EUROPEAN FRANCHISE AWARDS 2025

As European franchising meets global standards, one truth stands out: this is not an industry of national champions, but of systems built to scale across borders

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When Europe's franchise community gathered in Brussels for the 2025 European Franchise Awards, sponsored by CMS Francis Lefebvre, it wasn't just another black-tie event, but a reflection of how far the sector has come, and where it's heading next.

The night revealed an industry that's moved beyond counting locations and into a new era of systems, scalability, and cross-border cohesion.

Across every category, the message was clear: Europe's franchise market is maturing fast. The 2025 shortlist traced a map of Europe's business frontier, stretching from Finland's Alina and the UK's Right at Home to Croatia's Tinker Labs and Italy's Fortidia. These aren't just successful domestic operators; they're mature brands fluent in cross-border growth and adapting their models to new cultures and regulations without losing their identity.

Franchisee finalists told a similar story on the ground, with the awards spotlighting operators who excel not just in sales or service, but in translating brand systems into consistent, high-quality local execution. In Europe's connected marketplace, that balance between consistency and local nuance is fast becoming the gold standard of franchise excellence.

And for emerging brands such as X'PERT IMPACT (France), Zorgmaatje aan Huis (Netherlands) and Canopy Nurseries (UK), the recognition carried a different weight. It signaled that in 2025, youth isn't a disadvantage – not if a brand model is tight, its systems disciplined, and its scalability proven. The Emerging Brand category does not merely hint at future promise but showcases the next generation of well-structured challengers.

Even the Services to Franchising category, featuring suppliers like MCR Retailminds (Netherlands) and Stevens & Bolton (UK), highlighted a critical fact: Europe's franchise landscape is not driven solely by brand expansion, but by the infrastructure, technology,



Big winners: Right At Home (UK), Franchisor of the Year 2025

“The next chapter of European franchising will be defined by great systems, smart networks, and strong foundations”



and advisory sophistication that sustains it. The fact that specialist consultancies, law firms, and digital service providers are now sharing the stage with major franchise brands shows just how far the ecosystem has professionalized.

What emerged in Brussels was more than a night of celebration – it reflected a sector stepping confidently into its next phase of evolution. Whether you’re a franchisor seeking master partners, a multi-unit operator expanding portfolios, or an investor scanning for scalable opportunities, one takeaway stood out in Brussels this year: the next chapter of European franchising won’t be written through expansion alone – it will be defined by great systems, smart networks, and strong foundations.

For those watching closely, the European Franchise Awards are a strategic barometer of which systems, leaders, and partnerships are built for the future.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on the European Franchise Awards, visit eff-franchise.com

2025 European Franchise Awards Winners

FRANCHISOR OF THE YEAR

- Gold Right at Home (UK)
- Silver Hizi Hair (Netherlands)
- Bronze Isotec (Germany)
- Excellence Award Guy Hoquet (France)

FRANCHISEE OF THE YEAR

- Gold Sari Körkkö (Alina, Finland)
- Silver Alessio Piccardi (Mail Boxes Etc, Italy)
- Bronze Jon Radford (Football Fun Factory, UK)
- Bronze Karen Pollet (Carrefour, Belgium)

INTERNATIONAL BRAND OF THE YEAR

- Gold Mercure (France)
- Silver ERA (UK)
- Bronze Fortidia (Italy)

EMERGING FRANCHISE BRAND

sponsored by Localyzer

- Gold X’pert Impact (France)
- Silver Zorgmaatje aan Huis (Netherlands)
- Bronze Canopy Nurseries (UK)

EMERGING FRANCHISEE

Eugen Johannes (TUV, Germany)

EMERGING INTERNATIONAL BRAND

Tinker Labs (Croatia)

SERVICES TO FRANCHISING

- Gold Stevens & Bolton (UK)
- Silver MCR Retailminds (Netherlands)
- Bronze Mobilosoft (Belgium)

EUROPEAN HALL OF FAME

Manfred Maus

Who was on the judging panel?

PRESIDENT OF THE JURY



Charlotte Oude Reimer
Netherlands Franchise Association



Olivier Mermuys
CEO Cavavin



Pip Wilkins
British Franchise Association



Cristina Matos
Portuguese Franchise Association



Farrah Rose
The Franchising Centre



Michaela Fischer
German Franchise Association

EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING

In a world where eating out is as much about the feeling as the food, leading QSR franchises are showing that good old-fashioned hospitality and cutting-edge technology can - and should - work together hand in hand

It's 2025, and the quick-service restaurant no longer means "fast and forgettable."

The brands setting the pace today know that a great burger or latte is just the start. What keeps people coming back isn't just what's on the plate - it's how the experience makes them feel.

From the moment a customer taps to order or walks through the door, every interaction matters. The best QSR franchises have figured that out. They're using technology not to replace people, but to empower them - turning data into personal moments, and routine service into genuine connection.

Once upon a time, QSR success was measured in seconds. Now it's measured in smiles, stars, and stories shared online. Social media has made every meal a public moment - a chance to impress, inspire, or go viral for all the wrong reasons. That pressure has driven brands to double down on empathy, design, and training, bringing a new level of creativity to how they serve.

Across the world, franchised restaurant groups are leading a quiet revolution. They're proving that hospitality still matters - perhaps more than ever - and that

technology, when used with care, can make service feel more human, not less.

In this feature, we meet three QSR brands redefining what outstanding customer service really means for guests. Each one is investing in smarter systems, better training, and a more thoughtful kind of customer experience - one built on consistency, connection, and care. Because in today's world, food fills the plate, but experience fills the brand.

“Across the world, good hospitality still matters in restaurants, and technology, when used with care, can make the service feel more human, not less”

CRAVEWORTHY BRANDS

“Accessibility is key to customer experience”

Craveworthy Brands, the parent company of Taffer's Tavern, Wing It On!, The Budlong, Krafted Burger + Tap, Genghis Grill, BD's Mongolian Grill and Flat Top Grill and Lucky Cat Poke Company, is dedicated to invigorating and supercharging legacy brands while nurturing and growing emerging brands. The company brings to the table an accomplished leadership team and leverages a shared services model that works to benefit its entire portfolio. The first step towards creating a next-level customer experience is to be accessible, and with a significant number of orders taken through apps, third-party and to-go, all ordering systems are designed to be easy, convenient and seamlessly integrated into restaurants.

“A couple of the key initiatives we've rolled out across the brands and all the restaurants, corporate-owned and franchised, are tech-enabled to provide immediate customer feedback,” says Gregg Majewski, CEO and founder of Craveworthy Brands. “Giving all our guests direct and instant access to our restaurant leadership teams and our corporate support departments after an in-store visit or digital experience is critical. Why? Because if there's a problem, we're spotting trends immediately and resolving them. Every time there is any type of issue, we require the stores to do write-ups on themselves. We take customer feedback seriously, because they are the lifeline of the brand.”

“Unfortunately, too many restaurants in America take shortcuts when it comes to hospitality,” Gregg continues. “We are proud of the training and guidance we've implemented across our brands to keep hospitality at the forefront. For off-premise dining, our tech-enabled solutions create convenience and ease of ordering/payment, as well as top-level packaging to ensure our food travels well. But, when you come into our restaurants, we ensure the human touch is the reason why our guests want to come back. Our training programs focus on customer







service and building customer relationships instead of just being a transaction. Don't be misled, the small things add up, both positively and potentially negatively."

But tech can't solve every challenge, especially in today's competitive QSR landscape where customers vote with their feet and word travels fast online and through social media. "The foundations of hospitality and great-tasting food are at the top of the must-do list," continues Gregg. "We've elevated our approach to hospitality by introducing new training programs and restaurant operations processes. Across the board, we've introduced new menu introductions and higher-quality menu items with better ingredients. Keeping menus fresh is integral to customer satisfaction, loyalty and foot traffic. And for our guests dining in, we've introduced new, improved restaurant designs to maximize efficiencies in our kitchens and ordering counters. Consumer habits are changing, and we simply don't require as much space for eating in anymore, thanks to the rise in off-premise dining."

"Tech can't solve every challenge, especially in today's competitive QSR landscape where customers vote with their feet and word travels fast online and via social media"



POTBELLY

"Exceeding expectations through every touchpoint"

Potbelly Sandwich Works, better known as Potbelly to its fans, is one of many brands who have utilized technology to meet and serve customers "where they want to be met." According to chief marketing officer David Daniels, this investment has enabled Potbelly to "exceed customer's expectations through every touchpoint," providing accessibility and convenience as well as high quality food.

In providing simple and



efficient digital ordering channels, Potbelly has leveraged technology to improve execution and create a one-of-a-kind energy and atmosphere in its shops. “Specifically, the Potbelly Digital Kitchen is a platform created to improve our shops’ ability to manage digital orders and improve efficiency,” David explains. “The enhanced Tech Stack, which includes our website, app and Perks Loyalty Program, has improved ordering efficiency, brand access, convenience, and engagement, all of which provides a greater value exchange for the customer.”

While the in-shop tech enhancements have worked to improve overall guest experience,

Potbelly has addressed another key customer concern – value and ambience. “We revamped our menu in the second half of 2021 aimed at delivering greater value to the customer through improved portions and variety, while upholding our standards of serving the highest quality food. These investments have led to stronger shop performance metrics and improved customer loyalty,” David continues. “Additionally, our one-of-a-kind sandwich shop interiors feature a distinct ambience that deliver a fun, energetic vibe and a place our customers want to sit down to enjoy a meal.”

While the franchisor has utilized all the tech needed for improving

5 ways QSRs are redefining hospitality in 2025

As competition tightens and guest expectations soar, QSR franchises are turning to smarter systems and sharper service to stand out. Here are some emerging trends that are defining the new era of dining

1. Predictive personalization

AI-driven data tools are turning first-time visitors into regulars by tailoring offers, menus, and communication based on individual preferences and ordering habits.

2. Hybrid hospitality

Customers expect the same level of warmth and connection whether they order in-store, via kiosk, or through an app. Franchises are training teams to deliver consistent service across every touchpoint, whether it be digital or human.

3. Connected kitchens

Integrated back-of-house systems now link directly with POS and inventory tools, reducing waste and speeding up service without compromising quality or consistency.

4. Loyalty with meaning

Points and discounts still matter, but emotional loyalty is the real prize. Brands are using memberships, milestones, and recognition programs to create a sense of belonging that outlasts the transaction.

5. Design for experience

From open kitchens to acoustics and lighting, QSRs are redesigning their spaces to encourage dwell time, social sharing, and repeat visits, proving that good atmosphere is as memorable as good food.

the digital pick-up experience as well as tablets and in-line-order takers during high-volume lunch periods to maximize throughput and speed up service, Potbelly's COO Adam Noyes points out that positive personal interactions matter just as much. "We encourage our associates to bring their unique personalities into creating Good Vibes with our customers," he emphasizes. "All our shops use customer surveys and social listening to monitor progress and drive system results. This, along with other operations assessment tools, help us identify opportunities for continuous improvement."

THE HABIT BURGER GRILL
"Genuine world-class hospitality and high-quality ingredients"

For The Habit Burger Grill, providing genuine world-class hospitality and high-quality ingredients is central to delivering the elevated experience customers expect from a leading craft burger joint. The American fast-casual restaurant, with its laidback Californian vibe, specializes in award-winning Charburgers grilled over an open flame, but knows that to achieve its vision of being the 'number one better burger brand globally', next-level customer service is as important as the quality of burgers they're renowned for.

This hinges on creating consistency and ease of use across all customer touchpoints. "We are, and will continue to be, forward-thinking about the experience we create for our guests, both in-store or digital," says John Phillips, chief business development officer at The Habit Burger Grill. "We want to be an all-access brand – mobile, web and in-store," he explains. "It's not all about the tech – it's just as important to still maintain strong guest interaction at our restaurants, including having guest service representatives taking phone orders."

While the brand has invested in a raft of measures to ensure a smooth ordering process, it remains focused on what it knows

TECH MEETS HUMAN TOUCH

Franchises are learning that great hospitality isn't about choosing between people and technology - it's about blending the two. Here's where smart operators are investing to get it right.

Frictionless ordering
 Mobile and kiosk ordering are table stakes, but the winners are using real-time data to anticipate needs, from suggesting favourite orders to syncing loyalty rewards automatically.

Connected kitchens
 AI-powered prep systems reduce waste and wait times, keeping quality high and operations smooth. The result? Hotter food, happier teams, and fewer mistakes.

Human-first design
 Even the best tech can't fake warmth. Brands are training teams to blend digital efficiency with emotional intelligence - greeting names, reading moods, and knowing when not to rush.

Feedback that fuels
 Instant post-visit surveys and sentiment tracking turn customer voices into action. When data meets empathy, small tweaks can make a big impact.



is key to customer loyalty – food and service. "Enhanced packaging allows for better transportation of orders for off-premise dining and, since we have 35 percent of our guests utilizing in-store dining, we continue to elevate our dining rooms and guest interaction with team members," adds John, showing that when it comes to maximising customer experience, no stone is left unturned.

"From a tech standpoint, we're committed to staying at the leading edge of convenience, ease of use and accessibility for our guests, starting with our website which is completely accessible on all devices, optimized for speed and convenience and as streamlined as possible. Guests can order for pick-up or delivery using the site."

Regular customers can also use The Habit Burger Grill app with just as much speed and convenience as through the website. The brand has invested



“Unfortunately, too many restaurants in America still take shortcuts when it comes to hospitality”

heavily in the app, which maintains high review scores from guests with a 4.9 star rating out of 5. Crucially, the interface is intuitive and can be used for pick-up, delivery and curbside service. “We have also been introducing ordering kiosks at our restaurants,” adds John. “The functionality and guest experience mirrors our app, so guests have strong familiarity with using the interface. And, we have close ties with all third-party delivery platforms to ensure our guest experience remains

consistent. For many franchises, the challenge of exceeding customers’ high expectations is being able to maintain standards across the network. The Habit Burger Grill operates a significant number of corporate-owned restaurants, which allows them to implement and manage operations standards to a high level, while ensuring their carefully selected and dedicated franchisee operators are in lock-step with these standards.

“It’s the initial and ongoing training, as well as consistent systemwide communications, that provide us with our secret sauce,” says John. “We set industry-leading standards in both our training and the way we roll out and communicate new initiatives. For our new in-restaurant, app and web tech introductions our information sharing is robust, so our franchisees, restaurant managers and their teams are all extremely

knowledgeable.” But the brand goes a step further when it comes to internal communications. “We have our own help desk – The Habit Help Desk – which includes team members who have worked in the field. This means our operators always have knowledgeable support from those who know our proprietary POS, app and loyalty program inside out.” A focus on internal support is vital when it comes to ensuring the success of any tech investment and to keep all stakeholders connected to strategy. “We conduct monthly restaurant support level virtual meetings to review any new standards,” explains John. “These meetings foster open dialogue on new operations and tech introductions. Plus, we have quarterly franchisee meetings to review customer experience strategies and explore ways in which we can look to the future together.”

Insider...

Expert insights and commentary from the heart of the franchising world



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How smart leaders can rebuild frontline culture



Frontline culture doesn't collapse overnight – it erodes when leaders stop showing what great hospitality looks like, says **Tim Sharp**, Brand President of Urban Air Park. Here, he explains how leadership, visibility, and genuine care can make or break a brand's guest experience

It's easy to blame Gen Z for the state of frontline service. But if your team is disengaged, greeting guests with blank stares, the issue isn't generational – it's cultural. And it's not just about service; it's about creating hospitality.

Good hospitality is emotional work. It requires eye contact, warmth, and genuine care and connection. More often than not, this is not instinctive – it's learned. Yet too often, we assume teams will just “get it.” They won't. It must be taught, coached, and modeled.

After four decades in hospitality and franchising, I've learned that culture fades when leaders focus too much on process and forget that people mirror what they see. If you want your team to make customers feel valued, you can't just write it into a manual – you have to live it.

Most franchise teams are trained up for providing good service – quick check-ins, accurate orders, clean spaces. Necessary? Absolutely. But it's not enough.

Hospitality is the extra step that makes guests feel they belong. That positive feeling drives word of mouth recommendations, customer loyalty, and repeat visits.

The shift starts with language. At Urban Air, we teach the difference between service and hospitality on day one – and then we take it further. We weave soft-skill coaching into daily operations: smiling, speaking with intention, staying present, reading the room. We role-play it. Give real-time feedback.

Most importantly, we make sure our managers model it every single day. Culture isn't absorbed when it's written in a handbook. It's absorbed through small, repeated moments on the shop floor.

Technology should be implemented only to help teams connect with guests, not hide from them. At Urban Air, we rolled out mobile point-of-sale systems, not to cut labor costs, but to free our team from counters and screens. It allows them to operate where the magic happens – out on the floor, greeting guests and creating moments of connection.

The result? We've seen a real lift in customer loyalty and sales. Because connection doesn't happen behind a desk – it happens between people.

Culture only sticks when it's built into a daily rhythm. One of our best tools for training is using real guest feedback. We highlight the positive reviews to show what great hospitality looks like, and review negative feedback together as a team: “What happened here? How could we approach this situation differently next time?”

These conversations turn vague values into valuable coaching moments, giving our teams both agency and accountability.

At Urban Air, we define frontline culture with three words: Clean. Safe. Kind. These

are not just framed on a wall – they guide how we train, inspect, and reward. Is the park spotless? Do guests feel secure? Did someone offer an unprompted welcome?

When leaders walk the floor, praise the right behaviors, and correct mistakes with empathy, teams reflect that energy back.

Our first park to implement this strategy saw its revenue climb by 10% and its memberships grow. At another, the Net Promoter Score rose by 25%.

Service can be trained. Hospitality must be modeled. If you want your team to deliver it, don't tell them – show them.

“Good hospitality is emotional work. It requires eye contact, warmth, and genuine care and connection. This is not instinctive, it has to be taught, coached and modeled”



Helping employees become future owners paves the way for growth



Investing in people, rather than replacing them when they leave, is the ultimate growth strategy in the fitness and wellness space, says **Josh York**, CEO and founder of GYMGUYZ.

High turnover has long been treated as an inevitable cost of doing business in the fitness and wellness space, leaving thousands of trainer positions unfilled each year. Many brands respond with reactive retention tactics, adapting to churn as if it were an unavoidable routine. But taking the time to invest in employees from day one, turning jobs into careers rather than stopgaps, can

fuel both brand growth and meaningful employee development.

At GYMGUYZ, we challenge the traditional franchise approach to talent by redefining our employees as long-term investments. Our model develops team members into owners, building structured career pathways that strengthen retention, performance, and leadership across the system. By cultivating future business leaders from within, we're fueling sustainable growth and reinforcing the value of our brand. Here's how to put that mindset into practice.

Franchise systems often focus on processes, technology, and operations. While those are essential to building a successful model, the true strength of any system lies in its people. When you invest in your team, they invest back into the brand. That means regularly reviewing processes, equipping employees with the tools they need to thrive, and fostering mentorship programs that boost morale and inspire growth. Teaching employees how to succeed is vital, but so is taking the time to celebrate their successes. Creating a culture where ambition is nurtured and upward mobility isn't just possible but encouraged, leads to faster, more sustainable growth.

Smart franchise systems create clear career pathways that turn high-potential employees into multi-unit operators and future owners. While skill sets are important, ambition and passion deserve

How strategic reacquisition has strengthened our franchise network



Bringing a top-performing location under corporate ownership isn't just a growth strategy, says **Brad Hillier**, CEO of Re-Bath. It's a chance to evolve your brand in a deliberate and meaningful way.

At Re-Bath, our network is maturing, and we're focused on advancing our capabilities to ensure we're ready for what's next. The bathroom remodeling industry is evolving fast. Customers expect more, and technology is driving all of us to move quicker and demand faster go-to-market strategies that are best executed through closer alignment. We saw that reacquisition could help us strengthen operations, align more closely with our franchisees, and position the brand for the future.

One of the biggest benefits is that corporate-owned locations create a more consistent training environment. They give us space to safely test new programs and ideas without disrupting franchisee operations. They also provide our team with direct, day-to-day insight into what's really happening in the field, moving beyond theory to hands-on understanding and practical management.

These locations also play a major role in innovation and system support. We use them as central hubs to onboard new franchisees and to provide targeted assistance to those

who need extra support. They act as pilot sites where we can test programs and initiatives, either independently or with select franchise groups, before rolling them out system-wide.

When it comes to transitioning a store from franchisee to corporate ownership, we're very intentional. We don't acquire stores to flip them upside down - we acquire them to learn from them. We take a deliberate, cautious approach before making any operational changes. These stores follow the same rules as every other franchise, which gives the network confidence that any new program is designed to support everyone.

If you're a franchisor considering reacquisition, start by evaluating how a store compares to your network averages. Look at size, profitability, performance, and strategic value. Can it serve as a training hub? Is it a good place to pilot programs or initiatives that could benefit the wider system? Make sure any reacquisition aligns with your broader goals and creates meaningful opportunities to learn and grow.

Of course, it's not without risks. One of the biggest is the potential for culture disruption

equal weight. Someone willing to work hard and learn is often more valuable than someone with raw talent but little drive. Given the right tools and support, these individuals can become true assets to the company.

Training programs and continuous education are crucial in turning ambition into equity. Structured career tracks with set milestones help employees take ownership of their growth and measure progress toward long-term goals.

When team members feel valued and invested in, they don't just do their jobs – they become passionate advocates who elevate the entire franchise network. They lead with authenticity because they've lived the brand, and they uphold standards because they helped build them. That enthusiasm creates a ripple effect, driving better customer experiences, stronger performance, and an enhanced brand reputation. Franchisees who come from within often lead with greater pride, accountability, and buy-in – and that translates into something you can't recruit: sustainable, system-wide growth.

As franchisors, our responsibility extends beyond building strong brands. It's about building strong people and cultivating cultures that champion development. In an industry defined by high turnover and burnout, the most powerful and scalable strategy isn't about replacing talent – it's investing in it, developing it, and elevating it from the inside out.

– both within the team you're acquiring and across the network. We manage that by being transparent, over-communicating, and taking time to bring everyone along. Another challenge is change itself. Sometimes, it's not the store that needs to change – it's the corporate office that needs to listen and learn.

For us, reacquisition fits into a bigger picture. It unifies performance across the network, drives same-store sales growth, and enhances our ability to test and validate concepts more quickly, improving speed to market and supporting scalable, long-term growth.

Franchisees will always move faster than corporate because of their size and local focus, and that's a good thing. But not all innovations are built for national scalability. That's why collaboration matters. You need to work with franchisees to grow the ideas that move the whole system forward, and recognize and reward the people behind them.

Done right, strategic reacquisition doesn't just bring a store back under your roof. It brings your entire network a step closer together.



WHY WE'RE TAKING PIZZA TO NEW PLACES



For Little Caesars, growth isn't just about opening new stores – it's about opening in smarter places, says **Bryan Ketelhut**, VP of Franchising and Business Development.

Non-traditional venues are fast becoming a major driver of visibility, convenience, and brand loyalty.

At Little Caesars, we're always exploring new ways to make our signature, affordable favorites – like Hot-N-Ready® pizza and Crazy Bread® – even more accessible. Expanding into non-traditional venues allows us to do just that, reaching guests in places you might not expect to find a pizza brand.

Most people think of pizza as something you pick up or have delivered, but opening in venues like casinos, stadiums, and military bases changes that perception. These high-traffic spaces put Little Caesars in front of thousands of people every day – people looking for something fast, satisfying, and affordable.

Airports, for example, are an incredible opportunity. With travelers constantly on the move, offering a quick and familiar option makes perfect sense. It's a strategy that complements our traditional restaurant growth while keeping the brand visible and top of mind in key markets.

Non-traditional locations are also attractive for a practical reason: convenience. For consumers, it means great food where they already are. For us, it means less competition.

For franchisees, the benefits go beyond

visibility. These restaurants are typically smaller, with lower overheads and minimal staffing needs, appealing given today's labor challenges and rising costs. The ability to customize footprint and menus means franchisees can tailor their operations to fit each environment. That flexibility is a big part of why this model works.

And the brand exposure? It's huge. Guests might see Little Caesars in their neighborhood one day, then spot us again while traveling or attending an event. We're meeting them where they are, in some of the most visited spaces across the country. That's how you build lasting awareness and loyalty.

A great example is our recent opening at Pearl Harbor Naval Base. Located in one of the busiest Navy Exchange Malls in the world, this store marks our debut in this market and cements Little Caesars as a go-to QSR option for service members and their families.

Of course, there are challenges. Securing space and meeting venue-specific requirements can take time, and airports have a complex bidding process. Staffing can also be tricky when you factor in background checks and extended hours in 24/7 environments like airports or casinos. But with the right prep and adaptations, the rewards are well worth it.



Q&A

Building a world-class franchisor



Phil Broad, President of TGI Fridays® International Franchising, talks to editor Charlotte Smith about the brand's ambitious growth strategy and how

Fridays is supporting its franchisees across a range of global markets.

F

or more than six decades, TGI Fridays® has been a name synonymous with fun. From its first bar in New York to a presence in nearly 40 countries today, the brand has built a legacy on energy and connection – a place where guests come together to mark life's exciting moments. Now, under the leadership of Phil Broad, Fridays is entering a bold new phase of international growth.

The company has just extended its franchise development and master franchise agreements with two of its longest-standing partners – Franquicias Alimentarias S.A. in Peru and Watami Co., Ltd. in Japan – paving the way for more than 50 new restaurant openings across the two markets. The move builds on recent successes, including new openings in Lima and Yokohama, and marks another confident step toward Fridays' goal of reaching 1,000 restaurants globally.

Phil Broad, who became President of TGI Fridays® International Franchising in April 2025, is a Brit based in Dubai and brings more than 30 years of food and beverage experience to the role. Before joining Fridays, he served as Senior Vice President of Food & Beverage at Alghanim Industries, overseeing more than 270 restaurants across the GCC and driving regional growth for Wendy's, Costa Coffee, and Slim Chickens. His career also includes senior leadership positions with Starbucks UK & Ireland, InterContinental Hotels Group, and Jumeirah Restaurants, as well as a previous tenure as Managing Director of TGI Fridays UK from 1997 to 2000.



With a franchise-first mindset and a clear vision for growth, Broad shares how Fridays is evolving its model, empowering partners, and reigniting the spirit that made the brand a global icon.

GF: How would you describe your vision for Fridays' international growth and expansion?

PB: The key for us is being a responsible franchisor. People invest money, time, and energy into our brand, and we have a responsibility to make sure they're supported with world-class systems, processes, and people. Fridays has been around for over 60 years, and it's built on powerful foundations – a proven business model, strong brand equity, and a loyal

following that spans generations.

But success today isn't about doing what's always been done. We want to be bold and disruptive. The market's ready for a brand that does things differently, one that delivers great food and drinks but also energy, theater, and that unmistakable Fridays buzz. That's what we're bringing back – the bar-forward experience, the flair, and the celebration that defined us from the start.

Our goal is clear: to be a world-class franchisor operating 1,000 restaurants worldwide. Fridays is currently in around 40 countries, and we're seeing growing demand from potential franchise partners. That tells me the brand still has incredible global appeal.



Q: You've just announced extended franchise agreements in Peru and Japan. How do these fit into the bigger picture?

A: They're really exciting markets for us. We've just extended our development agreements with two long-term, highly capable partners (Franquicias Alimentarias in Peru and Watami in Japan) to develop more than 50 new restaurants between them.

We've already seen great traction. In Peru, we recently opened at Real Plaza Primavera in Lima, which takes our footprint there to 20 restaurants. In Japan, our new opening in Yokohama strengthens our presence in the Kanto region. Across both countries, we now have more than 30

restaurants, and we're just getting started.

These partnerships demonstrate confidence in the brand, in our strategy, and in the future of Fridays. Both partners understand the DNA of the brand and what makes it special. They live and breathe it in their local markets, which is exactly what we look for in franchisees.

Q: Fridays has such a long legacy. How do you balance that heritage with staying relevant for today's guests?

A: It's all about evolution, not reinvention. Fridays has a spirit – that sense of fun, energy, and hospitality – that people recognize and love. Our job is to keep that alive while modernizing how we deliver it.

That means rethinking design, menu

“When our franchise partners thrive, the brand thrives. That's how we'll reach our goals together”

innovation, technology, and the guest experience so it feels contemporary but still unmistakably Fridays. Whether it's in London, Lima, or Tokyo, we want guests to feel that same warmth and vibrancy when they walk through the door.

Q: How does that translate into the franchise model?

A: Fridays isn't a one-size-fits-all brand. We've built a flexible model that works across different markets and venues, from flagship restaurants and hotel partnerships to airports and compact urban sites. That adaptability gives us real strength as we expand.

It allows us to grow efficiently while keeping our identity intact. Every format, no matter how big or small, still delivers that Fridays experience – the energy, the service, and that sense of celebration.

Q: What does being a world-class franchisor mean in practice?

Phil Broad: It means always putting franchisees first. Our role is to make sure our partners have the right training, the right systems, and the right ongoing support to be successful. But it's also about partnership – listening, learning, and being there when they need us.

We want to be known as a franchisor that cares – one that celebrates success, shares best practices, and gives franchisees confidence that we're invested in their long-term growth. When our partners thrive, the brand thrives. That's how we'll reach our goals together.

Q: Looking ahead, what's next for TGI Fridays?

A: More growth, but the right kind. We're building towards 1,000 restaurants globally, and we're doing it by focusing on quality partnerships, strong local execution, and consistent brand experience. Fridays has the legacy, the systems, and the people to get there. Most importantly, we have the energy. We've got the spark back, and that's what's going to carry us forward.



GLOBAL WORKFORCE DEMAND REQUIRES LOCAL STRATEGIES



Vinny Provenzano, Senior Vice President of Global Franchising at Express Employment Professionals explains why a universal hiring model no longer works.

The global demand for talent has never been greater. Yet as businesses scale, whether within their own countries or across borders, the strategies for meeting workforce needs must be tailored to local realities. From urban hot spots to emerging markets, franchisors and staffing companies know that a universal model doesn't work in a world where economic conditions, regulations, and cultural expectations vary widely.

Employers everywhere face the same core challenge: unfilled positions. This shortage is driven by shifting industries, aging populations, and rising expectations around flexibility, compensation, and workplace culture.

But while the problem is shared, the solutions are not. Recruiting in Sydney is not the same as hiring in Des Moines. Each region operates under its own mix of economic conditions, labor laws, training systems, and workforce behaviors. For staffing providers – especially global ones – growth depends on understanding these local nuances. Healthcare offers a clear example. Aging populations are straining healthcare systems across continents, but each country's response looks different. In Australia, demand for allied health professionals continues to grow. In South Africa, access and training are the biggest challenges. In the U.S., burnout and wage pressure dominate. Though the

need for people is universal, the path to solving it must be specific to each market.

Labor markets are evolving faster than many institutions can adapt, placing new pressure on staffing providers to be both consistent and flexible. Franchise systems, in particular, must balance reliability with local autonomy. Too much standardization creates rigidity; too much freedom erodes trust. The future belongs to those who can do both, at scale. At Express Employment Professionals, we achieve a balance by combining data-driven insight with empowered local leadership. Real-time analytics allow us to identify trends and deploy specialized services where they're most needed, while local franchise owners bring deep community knowledge to shape strategies that truly resonate.

Globally, businesses want efficient, reliable staffing. Job seekers want fair pay, meaningful work, and opportunities to grow. These shared goals guide our systems and training, but impact comes from execution at the local level.

Workforce challenges will only grow more complex as technology, migration, and generational shifts reshape how we work. The franchises that succeed globally will be those that know what to standardize, what to adapt, and what to localize.

Train AI like it's a Golden Retriever



AI isn't your colleague, but it still needs boundaries, structure, and understanding, says **Mark Van Wye**, CEO of Zoom Room. The secret to using it well? Treat it less like a human and more like an intelligent pet.

The most powerful new coworker in your business doesn't sleep, take breaks, or have feelings – though your team may act like it does.

As AI becomes embedded in everyday workflows, people talk about it in oddly human ways. A chatbot "understood what I needed." A writing model "didn't like my tone." These aren't just figures of speech. Humans naturally anthropomorphize anything that shows patterns and responsiveness, even a text box that talks back.

That instinct isn't harmless. It shapes how teams use (and misuse) AI. And it's why franchise systems, especially those built on structure and training, might take a cue from an unlikely source: dog training.

At Zoom Room, we train people who love dogs, not the dogs themselves. Most canine behavioral issues stem from misinterpretation. Owners assume their dogs feel guilt, act out of spite, or "know better." They don't. But it feels that way because we see the world through human eyes.

The first step in dog training is recognizing your dog as a dog. Not a furry child or a peer. Dogs have emotion and instinct, but their logic isn't ours. Once owners stop projecting and start understanding, everything improves: communication, trust, and confidence.

AI deserves the same shift in mindset. It may not be sentient, but it's real – pattern-based, probabilistic, and remarkably capable. It can summarize a deposition, translate a marketing deck, write in five tones, debug code, and analyze trends.

These aren't human strengths, and that's the point. The goal isn't to humanize AI, but to understand it and teach teams to engage accordingly.

Love it for what it is, not what it isn't

The appeal of AI isn't that it mimics a coworker. It's that it can review 10,000 documents in seconds and never forget a rule. Teach teams to appreciate those traits. Don't indulge the illusion of personality.

Don't mistake fluency for truth

Just as a wag isn't consent, a fluent AI response isn't accuracy. Use it for ideation, drafting, and comparison, but keep humans in charge of judgment, ethics, and context.



Structure the relationship

People form attachments to tools that talk back. That's not a flaw; it's cognition. So, give them a framework: prompt, response, review, reward. Think of it as enrichment training - a routine that builds clarity, not confusion.

Reinforce good behavior

Most AI models are trained using the same behavioral principles that we use effectively with animals - positive reinforcement and shaping. You can train AI by the same methods. Reward strong prompts. Celebrate creative uses. Desirable behavior spreads faster through encouragement rather than by correction.

“People get attached to tools that talk back. That’s not a flaw, it’s cognition”

Teach better listening.

Dog owners learn to read tail wags and posture. AI users must do the same with language. Does the response make sense? Is it biased? Credible? The best AI users aren't necessarily techies - they're readers of nuance.

The best dog owners don't love their pets for acting human. They love them for being dogs and for the satisfaction that comes from bridging the gap between species.

The same is true of AI. Its power lies not in mimicry but in difference. Teach your team to meet that difference with structure, curiosity, and a bit of affection, and you won't just adapt to change - you'll thrive in it.

WHAT FRANCHISE BRANDS GET WRONG ABOUT DIRECT MAIL



Stop treating direct mail like a relic, says **Justine Poffel**, Director of Marketing at Imaginuity. With AI and smarter targeting, it's fast becoming one of the most powerful tools in the marketing mix.

Direct mail isn't dead - it's just misunderstood.

Too many franchise brands either ignore it altogether or run fragmented campaigns that waste budget and miss the mark. But when powered by AI and integrated into a modern performance marketing stack, direct mail can rival digital channels in both efficiency and conversion quality. The key lies in smarter targeting, continuous refinement, and structured

campaigns that respect both brand oversight and local relevance.

The problem is that many marketers still see direct mail as slow, expensive, and difficult to measure - a legacy channel that doesn't fit into a digital-first world. That couldn't be further from the truth. Today, direct mail can be personalized, performance-tracked, and optimized in real time. When executed with the same rigor as digital media, it



Why great leaders are managers too



Good leadership isn't about titles, talent, or charisma - it's about consistency, clarity, and accountability. **Brad Sugars**, founder of ActionCOACH, breaks down the biggest myths holding business owners back and shares what real leadership should look like in practice.

We see leadership advice everywhere - LinkedIn, podcasts, and inspirational quotes about vision and 'leading from the front'. But business owners are told to "be a better leader" without ever being shown what that really means. They chase personality traits, attend motivational seminars, and try to emulate famous leaders without mastering the basics. I've been leading ActionCOACH since I came

up with the idea in my bedroom in the mid-90s. The brand has grown into the world's number one business coaching franchise and along the way, I've seen the same misconceptions time and again. One of the biggest is believing you can skip management and go straight into leadership. Somewhere along the line, management got labeled old-fashioned - rigid, bureaucratic, uninspiring - while leadership became the glamorous ideal. Everyone

wants to be a visionary, a motivator, a change-maker. But here's the truth: you can't build great leadership without solid management underneath it. I've walked into countless businesses where people hold managerial titles but have never been properly trained to manage. They've been sent on leadership courses, but leadership without management is like building a house without a foundation. Management gives you process, structure, and consistency. It helps people do their jobs well and keeps teams on track. Without it, leaders spend their days firefighting instead of focusing on growth. Leadership brings direction, focus, and energy, but none of that sticks if your team doesn't know what's expected or how success is measured. Another myth is that leadership is all about personality, that you need to be loud, charismatic, or the most confident person in the room. But leadership isn't about how





delivers highly qualified leads in places where online campaigns fall short – especially in local markets where trust still depends on tangible touchpoints.

At Imaginuity, we've seen how AI-driven targeting has completely changed the game for home services brands. Our predictive model draws on hundreds of data points – from housing characteristics and ownership tenure to life stage triggers and behavioral signals – to predict which households are most likely to need services like roofing, plumbing, landscaping, pest control, or foundation repair.

We validated the model through extensive back testing, achieving 98% precision against historical conversion data. Then we ran phased, in-market tests where AI-selected leads fulfilled 25% to 50% of direct mail orders across several markets. The results were striking: campaigns using AI-modeled lists saw up to 30% lower cost per lead than traditional demographic or ZIP code-based lists, while maintaining or improving

close rates. It's not just smarter targeting – it's precision at scale for an industry built on local delivery.

Of course, direct mail doesn't work in isolation. When layered into a broader marketing strategy, it becomes a high-performance lever at the top of the funnel. We've seen predictive mail campaigns trigger measurable lifts across branded search and paid social when timing, messaging, and creative are co-ordinated. AI also helps dynamically adjust creative and frequency based on confidence scores, reducing waste and increasing ROI. When you stop treating mail like a static blast and start handling it like a digital campaign, the economics change fast.

For franchise and multi-location brands, the biggest challenge is balancing scale with local relevance. Our solution is a centralized strategy with localized execution. The model identifies leads within a tight radius around each location, then personalizes creative with local

“Direct mail is still one of the most cost-effective, scalable channels for driving real leads and revenue”

offers, contact details, and QR codes for attribution. Franchisees get the flexibility to speak directly to their markets while the brand retains full visibility into spend and performance.

Direct mail is no longer a “nice to have” or a last-ditch tactic – it's one of the most cost-effective, scalable channels for driving real leads and revenue. With the right targeting, structure, and technology, it belongs alongside digital in the modern franchise marketing mix. The brands that know better are already doing better.



you sound – it's about what you do and how you build. You need the right framework, clear communication, and the courage to make decisions under pressure. Personality shapes your style, but it's not what makes you effective. If you can't align your team or give constructive feedback, none of it will matter.

Then there's the idea that leadership comes with the title. It doesn't. Getting a promotion or stepping into a new role doesn't automatically make you a leader. True leadership isn't about status; it's about responsibility. It's how you show up for your team, create clarity in chaos, and earn trust over time. Leadership is built through consistency: showing up, owning mistakes, and setting the standard. When people see that, they'll go the extra mile because they want to – not because they're told to.

Finally, there's the myth that leadership is something you master once and you're done. Real leadership doesn't have a

finish line. Markets evolve. Teams grow and change. Technology reshapes how we operate. What worked last year might already feel outdated. The best leaders don't resist change – they seek it out. They stay curious, ask questions, and welcome feedback. They learn from both their wins and missteps.

Real leadership shows up in what you do every day. It starts with effective management – clear direction, robust systems, and the right tools. From there, leadership skills add the spark: confident decisions, focused energy, and a vision that brings people with you.

The best leaders keep it simple. They show up, keep learning, and lead with intention. Do that consistently, and the payoff is lasting – not just a flash of inspiration, but a business that works and a team that's proud to build it with you.



SO WHAT IF YOU'VE SOLD 100 LOCATIONS? NO ONE CARES



It's time to stop confusing deals for development. MassageLuXe International's president and CEO, **Kristen Pechacek**,

explains why your "sold" count might be your biggest red flag.

At some point in nearly every franchise conversation, someone brags about how many units they've "sold." And every time, I have to fight the eye roll. Here's the thing. If you've "sold" 150 but only 15 are open, that's not growth and I've been in franchising long enough to know it's a brewing problem.

I've worked for brands with 5,000 locations and brands with six. Now I'm the CEO of a brand that just crossed 100 open

units, an actual milestone, not a theoretical one. So, believe me when I say this: your sold-not-open (SNO) number is not as impressive as you think, and it could be a liability.

SNO is the sugar high of franchising. It feels good, gives you a quick dopamine hit, and it makes for a shiny slide in a pitch deck. But it crashes hard. When you chase sales over openings, you're risking your future. You end up with frustrated franchisees, burnt territories, broken trust, and a serious operations hangover.

Don't get me wrong, development is essential. We all want to grow. But I've seen too many brands flame out trying to grow too fast, too recklessly. It's a familiar pattern in franchising: sell 200 units in two years, open 30, and collapse under the weight of 170 unfulfilled promises.

According to FRANdata, only 16% of franchise brands ever reach 100 open locations. Think about that. Not 100 sold. 100 open. If you've made it there, you're already beating the odds. If your franchisees are winning with you, you've built something worth bragging about.

So why don't more brands focus on that? Because it's harder. It's less sexy. You can't post a big opening number on LinkedIn the same way you can a 10-unit development deal. It's not what will turn heads or garner engagement, but it's the only thing that separates legacy brands from short-lived hype. Here's my take: The only locations that count are the ones that are open, operating,

Winning brands have stopped thinking in silos



Smart systems close the gap between central control and local execution, says **Christopher Brown**, Marvia's Director of North America.

"Our current processes are starting to break down. Obviously, this can't support our expected growth."

I heard this from a franchisee just last week, and it perfectly captures what I see across the industry: franchise brands hitting a wall where their homegrown marketing processes simply can't keep up with growth.

Nearly every franchise marketing leader I speak with faces the same challenge. The central team is drowning in localization requests, while franchisees are either waiting for relevant content or creating their own off-brand materials. This gap between central and local marketing represents one of the biggest untapped opportunities in franchising.

Most brands approach this by adding layers - more designers, more approval workflows, more review steps. But here's what I've learned from dozens of conversations with franchise marketers: this isn't a capacity problem, it's a systems problem.

One pizza franchise creative director told me his team was constantly fielding requests, but couldn't respond quickly because of a clunky vendor setup. "We spend too much time going back and forth with our current vendor on template setup," he told me. What should have taken minutes was taking days.

Here's the proof. One franchisee I worked with was trying to find the budget to add two new designers to support an already overworked creative team. For a fraction

of that cost, they discovered they could shorten delivery timelines, maintain brand consistency, and significantly increase local marketing output. They didn't need more people - they needed better systems.

The franchises getting it right share three key pillars. First, they make it easy. Franchisees aren't professional marketers - they're small business owners managing day-to-day operations. An e-bike franchise customer put it best: "Dealers use our platform constantly." When it's genuinely easy to use, adoption skyrockets.

Second, they make it scalable. Smart templating changes everything. A Portland franchisee should see their local address and offers automatically appear on their content. Phoenix should see something different, all without manual effort. One restaurant franchisee saved hours using this kind of automation: "Instead of our designers customizing 60 different Facebook posts, the system does it automatically."

And third, they make it connected. Winning brands have stopped thinking in silos. Local promotions, social updates, print materials, and timing coordination all happen from one central platform, creating speed

and generating revenue. Bonus points if the owner isn't calling your support team daily in a panic.

SNO becomes a problem when you treat it like a scoreboard. It should be a to-do list. Those sold units are commitments. They're people who trusted your vision enough to write a check. Now you owe them a path to open, a model that works, and support that delivers. If you can't get them to the starting line, you shouldn't have taken their money.

At MassageLuXe, we've taken this to heart. Hitting 100 open spas isn't just a celebration. It's validation that our systems work, that our franchisees are making it across the finish line, and that we've got the engine to scale further. We don't high-five over development deals. We celebrate grand openings because these matter.

So next time someone tries to impress you with their sold pipeline, I challenge you to ask them how many are open. Then ask how many are successful. Then how many are happy. You'll learn everything you need to know about that brand in these three questions.

And if you're building your own? Focus on openings, not deals, and on the people, not the press release. Franchise growth isn't about how many checks you collect upfront. A one-time \$45,000 franchise fee is not going to keep your company alive, but recurring royalties will. It's about how many franchisees you can make successful. Otherwise, all you've got is a big, expensive waitlist.

advantages while competitors shuffle materials between teams.

The results speak for themselves. One global pizza franchise we work with tracks performance between participating and non-participating stores. "Participating stores turn out to have better performance, not only in sales and order growth but also in profitability," their marketing director told me.

But here's the key insight: you can't just launch a platform and expect adoption. As one experienced franchise marketer said, "You have to think in advance. How am I going to use it? How am I going to integrate it into our marketing strategy?" The most successful implementations treat this as a strategic initiative - not just a tech rollout.

The central versus local marketing challenge isn't going away. The franchises winning today have turned it into a competitive advantage. It starts with recognizing this isn't about hiring more people or adding more approval steps - it's about building systems that scale, making both your central team and your franchisees more effective.

In other words, get the systems right, and everything else follows.

FRANCHISOR CHEAT SHEET

SELECTING TECHNOLOGY THAT SCALES AS YOU GROW



For multi-location brands, the right technology can make or break growth, says **Ethan Anderson**, CEO of MyTime.

Franchise systems are entering one of the most transformative moments in decades. Technology is no longer optional; it's the infrastructure upon which growth depends. But with so many tools available, the question isn't whether to innovate - it's how to invest in technology that will still serve the brand effectively at 10, 50, or 500 locations.

The leaders who succeed are those who distinguish between shiny new tools and scalable innovation - technology that modernizes operations and creates a consistent customer experience across the network.

Many franchise systems unintentionally limit growth by relying on technology never designed for multi-unit operations. Two barriers are common: single-location solutions and disconnected platforms. Tools built for independents often lack the oversight franchisors need. As brands expand, complexity mounts, visibility declines, and consistency becomes difficult to maintain.

When scheduling, POS, marketing, and loyalty systems operate in silos, franchisors and franchisees juggle multiple tools. This patchwork creates inefficiencies, frustrates operators, and confuses customers expecting a seamless brand experience. The result: friction, weaker loyalty, and slower growth.

Technology that can't scale doesn't just cause inconvenience - it undermines the business. For customers, inconsistent

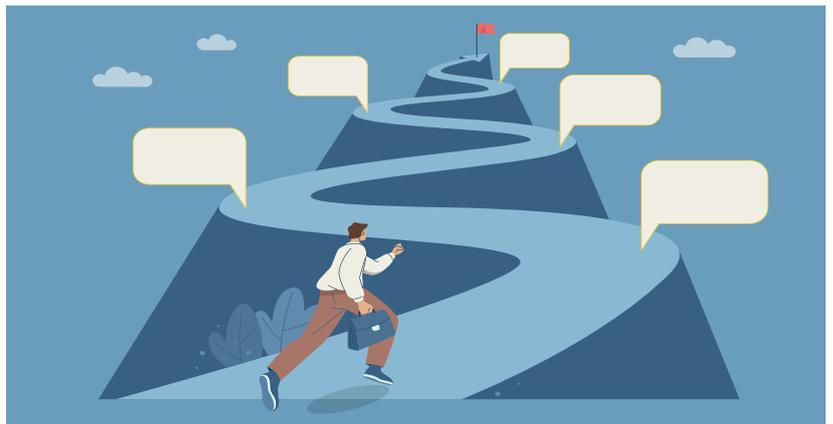
loyalty programs and gift cards create confusion and erode trust. For franchisors, manual reporting and incomplete data block timely, data-driven decisions. And for franchisees, disjointed tools waste time, reduce profitability, and increase churn. When technology fails to scale, everyone feels it.

The antidote isn't more software - it's smarter software. Franchise-first platforms are built for multi-location businesses, unifying critical systems so scheduling, POS, marketing, and booking live within one solution. They enable seamless corporate management, giving franchisors real-time visibility into every location.

They also support cross-location customer journeys, letting guests redeem loyalty points, memberships, and gift cards anywhere. Centralized financial reporting and automated royalty tracking build accuracy and trust across the system, while integrated marketing tools make campaigns easy to run, measure, and scale.

Franchises that thrive in the coming decade will be those that invest not just in technology, but in the right technology. Scalable, integrated platforms remove friction, strengthen consistency, and give both franchisors and franchisees the tools to grow.

Innovation in franchising isn't about chasing trends - it's about choosing infrastructure that fuels sustainable expansion. For franchise leaders, the time to make that choice is now.





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Booking, Payments, Marketing, & more—Unified.



All Your Tools, One Powerful Platform

Operate, grow, and delight clients with MyTime.

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Simplify Multi-Location Management

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Configured for Your Business

20+ modules tailored to your operations.

Accept Any Payment, Anywhere

Tap, dip, or swipe—fully integrated.

Offer A Branded Mobile App

Put your business in your clients' pockets.

Automate Your Marketing

Attract & engage with omnichannel campaigns.

Membership, Loyalty, & Referrals

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Automate Your Inventory

Track supplies & restock automatically.

Access Anytime, Anywhere

Manage from web, iOS, or Android.

Listings & Reputation Made Easy

Stay visible and trusted everywhere.

Track Clients Across Locations

Streamline forms and client information.

Trusted by Leading Franchise Brands

Built for salon, spa, wellness, pet care, and more.



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Learn more at MyTime.com/franchise

SCALING SMARTER

INSIDE THE FRANCHISE TECH REVOLUTION

The new franchise tech stack isn't just supporting expansion, but defining it. Here's what global brands are investing in right now





nce upon a time, franchisors could get by with a training binder, a Dropbox folder, and a hopeful email to “all franchisees.” Those days are

gone. As global networks now expand across borders and generations, the technology behind them has become as critical as the product itself. From AI-powered recruitment platforms to dashboard-driven performance tools, the new franchise tech stack isn’t just supporting scale, it’s defining it.

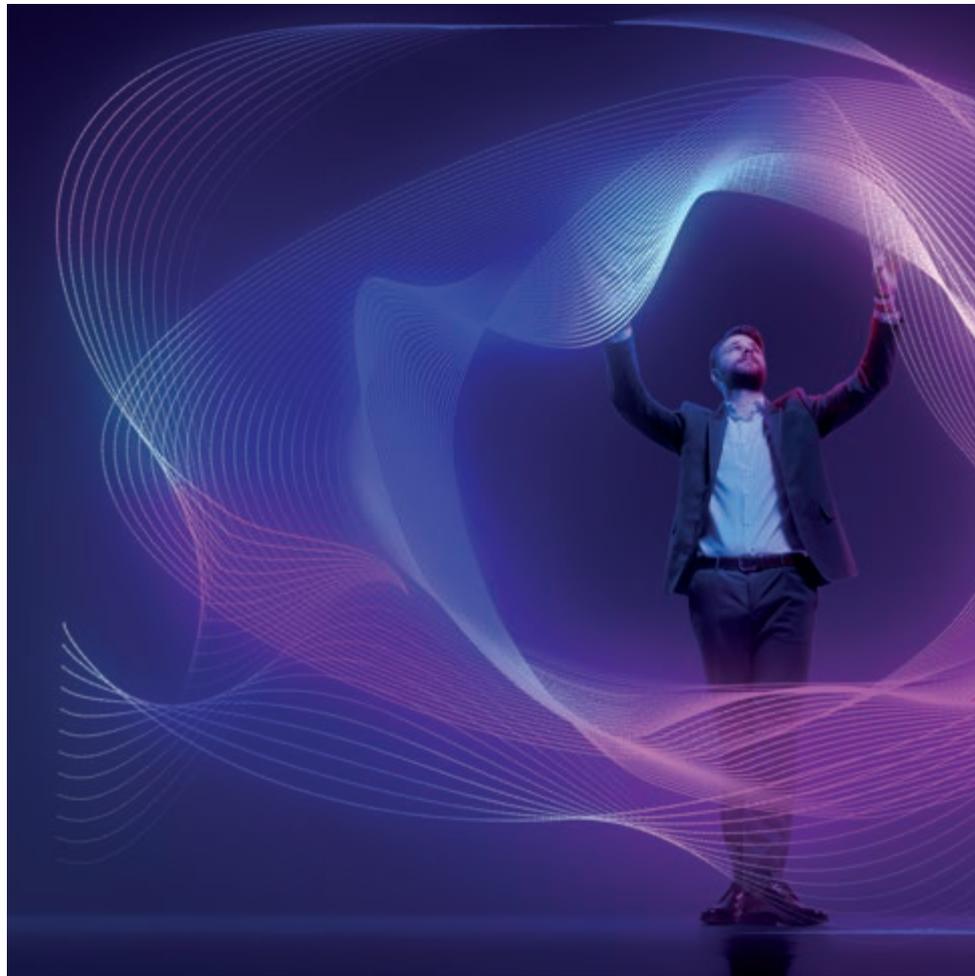
Across the sector, brands are investing in smarter, faster, more connected systems. Proof of consistency at scale now matters as much as the brand promise itself. Operations leaders want audit-ready evidence of who did what, when – not just another static manual. Marketing teams want tools that automate campaigns without losing local relevance. And customer experience managers want unified platforms that connect booking, loyalty, and service data seamlessly across every touchpoint.

In short, the question has shifted from “What tech do we have?” to “What tech makes us scalable?”

The age of intelligent scaling

At the heart of this shift is a desire for speed and the ability to move from confusion to clarity without waiting six or 12 months for a new system to be built and implemented. Few understand this challenge better than Penny Hopkinson, founder and CEO of Manual Magic AI®, an app built to help franchisors transform scattered know-how into a structured, living knowledge system that teams actually use.

“AI doesn’t give you human authority,” Hopkinson says. “When communicating with your ideal reader, you must amplify your expertise and apply the human touch to be authentic. That’s what sets a business apart.”



Hopkinson’s insight comes from nearly four decades of writing operations manuals for leading franchise brands, and a decade before that as a trade and technical journalist. Her realization? Too many franchisors still see the operations manual as a contractual ‘must-have’ rather than a practical engine for performance and brand protection.

Manual Magic AI® turns that mindset on its head. Franchisors upload what they

already have – PDFs, slides, videos, even handwritten notes – and the system automatically organises and drafts usable SOPs, step-by-step guides, FAQs, and short, captioned videos. Every draft is reviewed by humans before publishing, keeping brand tone and authority firmly in the franchisor’s hands.

What results is not another static document but a living knowledge ecosystem. Proof of consistency at scale is embedded into every layer – version control, audit trails, multilingual support, and mobile-first access via QR-linked SOPs ensure that a team member in Riyadh, Birmingham, or Warsaw follows the same approved process.

Hopkinson calls this the “TikTok Test”: if a manual isn’t short, visual, and searchable, today’s teams won’t use it. “Fewer PDFs, more living knowledge,” as she succinctly puts it.

The appeal for global operators is clear. “Manual Magic AI® is the first solution I’ve seen that bridges the gap between documentation and execution,” says Wesley Williams, Global Franchise Manager at Heavenly Desserts. “It transforms operational manuals into digestible, actionable workflows that teams can follow easily, without losing the

“AI doesn’t give you human authority. When communicating with your ideal reader, you must amplify your expertise and apply the human touch to be authentic. That’s what sets a business apart”



compliance and quality that protect the brand.”

Crucially, this platform doesn't live in isolation. It connects to learning systems, CRMs, POS, and HR platforms, feeding data in all directions so knowledge lives where work happens. “AI gave me the tools to turn confusion into clarity at scale,” Hopkinson explains, “while keeping human judgment firmly in control.”

In practice, this means an operational backbone that allows franchisors to scale confidently, knowing that every latte, haircut, or delivery meets the same standard, wherever it happens.

Marketing made local

If operational AI is redefining how franchisors scale consistency, marketing automation is doing the same for local engagement. This balance of control and creativity is at the heart of Marvia, a global leader in distributed marketing technology built specifically for franchise networks.

“Franchises everywhere struggle to scale local marketing without losing brand control,” says Christopher Brown, director of North America at Marvia. “Central marketing teams can't customize materials for hundreds of locations, while franchisees who try to do it themselves

often drift off-brand or miss opportunities altogether. We solve that by giving franchisors control, while empowering local owners to market effectively in their communities.”

Founded as an independent company in 2018, Marvia has grown into a global operation with clients in more than 90 countries, supporting multiple languages, currencies, and regulatory frameworks. Its client list reads like a who's who of international franchising, including Domino's, Jeremiah's Italian Ice, KidStrong, and Nurse Next Door – each using the platform to simplify and scale local marketing.

At its core, Marvia is about “freedom within frameworks.” Corporate teams create smart templates with locked elements (eg logos, fonts, and approved imagery) while allowing editable components such as headlines, offers, and local images. A pizza chain, for instance, can roll out a national campaign while automatically populating each store's address, opening hours, and prices. Meanwhile, franchisees can tweak offers or visuals without breaking brand guidelines.

“Most marketing tools force you to choose between central control or local flexibility,” Brown explains. “Marvia combines both. It's built for non-marketers – franchisees can log in, create a social post or flyer in minutes, and get back to running their business.”

The results speak for themselves. One QSR chain using Marvia cut manual customization time by 85%, doubled franchisee marketing participation, and saw a 12% lift in promotional response rates. Franchisees rated marketing support 27% higher after implementation, thanks to feeling empowered rather than restricted.

Recent innovation has focused on hyperlocal social media and creative automation. Marvia's Social Campaigns tool allows corporate teams to design a single campaign that automatically adapts to hundreds of local pages with localized captions and visuals, all published in one click. “It breaks the false choice between centralized or local social media,” Brown explains. “You get brand consistency and authentic community engagement.”

With automation driving efficiency and localization driving relevance, Marvia has become a cornerstone in the franchise tech stack. The company's next leap – an intelligent marketing assistant – promises to close the “last-mile” gap by helping franchisees match specific business challenges with the right marketing tactics, streamlining activation and improving ROI across networks.

“Franchisees shouldn't have to become marketing strategists,” Brown adds. “Our

Tech traps: what to watch out for

Smart systems promise speed and scalability, but the wrong tech stack can slow a franchise down before it starts. Avoid the following pitfalls to ensure your investment pays back:

Fragmented systems

When scheduling, POS, marketing, and reporting tools don't talk to each other, franchisees lose patience. Choose integrated platforms that scale as you grow, not a patchwork that multiplies admin.

Hidden data silos

If insights sit in different dashboards or formats, decision-making slows and performance tracking suffers. Ensure your technology can centralize data across all locations in one view.

AI without oversight

AI can streamline onboarding, marketing, and support, but unmonitored automation risks errors and off-brand messaging. Human review should remain part of every process that touches customers or compliance.

One-size-fits-all solutions

Tech built for independent retailers often can't handle multi-location complexity. Look for franchise-first tools that balance brand control with local flexibility and multi-unit reporting.

Neglected adoption

Even the smartest systems fail if users aren't trained or engaged enough to use it. Build rollout plans that include onboarding, support, and feedback loops.



mission is to make local marketing fast, simple, and effective, while keeping the brand stronger than ever.”

Scaling smarter, not harder

If operations and marketing form the backbone of a franchise, technology is the nervous system, connecting everything and keeping it in sync. It’s a challenge well understood by Ethan Anderson, CEO of MyTime, a platform designed to unify scheduling, POS, marketing, and customer engagement for multi-location brands.

“For multi-location brands, the right technology can make or break growth,” he says. “Franchisors need tools that don’t just modernize processes – they unify them.”

This challenge, Anderson explains, is what drives MyTime’s philosophy. Too many franchise systems, he says, hit a wall because their tools were never built for scale. “Single-location software can’t give franchisors the visibility they need. As you expand, complexity multiplies, and without connected systems, consistency disappears.”

Another common pitfall is fragmentation. “When scheduling, POS, marketing, and loyalty all live in different places, you create silos that frustrate franchisees and confuse customers,” he

adds. “The result is predictable: operational friction, weakened loyalty, and slowed growth.”

MyTime was designed to solve exactly this conundrum. Its all-in-one platform brings booking, POS, marketing, loyalty, and analytics together in one place, giving franchisors full oversight of every location while empowering franchisees with intuitive, plug-and-play tools. The goal is simple: scalability without chaos.

“The antidote isn’t more software,” says Anderson. “It’s smarter software – technology that’s franchise-first by design. Franchisors should be able to manage every location from one interface, track royalties automatically, and support loyalty programs across the network. It’s about creating a seamless customer experience that feels unified, whether you’re at location one or location 100.”

That unified experience isn’t just operational – it’s emotional. Customers expect the same journey wherever they go, from booking to checkout to loyalty redemption. Franchisees, meanwhile, need technology that makes their jobs easier, not harder. “Operators expect intuitive systems,” Anderson says. “They don’t want to juggle disconnected tools that waste time and reduce profitability.”

“When visibility is lost, decisions slow down. When systems don’t talk to each other, customers notice. And when franchisees can’t operate efficiently, churn rises”

The business case for scalable tech, he argues, is straightforward. “Technology that can’t scale doesn’t just create inconvenience, it undermines performance at every level,” he explains. “When visibility is lost, decisions slow down. When systems don’t talk to each other, customers notice. And when franchisees can’t operate efficiently, churn rises.”

That’s why MyTime has built a platform that unifies every layer of the franchise experience from head office oversight to front-line delivery. It integrates customer data, automates engagement, and ensures every operational process connects seamlessly to the next.

“Franchise-first technology is about enabling growth, not getting in its way,” says Anderson. “Innovation in franchising isn’t about chasing trends any more, it’s about choosing infrastructure that fuels sustainable expansion.”

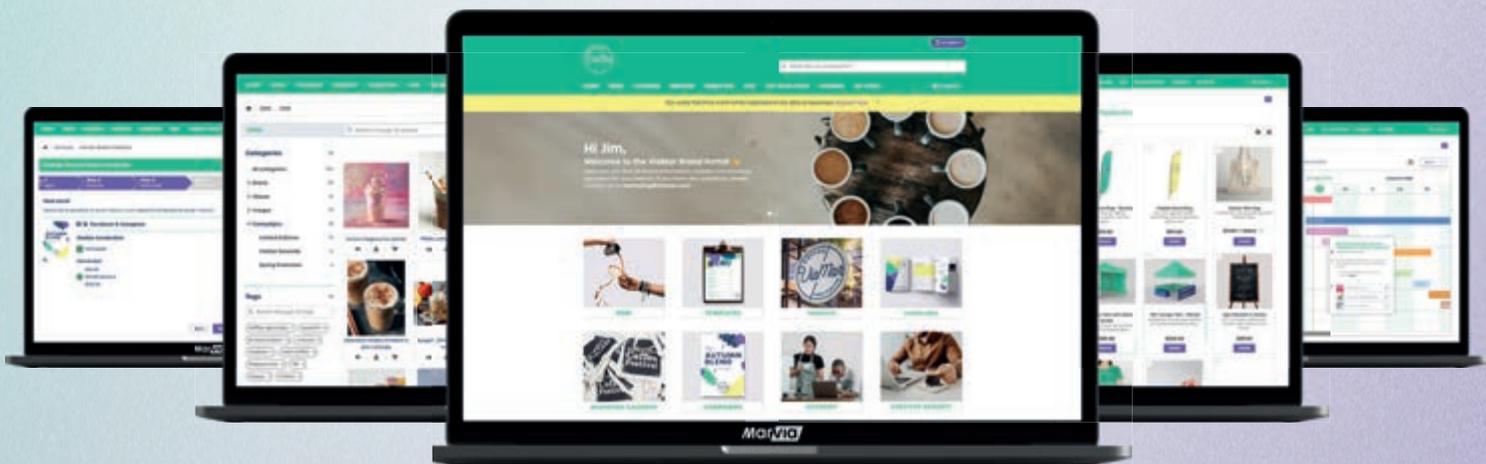
For franchisors, the message is clear: scalability starts with structure. “The brands that will thrive in the coming decade,” Anderson says, “are those that invest not just in technology, but in the right technology – platforms that remove friction, strengthen consistency, and give everyone in the system the tools they need to grow.”

As franchising evolves, so does the very definition of a strong system. Together, these standout solutions show that the future of franchising isn’t about chasing the next shiny thing – it’s about finding the right fit. For growing brands, success will come from choosing technology that works together, supports people on the ground, and helps the whole network move forward as one.

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WORLD OF FRANCHISE

The latest expansions, mergers and breakout brands transforming the global franchise landscape



1 CANADA

Playa Bowls has taken a major step in its global growth strategy, signing its first international master franchise agreement with

Eat Up Canada Inc. to

launch the superfruit bowl brand across Canada. The deal will see more than 160 locations developed nationwide, building on the brand's rapid rise to nearly 350 sites across the USA.

CEO John Cappasola said the partnership represents a pivotal moment for the fast-growing concept, bringing its health-focused menu to new international audiences. Eat Up Canada founders George Heos and Alex Gerzon bring significant franchising experience, including developing 50 Firehouse Subs restaurants in Canada and expanding emerging U.S. concepts such as Pokeworks. The group will oversee franchise development, operations and supply chain to support a robust national rollout.

“Our MFA with Mexico establishes a secure footing in Latin America, while we have solid momentum in Australia and continued growth in Taiwan”

- John Caraccio, President of World Gym Corporation



2 MEXICO

World Gym Corporation has announced major progress in its worldwide expansion strategy, securing a master franchise agreement in Mexico and reporting strong development across Australia. The agreement will introduce at least 30 new World Gym locations throughout Mexico, marking a significant step forward for the brand in Latin America. Meanwhile, five new clubs have opened in Australia as consumer demand continues to rise.

The company has also delivered record revenue, alongside the addition of five new corporate-owned gyms in Taiwan, further strengthening its home market presence.

President John Caraccio said the business is experiencing “breakneck growth” across both franchise and corporate operations, driven by its mission to bring health, wellness and community to more people globally.



3 UK

In a move that caught many by surprise, Pizza Hut is set to shutter 68 dine-in restaurants and 11 delivery-only sites across the UK – marking one of the largest shake-ups in the UK casual dining sector this year.

The announcement follows the collapse of DC London Pie Ltd, the franchise operator behind Pizza Hut's UK eat-in chain, highlighting a broader shift in dining habits and rising costs.

Parent company Yum! Brands has stepped in with a rescue pre-pack deal to salvage 64 sites and approximately 1,276 jobs, signalling a strategic pivot away from high-street dining towards a more delivery-centric future.



4 UK

U.S. investment house KKR has unexpectedly rejoined the bidding for UK coffee chain Costa Coffee, alongside rivals Bain Capital and TDR Capital who are reportedly in talks with The Coca-Cola Company and investment bank Lazard about a potential takeover of the store estate.

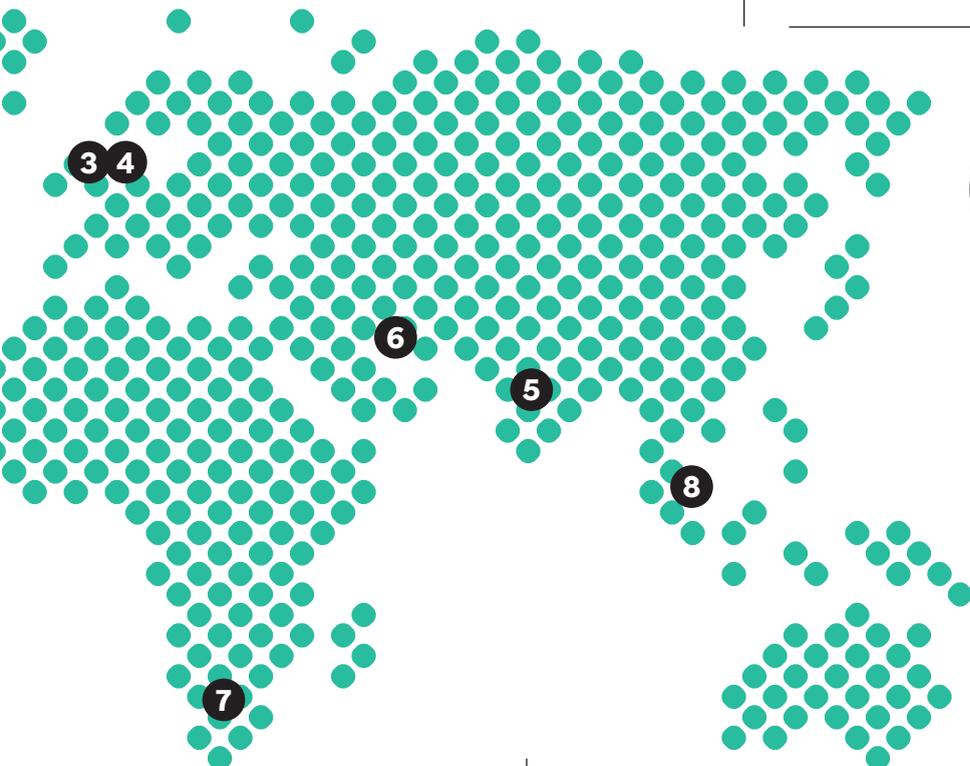
Analysts suggest the transaction could land at around £1.5 billion – well under the £3.9 billion paid in 2019. Coca-Cola has so far declined to comment regarding “market rumors or speculation.”



5 INDIA

German Doner Kebab (GDK) has announced entry into India as part of its fast-paced global expansion. The announcement follows a milestone year for GDK. The QSR brand – backed by investment firm True and owned by Scottish-based Hero Brands – now operates more than 170 restaurants across the UK,

Ireland, Sweden, North America and the Middle East. Its latest move comes via a master franchise agreement with GBC India to open 450 locations over the next 15 years, with the first restaurant set to launch in early 2026.



6 KUWAIT

Irish multinational fashion retailer Primark has opened its first-ever Middle East store, launching a 60,000 sq ft flagship at

The Avenues in Kuwait.

The two-storey location – operated through a new franchise partnership with Alshaya Group – marks the value retailer’s debut franchise market and its 18th international territory. The store employs 350 people and offers Primark’s full fashion, home and beauty ranges, including Disney collaborations.

The move signals the start of a wider regional rollout, with three Primark stores planned for Dubai in 2026. The retailer, now at 475 global sites, is also preparing to open its first Manhattan flagship the same year.



7 SOUTH AFRICA

British food-to-go brand Pret A Manger is ramping up its presence in South Africa after launching two

Johannesburg locations this year, with private equity company Millat Group confirming further stores in Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. The agreement marks Pret’s first major franchise rollout in the region, tailoring its menu with local flavours while maintaining its signature fresh food and organic coffee offer.

The push comes as Pret continues global growth, with systemwide sales hitting £1.2bn and more than 700 shops across 21 markets, targeting city and travel-hub expansion.



8 THAILAND

Xponential Fitness’ Club Pilates has signed a master franchise agreement with Me In Motion Co., Ltd., paving the way for 20 studios across Bangkok and Chonburi

Province. This marks Club Pilates’ 22nd international market – and the timing, according to Xponential’s president of International, Bob Kaufman, couldn’t be better. “Thailand has always been a strong, trend-setting market, and Pilates is on the rise here,” he said.

Club Pilates now lays claim to being the world’s largest Pilates brand by studio count, with more than 475 studios operating outside the U.S. and Canada, spanning across Europe, Asia-Pacific and Latin America.

“This latest agreement will serve as a launchpad for expansion, establishing GDK as a premium, culturally relevant fast-casual brand in India”

- Simon Wallis, CEO, GDK



THE MUMBO MINDSET

We interview three brilliant multi-unit, multi-brand operators about growth, grit, and the mindset that turns single businesses into powerful portfolios



WES SNYDER
PIRTEK, FASTSIGNS,
MY SALON Suite

I've been in franchising for the best part of 25 years, but I didn't start out with a grand plan to become a multi-brand operator. My journey began in 1999 when I opened my first FASTSIGNS location in Indianapolis. I was 25 years old, eager, and probably a little naïve, but I loved the idea of owning something of my own. That first location taught me everything about hard work, leadership, and the realities of running a business.

Over the years, I expanded within FASTSIGNS and today operate seven locations. Along the way, I explored other opportunities and eventually added four MY SALON Suite locations and six PIRTEK centers. By the end of this year, we'll have 17 locations open and operating. My portfolio may look diverse on paper – signage, hydraulic services, and beauty salons – but for me, it's never been about the industry itself. It's about the people, the leadership behind the brand, and the shared values that shape how we grow.

When I evaluate a brand, the first thing I look at is the franchisor's leadership team. I've learned that alignment in vision and ethics is everything. You can provide a great product or service, but if the leadership doesn't share your values or support your growth philosophy, the partnership won't work. I've been in systems where that alignment wasn't there – where growth felt like friction instead of collaboration – and I've learned to walk away from those situations.

That's why I value the teams at FASTSIGNS and MY SALON Suite, both owned by Propelled Brands. Catherine and Mark have built an organization that truly supports its franchisees. And on the PIRTEK side, I was really impressed with Kim Gubera's leadership. I knew she was someone I wanted to work with – someone I could build a real partnership with and grow alongside.

After more than a quarter decade in this business, the rewards come from not just opening new units but helping others find their own path to ownership. I have two daughters in their 20s, and whether or not they choose to follow in my footsteps, I want to

“When you let the people around you win, the business takes care of itself”

Wes Snyder is a seasoned multi-brand franchisee with a 17-location portfolio spanning FASTSIGNS, PIRTEK, and MY SALON Suite. His leadership model includes empowering general managers with equity to become future franchise owners. Beyond his business portfolio, Wes is a strong advocate for the franchise industry, testifying before a U.S. Senate subcommittee on joint employer regulations, and is passionate about mentoring minority franchisees.



model to them what's possible. Encouraging the next generation of franchisees is something I could talk about all day. In every business I operate, my goal is to give general managers everything they need to become owners themselves eventually. I'm not empire building – my goal is to create pathways to ownership and empower others to grow into leaders. That's the kind of legacy that matters to me.

Mentorship is also a big part of my life outside my own companies. Earlier this year, I had the privilege of serving as a mentor in the IFA's Franchisee Ascension Initiative – a nine-month program designed to help minority franchisees access the tools, education, and networks they need to thrive. It was an incredible experience.

Looking ahead, I plan to keep growing, but only with the right people and the right brands. I'm not actively seeking new franchise systems (although I've said that before!). I'm more focused on finding general managers and equity partners who want to lead and eventually own their business. You can't find that on a job board; it comes from relationships, from years of showing up at conferences, brand meetings, and IFA events, building trust. That's what I love about this industry – it's a community built on relationships and shared goals.

I sometimes joke that I'm a “recovering accountant.” I'm not a natural salesman or a showman, but I genuinely enjoy connecting with people. Franchising has a way of bringing together like-minded entrepreneurs who believe in shared success. That's why I stay involved, why I mentor, and why I advocate. It's an ecosystem that only works when we lift each other up.

If there's one thing I'd like to see more of in this industry, it's brands that truly support MUMBOs. The best systems (like those I'm fortunate to be part of) understand that experienced operators bring value back into the network. We've seen what works across different models, and we can help strengthen the system. Every brand has its strengths, and when you've operated in several, you start to recognize the best practices that can make everyone better. At the end of the day, franchising isn't just about systems or scale – it's about people. Whether I'm mentoring a future owner, building a new team, or testifying on behalf of franchisees, my focus is the same: helping others succeed. Because when the people around you win, the business takes care of itself.





DAVID WEEKS

Barberitos Southwestern Grille and Cantina, Dunkin', Newk's Eatery

I've always had an entrepreneurial streak. When I was nine, I'd push my lawnmower up and down the street, cutting grass for the neighbors. I didn't think of it as a business back then, but looking back, that's where it all began.

After college, I joined the corporate world. I was a banker for a while, sold pressure-treated lumber, did pharmaceutical sales and made good money, but man, zero job satisfaction. I just knew I wanted to build something that was mine. So I started looking at every brand under the sun – sporting goods, gyms, restaurants, you name it.

I found myself drawn to restaurants. A buddy of mine had opened a couple of Zaxby's, and when I asked how it was going, he said, "I'm not in the restaurant business – I'm just having friends over for lunch and dinner." And I thought, *that's it, that's exactly what I want*. My wife and I loved entertaining, and I figured, why not make that my business?

At the time, I didn't have the money to buy into a big franchise. Then along came Barberitos. It had just opened in Athens in 2001. I knew the founder, Downing Barber – his brother and I played football together – so I went down to support them and fell in love with the food. I told Downing right there that if he ever franchised, I wanted in. Six months later, he called me. I didn't have much money to invest, but he believed in me, and I believed in him, so it was the perfect fit.

It hasn't all been wins. Around 2009, I invested in a local pasta concept as the first franchisee. We had a couple of good years, but it didn't work out. That failure ended up being a blessing because it led me to Dunkin'. I was working with a broker in Atlanta, who mentioned Dunkin' wanted to expand in my area. I had lunch and dinner covered and nothing to do in the morning. I thought it would be smart to round things out with a breakfast concept, and I knew it would be exciting to learn from a global company.

I'm only successful because of the people around me. My company isn't about one person – it's about the team. Most of my senior managers have been with me for more than 10 years and we have a saying that iron sharpens iron. We debate ideas because that's how we make the best decisions for our guests and our crews. I love the people I work with, and that's what keeps it fun.

Our whole model is built around being the best in our community, not the biggest. All our stores are within a four-county area around Athens. Once we saturate a market, we only expand if we find a true home-run location, or we find another brand. That's how we added Newk's Eatery – a strong brand with great food and even better people.

For me, it's all about quality. I eat Barberitos five times a week. I can tell when the guac tastes off or the chicken's been cooked differently. We're about to build our tenth restaurant, and we've got plans for more.

Does it get easier as you grow? No. It just gets different. The challenges change. We've learned how critical our prep people are – they make the food what it is. We take care of them because they take care of



“Some people hate change, but I love it. Change means growth. I never want to be that old guy yelling at clouds”

David Weeks is an experienced multi-unit, multi-brand operator with 21 restaurants around the Athens, Georgia area, including nine Barberitos, eight Dunkin' and four Newk's Eatery restaurants. Seven of his Barberitos locations rank among the top 15 in the system, with his original store continuing to post 21% monthly growth. Earlier this year, Weeks signed a three-store agreement to grow his already impressive Barberitos portfolio.

the brand. Turnover's a huge issue in this industry, but we've built a loyal team. Consistency is my number one rule. My team always knows what to expect from me. We have another saying: nothing's personal, everything's business. I hold people to high standards, but I also believe in creating a safe, respectful environment – no harassment, no nonsense. Everyone's welcome in our stores, and everyone's respected on our team.

Georgia's been a great place to grow. The state has everything: coast, mountains, farmland, big cities like Atlanta. The climate's good, and people are moving here for opportunity. It's diverse, vibrant, and full of potential. That mix of people and culture makes it a perfect place for the restaurant industry.

Working with WOWorks, who acquired Barberitos in 2022, has been a great experience. They listen to franchisees and keep the brand fresh and consistent. Their culinary team is top-notch – they come up with new sauces and menu ideas, but always with strong business logic behind them. They're genuinely invested in growing Barberitos, and I've seen firsthand with Dunkin' that the more locations there are, the better everyone does. Rising tides lift all boats.

Even after 20 years, I'm still learning something new every day. Some people hate change, but I love it. Change means growth. I never want to be that old guy yelling at clouds.

If someone asked me for advice on becoming a MUMBO, I'd tell them this: first thing – you gotta love your brands and believe in them. Second, have the right team to execute your vision. You need people who believe in the brand as much as you do.

What's next? Honestly, I don't know. We'll have 25 stores open by the end of 2026. I tell my team we'll grow as far as they want to take it – as long as we have the people there to support it, I'm game.



GINAMARIE SOTO

Unleashed Brands

I've always believed that if you can dream it and stay curious enough to figure it out, you can build it, even if it means spending nights at the construction site to get there. My journey as a franchise owner began with one simple goal: to create a joyful, safe space for children like my son. That single purpose has since evolved into a portfolio of brands that have become part of the heartbeat of my community.

When I opened my first Little Gym in Midland, Texas, it wasn't part of some grand business plan. It was a leap of faith, a \$625,000 loan and a gut feeling that families in my area needed a place for their kids to move, play, and grow. At the time, I was working in the oil field. It was hard, physical work, and when I became pregnant, I knew I couldn't maintain that lifestyle. I wanted to take all that energy, discipline, and resilience and pour it into something that mattered to families.

I'd grown up watching my little sister tumble around at The Little Gym when I was a teenager, so that brand made perfect sense. It's been around for nearly five decades for a reason – it works. It meets parents and kids exactly where they are, in every community, every demographic.

From the start, my "why" was crystal clear. I wanted to build something for my son – a place where he could play, learn, and grow up surrounded by positivity. Every new project I've opened since has come from that same instinct. He's nine now, but he's been my muse for every decision. The Italian go-karts at one of my Urban Air parks? His idea. The esports program at my XP League franchise? Inspired by him, too.

That's what I love about franchising. Each brand gives you the blueprint, but it's up to you to bring the heart. You must find your own voice within it – the personal touches that make people say, "That's Ginamarie's place." In Midland, I became known as "the mom who brought the fun." It wasn't a marketing strategy; it was just me showing up every day, passionate about creating a space that families could trust.

Once I'd mastered that first location, I started thinking bigger. I attended a The Little Gym conference in 2021 – I had just made President's Circle – and I found myself surrounded by Urban Air owners. Hearing their stories sparked something in me. I thought, *if they can do it, I can too.*

On a delayed flight home from Orlando, I ended up chatting poolside with a couple of Urban Air owners who jokingly bet me I couldn't open a park within a year. Well, don't bet me – I opened it in 11 months. That same year, I also opened my first XP League. Each new venture built on the last. My The Little Gym Midland helped me launch Urban Air Midland. Then, The Little Gym Lubbock helped me open Urban Air Jackson, in Mississippi, one of my most meaningful projects. That park sits between two communities that don't always come together easily, and our mission was to bridge that gap. Watching families from both sides laugh, play, and connect under one roof – that's success to me.

Ginamarie Soto is an Unleashed Brands multi-brand multi-unit franchisee. A former oil field business owner in Texas, Ginamarie Soto entered franchising seeking a family-friendly venture and found her fit with Unleashed Brands. Today, she owns multiple locations across three concepts – The Little Gym, Urban Air Adventure Park, and XP League. Known for her rapid growth and record-setting membership numbers, she's also deeply committed to community impact. From opening her gym for free during COVID to advocating for unhoused individuals near her Urban Air in Jackson, MS, Soto leads with purpose while continuing to expand her franchise portfolio.

Then came Urban Air Odessa, my biggest and hardest project yet. We converted an old movie theater, and it took 1,900 dump trucks of dirt to fill the foundation. The process was brutal – long nights, constant problem-solving, endless inspections. But nine months later, we opened the doors. That park is the only Urban Air in the U.S. that combines slides, go-karts, and Sky Rider all under one roof. It's a safety and operations challenge, but it's also something special – a true one-of-a-kind experience for families.

That combination of hard work and heart is what defines Unleashed Brands for me. Urban Air brings cutting-edge family entertainment, while The Little Gym focuses on timeless child development. Together, they create a pipeline that supports kids from toddlers to teens, and beyond and you can't beat that.

And now, I'm adding Sylvan Learning to that mix. My son attended Sylvan last summer when I was homeschooling him during the Urban Air Jackson build, and I saw firsthand how effective it was. It's another Unleashed brand that perfectly complements what I'm already doing.

Winning Brand Ambassador of the Year was an incredible moment – standing on that stage with my managers beside me, the people who live and breathe this every day. But the true reward isn't the awards; it's the growth that comes after. When my team members rise to regional or district manager roles, that's when I know we're doing something right.

The world is always changing – in business, in life, in parenting – and you have to be adaptable. You don't have to have all the answers; you just have to stay flexible, and keep moving forward. That's what I try to do every day as a mother, a business owner, and a leader. Because at the end of the day, success isn't about the number of units you own. It's about the lives you touch, the opportunities you create, and the joy you bring into the world, one brand at a time.

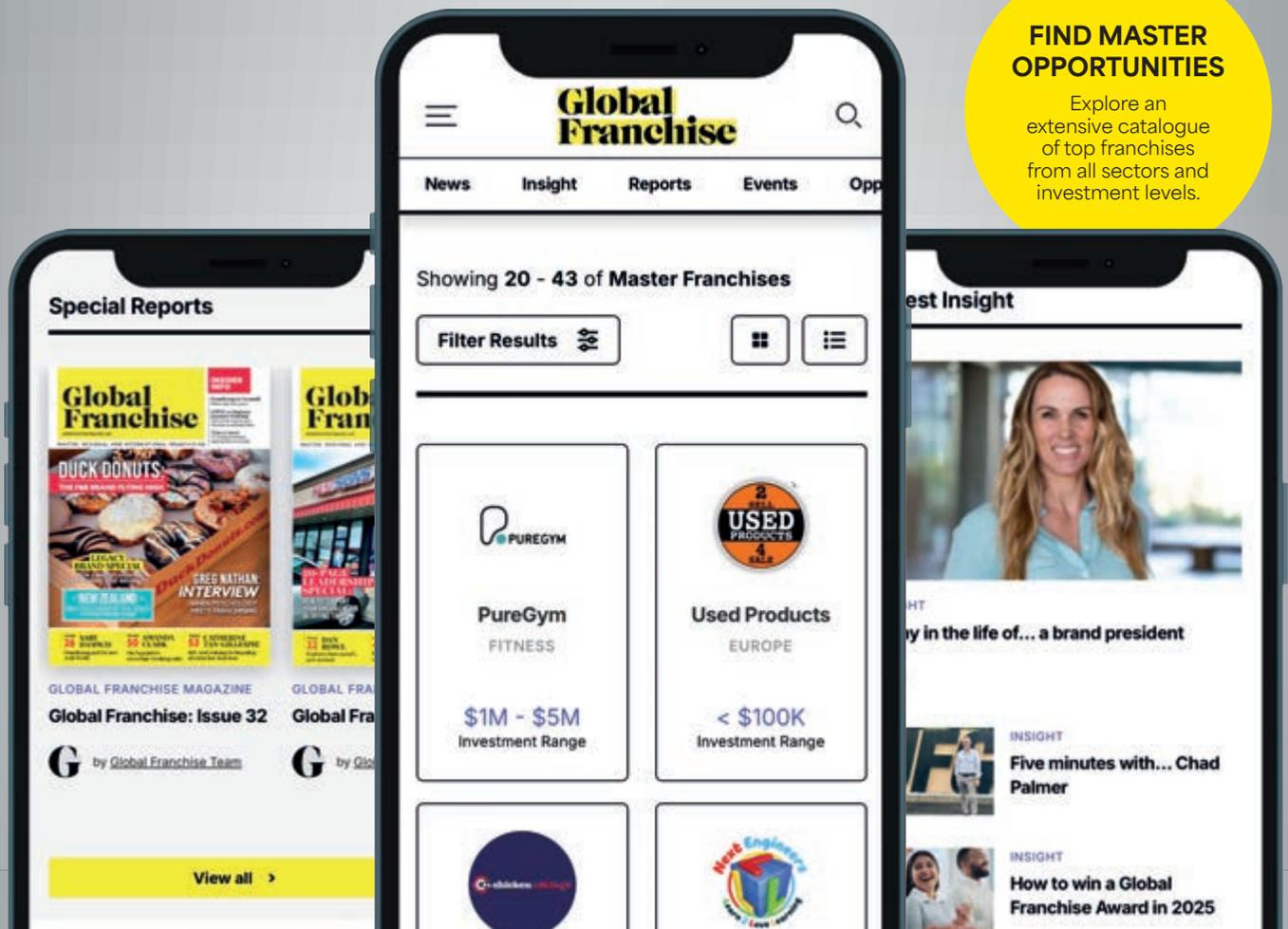
“Each brand brings the blueprint, but it's up to to you to bring the heart. That's what I love about franchising”



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FRANCHISE SALES

THE TRAINING CONUNDRUM

Evan Hackel is tackling a challenge that quietly undermines franchise sales: why training fails to stick, how experience can work against you, and what every franchisor can do to close the competence gap

P

icture this. A franchisor hires a bright, enthusiastic new salesperson named Emily. She's eager,

energetic, and ready to conquer the world of franchise sales. But Emily is in Stage One of her learning journey: unconscious incompetence. In other words, she doesn't know what she doesn't know. To her, franchise sales looks a lot like product sales – persuade, pitch, and close.

To train her, the franchisor pairs her with Robert, a seasoned development executive who's been closing deals for 20 years. Robert operates at Stage Four, the highest level – unconscious competence. His instincts are razor-sharp. He knows within five minutes if a candidate is serious, and he guides conversations like a master conductor leading an orchestra.

Sounds like a perfect pairing, right? Not always...

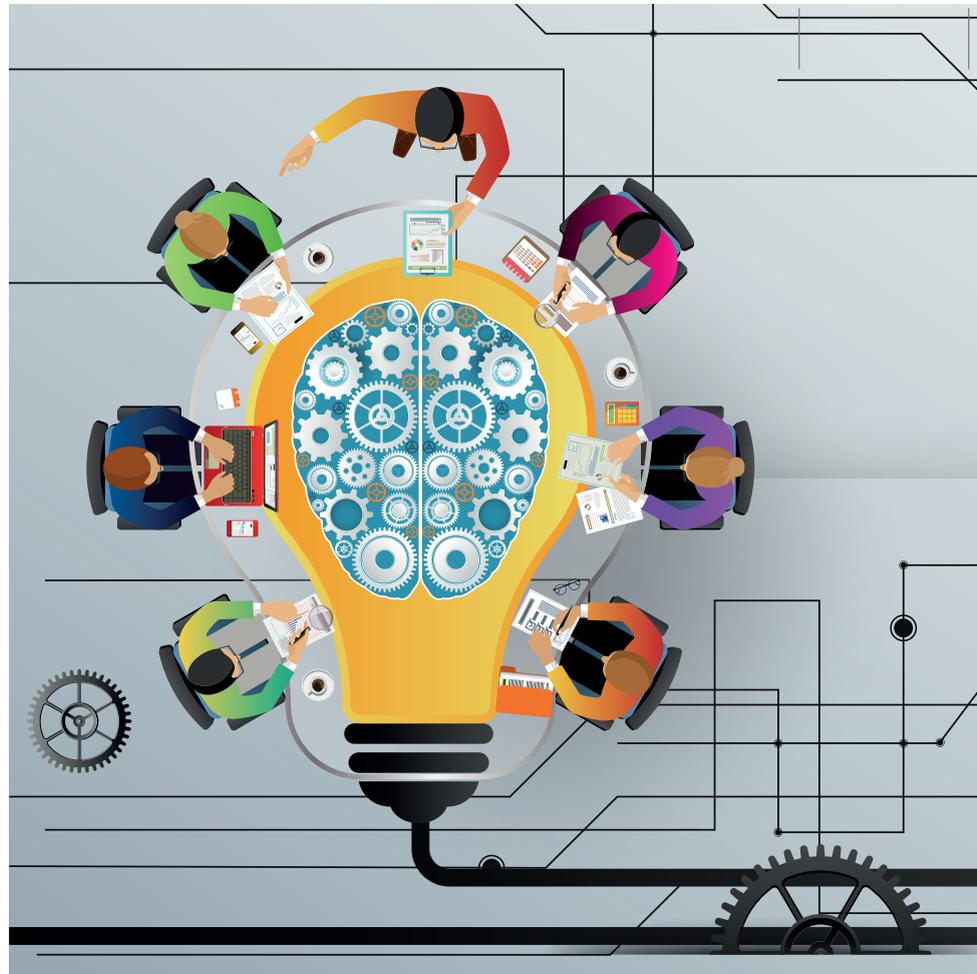
When stage one meets stage four

Here's the problem. Robert doesn't remember what it was like to be Emily. He skips over vital steps, glosses over process, and offers advice that sounds deceptively simple: "Just build trust and the deal will close itself."

For Robert, that's second nature. For Emily, it's mystifying.

Instead of gaining confidence, Emily becomes frustrated. She struggles to connect Robert's intuitive shortcuts to her reality, where every candidate call feels like a maze. Worse, she begins to mimic Robert's style without the underlying judgment or experience to back it up. Deals stall. Prospects disengage.

This is a classic breakdown in development training. Stage Four professionals forget that mastery can't be transferred wholesale. It has to be built step by step, with structure, repetition, and conscious practice.



Why these problems arise

Seasoned franchise development professionals often speak a different language from beginners. Experts rely on intuition rather than process, while newcomers need structure – clear discovery questions, objection-handling scripts, and the chance to practice through role-play.

Veterans, having internalized the rules, struggle to articulate what they now do instinctively; "trust your gut" works for them, but a rookie's gut is still empty. Add

to that a touch of impatience – the tendency to expect new hires to "get it" faster than is realistic – and the gap widens.

When franchisors don't bridge this divide, new recruits like Emily risk failing outright or, worse, developing bad habits such as pushing too hard, overselling the opportunity, or skipping critical qualification steps.

Overcoming the stage gap

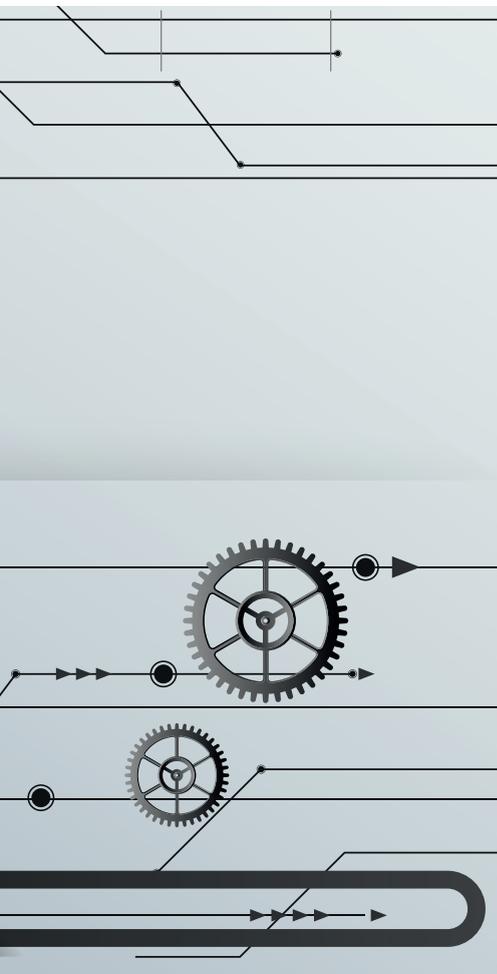
To make the partnership between new and experienced franchise sales professionals work, franchisors need to build structure between the early and advanced stages of development.

Training systems such as virtual simulations, learning management systems, and structured learner journeys can help bridge the gap between Emily's inexperience and Robert's expertise.

It's equally important not to let Robert's brilliance stay locked in his head. Document best practices, capturing Robert's insights and processes in playbooks, interactive manuals, and video libraries so his methods can be shared and scaled across the team.

Finally, coaching with empathy is key. Robert must relearn how to explain not just what to do, but why it matters – slowing down, listening, and remembering what it

“Franchise sales are about creating a culture where salespeople at every level grow, adapt and contribute to the long-term health of the system. Because in franchising, the deal is never just a deal. It’s the start of a relationship that will shape your brand for decades”



felt like to be a rookie. When done well, this approach turns frustration into progress: Emily begins to rise, and Robert evolves from being a closer to being a coach.

The other trap: Stage Four with bad habits

There's another challenge franchisors need to watch for. Sometimes, they hire a salesperson who already has years of experience in franchise development. On paper, this person looks like a Stage Four professional – but experience doesn't always equal excellence.

Some “seasoned” reps carry baggage. They cut corners during discovery, rushing to close unqualified candidates. They dominate conversations instead of listening. They rely on charm rather than process, leaving behind a trail of mismatched franchisees.

As management guru Tom Peters put it, “It's harder to unlearn than it is to learn.” A rep with entrenched habits may resist coaching, insisting, “This is how I've always done it.”

The consequences can be serious. Poorly matched franchisees often lead to disengagement, conflict, and even litigation – problems that ripple across the network and weaken the brand.

The key to retraining experienced franchise sales reps without coming up against resistance is to guide them forward without triggering defensiveness. Start by measuring outcomes, not ego. Don't accept “I've always closed deals this way.” Instead, review real performance data – the success of their recruits, validation scores, and convention participation.

Next, reframe unlearning as evolution, not correction. Even the most experienced professionals need to adapt to new markets, technologies, and buyer behaviors.

Pairing them with high-performing peers can also be powerful. Hearing how another seasoned rep is thriving with a fresh approach often sparks change more effectively than top-down directives.

The goal isn't to undermine confidence, but to align instinctive competence with the brand's culture, process, and long-term vision.

Why this matters for franchise sales

Franchise development isn't about selling a unit – it's about shaping the future of the system and the brand. Every deal sets the tone for years of partnership, and that's why managing competence is critical.

With rookies, offer structure, patience, and step-by-step guidance. With experts, ensure their mastery supports culture, not just conversion. Across the system, embed engagement so franchisees validate positively and candidates feel the brand's authenticity.

When competence is developed deliberately, sales teams don't just sell – they attract the right partners, nurture trust, and build a stronger, more sustainable franchise network.

A final word

Emily eventually grew. With structured training, empathetic coaching, and plenty of practice, she advanced from Stage One to Stage Three. She still leans on Robert, but now their conversations are productive. Instead of mimicry, she's building her own instincts.

And Robert? He discovered that coaching Emily sharpened his own skills. By slowing down and explaining his process, he uncovered shortcuts he hadn't realized he was taking. He became not just a closer, but a mentor.

That's the real power of the Four Stages of Competence in franchise sales. It's not just about individual mastery. It's about creating a culture where salespeople at every level grow, adapt, and contribute to the long-term health of the system.

Because in franchise sales, the deal is never just a deal. It's the start of a relationship that will shape your brand for decades.

The 4 stages of competence

The Four Stages of Competence model, developed by Noel Burch at Gordon Training International in the 1970s, offers a simple but powerful framework for understanding how people acquire new skills.

“The Enthusiast” (Emily)

Unconscious incompetence – you don't know what you don't know. In franchise sales, this is the rookie who thinks selling a franchise is like selling a product. Confidence is high, but awareness is low.

“The Learner”

Conscious incompetence – now you know what you don't know. The salesperson begins to see the complexity of franchise sales – fit, validation, culture, and trust – but hasn't mastered it yet.

“The Technician”

Conscious competence – you know what to do, but it requires effort. Every call, every email, every discovery step is deliberate. The salesperson is competent, but still focused on mechanics.

“The Knows-It-All” (Robert)

Unconscious competence – mastery achieved. Actions are automatic, instinctive, and effective. But beware: the “Knows-It-All” can struggle to teach others, forgetting the steps that led to mastery. This stage requires humility and structure to avoid leaving rookies behind.

Evan Hackel, author and CEO of Ingage Consulting, has founded three franchise brands, expanded systems into five countries, and consulted with more than 100 franchise organizations.

Global recognition starts here

Global Franchise AWARDS 2026

— Recognizing excellence —

From emerging innovators to sector-leading giants, the Global Franchise Awards shine a spotlight on the brands raising standards worldwide



74

If your franchise is achieving great things, the world should know about it. The Global Franchise Awards spotlight the very best international franchising has to offer and the brands, people, and partnerships shaping the industry's future, with excellence taking center stage. A place on the shortlist puts you in front of investors, partners and media who can accelerate your next phase of growth. And for those taking home the trophies, that's a global mark of quality that opens doors both at home and abroad. If you're raising standards, delivering results, and building something scalable, it's the time to step up. Enter today and show the world what exceptional looks like.

01

New for 2026

The Single Market award in each category honors franchises that operate exclusively in one country and truly excel there. From emerging disruptors to established heroes, this award spotlights brands defining success in their own markets and offers a global stage for high-performing concepts gaining momentum. Here, brand strength is something to celebrate: the strength of a proven model, a passionate customer base, and a brand built with excellence at its core. Wherever outstanding franchising happens, the Global Franchise Awards recognize and elevate regional excellence to worldwide acclaim.

02

Best-in-class judges

The awards are guided by an exceptional panel of international leaders who ensure each shortlisted entry is assessed through a truly global lens. Dr Katalin Mandel of the Hungarian Franchise Association and Cristina Matos, CEO of the Portuguese Franchise Association, bring deep insight into European system growth, while Pip Wilkins of the British Franchise Association, Matthias Lehner, President of the European Franchise Federation, Jennifer Brandeen of the IFA, and Sherry McNeil of the Canadian Franchise Association bring their global experience and best-practice knowhow to the judging table.

03

Market leading partners

The 2026 Awards are backed by sponsors who share a passion for ambitious, scalable franchising. Gong cha brings a proven track record in rapid international growth and customer loyalty. Seasons Art Class champions inclusive learning and accessible art enrichment for all. And Pacer powers the systems that drive multi-unit success. Together, these partners reflect the innovation, ambition and commercial excellence the awards are designed to honor, helping to spotlight brands building remarkable futures, either in single markets or via global expansion.



DON'T MISS OUT!
Entries close at
5pm (GMT) on
11.28.25



04

Comprehensive categories

The awards offer a stage for everyone. Whether you're a fast-growing startup or a powerhouse brand with international reach, there's a category that fits – or maybe several. From food and drink, fitness and beauty to children's services and education, your franchise has a home here. For new kids, there's the Emerging Franchise category. Service brands can shine in Business & Professional Services, and suppliers go head-to-head in categories like Marketing & PR Supplier and Tech Innovation Supplier. Plus, regional awards from Americas to Asia-Pacific ensure every territory counts.

Raising the bar

We assess excellence through four core values. First, a global mindset. It's not about how far you've expanded, but whether your plans show a sustainable, ethical ambition. Second, franchisee relationships. Strong communication, high-quality support, and genuine partnership are the foundations of every successful network. Third, standout marketing that drives visibility into 2026 and beyond. Finally, we look for brands making a positive impact on the sector, championing best practice and contributing to the wider franchising community through industry involvement.

05

Hottest ticket in town

Winners of the Global Franchise Awards 2026 will be revealed in style at an exclusive evening gala, held at the International Franchise Association (IFA) Convention in Las Vegas in February. The ceremony features a drinks reception and sees franchise leaders, global brands, sponsors and industry media converge under one roof for an evening of celebration. It's a night where achievements are celebrated, connections are made, and your brand can shine in front of the people who matter most. If your entry succeeds, expect to open new doors both at home and around the world.

06

Taste of success

The Global Franchise Awards have honored some of the biggest names and rising stars in franchising. In 2025, the UK-based ERA Group took the coveted Global Franchise Grand Champion title – a triple win that showcased exceptional market performance and global ambition. Alongside them, brands such as School of Rock (Best Children's Service & Education Franchise) and Gong cha (Best Food & Drink Franchise – Drink) also claimed top honors. These winners demonstrate exactly what the Awards stand for: international excellence, strong growth, and real-world impact.

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FOOD & DRINK

Tariq Halal drives convenience global

The U.K.'s premium halal butcher launches its international expansion strategy with a revolutionary drive-thru innovation

Minimum required capital:

£100,000

For over 30 years, Tariq Halal has been the go-to name in London for premium halal meats, known for its unwavering commitment to quality, service, and tradition. Now, this renowned British butcher is expanding rapidly with an innovative drive-thru concept, targeting both international markets and new U.K. cities.

Imagine this: you place your order, drive up, and within minutes, your ethically sourced, freshly prepared halal meat is handed to you - all without leaving your automobile. In less than five minutes, you've picked up top-quality products, enjoying the ultimate convenience without sacrificing service or standards.

This concept is especially transformative for regions dealing with extreme heat, where customer comfort and food hygiene are paramount. By staying in their air-conditioned vehicles, customers not only avoid the heat but also benefit from the added freshness of ice-packed meat to ensure quality from store to home.

“Imagine this: you place your order, drive up, and within minutes your halal meat is handed to you”

Tariq Halal is more than just a butcher; it's a brand that evolves with today's consumers, catering to the rising demand for convenient, pre-packed halal meats and now available in U.K. supermarket giants like Sainsbury's and Ocado.

By introducing its drive-thru model to new markets, the brand is once again setting the standard for excellence in halal butchery. This innovative approach blends tradition with modern convenience, offering customers a seamless experience that reflects the future of retail.

Demand for certified halal products continues to rise globally. In the U.K. alone, halal accounts for 15% of the overall meat market, with projections showing a market value nearing £2 billion by 2028, according

Pic: Veloche Global



FRANCHISE OVERVIEW

Established:
1982

Number of outlets:
27 sites (U.K.), Q4 2024 - 35, 2025 - 50

Locations of units:
U.K. nationwide



to research from Dr. Awal Fuseini, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board's halal sector senior manager, alongside Dr. John Lever and Dr. Shabbir Dastgir from the University of Huddersfield.

Tariq Halal's expansion strategy is focused on key territories, including the U.K., U.A.E., U.S.A., Canada, and the Far East - regions where demand for halal products is steadily increasing. Each store offers a wide range of products, from fresh marinated meats to spices and meal essentials, creating a one-stop destination for customers.

With franchise models ranging from Uberstores, community stores and now drive-thru, all designed for scalability with multiple revenue streams beyond meat sales, Tariq Halal also provides comprehensive support in site selection, training, and operations, ensuring each new franchise is poised for success.



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RETAIL

CeX: Powering the second-hand retail revolution

CeX has redefined the buy-and-sell model with proprietary tech, sharp pricing, and recession-proof appeal. Now, the award-winning brand seeks master franchise partners to drive its next wave of expansion

Minimum required capital:
\$1,200,000

The best business ideas are often the simplest - and the most enduring. Complete

Entertainment eXchange, or CeX, has transformed the traditional buy-and-sell model by specializing in second-hand technology, gadgets, and digital entertainment.

With more than 30 years of operational experience, CeX has built a globally recognized, multi-award-winning retail brand that now spans over 600 stores across the UK, Spain, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Italy, India, the Netherlands, Australia, and master-franchised outlets in Malaysia and Mexico.

CeX focuses on a tight, complementary range of high-demand consumer products, including mobile phones, games, electronics, computers, movies, and VR technology - items that continue to dominate the digital and home entertainment market. What differentiates CeX is not only its product mix, but the sophistication of its systems and its ability to optimize margins through pricing intelligence and operational efficiency.

At the heart of the model is a bespoke suite of proprietary tools that track product supply and demand in real time. Prices are continuously adjusted using AI input and decades of transactional data to achieve two optimal outcomes: a compelling sales price that beats the cost of buying new, and a strategic purchase price that ensures consistent, profitable inventory flow. Customers benefit from competitive pricing, generous warranties, and access to discontinued or hard-to-find items, while the business benefits from a loyal repeat customer base and a highly agile margin structure.

As a franchise opportunity, CeX offers a powerful proposition. The brand's live pricing website drives both footfall and transparency, letting customers view real-time stock levels and valuations. Unlike traditional retail, where margins are squeezed and customer engagement is waning, CeX offers a dynamic, recession-resilient alternative. The second-hand market is no longer niche - it's mainstream, driven by consumers who value both cost and



sustainability.

CeX's growth is driven through a carefully structured franchise model. The business is now actively seeking master franchise partners and area developers to lead the rollout of new territories worldwide. These are owner-managed businesses that require a blend of strategic oversight, operational scale, and growth capital. Ideal partners will bring retail experience at national or regional scale, strong sales and marketing credentials, and a vision to build out a multi-unit network in their region.

In a consumer environment where value, convenience, and sustainability drive purchasing decisions, CeX is exceptionally well-positioned. It is a brand that combines robust infrastructure with market relevance offering both commercial upside and operational scalability.

"In the next few years, we'd like to be able to call ourselves a £1bn turnover organization, and we'd like to become a truly global company. That will entail a presence in at least 20 to 25 major countries, and we need good local partners to make that happen," says Hugh Man, founder and chairman of CeX.

FRANCHISE OVERVIEW

Established:
1992

Number of outlets:
620

Locations of units:
UK, Spain, Malaysia, Portugal, Poland, Mexico, Australia, Ireland, The Netherlands and India

Investment range:
\$1,200,000 upwards



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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EDUCATION

Shaping tomorrow's innovators today

Logiscool is the world leader in children's/teen's digital education franchises, shaping future creators and delivering unparalleled opportunities for investors

Investment Range

\$75,000 USD - \$150,000 USD

Logiscool was founded in 2014 in Budapest, Hungary, by Dr.

Anita Breuer and Gyula Csitári, driven by a vision to equip young minds with essential digital skills. Starting from a single location, the brand has grown into a global network spanning over 360 learning centers in 30+ countries. With more than 260,000 students (Scoolers) trained, Logiscool is the fastest-growing education franchise in its niche, attracting investors passionate about educational technology.

Logiscool's innovative curriculum encourages creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration, preparing children for a tech-dominated future. Its proprietary platform, Scoolcode, bridges the gap between visual and text-based coding, addressing a crucial challenge in technology education. The brand's mission is to make digital literacy accessible to children worldwide, ensuring they are confident and well-prepared for the future.

Today, Logiscool leads the European digital education sector and is expanding rapidly across the globe. With 250 locations in Europe and 100+ in other regions, the franchise achieved a 26% growth in learning centers in 2024. Its edutainment portal, MyLogiscool, has facilitated over 798,000 student projects, reflecting the brand's impact. Plans for 2025 include further expansion in the U.S., entering new markets, and reaching a million students worldwide within five years.

Logiscool's achievements are backed by numerous accolades, including an "Excellent" rating from Education Alliance Finland, the European Franchise Federation's Best International Brand Award, and recognition as a BETT Awards finalist. Collaborations with esteemed institutions like EtonX further highlight the brand's commitment to world-class education.

The franchise model is designed for success and offers comprehensive support - from initial training and marketing tools to operational



guidance. Logiscool provides a structured onboarding process, mentoring, and ongoing training for franchisees. Weekly online meetings, regional meetups, and access to a detailed marketing activity calendar ensure continued success. The brand's innovative marketing strategies leverage social media management platforms.

Logiscool seeks entrepreneurial franchisees with a success-driven mindset, dedication, and a passion for education. Many franchisees are parents themselves, who resonate deeply with the brand's

mission to empower the next generation.

The children's digital education market is forecasted to reach \$5 billion by 2030, and Logiscool is at the forefront of this growth. By investing in Logiscool, partners gain a scalable business with strong ROI potential, backed by more than a decade of success and a global support network. Join Logiscool to shape the future of education and inspire the next generation of innovators.

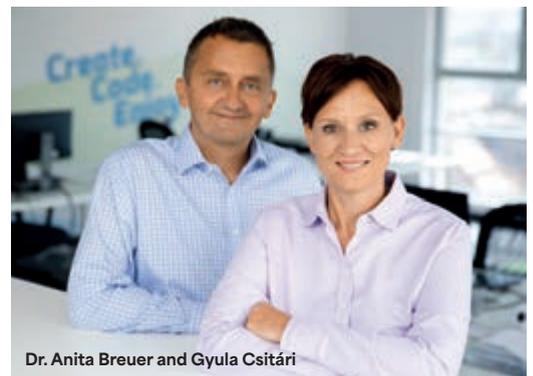
logiscool
Create. Code. Enjoy

FRANCHISE
OVERVIEW

Established:
2014

Number of outlets:
371

Locations of units:
Europe, Middle East,
Asia, Africa, Americas



Dr. Anita Breuer and Gyula Csitári

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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FOOD & DRINK

I'M HUNGRY: Bring a fresh fast-food revolution to the UK

This exciting international success story is inviting capable investors not to buy a franchise, but to build a kingdom

Investment range:
£600,000 - £750,000

The UK's crowded £20 billion fast-food market is ripe for disruption, with consumer demand shifting towards fresh, high-quality ingredients served at speed, without compromise.

Enter I'M HUNGRY: a fast-growing Middle Eastern brand that has already secured more than 30 sites across Saudi Arabia. Now, it's crossing into the UK with a bold proposition: the chance to become the franchisor for your own territory. This is not about running one store – it's about building an empire.



convenience without guilt. That means 100% fresh, never-frozen meat, locally-sourced produce, and a menu designed to cater to every time of day. From burgers and fried chicken to wraps, salads, and indulgent milkshakes, the offer is both broad and craveable.

THE INVESTMENT CASE

This opportunity represents not just a business, but the foundation of a multi-million-pound enterprise. Financial projections suggest a flagship

location can achieve breakeven within two to three years, with annual revenues from year three onwards of more than £1.7 million. Earnings potential is considerably higher once network growth is factored in, thanks to the dual revenue model.

NEW KIND OF OPPORTUNITY

What sets I'M HUNGRY apart is not just its menu, but its model. Instead of the traditional route of taking on a single franchise unit, the company is inviting a select group of UK investors to take on exclusive Area Developer Licences.

This distinction matters. An Area Developer doesn't simply operate a store. They take on a strategic role, launching a flagship location while also recruiting, training, and supporting a network of sub-franchisees across their territory. Revenues come from two streams: profits from the investor's own operations and a share of the fees and royalties generated by sub-franchisees. It's an approach that positions investors as leaders and brand builders, not just operators.

The model is already showing strong results overseas. Its leadership team believes the time is right to replicate that momentum in the UK, where demand for fresh, convenient dining is outpacing many established brands. With a concept proven in one of the most competitive foodservice markets in the world, the brand is confident of carving out a powerful presence in Britain.

WHAT MAKES I'M HUNGRY DIFFERENT?

In a crowded sector, standing out is crucial. I'M HUNGRY has built its reputation on one principle: freshness. With no preservatives or hydrogenated oils, the food appeals to consumers who want

FRANCHISE OVERVIEW



Established:
2016

Number of outlets worldwide:
30+

Locations of units:
Saudi Arabia



LEAD THE REVOLUTION

I'M HUNGRY is seeking experienced entrepreneurs or established business leaders with the capital, strategic ability, and appetite to build something significant. This is not a role for the passive investor. Candidates will need proven commercial acumen, leadership skills, and the financial capacity to fund both the licence fee and their flagship store. In return, the brand provides comprehensive support. This includes training at its headquarters in Jeddah, operational and marketing resources, and supply chain expertise.

The system has already been tested and refined in international markets, giving UK developers a clear blueprint for success. With territories strictly limited, the opportunity to secure first-mover advantage is unlikely to remain open for long.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact the dedicated franchise team to schedule a confidential, in-depth consultation:
0808 281 4727
hello@thefranchiseconsultant.co.uk

MASTER THE ART OF...

local store marketing

Franchising's greatest strength has always been its local roots and its ability to deliver global consistency with neighborhood familiarity. When franchisors lead with that principle, they create more than a marketing strategy; they build a movement of local champions who embody the brand's purpose in every zipcode. The most successful brands recognize that even experienced operators need structure, tools, and inspiration to stay creative and consistent. These four strategies will help franchisors refine their local playbook, support consistency across markets, and turn neighborhood recognition into network-wide growth.

EMPOWER YOUR BIGGEST ADVOCATES

Franchisees are more than operators – they're brand champions who bring your story to life. By supporting them to share that story confidently and consistently, you multiply your brand's reach and credibility.

Create simple, effective referral programmes that reward both franchisees and customers. Provide accessible social media toolkits, local press templates, and storytelling workshops to make brand communication second nature. The goal isn't polish – it's pride.

When franchisees can articulate what makes your brand special, their authenticity and enthusiasm become a magnet for new customers and future franchise partners alike.



MAKE SOCIAL MEDIA LOCAL

While corporate social content maintains consistency, the real magic happens at the local level. Encourage franchisees to use social channels to reflect their community, showcasing local customers, celebrating staff achievements, or highlighting nearby events.

Offer branded templates and a flexible content calendar so messaging stays on-brand but never feels generic. Give them permission to sound human.

Authentic local content cuts through the noise of algorithm-driven feeds. It fosters genuine engagement and loyalty because people don't just want to follow brands – they want to follow stories that feel close to home.

“When franchisees become known and liked locally, they don't just build their business – they strengthen the entire brand”

GET CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES

The most effective local marketing isn't about big budgets. It's about authenticity. Encourage your franchisees to become true fixtures in their communities by supporting grassroots initiatives. Sponsoring local sports teams, volunteering at events, or partnering with nearby businesses helps transform each location from a transactional outlet into a trusted local name.

To make this easy, equip franchisees with ready-made community engagement ideas, marketing materials, and even a shared calendar of local opportunities. When involvement feels achievable rather than overwhelming, participation rises. The result? Franchisees who are recognised, trusted, and valued – and a brand that feels meaningfully embedded in people's lives.

SIMPLIFY DATA SYSTEMS

For many franchisees, marketing data can feel intimidating. The key is simplicity. Focus on actionable metrics such as redemption rates, footfall, or customer feedback scores. Provide intuitive dashboards or reporting templates that show what's working (and what isn't) at a glance.

When data is presented clearly, it empowers better decisions. Franchisees can see the return on their efforts, while franchisors gain a network-wide view of trends and success stories worth replicating. This creates a smarter, more connected ecosystem where insight drives action.

After two decades growing 100% Chiropractic into a thriving national franchise, Drs. Jason and Vanessa Helfrich have learned that enjoying business success and a strong marriage aren't competing priorities, but built on the same foundation

Why business and pleasure can be in perfect alignment



Dr. Jason Helfrich

My wife, Vanessa, and I share the same goals for the company, our family, and our relationship, and even when we differ on how to get there, we know we're pushing toward the same outcome.

We find ways to enjoy the process, even during stressful times, and remind ourselves that things always work out. Great companies and great relationships are built by working through challenges, and we take pride in our ability to navigate them.

We've always been good at dividing up our responsibilities in a way that plays to our strengths. We allow each other to shine and handle what makes the most sense for the business. We never hesitate to ask for the other's opinion, but we trust each other to lead on the projects that fall within our areas of strength.

We always present a united front – to clients, employees, and even our kids – and if we have differing opinions, we talk them through.

What makes it work is space and trust. We respect each other's opinions and know we're working toward the same goal. If we hit a wall in a conversation, we pause discussion and revisit it with a fresh mindset the next day.

The fact that we've built this successful business up together is incredibly rewarding. It makes every challenge worthwhile. We celebrate our wins daily – often on our back deck watching the sunset – and spend as much time as we can with our three boys and our new daughter-in-law.

The biggest lesson we've learned is that not everything needs to be done together. Trust each other to get on with your tasks and productivity soars. Agree on the goals, revisit them often, and always remember you're striving toward the same thing – even if your paths differ.

At the end of the day, the strength of your relationship comes first. Business will inevitably test you, but if you stay listening, always respect each other, and keep your priorities straight, you can achieve incredible things together.



Dr. Vanessa Helfrich

Jason is an incredible communicator who thrives in front of people, while I'm drawn to spreadsheets, numbers, and the detail-oriented side of system creation.

Our biggest strength, though, is how we come together on vision. We both love chiropractic, and we both love business. We probably talk about work too much, but it's always been part of our connection – I can't imagine it any other way.

“It's actually a strength having two viewpoints – it makes for better, more balanced decisions”

People sometimes assume that working together means you lose individual time or independence. That can be true for some couples, but we've always found what works for us. When we were in practice and raising three young boys, we had opposite schedules, so one of us could be home with the kids. Now, as empty nesters, we work in separate offices and reconnect at sunset over a glass of wine to recap the day. The balance has shifted

over time, but the principle remains: find out what fits your relationship.

We've also learned that having clearly defined roles is essential. Early on, we both did the same work and often stepped on each other's toes. When we created separate lanes that played to our strengths, everything became smoother. We don't always agree, and sometimes it gets heated because we're both passionate, but that's maybe 1% of the time. We've been together since high school, and we usually see things the same way. When we don't, we listen, respect each other's perspective, and find common ground. It's actually a strength having two viewpoints – it makes for better, more balanced decisions.

The most rewarding part of this journey has been the memories we've created together. Building something from an idea 20 years ago into what it is today – and doing it side by side – has been incredible. The relationships we've built along the way and the legacy we're creating for our family make it all worthwhile. Having a soulmate to share in the struggles, victories, and everything in between has made our relationship even stronger.

“Great companies and great relationships are built by working through challenges, and we take pride in our ability to navigate them”





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