What Franchise

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MEET THE WOMEN

FINDING FREEDOM IN FRANCHISING



12-PAGE SPECIAL

LOW COST & LUCRATIVE

How children's services are maximising profits

APPRENTICE STAR

REECE DONNELLY

Calls 'action' on the UK's next big franchise

SALES GEEK: "We're starting a global sales revolution"

Side hustle heroes

Top franchisees – who've kept their day jobs

Land a whale

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Second chances

Which comeback brands are worth the investment?

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FROM THE EDITOR



Less than positive stories for business owners have been rife in the news of late. One of the most startling headlines has been the UK's plunge into recession, which stoked fears of a repeat 2008.

However, these tough economic periods often become the catalyst for aspiring entrepreneurs to invest in their own businesses. In fact, ask many franchisees and you'll find their journey began off the back of redundancy or at a time when they faced a competitive job market.

Needless to say, franchising isn't always a silver bullet in such difficult circumstances, and anyone willing to invest needs to do their due diligence and look for evidence of a brand's resilience. Thankfully, the International Franchise Show provides an opportunity to compare those currently recruiting and you can find some of the upcoming exhibitors on page 61. Meanwhile, we've also investigated the merits of investing in a franchise that's made a comeback in the UK, after previously withdrawing (pg. 57).

One sector that's been getting a lot of attention has been children's services, which is understandable when you consider it's often a low-cost investment. Franchisees can stabilise their income here by securing big public sector contracts (pg 22). Meanwhile, children's language learning classes seem to be a space to watch as multiple brands have unveiled plans to expand this year (pg 16).

Even Apprentice star Reece Donnelly hasn't shied away from investing in the child-focused space. The entrepreneur has continued building his 'six-revenue stream' theatre school since leaving Lord Alan Sugar's boardroom. He rang me from Scotland to outline his franchisee recruitment plans for the UK and Ireland, which you can read about on page 49.

Regardless of your franchise choice, we've packed this issue with information to help you feel confident about navigating the industry.

Here's to your success,

Molly Raycraft

Editor, *What Franchise*
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With more than 900 franchises to choose from, how do you find one to suit your personal working style?



WORDS: LINDA WHITNEY





What is your ideal Sunday afternoon?

- ❏ a) Hill walking on your own
- ❏ b) Watching your favourite sports team play
- ❏ c) Playing chess against a challenging opponent
- ❏ d) Relaxing with family

What's your favourite work activity?

- ❏ a) Developing your personal project
- ❏ b) Leading team meetings
- ❏ c) Forward planning and coming up with new ideas
- ❏ d) Working flexibly but hitting targets

How would you like to be known at work?

- ❏ a) Someone who can be relied upon to get things done
- ❏ b) A popular team player and leader
- ❏ c) An ambitious strategist
- ❏ d) Someone trusted to work without constant attention

Your favourite pet would be:

- ❏ a) Cat
- ❏ b) Dog
- ❏ c) I haven't got time for pets
- ❏ d) The one I'm using to keep my feet warm

IF YOU ANSWERED MOSTLY:

a **You're a lone wolf.** Research franchises that involve working solo, such as business consulting and training (for instance, ActionCOACH), oven cleaning (Ovenu), or mobile sales (Mac Tools). You'll not be entirely alone – the franchisor will provide training and support to keep your growth on track.

b **You're a natural team player – and manager.** Check out franchises that allow you to get into management, (such as Revive!, Agency Express, or Refresh Renovations). Normally franchisors expect you to grow your business by adding extra operators, so you become the manager. Look for franchises with management training.

c **You're big company boss material.** Look for franchises where you run a team from day one, such as well-known QSRs (McDonald's), gyms (Anytime Fitness), or coffee outlets (Costa). You'll need senior management experience and a big investment. Once your first location is operating, you're usually expected to open more.

d **You're a homeworking hero.** Many franchises can be run from home. Often these involve low start-up costs because there's no business premises – but you may need space for equipment or stock. Check out pet services (Barking Mad), travel sales (The Travel Franchise) or kids' activity franchises (Baby College).



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Going for growth

Marketing manager of Mail Boxes Etc. UK and Ireland explains how ambitious plans align with franchisees' needs and wishes

As one of the world's largest logistics franchisors, Mail Boxes Etc. UK and Ireland is part of a worldwide group with over 1,800 solution centres. Services are available online and from more than 140 high-street stores run by customer-focused franchisees.

The group has ambitious plans for growth, as Sam Whittaker, marketing manager for UK&I explains: "Over a third of our centres saw double-digit year-on-year revenue growth across the franchise network in 2023, contributing to our plans to double the group's size within the next three years."

What makes the MBE mix so successful?

Sam: Our unique portfolio of services offers multiple revenue streams. This means franchisees can focus on their strengths, be agile when markets are volatile, and cater to the needs of their local communities.

Do you have any niche areas of expertise?

The growth of online bidding and auctioneering has increased the demand for white-glove logistics. We work with more than 750 auctioneers and dealers across the UK and Ireland to ensure buyers can have their lots shipped to them safely, anywhere in the world.

We're also the ideal partner for start-ups, SOHOs (Small Office/Home Office), and small businesses. Our franchise partners are perfectly positioned to understand the needs of this marketplace as small business owners themselves.

What makes MBE special for franchisees?

We support our franchise partners in every aspect, from helping them put their business plan together and apply for funding to finding the perfect location for their new MBE centre.

Many of our franchise partners come from a business background and some already have expertise in print, shipping, or retail. But we ensure that thorough onboarding and training is provided, so no prior experience is necessary – just a dedication to customer service and the willingness to work hard.

Franchise partners must be able to grow their businesses to match their ambitions and we have a range of technology to help them do just that, allowing them to focus on multiple profit centres as well as navigate the international shipping market in volatile trading conditions.

What are your future plans?

We have access to a wealth of expertise and experience across the group, as well as the purchasing power that helps us remain profitable and competitive.

Our strategy for 2024 is not only to continue serving our core markets, but also to engage with larger businesses that stand to gain from our comprehensive suite of support services.

Franchise Overview

Mail Boxes Etc.

Established: 1980

Number of franchised outlets: 2,800+

Location of units: Worldwide

Investment range: £60,000 to £70,000

Minimum required capital: £25,000

Contact: franchise@mbe.co.uk

www.mbe.co.uk



Driving force

Drivalia is working strategically to cement its position as a frontrunner in the lucrative car rental market, and franchisees are reaping the benefits



The car rental market is thriving with sustained growth predicted, but it's a commitment to innovation and adaptability that differentiates Drivalia. The brand is ensuring it aligns with market trends and is attracting franchisees and customers in the process. Duane Murray, franchise manager at Drivalia, explains how.

How do you expect demand to grow for vehicle rental services?

Duane: Demand for vehicle rental services is expected to rise due to several factors. Firstly, rental services now offer more flexibility in vehicle type, rental duration, and pickup/drop off locations, which caters to diverse customer needs. For occasional car users, renting is often more cost-effective and environmentally-friendly than ownership.

Increasing accessibility to travel and the demand for unique experiences boosts rental demand, especially in tourism hotspots. Businesses also frequently use rental vehicles for a variety of purposes, indicating a growing demand for corporate rentals.

How are you meeting the challenges of the current market?

Drivalia's strategic approach involves diversification of services, such as a brand new subscription model. There are sustainability initiatives too, as well as major investment in technology and a customer-centric approach that prioritises satisfaction and loyalty.

Additionally, Drivalia has collaborated on strategic partnerships with hotels, car parks, and dealerships to enter new customer segments and distribution channels.

How are you differentiating your brand for franchisees and customers?

We offer a diverse vehicle fleet, exceptional customer service, innovative technology, and sustainability initiatives. Customer experience is a priority, with convenient booking options, streamlined procedures, clean vehicles, and responsive support as standard.

Extensive support and ongoing training programmes are key to ensuring franchisee success. This covers site selection, setup, operational support, marketing guidance, and access to proprietary systems.

We also ensure consistency across our franchise locations in branding, customer service, pricing, and policies to build trust and credibility.

How can Drivalia franchisees make the most of the earning potential?

Franchisees possess a number of a number of skills to navigate the car rental market effectively, including business acumen, customer focus, sales and marketing skills, operational excellence, leadership abilities, adaptability, attention to detail, and ethical conduct.

While potential earnings vary, based on factors like location and market demand, franchisees can potentially earn substantial incomes with some exceeding six figures annually.

What's next for Drivalia?

Following the successful launch of the franchise programme in May 2023 and with 10 UK franchised locations now established, we plan to open a further 20 new sites in 2024, strategically positioned in major towns and cities.



Franchise Overview

Drivalia

Year Established: 2021

Number of franchised outlets: 34

Location of units: Nationwide

Investment range: £5,000 -£15,000

Minimum required capital: £5,000

Contact: uk.franchise@drivalia.com

drivalia.co.uk

THE CHILDCARE CONUNDRUM

Low-cost investment and a near-enough essential service are proving lucrative for franchisees in the UK. But is it enough to navigate the challenges of an industry talent deficit?



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

12 Boom or bust?
Enthusiastic children, willing parents, and a variety of franchise options. We delve into industry data.

16 Talking business
Why investing in foreign language tutoring businesses can translate to big success.

22 Unlock government gold
Your guide to winning large public contracts for your children's services franchise.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Playtime profits: can the children's services market keep the fun and finances balanced?



The children's services industry is incredibly diverse, but broadly speaking we can divide brands into two categories: essential and non-essential. Parents are likely to see childcare nurseries (which often require the highest investment level) as the most indispensable among franchise brands on offer. The benefit here for franchisees is that the chances of creating a sustainable revenue stream are promising if you're able to abide by government requirements and reassure parents.

However, that's not to say that other brands are unimportant – some parents will view services catered to developing children's social skills, swimming abilities, and general wellbeing just as crucial. Plus, fees for these services are often more affordable than nurseries. From a franchisee perspective, these non-essential franchise brands can be ideal for anyone looking to enter the child services space because they usually require a lower investment level and can offer a more flexible working life in comparison to day care facilities.

Franchises that operate a child-friendly environment can be particularly appealing to prospect franchisees who are working parents as they may need to incorporate their own childcare into their working day. For instance, if a franchisee runs an evening children's club, they may be able to bring their own children to sessions, enabling them to earn while parenting.

Another draw to investing in a children's services franchise is the opportunity for a much bigger salary than what can be offered as a staff member. The average

salary for childcare workers in the UK is £27,000, while for nursery jobs it is £21,000, according to a survey by recruitment company Total Jobs. The number of childcare workers has dropped over the past few years – now estimated to be around 623,500 according to Statista – which suggests that some contracted staff may be leaving the industry due to poor pay.

Franchising in a children's services business could provide a solution here by giving low-paid workers the opportunity to become their own boss and take away the salary cap they currently face. However, despite investment, they may still face challenges if they're looking to hire employees from the dwindling talent pool they once came from.

Yet, there's also some massive opportunities here, especially when it comes to lucrative public sector contracts, which guarantee a much steadier and more substantial income than what fees from parents can provide alone. (Rich McEachran looks at how franchisees can best position themselves to pitch and win a public sector contract on page 22).

Childcare

Nurseries and day care centres took a big hit in during the pandemic due to national lockdowns. Remote working and fears around infection rates within nurseries have led to some parents reconsidering their need for external childcare.

However, despite an abrupt pause on the industry and a change in consumer behaviour, revenue and demands for nursery and daycare services are beginning to clamber upwards, according to IBIS. This trajectory is unlikely to change, especially if we consider that the cost-of-living crisis is prompting parents to go back to work, and in turn, pay for childcare services.

Furthermore, the UK government has bolstered the use of day care facilities, having recently doubled its investment in early years education to £8 billion annually by 2025. Some of this money will contribute to funding an increased number of hours for childcare across England.

For franchisees, investing in a nursery could prove lucrative and rewarding. However, success will ultimately hinge on their ability to create a comforting and stimulating environment for the children under their care.

Most parents are well aware of horror stories relating to malpractice within the industry – so much so, that's there's a growing rise in home schooling. In response, franchisees need to be reassuring parents and providing visibility over their child's care (in addition to satisfying Ofsted).

For example, digital updates sent to a parent's phone throughout the day are becoming increasingly common. This segways into a larger development across the industry: the introduction of technology. We're now seeing an increasing amount of franchise brands use digital tools to encourage learning and interaction among children, alongside the implementation of a branded curriculum.

These developments help solidify trust and craft a memorable brand that can complement modern day parenting needs. Currently, there are several franchise brands recruiting across the UK, including Canopy Children's Nurseries (total investment £249,999+), Moonstone Day Care (total investment £120,000), and Monkey Puzzle Day Nurseries (minimum investment £300,000).

Sport

There's a real opportunity for franchise brands to capitalise in the youth sports space. Children overwhelmingly enjoy being active; 61% say they love playing sports and 29% say they like it, according to a study by Statista.

However, there is not necessarily enough opportunity for children to participate in their crucial one hour a day of exercise, seeing as child obesity has risen by 300% over the past 30 years. Franchise brands can lean into this space to create a relied-upon

"A children's services business could give low-paid workers the opportunity to become their own boss"





"Considering the cost of living crisis, luxuries such as extra-curricular activities may be the first thing to go"

and fulfilling service as well as a sustainable revenue stream.

Overall, competitive sports are the most popular among children, with football at the top of the list for children aged between 11-15. Here, brands include Premier Education which requires a £24,950 minimum investment and regularly partners with schools. The Little Foxes Club similarly offers sports coaching, with a minimum investment of £14,950. While BabyBallers instils a love of football in children as young as 16 months, with a total investment of £9,995 + VAT.

Swimming is also highly popular, especially among younger children who are learning to take to the water for the first time. As a result, there are numerous franchised swimming schools operating across the UK who are actively recruiting franchisees. This includes Angela's Swim School (£22,000 minimum investment), Aquababies, (£5,000 minimum investment), Turtle Tots (£13,000 minimum investment), and Water Babies (£5,000 minimum investment).

Aside from these sports, alternative physical activities like skateboarding, dancing, and fishing have piqued the interest of children up and down the country. Brands like Diddi Dance (£4,995 minimum investment) and Children Inspired by Yoga (£10,000 total investment) are leaning into this interest.

Artistic ventures

There's substantial scientific evidence to show that creativity is an important factor in nurturing imagination, problem solving, self-expression, confidence, and good mental wellbeing in children. As a result, parents are generally keen to pay for extra-curricular enrichment activities.

However, considering the cost of living crisis, luxuries such as extra-curricular activities may be the first thing to go from people's budgets. Yet, this won't necessarily be the case considering that fees for these services are often lower than other businesses operating in the industry.

Franchise brands in the creative space often offer one-hour classes and clubs, which means franchisees are usually able to take on flexible working patterns that enable them to adapt their schedules around other life commitments. This has made artistic franchises a particularly popular investment with working parents and others with caring responsibilities.

Artistic franchise investment opportunities currently include ARTventurers (£5,000 minimum investment), Bricks 4 Kids (£25,000-£50,000 minimum investment), Crayola Imagine Arts Academy (£76,000-£205,000 total investment), Cook Stars (£6,995 minimum investment) and Engino (£20,000 minimum investment).

Meanwhile, performing arts franchises are also keen to expand across the UK, and this includes Footlight Theatre School Academy (£3,995-£13,250 minimum investment), Monkey Music (£12,975 minimum investment), and Stagecoach (£9,000 minimum investment).

Academic

Big emphasis has been placed on tutoring businesses over the past few years. In 2022, the UK government announced the education recovery plan which aimed to bring children back up to speed following the pandemic. This included an almost £5 billion investment, which comprised £1.5 billion specifically for tutoring. If anything, focus here emphasised the importance franchise brands could have in this space, particularly as children's services businesses often thrive off securing public contracts.

For franchisees, tutoring is an ideal option for those who perhaps enjoy elements of teaching but need the flexibility that working in a school, or even as a supply teacher, just can't offer. Some franchise options enable franchisees to work with individual children on a home-based basis, such as Choice Home Tutoring (£21,000 + VAT).

Meanwhile others like Kumon UK (£3,000 minimum investment), Mathnasium (£40,000 minimum investment), and Eye Level (£8,000 minimum investment) have a big high street presence whereby groups of children attend educational centres with a uniformed team of tutors on hand.

There's also growing ground for educational brands that operate beyond the confines of basic school curriculum. For instance, language learning schools such as Kidslingo (£3,000 minimum investment) and Lingotot (£8,200 total investment) are appealing to a new generation of parents who have ambitions to raise their children bi-lingually. No doubt, as this trend grows, we're likely to see more languages on offer (you can find out more about the language learning franchise landscape on page 16)

Meanwhile, those franchises with a STEM focus may also prove popular because they provide a much more in-depth exploration of science and technology than what can ever be offered in schools. Brands currently looking for franchisees include E2 Young Engineers (£31,000 minimum investment) and Junior Einsteins Science Club (£30,000 minimum investment).

Party services

Children's parties really hit the headlines ten years ago when a survey first revealed that parents were averagely spending £191 on their child's birthday celebrations, according to investment management service Nutmeg.

Since then, a whole host of roles have emerged in the industry from venue renters, children's entertainers, and catering companies to specialist party planners, party stylists, gourmet cake makers, and giant balloon manufacturers. It goes without saying a lot of these services are more likely to be popular in areas where families have higher disposable incomes.

A big pull for franchisees is that the market is currently severely fragmented with a lot of small and micro businesses. Investing in an established brand could provide them with the same independence but with the advantage of additional support, as well as brand reputation.

Some current franchise investment opportunities include Go-Kart Party (minimum investment £14,000), Gamewagon (minimum investment £15,995), and The Detective Project (minimum investment £9995).

Practical

Children's services always elicit strong images of colourful play areas, lots of toys, and age-appropriate activities. However, beyond nurseries and fun afterschool clubs, there's a market for those offering more practical services that help parents care for their offspring, even before birth.

A prime example of this is specialist cleaning brands such as Pram Parlour, which aims to get expensive prams looking brand new after being sullied by leftover snack crumbs and all manner of liquids. For those interested in going down this path, investment is £30,000 in total.

We're particularly seeing a market for services that also centre around capturing childhood memories. A great example of this prenatal scans, which have been launching in highstreets to provide additional photos and videos of babies in the womb in 3D. (Numi Scan has a total investment of £55,000, while Hey Baby 4D similarly has a total investment of £35,000-£55,000.)

Photography studios for family shoots are also another investment opportunity – and one that has recently been given another lease of life by a TikTok trend, which has prompted adults to visit studios to recreate their family photos from their childhood. One such investment opportunity is Venture Studios, which currently has a £70,000-£100,000 minimum investment.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN NUMBERS

£6.7 billion

The day nursery sector's contribution to the UK economy
Savills

4.6%

CAGR between 2021 and 2026 for children's party industry
Gitnux

$72.4 billion

The value of the global children's activity market by 2027
Grand View Research

8.8%

CAGR for children's education between 2020 and 2025

Technavio

"There's a market for those offering more practical services helping parents care for their offspring"



Beyond the classroom

Modern foreign language tutoring franchises have found a gap in the UK education system. And they're monetising it

WORDS: MOLLY RAYCRAFT





You've got the best chance of picking up a foreign language to a near-native level if you start studying before the age of 10, according to scientists. Meanwhile learning as a mother tongue requires an even younger age bracket. "We know that you only really learn a language as a mother tongue with the right grammar until the age of seven," says Helen Doron, linguist and founder of Helen Doron Educational Group. "After that your brain loses ability and total flexibility there. It's natural for children to be polyglots, to learn any number of languages from an early age."

However, in the UK school system, modern foreign language teaching is often sporadic and sometimes reserved until secondary school. "Having taught high school children for nearly a decade, [students] finds language learning difficult, having been exposed to languages too late," confirms Andrea Baker, founder and franchisor of Les Petit Pois Fun French. "Pressure heats up in high school. It's too much, too late, and they feel embarrassed and become opposed to language learning."

However, outside the walls of the classroom, there's an established demand for services and products that supplement the in-school learning experience. For instance, the BBC's language tutoring programme for children, Muzzy, has been running for the past 30 years. Meanwhile, second-language daycare facilities have been cropping up around UK cities; The German Kindergarten now has four locations in London. Meanwhile, usage of language apps such as Duolingo have grown tenfold, igniting a passion for linguistics in parents.

Now, we're seeing multiple brands capitalise on this interest by franchising, in hopes of scaling their tuition services across the country. But will demand really translate into a lucrative investment opportunity for franchisees?

The reality of demand

In 2023, the UK had the second largest percentage of language learners who were learning three or more languages on Duolingo, according to the app. It means some interest in foreign languages, at the very least from parents, is there.

English, Spanish, and French are the top three most studied languages on the app, and we're certainly seeing these catered for by child-focused franchise brands. However, German, Japanese, Korean, Italian, Hindi, Chinese and Portuguese also comprise the top ten most popular languages, and it's here that we're currently seeing a potential lack in offering.

For Andrea Baker, it was French that seemed to be the right choice for her business, Les Petit Pois Fun French. She could speak the language and as a mother herself she quickly realised there was little on offer in St Helens and Warrington for those hoping to raise French-speaking children.

In response, Andrea established Les Petit Pois Fun French which runs French sessions incorporating play aimed at children aged 0-8 years. This includes parent and baby, toddler, and after-school classes, as well as private sessions for schools, nurseries, child minders, and birthday parties. It's a niche that's proven popular within the community and customers have accumulated via word of mouth.

"I'm usually sold out," she says. "People can sometimes be a little unsure about what to expect but once they've seen what we do and how we do it, and how much the children love it, they're hooked and tell all their friends."

In fact, it was this parent network that provided Andrea with her first franchisee, Beth, who is also a French speaker. Demand became so high that it was unrealistic to continue the business solo, and in 2021 Les Petit Pois Fun French became a franchise brand. "I was approached by a parent who used to attend my classes telling me she was being made redundant and asking if I had any opportunities," says Andrea. "Fast forward six months and Beth became my first franchisee and is now in her third year."

Beth now runs 11 classes per week at her location in South Warrington. She runs these alongside an after-school club every night of the week and has several local schools on her waiting lists as she's now at maximum capacity. For franchisees, Andrea says, they can look to earn around £450 if they choose to work a full day once they've established their business.

Spanish is another language that seems to be increasingly remunerative. In fact, it's

"I'm usually sold out. People can sometimes be a little unsure about what to expect but once they've seen what we do... they're hooked and tell all their friends"





overtaken French as the most popular A-Level in England and is also set to become the most popular GCSE language by 2026, according to the British Council's Language Trends 2022 report.

It's a growth that former teacher, Maria Torres Giron has noticed, having set up her business Olé Spanish in 2002, and franchising in 2019.

"Now I'm seeing that there are more and more companies that are coming to join the trend, which is amazing because I believe language acquisition has to happen as early as possible," she says.

Additional competition in the Spanish learning sector comes with challenges for franchisees such as capturing the market in what could become a congested space. However, Maria says choosing the right brand is intrinsic to being successful, regardless of the noise. "Like with most things quantity does not always translate to quality," she warns.

It's consistency in quality that Olé Spanish has capitalised on over the past two decades, with Maria creating textbooks that are rolled out across the brand's six locations. The business also has multiple revenue streams which cater to babies all the way through to adults, ensuring that the customer's lifespan is maximised for franchisees.

"I've had a student who joined us at the age of five and left at the age of 18," says Maria. "One student has taken lessons for 15 years with us and she's now fluent. We also have our youthful 85-year-old student. She's been coming for about seven years and she was 83 when she came to our first immersion camp in Salamanca. She's now planning to travel with us again this year."

Olé Spanish is currently in a recruitment drive, and franchisees who have recently invested are doing well, despite the cost-of-living crisis.

A variety of teaching styles and price tags

Reliance on textbooks while teaching languages to children is a common criticism of linguistic education within the UK. In response, several franchise brands appear to have focused on moving away from such a huge emphasis on grammatical rules, and instead are centring their unique selling points around play and language exposure, which encourages young students to absorb information in a much more natural way.

For Milena Jurasz-Cruz, franchisor at El Recreo Spanish, classes aimed at the youngest children are delivered through nursery rhymes, which has provided an opportunity for inclusivity – something that often goes amiss in classic Spanish textbooks. "We understand that in



DO I NEED TO SPEAK LANGUAGES TO OWN A FRANCHISE?

- **Some franchises will require investors to speak the language that's being taught by the brand, as often franchisees will be on the ground teaching classes. For example, Les Petit Pois Fun French requires franchisees to speak French in order to invest. Meanwhile, other brands enable franchisees who don't speak the language to invest but this will usually require some understanding of the culture, as well as the recruitment of skilled language teachers, which is an additional cost. Olé Spanish, Language for Fun, and Helen Doron Educational Group have management franchise opportunities available.**



Spain they speak Spanish, but we have 21 Spanish speaking countries," says Milena. "We want to bring culture and traditions from these countries as well as have traditional songs from these countries."

As result, children are exposed to vocabulary from a broader range of countries such as Venezuela, Puerto Rica, and Columbia (Milena's homeland). It's this sense of inclusivity which has curated a community of attendees, some of whom have Spanish-speaking family members and others who simply want to learn.

"We try to get all the family involved and we have different resources to help all the family as well," says Milena. She recognised the importance of offering a tutoring services that extended across multiple age ranges, including adults, after she began teaching her daughter Spanish, while also supporting her Polish husband who wanted to learn. The incorporation of multiple family members within language learning not only opens greater revenue opportunity but creates a better possibility of immersion – a technique that both El Recreo and Olé Spanish have supported by offering summer camps and trips.

These events mean franchisees can sell big ticket trips and teaching sessions, while offering children and adults a cultural experience that will massively greaten their language proficiency in the process.

Megan Haycock, franchisee at Language for Fun, similarly offers these Spanish language excursions and has also seen first-hand how language learning techniques vary between different age brackets. She initially worked as a Spanish language tutor after moving back from Spain where she'd previously taught English. In this time, she has taught both children and adults, but when she decided to finally open her own business under a franchise brand she opted to focus on teaching students 18+, although she still teaches child classes for another franchisee in the area.

"Looking at it financially, it was going to pay off more to teach adults because I could charge them more," she explains. "I think there's people who are willing to pay a bit more as well to learn a language."

Megan's Language for Fun franchise in Sandbach and Holmes Chapel runs classes from various venues across the local area, including coffee shops and a Cuban restaurant. "You've got adults who are putting their own money into this, therefore will do





work outside of classes, will pay attention, will do as much as they can to try and learn this thing that you're teaching them about," she says. "I have a group on a Friday morning where we sit in a café and have coffee and I just teach them about this thing [Spanish] that I love."

Students vary significantly but most have disposable income, which highlights the importance of choosing the right location to open a language learning franchise. "We get interest because these are people that may have holiday homes in Spain and travel a lot. So, they are people that generally have spare income to be able to travel or have a second home," says Megan.

Although there are also students who attend as a hobby, travel has been a big motivation for consumers to spend money on learning languages, so much so that changes in holiday plans have affected the attendance of some students. "You've got people who were learning before, then Brexit happened, so they decided to sell their place in Spain, Italy, or France, so we lost them," says Megan.

However, she also says this has been balanced by the uptake of language classes during the pandemic, which added a revenue stream to the business by extending services to online classes. "This year we've hit our pre-COVID numbers, we're above our pre-Covid numbers now."

Megan plans to continue leaning into the travel lifestyle that drives many of her students to her classes by offering Italian – a language that's not currently offered by many franchises.

The UK as a hot destination

There are countries that typically have language learning engrained within their culture, much more so than the UK. However, as demand continues to propel the franchising efforts of brands on our shores, it has also begun attracting much bigger players in the market, including Helen Doron Educational Group. The business, which has been in operation for 40 years, has 1200 franchised units around the world in 40 countries, with a network of national and master franchisees.

Now, the franchise plans to roll out it's services across the UK, setting up a dedicated environment for students, with a pending headquarters based in London. "I think the UK needs something like this," says founder Helen Doron. "We've got a curriculum. We don't just sit down and sing a few songs with kids. They start at X and they end at Y. We know what the learning outcome is and next year they're going to start from somewhere else."

The business has similarly chosen to focus on the dominance of Spanish, offering several age-appropriate classes which incorporate fun and specially developed songs. Alongside this, students can also access English as a Second Language, mathematics, and music in what Helen terms 'a one-stop shop'. But why now? And why the UK?

"I think parents are understanding it's important to be culturally diverse, which you can't be when you only know one language. But also, I think there's a really big interest in early child development and their child's brain will literally and physically grow in order to accommodate this extra language."

The franchise is aiming to appeal to the UK market via its established methodology, which Helen began developing more than 40 years ago and continues to innovate. "Forty years ago, [tutors] were starting with reading and writing. That's not language, which is understanding and speaking," says Helen. "We started with the pedagogy. We learned the marketing as we went along because we think this is an essential."

Now, the next challenge will be finding franchisees willing to invest as the brand makes its UK debut. These investors don't necessarily need to be language speakers, but they do need to feel the brand has an important part to play in UK education. "I think people should be emotionally involved in this business. It's an educational business. It has a soul," says Helen.

THE MOST POPULAR LANGUAGES TO LEARN

(According to The 2023 Duolingo Language Report)

1. English
2. Spanish
3. French
4. German
5. Japanese
6. Korean
7. Italian
8. Hindi
9. Chinese
10. Portuguese

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How to win public contracts

Servicing the public sector can be the bread and butter of children's franchises – so how can you bid for a slice?

WORDS: RICH MCEACHRAN

The UK government spent £393 billion on public procurement in the 12 months ending 5 April 2023 - up 7% from the previous year, according to Public Spending Statistics.

Supplying products or services to the public sector can be rewarding business for those lucky enough to secure it. But the good news is that "franchises by their very nature can be appealing for public sector authorities that are putting contracts to tender," explains Andrew Walters, founder of Kindling Franchise Consultants, a recognised expert in children's activity franchising.

As Walter says: "The public sector is often looking for the reassurance and comfort provided by a bigger brand and the robust processes that a franchised operation can provide. In the case of nationwide tenders, a national footprint can also be a huge advantage as it allows them to contract with one central office that can manage the roll out."

Children's services franchises are also attractive to the public sector because franchising tends to have a low overhead business model and, as a result, fees per child are often lower which increases accessibility of services. This advantage could be key to winning over a contractor – in this case, a local authority or authorities – looking to improve access to education and extra-curricular activities.

Preparing for the tender process

Stepping into the public sector arena can be daunting, regardless of the experience and size of your franchise, especially as procurement processes can be complicated and wrapped in red tape. "The public sector loves bureaucracy and has a certain way of doing things," says Walters.

Franchisees can apply for a tender in their region directly or via a franchisor applying on your behalf. Before you can even be invited to pitch, you'll be required to fill out the Standard Selection Questionnaire, often referred to by its acronym SSQ. It's a list of selection questions, including previous contracts, past experience, qualifications and your financial health, as well as self-declarations against exclusion grounds as set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The contractor will use responses to shortlist bidders, so it's important that you answer the questions honestly and transparently.

Pitching for public contracts

Assuming you're successful with the SSQ, the next step is to prepare your pitch, which should be treated like any normal sales pitch.

You'll need to be able to market

"The public sector is often looking for the reassurance and comfort provided by a bigger brand and the robust processes that a franchised operation can provide"

your product or service in the best possible light in order to persuade the buyer that yours is the one to procure. For example, you could emphasise how your children's services business encourages play and inspires young minds.

It's also worth remembering that, at the end of the day, writing a tender response is more than just a form-filling exercise. Storytelling can help you to connect with those reviewing the application.

"Submitting a tender application can be a bit of an artform. It can be advantageous to get support from an organisation that specialises in tenders to help," advises Walters. Such organisations can work with you to craft the perfect narrative.

Consider accreditation

When pitching for a tender, it's vital that you read the tender document thoroughly, so you're confident that you can answer the points raised.

Accreditation may help boost your application. Tenders will typically stipulate that you may have to hold certain certificates, but, even if they don't, it could still be harder to win a pitch if you're coming up against accredited competitors.

The two main accreditations are ISO:90001 for quality management, which demonstrates your ability to provide products and services that meet customer requirements; and ISO:90001 for regulations, which demonstrates that your franchise is being proactive in minimising its carbon footprint.

For children's services franchises that run inclusive playgroups and support children with special education needs, specific accreditations such as those awarded through the Autism Accreditation Programme could boost your application.

"The UK government has a contract finder that allows you to find out about opportunities worth at least £12,000, including past tenders and upcoming contracts. There's also a separate search facility for high-value contracts worth at least £138,760"

Where to find tenders to pitch for

The UK government has a contract finder that allows you to find out about opportunities worth at least £12,000, including past tenders and upcoming contracts. There's also a separate search facility for high-value contracts worth at least £138,760. Each opportunity listed will give you the name of the contracting authority, the duration, anticipated value of the contract, plus the terms of the agreement.

Alternatively, there are third-party sites, like Bidstats, which boasts the largest database of public procurement data.

Where to find advice

As part of Brexit, the government has recently updated the UK Procurement Act, which is due to come into force this October.

Changes aim to make it easier for suppliers to do business with the public sector. Plus, YouTube tutorials, known as 'Knowledge Drops', are designed to prepare suppliers for the upcoming changes and include lessons on how contracts are awarded and managed, so you can begin pitching with confidence.

"Sales is not a dirty word"

Sales Geek founder Richard Few explains how the brand's mission is to change the way the world perceives sales



The sales education market can often be expensive and inaccessible, with much of it set up to support bigger businesses. Yet, small businesses make up 93% of the UK economy, and most are started by people who are not from sales or marketing backgrounds. Unfortunately, 80% of them fold within their first five years of trading.

"We enable businesses not just to survive but thrive by providing part-time sales directorship as well as helping them build sales engines to create scalable and sustainable revenue," explains Richard Few, who set up Sales Geek seven years ago in Lancashire. Now the brand is expanding globally, and is seeking both UK-based franchisees and international multi-unit operators to meet impressive growth targets. We caught up with Richard to find out more.

What does Sales Geek do in a nutshell?

Our disruptive part-time sales director model is geared towards the small businesses in our communities with the culture and the personality of our brand matching the franchisees who front it. We do this by making sales education more accessible to our clients, whether they're salespeople, sales leaders, or business owners.

We've worked hard to ensure that clients who need our help and support feel psychologically safe enough to start the conversation with 'things aren't going well, I need some help'. And really, the impact this has on people is huge. Running your own business when you don't know how to create sustainable revenue is a scary place to be and the number one reason why businesses fail. Helping to keep people in business is hugely rewarding.

Our training is endorsed by the Institute of Sales Professionals (ISP) and clients range from tiny businesses with only one salesperson right up to global brands with large teams, including Panasonic, Royal Mail, and International Airlines Group.

How does your positive culture impact franchisees?

I quit a career that I was miserable in seven years ago to start up Sales Geek, because I wanted to lead a happier and healthier life. Three years ago, we franchised the business to give the same opportunity to other salespeople who find themselves in the same place. We have the attitude that we borrow our team members from their families for a few hours a week, and we have a duty of care to return them back to their families feeling fulfilled and in good health, rather than grinding them into dust like a lot of organisations do.

From the get-go we set out clear values. Two that mean a lot to me personally are geeks make it fun and geeks care.

There's sometimes a lack of fun and a lack of care in business. We spend a lot of time at work and enjoying it is vital for the team at HQ and our franchisees too. Part of our value proposition to franchisees is becoming part of a community of like-minded people, so it's important to us to maintain that culture across our franchise network as it continues to grow and scale.

All our franchisees are experienced sales directors and leaders – some from an SME background and others from huge organisations like FedEx, Tesla, and Cisco Systems – but all have an

appetite for serving their local business communities. They really care about the businesses in their local community, as well as buying into the Sales Geek mission and believing in a world where sales is no longer a dirty word.

What's the onboarding process for franchisees?

We've onboarded 37 franchisees across the UK and the US over the past three years. Onboarding is critical to franchisee success and it's the area we work on the hardest. It begins with a residential week up at HQ in Lancashire, where we focus on our brand, marketing and business development, vision and goals. Ultimately, our partners learn how to go from being employed sales directors in large companies to inclusive, valuable members of their local business communities.

After that, there's another five weeks of part-time remote learning followed by regular monthly training on sales, business growth, products and internal training. We also have a team member who's dedicated to being in the field. He gives most of his focus to supporting the guys who've been with us for nine months or less, helping them to avoid the traps and get started as well as they possibly can.

What territories are currently available?

There are currently two levels of opportunity for prospective partners. We have franchises available both in the UK and in the US market, and international master franchise opportunities as well.

In the UK, we've mapped out 60 franchisee territories, about 50% of which are already occupied. We're quite busy in the Northwest, but there are opportunities in the Southwest, the Northeast and a couple of areas in the Midlands, too.

A big part of our growth model is our master franchise territories in America. We've identified 13 master franchise territories that compare well to the UK in terms of business populations and how many franchisees they can take. Some of these are large single states like California, Texas and Florida, and others are combinations of states.



Franchise Overview

Sales Geek

Established:
February 2017

Number of units:
Master Franchises – 3.
US Franchises – 3.
UK Franchises – 28

Min required capital:
£63,000 + VAT.
With £35,000 + VAT paid up front and the balance of £28,000 + VAT being paid as £7,000 + VAT paid in Year 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Contact:
Lucy Few at franchise@salesgeek.co.uk | Tel: 01254 920 120

salesgeek.world or salesgeek.co.uk

"We have a duty of care to return our team members back to their families feeling fulfilled and in good health, rather than grinding them into dust"

We currently have 10 master franchise territories available in the US. Our goal is to recruit 30 master franchises globally, each with an average of 30 franchises by 2030. It's an ambitious goal but doable on our current trajectory.

Although we are engaging directly with people in the US through our own marketing and our recruitment strategy, we've also been approached by people in the UK who are looking to take Sales Geek to parts of the EU and even out to Australia and New Zealand. We're open to conversations with people in most of the global regions, to be fair, and we are nimble enough as an organisation to be able to respond and react to opportunities. Regions like Asia Pacific, Middle East, and India are going to be a big focus for us in 2024.

What opportunities are there for franchisees to grow, scale and build an asset?

This is the main cornerstone of our offering to our franchisees. At a master franchise level lies a significant business opportunity – with 50-60 franchisees we'd expect a business to be turning over something in the region of $6-7 million. But equally, at a franchise level our territories are built to a size where franchisees can grow and scale their business. We grew a million-pound turnover business with a team of nine people here in rural Lancashire – a goal which is completely replicable for any of our franchisees. And despite being only three years into their franchise journey, several UK franchisees are already recruiting. We've built territories big enough so they can do just this.

Ultimately, our main driver and mission statement is to change the way the world sees sales. When we first franchised Sales Geek we only had three core products. We now have 14. We're constantly launching new products and services to our franchisees to help them to grow and scale their business safely and effectively, as well as passing on advice and support. By becoming a global business, we're both directly and indirectly adding value to our franchisees' assets, making it easier for them to acquire customers and recruit team members as they grow.



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THE HYBRID HUSTLE

Meet the successful franchisees building their businesses alongside their day jobs

BY LINDA WHITNEY







"You must budget carefully because up to 80% of revenue from the hog roast comes in over only six months of the year"

Some 5.2 million workers in the UK have taken on second jobs and 10 million are considering taking on another job if living costs continue to rise, according the Royal London Cost of Living Report. While an additional contracted role is certainly an option, it seems business ownership is becoming particularly appealing to those looking to bolster their earnings.

For example, new business set-ups increased by 9% in the first quarter of 2023. This equates to 101 new businesses being launched every hour across the UK, according to iwoca, one of Europe's small business lenders.

Some of these businesses are franchises; there are brands that allow new franchisees to launch while maintaining their previous job, especially in sectors where the business is seasonal or can be run part time. However, before you dive in, it's important to discuss your future plans with franchisors at the very start as some may expect you to eventually transition to working full time on the franchise.

How common are second jobs in franchising?

Setting up a new business can be a time-consuming process, which means that in some cases becoming a part-time franchisee just isn't feasible. However, there are numerous brands who are open to franchisees who want to run their business alongside another role. This includes seasonal and part time service providers.

"Two of our franchisees are currently running their hog roast businesses part-time, with the aim of going full time later," says Nick Warlow, a director at The Gourmet Hog Roast Company. "We certainly allow this, because it means franchisees who may be nervous about taking the business full-time from day one can keep their existing Monday to Friday job with confidence.

"They are often office workers who want to escape the Monday to Friday rat race. They have enjoyed hosting barbecues at home and want to make it a business," says Nick.

Some service franchises similarly allow franchisees to start part time, as roles can involve evening or weekend work which sits outside of other work commitments.

"The Razzamataz franchise is ideal for people from a wide variety of backgrounds because it allows franchisees to work flexibly," says Denise Gosney, MD and founder of Razzamataz Theatre Schools. "This means they can continue in the job they are in on a part time basis."

Other franchise sectors worth looking at are sports franchises (some operate outside school hours or at weekends), travel sales franchises, and local 'what's on' magazines, many of which also involve working from home.

Seasonal success

Peter Gadsby is an established photographer and consultant at Bonhams auction house. However, he made the decision to maintain his 25-year career while becoming a franchisee at The Gourmet Hog Roast Company – an events catering company specialising in hog roasts.

"I was always on call, and commuting to London from my home in Kent had lost its charm," he says. "I wanted something extra that was completely different."

Peter had always loved cooking barbecues in the garden for friends, so when he heard about The Gourmet Hog Roast Company franchise, he wanted in.

"Now I devote the start of the week to consultancy projects, and the end of the week to my hog roast business," Peter explains. "The hog roast is busy in the summer and at weekends, so it can mean quite long hours, but when it's quiet, in winter, my wife Katie and I like to travel to places like India, or go skiing.

"You must budget carefully because up to 80% of revenue from the hog roast comes in over only six months of the year. But ploughing profits back into the business means I've been able to take on a unit in which to store and prep the meat. Long term, I want to grow the revenue from the hog roast."

A critical factor in Peter's success is that The Gourmet Hog Roast Company head office handles all the initial enquiries, event bookings, and marketing for


Charlotte Bradshaw

its franchisees. "It means that I only put in an hour a day on the admin, so I can juggle the hog roast work with my consultancy business," says Peter.

Part time prowess

Charlotte Bradshaw combines her job as a midwife in the NHS with being the principal of the Razzamataz Theatre School in Leicester.

"I'm currently working three long shifts a week as a midwife, with a plan to drop this to two shifts," she says. "When Razzamataz builds, I will make a further decision, but for now, I always want to keep a hand in midwifery."

Charlotte qualified as a midwife in 2018, but was looking for an outlet to mitigate the stresses that can come with such an under-pressure role.

"I had been feeling trapped, miserable, and a bit desperate, worrying about how to change my life," she says. "Then I watched a Razzamataz video where a theatre school principal was talking about the right time to go into business. A switch flicked on in my head and everything about Razzamataz just felt right. A huge weight was lifted from my shoulders. I was nervous, but more excited than anything."

Prior to investing, Charlotte had never performed professionally and had no experience in running a business, but then she found resources offering a helpful guide to setting up a successful franchise location.

"Razzamataz has launched more than 60 new schools, so I just needed to follow their system," she explains. "The role is very flexible so I can combine working for the NHS and launching my school.

"So far, it's working really well, and I can choose when I do things, working at my own pace and around my midwifery shifts and social life. I'm very busy but it is easy to fit it in if you are organised and Razzamataz head office staff are great for getting back to me quickly if I have any questions or need support."

"It's working really well, and I can choose when I do things, working at my own pace and around my midwifery shifts and social life"

Complementary careers

In 2017, Nick Blakemore became a magistrate as well as the Lichfield and Tamworth franchisee at OSCAR Pet Foods, where he began delivering nutritional advice, food, and accessories to pet owners.

"I could only volunteer as a magistrate once I'd set up my own business and could give my own free time," says Nick. "Magistrate's rotas are set six months in advance so I have plenty of notice. I keep a strict delivery schedule for OSCAR and allocate days for admin and stock management."

He advises others who want to adopt two roles to keep time blocked for both without allowing them to cross over as it can be confusing.

"Have a clear discussion with the previous business owner and the franchisor to understand the true time expectations to perform the role effectively," says Nick. "Some franchises are less flexible than others. Also, clarify service level expectations with customers from day one."

For Nick, it has helped that the OSCAR customer relationship management system allows for scheduling and stock management and has generous timelines for company meetings and training. "It means I can integrate the two dairies without too many panic activities.

"OSCAR also permits flexible working practices so I can set my own delivery, admin, and stock days to balance between my interests."



Nick Blakemore

"Have a clear discussion with the previous business owner and the franchisor to understand the true time expectations to perform the role effectively"

Building strong foundations

Business owner John Davidson was feeling exhausted from 100-hour weeks... that was until he met ActionCOACH



Alan Smith (left) with the SouthSide Property Management team at the BizX Awards

After nearly two decades in the corporate world, Alan Smith found himself yearning to escape the constraints of the daily grind to regain precious time with his family. The answer came to him in 2014 when he launched his own ActionCOACH franchise. Now, Alan is earning more than he could have dreamt in his previous career, while also enjoying the difference he's making within the local business community.

One such business within this community is Edinburgh-based SouthSide Property Management, which was founded by John Davidson in 2009. Like Alan during his corporate career, John found himself devoting upwards of 100 hours a week to work, meaning he was missing out on precious time with his young family.

Having previously used ActionCOACH services, John decided to act by seeking the help of his local Action Coach, Alan.

"I've always believed in the advantages of internal staff development," says John. "Unfortunately, I regularly have too much on my plate to devote the time I'd like to it, so introducing the quality service that ActionCOACH delivers to the team was a no-brainer."

LEARNING TO DELEGATE

The primary objective for Alan's coaching direction was to influence the leadership qualities within the team. Cat Dalrymple, head of development at SouthSide, has worked closely with Alan since the start of coaching.

"At first, Alan came in and delivered monthly leadership sessions. These had a tremendous effect on my colleagues, Cat and Leah," says John. "We've



Action Coach Alan Smith changing the lives of business owners at his monthly group coaching session

"I'm really looking forward to seeing how the business flourishes while I can enjoy more time with my family and on other projects"

enlisted Alan's help since late 2016 and continue to invest in his support due to how successful it has been.

"I've always looked forward to Alan's leadership sessions. I consistently feel like I've walked away from them gaining valuable information.

"Sometimes it may be a simple tip, but you can see the benefits of putting it into practice straight away. One of those things is maintaining an up-to-date schedule just so no task gets forgotten, no matter how busy it gets."

Alan also brought on board the assistance of fellow Action Coach, Yvonne Webb, to provide the SouthSide team with an array of new perspectives and valuable business insights.

"Working with Alan and Yvonne for a long time means the advice they can provide is more specific to our business and ourselves," says John. "Now we know each other so well, they know our strengths and weaknesses and we can really work on what needs to happen to ensure the business continues to run smoothly."

RETURNING TO THE BRAND

Since establishing itself as a major player in the Edinburgh property market, SouthSide has aimed to stick to its key brand values: safe, happy, and sustainable. "Sticking to your principles in business is vital as they serve as the foundation for your identity and reputation in the community," says John.

"We'd noticed, around the same time as Alan joined us, that we'd strayed away from them somewhat. That's not to say the business had lost its identity, but I don't think we were implementing them as much as we could. With Alan's help, we reintroduced our values into all aspects of our day-to-day operations at SouthSide."

A WORK-LIFE WIN

The priority for John was to improve his work-life balance so he could spend more time with his family. From starting the business to the birth of his first son in 2013, John had been putting in more than 100 hours per week.

Action Coach Alan aimed to help John in scaling down his workload as he looks to gradually step back from the helm.

"The hard work definitely paid off. We've grown every year since we started in 2009," says John. "Even during our toughest time through Covid, when a fifth of our properties were vacant for around 2-3 months, we still managed to achieve 2% growth.

"Now I'm looking to decrease my hours to 50-60 a week consistently. I feel confident we have built a team who will continue to be successful with less and less input from me. I'm really looking forward to seeing how the business flourishes while I can enjoy more time with my family and on other projects."

PROPERTUNITY KNOCKS

SouthSide's business model and its standing in the community has been central to it winning the award for Best Service-Based Business at BizX 2023. Now, the focus has shifted towards two key developments: expansion and futureproofing.

"We've come a long way since 2009 but we don't want to stop there," says John. "It's so important to establish a solid foundation for the future – whether that be through bespoke software systems or the professional development of our people. But one thing is clear, if you want to ready your business for a successful future, you should be working with experts."

THE COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

Since working with SouthSide, Alan has been able to understand how John has made the business such a success – and where ActionCOACH can help elevate that further.

"It was clear very early on how much of an exceptional businessman John is," says Alan. "When coaching at SouthSide, I knew I wouldn't be a knight in shining armour, coming in to make drastic changes to turn the business' fortunes around. Sometimes there are more subtle changes that elevate a good business to great."

Franchise Overview

ActionCOACH

Established: 1993

Number of franchised outlets: 200+

Locations available: Nationwide

Investment range: £69,000 or £29,000 initial investment

Minimum required capital: £30,000 working capital

Contact: freedom@actioncoach.com
www.franchise.actioncoach.co.uk

HOW TO MAKE YOUR BUSINESS INSTA-FAMOUS

Algorithms, hashtags, and influencers... what's the formula for viral success on Instagram? And do you *really* need it?

When Instagram first launched in 2010, it was predominantly an image sharing space that followed the premise of social media platforms before it, such as Bebo and MSN. The focus was firmly on enabling users to share snippets from their lives with their friends.

Then, came the influencers, who similarly shared content from their daily lives. But it had an aspirational quality, which eventually ushered in paid collaborations with brands. This was the beginning of what would become a behemoth of commercial opportunity for brands who are ready and willing to capitalise on Instagram's estimated 1.4 billion user base.

However, the three-step process of taking a photo, writing a caption, and pressing post can look deceivingly easy, and it quite often doesn't guarantee engagement. Before, you know it, you could be pouring hours into constructing a comprehensive social media plan without really reaping the results the justify the time spent.

So, before you plummet into the rabbit hole of Instagram, we spoke to digital marketing experts about what franchises can really do (or not do) to make the most of this platform.

Is Instagram really for you?

While Instagram is certainly an attractive platform for reaching new customers and raising brand awareness, it may not be the right place for you. Consider how the platform could work for your business before sinking significant amounts of time into planning lengthy posting schedules for a target audience that may not necessarily exist.

"Be really clear about who you are or will be when using Instagram," says Jessica Morgan, founder of Carnsight Communications. "Who are you targeting? What tone of voice will you use? Do you have brand guidelines to follow? Can you create consistent content?"

Product-based, consumer-facing, lifestyle businesses are often the most obvious fit here, and in the franchising space QSR brands such Burger Drop, Chai Green, and Black Sheep Coffee have clearly taken this approach with photogenic dishes set against the aesthetic backdrops of their



"With strategic creativity, virtually any business can find its niche and thrive on this platform"

restaurants, encouraging user-generated content.

However, that doesn't mean Instagram is a non-starter for service-based or B2B businesses. "With strategic creativity, virtually any business can find its niche and thrive on this platform by emphasising storytelling and visual appeal," says Darron Palmer, founder and lead photographer at Darron Palmer Photography.

What do we know about the Instagram algorithm?

The Instagram algorithm can feel somewhat illusive, especially when content you predict will thrive does incredibly poorly. However, Jessica reassures that the algorithm isn't designed to persecute professional accounts, as is sometimes suggested by disgruntled users.

"The platform is trying to put the right content in front of the right users, so help it by being consistent, using a range of content including videos, lives, reels, and stories, using the right hashtags, and making sure content is helpful for your audience, and not too sales-driven," she says.

Choose your brand over trends

It's trends that can give an unknown brand a dose of virality, but this isn't a common experience. Instead, it's often better to curate content that stays true to the authenticity of the brand because this is much more likely to grow a healthy following of paying customers, rather than a spike in entertained users who will likely never buy.

"Just because it's trending, doesn't necessarily mean it's going to automatically align with your branding," confirms Darron. This translates to focusing on taking photos that convey your messaging, incorporating colours that are representative of your brand's colour palette, and including people that reflect your diverse customer base.

"Sustainability is also huge at the moment, so make sure your images showcase you to be as sustainable as you can be," adds Darron. "For example, don't highlight single use plastics and disposable coffee cups."

He also acknowledges the rise of AI usage within brand photography, which can be helpful but should be used with extreme caution. "People want authenticity, and that includes your images (especially images of you.) Don't be tempted to go down the AI generated portrait route," says Darron.

However, a word of warning for those who choose to defy this advice: "It finds hands very difficult to cope with so watch out for 'giant hands' in any AI assisted images."



"Don't overcomplicate it. My personal mantra is: if you can't edit in a minute, bin it"

Don't spend too long editing

Instagram comes with so many built-in filter options and there are plenty of free mobile apps to conduct more extensive edits. So, it's easy to get carried away. "Don't overcomplicate it," advises, Jeanette Lendon, at Jet Black Squares. "My personal mantra is: if you can't edit in a minute, bin it."

She recommends beginning your foray into Instagram by considering your approach to editing and your chosen style. So, for example, if you're going to use a filter, which one aligns most with your brand? The reason being, if you experiment with a new filter on every single image you'll end up with a mis-matched Instagram profile which completely distracts from your messaging.

However, beyond instilling cohesiveness, using strong filters could be a real hindrance to customers trying to view your products. "You don't want to misrepresent your product with a different, more vibrant colour if that isn't what it looks like in real life. Gently enhance, but don't go overboard," says Jeanette.

Always shoot in natural light

There are also easy things you can do to limit your reliance on post-production editing, and that can be as simple as choosing the right time of day to take photos. "Natural light is key," confirms Jeanette, who recommends factoring this into your schedule when looking to add to your Insta-photo portfolio.

"Make sure you have the light in front of your subject, so it gives a lovely, soft light," she says. "Turn on the grid on your phone camera and keep your subject out of the middle square.

"By offsetting your subject, you can use the negative space (empty space in your photo) to add text, meaning people don't have to read the caption in order to get info."

The grid, which can be turned on in phone settings, ensures you're operating to straight lines – creating a more professional feel from the get-go, according to Jeanette.

However, she does warn against cropping images to 'square' (something commonly done on Instagram) as this will make it harder to create a 'scroll-stopping' composition.

Measure your success

Having visibility on what Instagram is bringing to your business is incredibly important if you want to justify investing in social media marketing. By measuring a range of metrics (something that can be done on Instagram's dashboard), you'll be able to understand what approach is working for you, and what needs changing.

"Monitor analytics regularly – it's not an occasional process but an ongoing one, so you can learn and optimise content continually," says Jessica.

search for relevant terms. The second option is to collaborate with influencers.

"If you're using advertisement tactics (which usually show up in-between stories or reels), do your best to make for an engaging or even amusing narrative to capture the viewer's attention," says Karim Salama, director at e-innovate.

"If you choose to collaborate with other influencers, make sure you prioritise the nature of their content over the number of followers – you want to use influencers as a means to target a particular demographic."

This means that while big names may seem like the best option, a micro influencer who has a smaller but more concentrated following may actually bring your business better traction.

"I would avoid having a 'scattershot' approach where you try to get anyone with a decent following involved," confirms Alex Robinson, founder of Novus Digital. "Instead, I would research any influencers who align well with your brand's message, values, and service. Remember, you want to tap into the demographics of this influencer's fanbase more than simply get publicity."



> *"Monitor analytics regularly - it's not an occasional process but an ongoing one"*

Reach and engagement are two of the most popular metrics and are a good indicator of what content is proliferating across the platform and what's not. However, even if these figures are positive, they don't necessarily equate to revenue. This raises a vital question: what is your definition of success?

"For franchisees, that could be reaching and resonating with people in the right areas," says Jessica. "Make sure you know what action you want users to take – whether that be sharing your content, visiting the website, making an enquiry or buying a product. Always use Instagram as part of a wider business strategy."

Is it worth collaborating with influencers?

Beyond organic engagement, business owners can take two different approaches to paid content. The first is to pay for targeted advertisements that boost your content to people who follow businesses like yours and

It's not all about posting

Having a two-way interaction between your followers and your brand shouldn't be forgotten. This will require you to put some time aside to engaging with other users.

"Instead of spending the majority of time posting your own content and then jumping off, try to spend the majority of your time interacting with other accounts," advises Jessica. "Follows, likes, comments, even DMs where relevant, will help build a strong profile as well as bring you closer to who's using the platform well."



"Try to spend the majority of your time interacting with other accounts... this will help build a strong profile "



With this in mind, it's better to consider Instagram as a customer service channel rather than a marketing strategy, and as part of this you should ensure you're answering customer comments and messages.

The franchise perspective: Build a community with user-generated content

Cece and Me is a mobile children's shoe shop franchise. It frequently pop-ups at child-orientated locations such as playgroups and family cafes.

When the business launched in 2015, it immediately started using Instagram to compensate for the fact that the brand doesn't have a physical shop window. Since then, franchisor Sam Chetworth and the Cece and Me franchisees have each cultivated a following within the local community.

"I know without having social media platforms, we wouldn't be accessible to people," says Sam. "If we weren't on them then we'd be more reliant on word of mouth and people finding our website through Google."

The primary goals here have been to increase brand awareness while also building a relationship with the community, which Sam believes has contributed to revenue. "I can see on the website that a decent proportion of people come through from Instagram and Facebook," she says.

The franchisor uses analytics to understand what works and what doesn't. Two forms of content have proved to be the most successful. The first is educational content about foot health and correct shoe fittings for children, which has a shareable quality on account its usefulness. Meanwhile, personal stories about Sam and the other franchisees have placed a human quality at the centre of the brand and appealed as an interest piece.

"I think that's the thing that franchisees find the hardest – making themselves the face of the business," says Sam.

Another challenge has been getting the right imagery to support the brand's messaging which centres on a child-friendly experience. For this, Cece and Me has leaned into user-generated content, which not only demonstrates an authentic experience but also conveys parent approval.

"One of my franchisees is much better at getting people to send her pictures after they have bought the shoes. I'd say about half of their content is pictures taken by other people, which is brilliant."

Sam says the business' initial introduction to Instagram was adhoc but over the years she's carved out planning time in which she schedules content for upcoming weeks – and this extends beyond grid posts. "Instagram stories are a really good way to generate more interaction. I use polls and include a bit more personal content which do get good reach," she says.

However, Sam warns that following isn't everything and not to fall into the trap of being fixated with this. "If you've got loads of people following you, but only a very small percentage of them are interested then it's not doing you any favours," she says. "I'd rather have a small number of followers who are really interested and engaged."

Cece and Me's main Instagram @ceceandmehq now has 2,030 followers. The franchise is looking to expand further and Instagram will remain intrinsic to reaching paying parents within the local areas that the brand serves.

5 STEPS TO GETTING GOOD PHOTOS (WITH AN IPHONE)

Polished studio photography isn't essential for capturing the attention of users on Instagram. In fact, a lot can be done with an iPhone, according to Jeanette Lendon, who runs smartphone photography classes at Jet Black Squares.

1) **Use portrait mode:** this lens option can be really effective in creating a professional feel to your photos. For android users, most newer models also provide the option to make the background blurry, which essentially creates the same effect.

2) **Flip your phone and focus:** experiment with taking photos with your phone upside down, this can create depth within the image. Make sure you touch the focal point on the screen to adjust focus on your product.

3) **Look for macro-mode:** some phones have macro-mode which means you can zoom in on small details. If you don't have this, clip-on lenses can be around £10.

4) **Invest in some cheap products:** A selfie stick with a built-in tripod and Bluetooth remote can be really useful when taking photos on your own and should only set you back by £10-£20.

5) **Craft some light:** Cover a cereal box with tin foil and angle it so it reflects light back onto your subject.



Own a salon (no scissors required)

David Mathie, head of franchising, explains why you don't need to be a hairstylist to build a successful Just Cuts franchise

While embracing digital transformation within its service offering, Just Cuts continues to grow its salon footprint - as you just can't get your hair cut online.

Throughout this time, the hairstyling salon has tried, tested, and refined its systems to ensure it works and will continue to work for salon owners across the world.

However, that doesn't mean you have to be a qualified hairdresser to invest in this lucrative opportunity. David Mathie explains why and what's next for the internationally known franchise.

Hairdressing will never go online, so how do you evolve a 34-year-old salon model?

David: You don't need any hairdressing industry experience to own a successful Just Cuts salon, and over half of our 123 franchisees own more than one location.

Based on a no-appointments, walk-in system, Just Cuts performs more than 100,000 weekly *Style Cuts* across Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the UK.

While our core business offering hasn't changed in 30 years, we're continuing to evolve to meet the changing needs of our clients and salon owners:

- Clients can check in digitally ahead of their visit via our Just Cuts loyalty app to earn rewards.
- Salon owners are provided with a professional haircare range formulated by stylists to grow transaction values.
- Franchisees can monitor salon productivity, stylist cut rate, and sale volumes using our smartphone app.

How do you set up new salon owners for success?

With our site selection focused on high foot traffic locations to maximise the value of our walk-in promise, we've refined our model so you can spend more time working on your business, not in it.

With built-in global transferability, thanks to a timeless USP built on convenience, Just Cuts' success stems from how we continue bridging the gap between barbers and high-end hair salons for clients.

And when you join the collaborative Just Cuts community of salon owners, you're never on your own.

The Just Cuts franchising family employs more than 3,500 stylists globally, and we're investing in more recruitment solutions including government subsidised apprenticeships.

Why is now a good time to invest in a Just Cuts franchise?

Just Cuts uses a fixed price model. Regardless of the economy, hair never stops growing and high-quality haircuts at great prices position our brand as a cut above the rest.

With the rising cost of living, Just Cuts continues to grow globally as consumers increasingly choose brands that offer the most value.

Franchise Overview

Just Cuts

Established: 1990

Number of outlets: 226 salons globally

Locations of units: Australia, New Zealand, UK, Taiwan

Min required capital: CAN$170k-270k

Contact details: David Mathie, head of franchising: davidm@justcuts.com +61 448 063 235

franchising.justcuts.com





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Strength in numbers

ERA franchisees may be in business for themselves but they're certainly never by themselves, as it's effective collaboration across the network that drives the brand's success



For ERA Group (ERA), 'collaboration' isn't merely a buzzword; it stands as a fundamental principle deeply ingrained in the company's identity, shaping its trajectory since the business began in 1992.

Back then businesses were seeking ways to streamline costs.

Recognising this growing need, ERA's founder, Fred Marfleet, envisioned a way to help companies optimise their costs through leveraging his extensive background in finance, mixed with his passion for working with people. Thus, ERA was born.

Yet, the journey from a local start-up to a global franchise powerhouse wouldn't have been conceivable without an effective framework for both local and international collaboration.

Referring to ERA's humble beginnings, head of training, Tasha Starks, explains: "Many might not realise, but ERA started off as a training company. Our founder, Fred Marfleet, started training professionals to be consultants, laying the groundwork for what would eventually evolve into ERA."

However, it wasn't until 1996 when technological advancements and the advent of the intranet presented ERA with an opportunity for global scalability.

Today, collaboration remains at the heart of ERA's success story, illustrating how collective efforts and innovative thinking have propelled the company from modest origins to its current status as an internationally-acclaimed franchise and winner of 'Best White Collar Franchise' at the Global Franchise Awards 2024.

WORKING TOGETHER

For franchisees, embracing the concept of collaboration within ERA's ecosystem is not only intuitive but instrumental to their success. The business model actively promotes joint ventures, empowering individual franchisees to tap into the collective expertise within the network. This allows franchisees to capitalise on their own unique strengths, whether in client management or project delivery, while collectively delivering the best possible solutions to clients.

"We have a responsibility to promote the brand, to build trust and advocacy, to foster a connection with our audience on a global level"

Tim Barber-Lomax, ERA's head of EMEA, echoes this sentiment: "Collaboration is very much at the heart of what we do as a business. No one is a master of everything and the way in which we operate means franchisees can bring in their colleagues to assist and advise with certain clients and projects. My job is to help foster these collaborations and create a platform for franchisees to share best practice."

This approach has proven immensely beneficial for ERA, which consistently attracts new franchisees eager to establish their own consultancy under the umbrella of an international network. The draw lies in the prospect of entrepreneurial freedom coupled with the invaluable support of seasoned colleagues and an experienced franchisor.

In many ways, the key to fostering collaboration lies in effective communication and creating a culture of openness to sharing ideas and best practices. In this aspect, ERA is very much ahead of the curve.



KNOWLEDGE-SHARING FOR GROWTH

Organisations with a strong focus on knowledge-sharing will always generate opportunities for self-growth and create an environment to learn from one another. For ERA, the emphasis on sharing expertise begins at the foundation training, where aligning new franchisees with the company's ethos is paramount for both immediate and long-term success.

"Sharing knowledge is basically what we're designed to do. It's one of the reasons why we invite so many experienced franchisees to help deliver the training. Because who better to deliver the training than the people who've made it work?" emphasises Tasha Starks.

It's a concept deeply rooted in the company's DNA, a collective appreciation that sharing ideas and knowledge helps individuals, and teams, to perform at their best.

UNLOCKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Another benefit of effective collaboration is the ability to unlock new opportunities for business growth. Innovative franchise organisations will always take a strategic view on how to get the best out of everyone, from franchisees to employees.

"Every country we support is different," agrees Tim Barber-Lomax, with much of his role focused on facilitating collaboration at an international level. "It's important to understand the strengths and the challenges of those different countries because often the challenges in one region present an opportunity for another."

This collaborative spirit extends beyond franchisees to the global support teams, where regular communication and cross-departmental collaboration spark new ideas and ensure alignment with the network's evolving needs.

"We have a responsibility to promote the brand, to build trust and advocacy, to foster a connection with our audience on a global level," adds John Mockler, head of marketing, "But we are also very 'hands-on' with our franchisees and tailor our support accordingly, rather than promoting a one-size-fits-all approach. People work in different ways and we try and cater for this."

COLLABORATION FOR PROBLEM-SOLVING

Innovation and problem-solving are integral to ERA's growth strategy. Establishing strong communication channels is essential for encouraging an environment where creative solutions flourish.

"My team must adapt to new technologies very quickly. To allow us to have global communication with our franchisees, we have created a variety of solutions available to the network," shares David de la Nougerede, head of IT.

By leveraging the right tools and channels, an organisation like ERA can bring together diverse minds, skills, ideas, and perspectives to spark change, foster innovation and, ultimately, drive business growth.

"Our model and structure fits the current, fast-changing business scene and is extremely well suited to today's economy. Our vision is to continue unlocking potential and that applies equally for franchisees, clients and employees," concludes Fred Marfleet, ERA founder and chairman.



Franchise Overview

ERA Group

Established: 1992

Number of outlets: 750+ franchisees

Locations of units: 50+ countries worldwide

Min required capital: £49,950

Contact: joinus@expensereduction.com

uk.expensereduction.com/careers



Our mission

We optimise costs and illuminate opportunities, revealing hidden value to help business unlock their full potential

Franchisee benefits

- Proven business model
- Recession-proof business
- High income potential
- Scalable asset
- Work/life balance
- Joint venture opportunities
- World class business support

Who are we?

- World's #1 cost consultancy franchise
- Founded in 1992
- Global network of 1000+ people
- Present in 50+ countries
- 'No Win, No Fee' value proposition

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We are WOMEN IN FRANCHISING

In 2022, just over 20% of all new companies in the UK were female-led, according to parliament research. Meanwhile in 2023, the gender pay gap was very much present, reported by ONS at 7.7%. Here, we speak to women who've used a franchising model to forge a successful path in business, while gaining more autonomy over their careers. They share their challenges, wins, and best practices for entrepreneurs hoping to follow in their footsteps.





"You never know what you'll achieve unless you take the leap"

Ros Wiggins, franchisee at Didi Rugby, Stone & Stafford

Finding coaches who can lead sessions and also be the face of the brand can be challenging because it's 100% personality-based and can't really be taught (or not easily in my experience). I play a lot by the 'monkey see, monkey do' school of teaching, so I try to model the behaviour I want to see from my coaches and follow this up with feedback and suggestions. My proudest moment has been hitting the £2000 per month revenue mark. This was a real step up for me as a sole franchisee and head coach. It means that my customers believe in what I do and are on the journey with me. Being able to grow the business has enabled me to swap working full time and doing Didi Rugby on the side, to focusing on the brand full time and expand even further. You never know what you'll achieve unless you take the leap. With franchising, you've got a team behind you to help and support, they don't succeed without you, so they're as invested as you are.



"Get advice from someone already doing the business you're doing"

Abbie Akinfenwa, franchisee at Pink Spaghetti

The biggest challenge I've faced has been when a client hasn't paid me. I never recovered the money but put a process in place to prevent that from happening again. I don't think being a woman has been a factor that's affected my experience as a franchisee. People need things done and as long as they're done to the timeline and quality expected, most do not care one way or the other. So far, the proudest moment in my business has been reaching the end of my first year. I never thought I'd be able to it, so that was a highlight for me. Now, my career aspirations are to continue growing my business organically and developing other means of passive income. If you're a franchisee starting out, I would suggest getting advice from someone already doing the business you're aiming to do.



"Do your due diligence"

Jane Hotz, franchisee at The Cat Butler Radlett

This is my first experience as a franchisee, having come out of the corporate retail world, which I spent 36 years in. I'm discovering the benefits of being a franchisee. Make sure that the franchise you want to buy is going to give you the long term success, and the long term satisfaction that you're looking for in your next career move. If there's one part of the business that isn't your passion, it's not going to work. Also, do your due diligence and don't rush the decision. Make sure you've looked at every aspect of the business: the owner of the franchise, how much support you'll get, and the financials. Talk to other franchisees within the franchise so that you can get their honest opinion of how the business operates. Finally, just go for it, follow your gut, follow your passion, and it will be the best decision you'll make.



"Seek opportunities out"

Claire Rushton-Plant, franchisee at MiniMe Mindfulness, Staffordshire and Derbyshire

I think like many women, the impact of having children on my career has been immense. This is why I've moved to running my own business, allowing me some flexibility to support my children. My biggest challenge has been the steep learning curve when it comes to the business side of things. I left a career in teaching after almost 20 years in the classroom so delivering sessions to children, their families, and schools comes as second nature to me. However, tax, social media, and invoicing have been new skills I've needed to learn. I think until you get that first booking you'll always have a little voice of doubt that will question whether you've made the right choice. Don't sit and wait for opportunities to come to you, seek opportunities out. Yet at the same time be patient with your progress. It will take time to make connections, raise your profile, and build your client portfolio.



"Get someone who can teach you the ropes"

Lucy Long, franchisee at WPA Healthcare Partners

When I started my franchisee business 15 years ago, starting out with zero customers was the biggest challenge. The help now available for new franchisees is phenomenal. For example, WPA Healthcare Partners now has an academy to teach new-joiners. Get someone experienced like me to teach you the ropes or buy an existing portfolio (as we all hope to retire eventually) and listen to advice. Within our franchise, it's typical that there will be an agreement to stay on for a year with the new franchisee to help with the handover. People buy from people in the financial advice arena, especially in health insurance, and I believe encouraging a wider range of people to become franchisees is better for the customer. Currently, my Trustpilot rating is consistently five stars and I've had more than 100+ reviews in the past year, which I'm very proud of. However, moving forward, I'd like to semi-retire to celebrate time following my cancer recovery and work with other franchisees to help them avoid common pitfalls.



"Don't think you have to know it all"

Nicola Adams, franchisor at Full of Beans Fitness

My children were very young when I created the Full of Beans model and a lot of the people around me thought it would be a "fun job while the children are young and at school". I was actually asked by one of the dad's at school if I'd got a "proper" job yet when I bumped into him a couple of years ago and was delighted to tell him how far we had come, how many children we support, and how many areas of the UK he could find Full of Beans franchises. I think the biggest challenge as a smaller business owner is mastering so many of areas yourself, as you can't afford to pay external people initially. I enrolled on many courses in the run up to starting the business so I knew I could master the basics and then I've honestly never stop learning because things change so quickly, especially with technology. Don't think you have to know it all - take all the support and advice you can get. Don't worry if you make a mistake, these are lessons to learn from along the way, we have all made them - you will improve.



"Your business should be something that excites you"

Caron Kelly, franchisee at Little Voices, West Kent

The motherhood and career juggling act is really difficult and it's frustrating that the expectation to do and be everything is on us. I started my business in September with three after-school clubs and my centre is continuing to grow. I have gone from six students to 60 children accessing a variety of Little Voices Classes, so I'm pretty proud of that. However, juggling full time work around my new business has been a challenge so I've decided to leave full time teaching and concentrate on my business from April. Now the goal is to grow my business and live life on my terms. Your career should be fulfilling and not just pay the bills. I'm so grateful I've found something I love and get to see children flourish. I think working for yourself gives you the motivation to succeed, I have such a supportive network in Little Voices. Go and find the right network for you. Your business should be something that excites you and that passion and consistency will get you the results you want.



"Look at the steps you need to take to get to your goal"

Rebecca Lomax, franchisee at Puddle Ducks, Norfolk and Suffolk

Before expanding my business, I had imposter syndrome, which affected my confidence when it came to running Puddle Ducks, Norfolk and Suffolk. However, I didn't let that stop me. I proactively sought mindset coaching along with the support of Puddle Ducks' Head Office and my team, so I was able to pursue my expansion dreams. There will always be obstacles in life, but it's how we approach them and overcome them that matters. If you have a goal you want to achieve, look at the steps you need to take to get there and don't be afraid to ask for support if you need it. That's the beauty of joining a franchise, you'll always have the backing and support of the franchisor who will be there to guide you to success - whether that's through training and resources, or often just a phone call to talk something through.



"It's about confidence, ability, and attitude"

Vikki Donnachie, franchisor at Merry Maids

Covid was one of the biggest challenges I've faced. When the pandemic first hit everyone was just trying to find their way through, some businesses were forced to cease trading. This was a huge learning curve and it has certainly changed how we all work. I have proven to myself that even through the toughest of times, we must learn to embrace changes and make the most of the resources and technology that we have available to us. Our businesses expanded through this time, proving that with the right can-do attitude and thinking outside the box, you can achieve anything. There are certainly plenty of fantastic opportunities available within franchising for women. For me it's about confidence, ability, and attitude. When I entered the franchising sector it was a predominantly male environment however the industry has changed, and if you have the desire to be successful along with ambition and drive you will succeed in whatever environment you wish. My career aspirations are to continue building and supporting our growing network of franchisees.



"Have confidence and trust in your abilities"

Shilpi Verma, franchisee at Walfinch, Harrow & Brent

Running your own business means keeping on top of the finances. That's easier as a franchisee than for someone alone in business because your franchise manager can help with financial management and planning. Recruiting, hiring, and retaining carers is challenging, but I'm tackling it by creating a positive culture which increases employee satisfaction. Have confidence and trust in your abilities. Sometimes you'll experience self-doubt because in business it's inevitable at times. For instance, I wondered if I could reach a turnover of one million - but then I did. Also, build a good support network around you. A franchise comes with a built-in network of other franchisees, whose support is invaluable, but it also helps to have support from experts in your community, such as community nurses. I'm co-chair of the care sector workforce intelligence organisation, Skills for Care, in Harrow and Brent, so I keep in touch with many people working in care in the local area.



"The only obstacle you'll face is yourself"

Angelina Mouralidarane, commercial director at Iceking Group

The biggest challenge I've faced is the limitations I've placed on myself for being a female leader, business owner, wife, and mum. I've had this notion of having to do more than my male counterpart at any meeting, presentation, or review, just to justify my seat at the table – but it was exactly that, a mere notion. I soon realised that what earns you a seat at the table is your ability to perform regardless of background and gender; the franchise network has done a very good job of trying to level the playing field. Ultimately, the only obstacle you'll face is yourself. If you work relentlessly, stay focused and commit to achieving your goals you absolutely will succeed regardless of gender. Inequalities will continue to exist, but it's how you navigate around them that's more important than the inequality itself. I'm aiming to build a multi-generational business across different sectors and global markets. I hope to inspire, educate, and mentor women in business and franchising.



"Don't be afraid that you'll be on your own"

Kim Emmett-Gidney, franchisee at Safeclean, High Wycombe

I've pushed myself to work hard physically and mentally to overcome challenges along the way and, most importantly, learn from them. I think the biggest challenge has been believing in myself and knowing that I do a good job to a high standard. What's helped me with this is having a regular client base, and obtaining new clients through recommendations. This just proves that if I wasn't doing good a job then my clients wouldn't have me back. I also believe that ongoing training is very important, so I'm always updating, and improving my skills. I'm the only female specialist within my network and this was quite isolating at first. Don't feel that because an industry is male dominated it isn't for you or you can't do it, it's only perceived as a man's job because it's a hard graft with the equipment etc. But if you aren't afraid of hard work then you are just as good as the rest of them. You'll also be surprised at the amount of support you get from your network support team.



"Above everything, trust your gut"

Georgina Broadhurst, franchisee at Just Shutters, Surrey

The cost-of-living crisis has meant customers are looking for the keenest price, while our margins are being squeezed. I have a lot of data available to help drive efficiencies in the business, analyse cost and margin, and protect profits, all while delivering high levels of service and customer satisfaction. I'd advise other women hoping to follow in my footsteps to do their research, ask ALL the questions, talk to a wide variety of relevant stakeholders, and then analyse the data that's available. But over and above everything, trust your gut. I also put a lot of thinking into how best to reach our customers, what's important to them, and how to keep them coming back for more. It's paid off; we have very high levels of repeat business and referrals.



"Always be open and transparent with those around you"

Joanna Askew, franchisee at Conexus Tuition, Colchester

There will always be unforeseen obstacles - some you can plan for and some you can't. I've learned how important it is to be aware of your customer base, the changing demographics of your market area, and adapting your business plan, while sticking to your values. My biggest challenges have been keeping the faith, maintaining a positive mindset, and knowing my worth. I was in a permission-driven industry previously, and at times very little autonomy was given. We had to continually justify outcomes at the expense of planning time. As a franchisee, the opposite is true. In a world where we place too much value on competition, winning and losing, and status, have faith in yourself and value others. My business will continue to support families in our community, and I intend to expand my team, open more venues and win more contracts. Think about the ethos you want to create and lead by example. Keep focusing on the 'why' – what is the real purpose of your business? Use visualisation techniques and keep a gratitude journal. Always be open and transparent with those around you, showing vulnerability isn't always a bad thing.



"Don't waste time and energy constantly comparing yourself to others"

Rebecca Newenham, franchisor at Get Ahead

People have been my biggest challenge and over time I've clearly recognised that not everyone is your right client or franchisee, and that's absolutely fine. Keep your eye on the prize, follow your own journey and don't waste time and energy constantly comparing yourself to others. This is your life and you must choose the right path for you. Launching my first franchise in Leeds has to be one of my proudest moments – it's over 200 miles away from Guildford where I am based, so to see Fiona, my franchisee, take our brand and start her business journey without me being there was awesome. I've now started mentoring business owners over the past two years, which I love. I'm also a franchise consultant which fits perfectly alongside my franchisor role. In addition, I'm hoping to train as a humanist celebrant later this year so I can conduct naming ceremonies.



"Franchising can be a less risky and more accessible way to start a business"

Fiona Mackenzie, franchisee at Mathnasium, Richmond

With little knowledge of starting up a franchise, I particularly struggled with the set-up stages, from sourcing funding and acquiring a premises to managing a team of builders during the fit-out stages. I was very fortunate to have the ongoing support of the head office team, who were able to advise and mentor throughout the initial phases. Additionally, balancing the demands of running a franchise business with family and personal responsibilities can be challenging for women in franchising. However, following initial hard work, the business has been successful very quickly, and in time this will allow me to manage my own work schedule and balance personal responsibilities. I managed to surpass my expected growth by the end of year two in just six months. After just seven months, I'm already hoping to complete on a second site, which is both exciting and scary at the same time. Franchising can be a less risky and more accessible way to start a business compared to building a business from scratch.

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A question of support

Job flexibility, pride of ownership and help from Molly Maid HQ is driving success for franchisee Anne-Marie Coleman



Anne-Marie Coleman worked as a manager for a family law firm prior to becoming proud franchisee for Molly Maid Haselmere last October. "My business background gave me a good base knowledge of what it takes to create a successful working environment," Anne-Marie tells *What Franchise*. "I left my position to have a family, but once our son started school, I was ready to get back to work. I needed work to fit around my family as I felt it was important to be able to pick him up and have time with him between school and bedtime." After talking to Aaron at Molly Maid, Anne-Marie decided this opportunity would be a great option. "It gave me the flexibility to be the parent I wanted, but also create a business to be proud of," she explains.

UP AND RUNNING

Setting up a business for the first time felt daunting for Anne-Marie, but she found the help received from the Molly Maid Support team invaluable. "They have made it so much easier for me by providing training before the launch, full time mentoring for the first few weeks and extensive ongoing support whenever it is needed," she continues. "There's also an extension to that support – through all the other franchisees who are eager to share their knowledge and experiences to help new business owners."

Anne-Marie put up half the initial cost and was guided through the Government Start Up Loan process by a recommended partner of Molly Maid, which made it straightforward and easy to obtain the required funding.

"It really is the best combination of being your own boss, but also having back up when needed"

"The biggest learning curve for me has been staff management," admits Anne-Marie. "It's a big job making sure they are happy, have what they need, and are working to an optimum level. I'm sure I have much more to learn in this area, but I feel I am now much more skilled in being able to recruit suitable candidates."

BUSINESS PRIDE

"The best thing about being a franchisee is having the opportunity to build a business to be proud of, but with the support of a proven system and established brand recognition," says Anne-Marie, who's weeks consist of a varied mix of staff management, admin, planning, and visiting potential customers to carry out estimates. "I try to have Monday and Friday in the office and the rest of the week out estimating," she adds. "It really is the best combination of being your own boss, but also having back up when needed."



Franchise Overview

Molly Maid

Established: 1984

Number of outlets: 67

Location of units: Nationwide

Minimum required capital: £9,000

Contact: Aaron Watson, awatson@mollymaid.co.uk, 01628 583765

mollymaid.co.uk/franchise



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Partnership event with MFV Expositions/Comexposium

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September 6-7 | Ft. Lauderdale, FL
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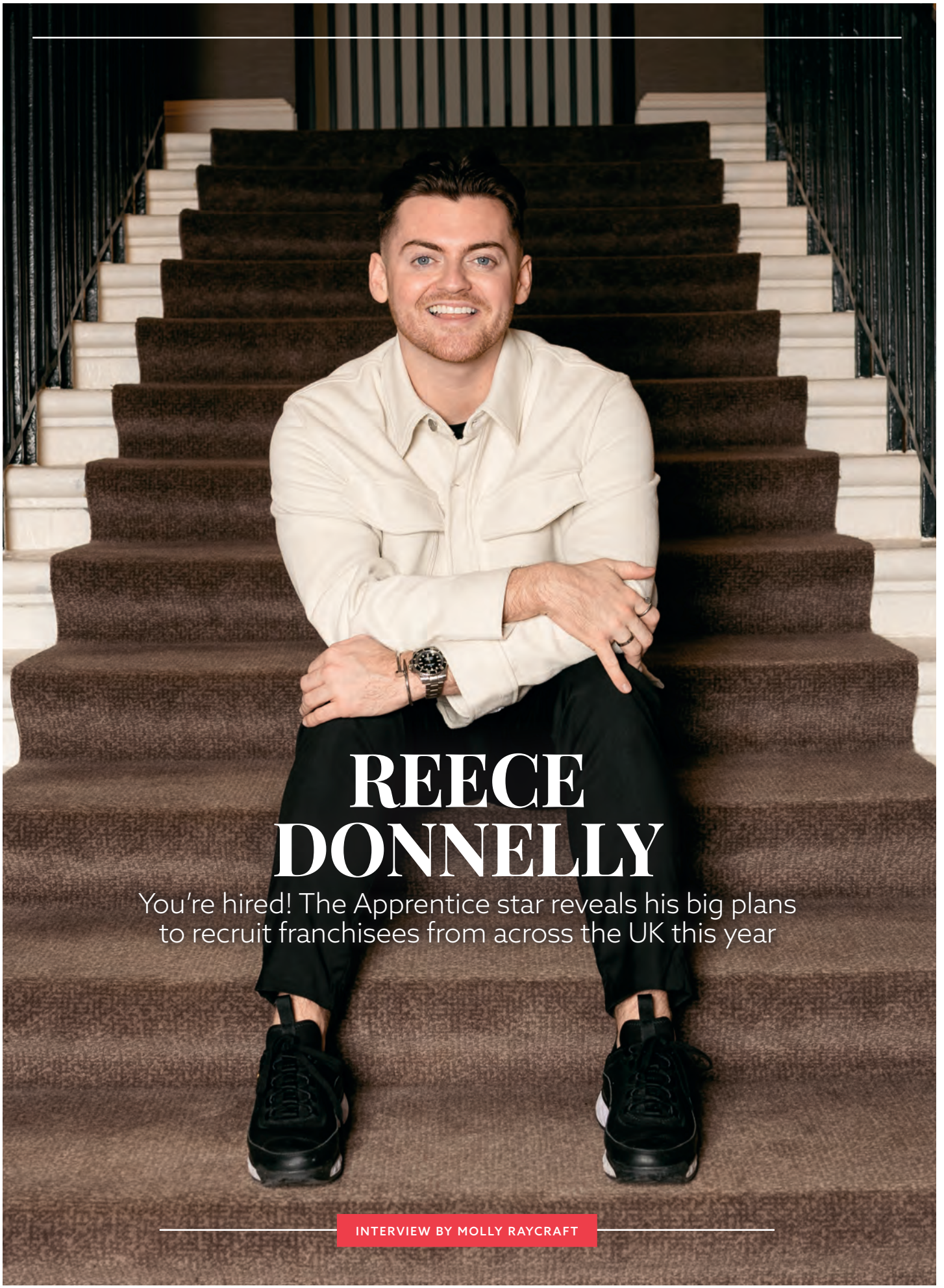
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REECE DONNELLY

You're hired! The Apprentice star reveals his big plans to recruit franchisees from across the UK this year

INTERVIEW BY MOLLY RAYCRAFT

It's already been a busy day for Reece Donnelly when he calls me just after lunchtime. The night before, he was on the star-studded red carpet as an attendee at The Brits. This morning, he was interviewing dinner ladies before heading into the office for some afternoon calls.

Clearly Reece wears a lot of hats, but it's evident that his business, Theatre School of Scotland – a performing arts training facility for children – remains at the centre of everything.

The business launched in 2017, when Reece was just 20 years old. Since then, it's opened three sites in Glasgow (the country's head office), Edinburgh, and Greenock. It's opening a site in Cheshire later this year, before entering the franchise arena, with an aggressive recruitment drive across the UK.

Franchising is the latest in several efforts from Reece to grow the brand at scale. Last year, he was one of the candidates on BBC's *The Apprentice*, hoping to land his business plan in front of Lord Alan Sugar. Unfortunately, he didn't quite make it, bowing out on health grounds (which means technically he wasn't fired). But the exposure has nevertheless proven fruitful.

"For me it was the perfect platform," says Reece. "I was getting put through these tasks but I was getting to sell my business every episode. We had 10 million viewers every Thursday night for eight weeks, which for me, was just amazing. I think that's something that will stay with the brand for years."

MORE THAN A THEATRE SCHOOL

Theatre School of Scotland has a comprehensive teaching programme – one that arguably transcends what's typically considered to be the performing arts offering in the franchise space. "A lot of people think that we run small dance classes at church halls on a Saturday morning, and that just isn't the case," says Reece.

The business positions itself as

a training base for children hoping to go professional, although some choose to attend purely for fun and a confidence boost.

"I don't believe that children should be coming in on a Saturday morning to be taught for 45 minutes," says Reece. "I genuinely believe that there's a market out there for performers to be teaching the next generation."

Students aged from three years onwards can enrol in courses such as acting, musical theatre, singing, dancing, and lamda, or take one-to-one lessons. (There's also a sister business Theatre College of Scotland which is aiming to provide a degree course in the future.)

Sessions take place at one of Theatre School of Scotland's physical locations, but beyond this the company also does outreach programmes with local schools – something that initially received reticence from the local community. "When we opened the Greenock site, there were a lot of local schools that felt it was ridiculous for a big school to be moving into the area," says Reece.

However, Theatre School of Scotland aimed to take a collaborative approach, whereby the business positioned itself as the next step in elevating talented students' performing arts journeys. "When you have that open approach and when people can see you keep going, they slowly convert," says Reece.

Now, the business frequently works with schools and has regularly seen local performing arts clubs encourage their students to also attend Theatre School of Scotland. Why? Because Reece has the industry contacts.

The Theatre School has a talent agency called KX Management which runs alongside it, meaning when broadcasters come looking for young performers they get the call.

"Our students can be seen on everything from Disney and CBeebies to BBC One," says Reece. "Just today, we announced that we've got three children who are the voice of Haribo." Other high-profile jobs include *Call the Midwife* Christmas Special which was filmed over three weeks in the Scottish Highlands; the David Walliams book adaptations which are similarly all filmed in Scotland; and Harry Style's 'Adore You' in which a student played the younger version of Harry.

Cultivating audition-ready children requires industry expertise which means all staff must have a BA degree in the creative arts – a requirement that has inadvertently overcome the common challenge of hiring staff to run classes.

"In this industry, you're always going to have an actor, a singer, or dancer who's in between professional jobs. And they're exactly the type of people that should be teaching children," says Reece.

FILLING THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC TALENT GAP

Reece's appearance on *The Apprentice* wasn't just significant for Theatre School of Scotland, but a win for representation. He was the first Scot to appear on the show in eight years, which coincidently chimes with the business' mission to get greater regional representation onto our TV screens – something Reece is so passionate about he's decided not to open franchises in Central London.

"There's still a regionality crisis on our TV screens across the world," he says. "I think let's fly the flag from the regions. Up North is amazing. In Wales, there are such talented students. And we've just seen a young girl from Ireland play the lead role in Matilda. I think we need more of that."

This awareness of the disparity between the regions and London is borne from Reece's own experiences. Although Theatre School of Scotland is seven years old, the entrepreneur has been involved in the industry for much longer. Reece started acting when he was six years old, appearing in shows such as BBC's *Waterloo Road*. He then studied BA Drama at the University of Sunderland.



"I think even when I was a child, if I didn't have a postcode within 45 minutes of the M25 I would have been ruled out of a job," he says. "And I think that all it takes is for someone on the phone, like me or my team, to make sure that children are represented.

"I come from a working class, if not lower-class area of Scotland. The chances of me doing what I do now were pretty slim. And I would just like every child to realise that

"I think a lot of people think that we run small dance classes at church halls on a Saturday morning, and that just isn't the case"



there's much more out there. Don't set your hopes on getting a job and getting two weeks annual leave in the summer."

It's interesting how this regional focus could potentially cross over into the way Reece focuses on the brand as the business begins to franchise into different areas of the country. An obvious change is going to be the brand name – Theatre School of Scotland will change to Theatre School of England, of Ireland, or of Wales, depending on location.

Beyond this, Reece says his focus has been shaped by his homeland. "I think in Scotland you need to be open to building a community and I think across the board, we are a community-led business."

This has created some unusual collaborations with local businesses. For example, Theatre School of Scotland partnered with Scottish car dealership, Arnold Clark, to bring free classes to the children of employees which were conducted in the show rooms. It was an unexpected action but Reece believes it led to around 200 new students, which is a demonstration of the 'out the box' thinking he's looking for as he begins to partner with franchisees.

"I think even when I was a child, if I didn't have a postcode within 45 minutes of the M25 I would have been ruled out of a job"

THE DECISION TO FRANCHISE

Franchising has been on the cards for a long time for Theatre School of Scotland, and over the years the business has been approached by numerous people who have been interested in investing. However, Reece has felt it's not been the right time, until now.

"Whatever franchisees we bring on in these early days, they're going to need to be prepared to be my best friend at the other side of the phone for the first six months because there's so much risk for us," he says. "But I think there's amazing candidates out there. I think I'd rather share that success with the rest of the UK than keep it bottled up in Scotland."

Beyond the niceties, there's potentially a big financial opportunity here too, although financial information is yet to be released. Packages are expected to start from £25,000 and will be dependent on territory, with Reece hoping the big appeal will be the flexibility, the brand reputation, and the six established revenue streams.

"Whether it's your productions, whether it's your agency, whether it's selling outreaches into primary and secondary schools, there are vast ways to make money in this business," he says.

Although being a staff member comes with the pre-requisite of a degree, franchisees will not necessarily need the same qualifications so long as they take on a managerial role.

"My ideal franchisee needs to be someone that's filled with energy and gets the mindset we're in," says Reece.

This mindset comprises positivity, strong leadership, the ability to think outside the box, and ultimately someone who can understand the value of the brand. These traits are all characteristics that Reece feels have personally helped him to put himself out into the public space and essentially ignore unsubstantiated criticism.

"I'm a massive believer in positivity, spirituality," he says. "I think I read *The Secret* as soon as I could read, and that ethos has carried through into my adult years."

No doubt, this optimism will continue as Theatre School of Scotland opens its doors in England for the first time later this year – with Wales and Ireland hopefully in tow.



Introducing... Burger Drop

The UK's QSR scene has welcomed a new burger brand, and now its founders have their sights firmly set on nationwide franchising

In 2020, Hasan Hamid and Amer Qayyum launched Burger Drop with the vision to change the premium burger scene by embracing quality, innovation, and the promise of affordable luxury.

Since its debut, Burger Drop has proved successful – achieving the title of 'best-selling burger' in the North East of England outside of national chains, according to UberEats. It's also accrued a devoted following and earned accolades from esteemed food bloggers who have said the brand has: "the best burgers they've ever eaten!".

Driven by a passion to offer an artisanal burger experience, the Burger Drop team crafts each menu item from scratch using the freshest ingredients available. This enables customers to indulge in a good-quality meal in a luxurious setting, while still paying an affordable price tag.

It was this early success that's encouraged Burger Drop to expand the business across the UK, adopting a franchise model. At present, Burger Drop has two locations in Newcastle; with several further sites joining the portfolio in 2024. The bold ambition is to have more than 150 sites across the UK.

BEYOND THE BUN

Hasan and Amer both have backgrounds in healthcare and entrepreneurialism, which they say has aided them in providing vision, professionalism, and a clear strategic direction in all aspects of the business model's delivery. For Burger Drop franchisees this translates to a support network of experienced individuals who can provide holistic support in tackling challenges within the QSR market as well as fostering strategic relationships built upon trust and integrity.

"From our own experiences and through embracing market trends, we have developed one of the most technologically sophisticated approaches to business operations and franchisee support," says Amer.

"To this effect, we've adopted market leading integrated POS systems, restaurant management software, audit tools, and mystery shopper experiences; which have dramatically improved our existing operations and helped provide assurances regarding sustainability and long-term profitability accordingly."

THE BITE THAT'S RIGHT

Burger Drop's financial model is based around four different concepts and aims for ROI within two years. Moving forward, its vision is to provide something unique within the F&B market space, combing a premium approach to comfort food, a keen focus upon customer satisfaction, and strong brand values.

The Burger Drop franchise is BFA accredited to provide assurance of its ethics and sustainability to any prospective franchisee.

"We are proactive, transparent, and will continue to innovate products and services throughout time, ensuring that our franchisees are always supported and at the centre of all we do," says Amer. "This reinforces our ethos whereby we strive for any partnership to be a 'win-win for both sides'."



Franchise Overview

Burger Drop

Established: 2020

Number of franchised outlets: 2

Location of units: Newcastle upon Tyne

Investment range: £174,000-£266,000

Minimum required capital: £87,000

Contact: pdavies@burgerdrop.co.uk

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Corporate professionals reveal how their NIC franchise has turned them into commercial cleaning entrepreneurs

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FRANCHISEE SUCCESS

Business partners Charlotte Eccleston and Kerry Miller, one of NIC's many success stories, are enjoying the flexibility that running their own commercial cleaning franchise can bring. With an annual turnover of £2 million, they have built a successful operation.

Charlotte recalls: "I worked for a large corporate organisation for over 12 years, working my way up to general management level. When I was made redundant, I took a few months out to decide what I wanted to do. I began to look at commercial cleaning franchises, a sector that stood out for me because virtually everything needs cleaning every day. There's no limit to your potential earnings – it's an essential service."

Kerry adds: "We really enjoy running a franchise and the flexibility it brings. As our business has grown, we've been able to recruit a team to run things, so we can concentrate on meeting with clients, both existing and potential."

Franchise Overview

NIC

Established: 1995

Number of outlets: 24

Locations of units: Nationwide

Min required capital: £15,000+

Contact details:
0113 231 0210
info@nicgroup.co.uk

www.nicfranchise.co.uk

> "There's no limit to your potential earnings – it's an essential service"

BUILT-ON SUPPORT

As a management franchise, cleaning industry experience is not required. Comprehensive training is provided, along with ongoing support and mentoring through business development managers, who support franchisees in developing and operating their NIC business.

Unlike some franchisors, the BDM support is available to franchisees for as long as they want at no extra cost.



The support does not stop there either; comprehensive admin support includes invoicing, credit control, and a full payroll bureau service, allowing franchisees to concentrate on building their business.

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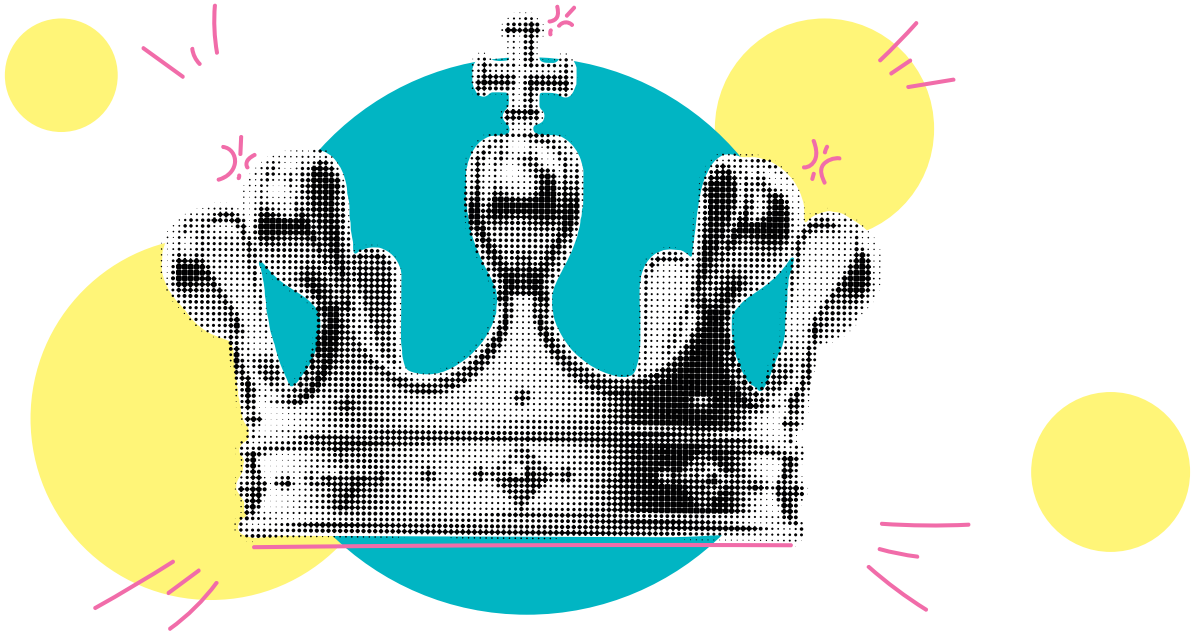




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ALL HAIL THE COMEBACK KINGS

With international franchise giants like Wendy's, Little Caesars, and Häagen-Dazs back in the UK, there's a golden chance for savvy franchisees to hop on a global success train

BY CHARLOTTE SMITH

Franchising contributes more than £17 billion a year to our nation's economy, via 900+ franchise systems and a sprawling network of 48,000 outlets employing a workforce of over 700,000 individuals. These numbers keep rising, highlighting just how big a role franchised outlets play in shaping our town centres, retail hubs, and industrial parks, particularly when those brands come with a 24-karat global status.

Think about it – every time you stroll past a McDonald's, hit the gym at Anytime Fitness, or grab your daily brew at Costa, you're witnessing the impact of these global names on millions of people's daily lives. They don't just draw in crowds; they create jobs and keep local economies buzzing. And let's not forget the democratisation of business ownership that comes with franchising a global brand. It's like giving a small-town player a shot at the Premier League.

"When it comes to choosing a franchise, one simply can't overlook the allure of a worldwide presence," explains Phil Mowat, managing consultant at Ashton Franchise Consulting. "There's a certain je ne sais quoi that comes with aligning yourself with a huge international name. These brands have already established trust, admiration, and a loyal following on a world stage, which can work wonders in helping to build credibility and trust in your local market."

Why would global brands ever leave?

Successful international expansion into the UK market demands meticulous planning, strategic foresight, and a keen understanding of local nuances on the franchisor's part – and even global brands can get it wrong. When the North American electronics retailer Best Buy teamed up with Carphone Warehouse its ambitious expansion plans in the UK failed to ignite, and US consumers gave British supermarket giant Tesco the heave-ho when it tried to export its winning formula to America.

Franchise giants like Wendy's, Little Caesars, Wimpy, and Chick-fil-A have also previously bowed out of the UK due to market pressures, which could be seen as a potential red flag for British investors. However, these brands have all been confident in making a return, and a thriving QSR landscape combined with accumulated experience could enable them to avoid an uncomfortable attack of deja vu. For franchisees with ambition to scale, these returning brands are worth serious consideration.



For example, Little Caesars' initial foray into the UK in 1985 failed to replicate the triumphant growth experienced in its homeland. Grievances over the US franchisor's communication and support reportedly emerged and the brand failed to resonate with its British consumer base, causing tensions between franchisees and the US-based HQ to escalate until the last UK outlet of Little Caesars closed in 2000.

Fast forward more than two decades, and a Little Caesars UK 'second coming' is a pivotal moment in the pizza brand's revitalised international expansion strategy. Demonstrating a focused commitment to learning from past mistakes, the company has established a dedicated international team to provide comprehensive support to franchise partners. The next phase of growth is backed by advancements in technology and ongoing innovation, as well as customers doubling down on value for money.

"Given the backdrop of the cost-of-living crisis in the UK, we've realised there's a distinct appetite for a value-first offering which doesn't compromise on quality or fresh ingredients," says Carlos Vidal, global franchise development and operations senior executive.

Rajan and Jas Sandhu, franchisees for Little Caesars Greenford, opened the first ever site for London and the south, viewing the arrival of the brand as an exciting opportunity to offer their local community top-quality 'Hot-N-Ready' pizzas starting at £5. "The enthusiastic response from our customers has been overwhelming," they say.

Little Caesars is now embracing a rapid growth approach by seeking franchisees who are interested in establishing 20 or more units within an initial five-year timeframe – presenting an opportunity for multi-unit operators.

Why are they coming back?

While Little Caesars and Chick-fil-A (the US burger brand which withdrew from the UK four years ago following boycotts) may have changed their corporate strategies to strengthen relationships with customers and franchisees, the main reason why many international franchises are returning now is simply due to improved market conditions.

Wendy's – the third largest burger chain in the world – returned to the UK in 2021 after a 20-year hiatus. It was armed with an Uber Eats delivery deal and a goal to open 400 outlets. Wendy's originally left the UK citing high operating costs and overheads as the reason for exit.



"Successful international expansion demands meticulous planning, strategic foresight, and a keen understanding of local nuances on the franchisor's part"



However, it is now the springboard location for the brand's Europe-wide expansion plan, thanks (in part) to a huge national trend for burgers and takeaways as well as new-and-improved infrastructure, including a strong team on the ground and established key partnerships.

"A lot has changed over the past few decades, and we've learned so much since we returned to the UK in 2021," says Michael Clarke, managing director of Europe. "This time around, we're using a company-owned franchising model to lead by example, help build brand awareness, and ensure we're executing our high brand standards to help us scale quickly and grow our presence in the right way. To date, we've, opened over 30 locations and have a strong pipeline for 2024 and beyond."

For Wendy's multi-unit franchisee operator, NFH Restaurants, the menu's focus on fresh was an immediate advantage and key differentiator from QSR competitors. "Wendy's had all the qualities we look for when selecting partners to add to our portfolio: an international brand, the freshest ingredients, the ability to scale and grow, a commitment to invest and great marketing potential," says Faisal Jamal, NFH Restaurants' managing director.

Despite being absent for so long from the UK market, Wendy's is still instantly recognisable due to its worldwide presence. "Our recent restaurant openings have seen customers lining up to try Wendy's for the first time, or to revisit a brand they know and love. The strength of the brand has been a huge advantage, enabling us to attract customers quickly as well as gain access to great new talent," continues Jamal, who's in talks to increase his commitment to Wendy's growth in the UK.

"The support from the company team is great, and they are always on hand to offer directional guidance, be it construction, supply chain, or operations related. It really does feel like all of us are working together with the goal of making Wendy's a success in the UK," he adds, highlighting an approach that's been proven time and time again to succeed in franchise expansions.

Getting the timing right

Capitalising on British love for luxury ice cream and recognising significant untapped potential in the UK market, Häagen-Dazs is making a return to Greater London, having recently announced big plans to open at least 25 outlets in the next five years. The ice cream icon closed its last permanent branch in 2015 but has since tested the water with a pop-up in John Lewis' flagship Oxford Street store, enabling the brand to gain crucial insights into a resurgence of consumer demand for luxury desserts.

"Aligning with a globally recognised franchise can inject a sense of pride and purpose, knowing you're contributing to a brand's global success story while also carving out your own path"

"The success and extended duration of the pop-up store re-affirmed a clear appetite for Häagen-Dazs," says Aurélie Lory, global managing director at Häagen-Dazs Shops. "By observing flavour rankings, analysing consumer feedback, and monitoring Google reviews, we were able to get a deeper



understanding of what resonates with UK consumers. What's more, we witnessed first-hand the importance of offering a comprehensive dessert experience where customers could enjoy a leisurely sit-down experience with a coffee and pastry.

"Through consumer studies, we have also found that there is a genuine appetite and demand among UK consumers for Häagen-Dazs shops in this territory," she continues. "The post-COVID landscape has seen a resurgence in OOH consumption, with the snacking and indulgent 'treat' category experiencing significant growth. Consumers are once again seeking out indulgent experiences, including premium ice cream treats, so the time is ripe for expansion. Häagen-Dazs, with its strong brand recognition and reputation in the UK, is well-positioned to meet this demand."

This presents a real opportunity for entrepreneurs, but for now those operating outside the capital will have to wait. While the brand remains open to expanding into other cities in the future, primary focus is on re-establishing a presence in London.

"We believe that by concentrating our efforts on this key market, we'll be able to gauge the success of our reintroduction and finetune our approach, building a strong foundation for future expansion," explains Lory – showing a reassuringly thorough strategy aimed to inspire confidence from franchisees who might be reticent after the brand's previous departure.

"We're carefully evaluating potential multi-unit franchisees based on a set of criteria and qualities that align with our brand values and objectives. It's crucial they demonstrate a genuine passion for the Häagen-Dazs brand, as well strong operational skills managing multiple units, relevant experience in the retail and food service industries as well as being familiar with the London landscape as we have learned to lean heavily on local expertise when it comes to pinpointing the ideal locations for our shops."

Buying into something big

The thrill of being part of something bigger, something grander than oneself, is a compelling reason to partner with an internationally popular brand like Häagen-Dazs. "Aligning with a globally recognised franchise can inject a sense of pride and purpose, knowing you're contributing to a brand's global success story while also carving out your own path to prosperity," says managing consultant, Phil Mowat.

He adds that the UK holds a certain charm for international franchises, being a bustling hub of commerce, innovation, and diverse consumer preferences, as well as having an established legal framework and strategic geographical location.

"Established international brands tend to be at the forefront of industry trends and technological advancements, equipped with robust systems, tried-and-tested operational procedures, and comprehensive training programmes – a godsend for franchisees who need to hit the ground running and navigate the complexities of running a business with confidence."

By partnering with an international brand that's been to the UK before, you're buying into a mature system that's already weathered previous storms, gained valuable experience in navigating the unique market and learned from past lessons in building a growth strategy that's both robust and secure. It surely is a win-win situation.

"By partnering with an international brand that's been here before, you're buying into a mature system that's already weathered previous storms"

DO YOUR DUE DILIGENCE

Consultant Phil Mowat on the checklist franchisees should follow when navigating a potential partnership with a returning franchisor.

- **Enquire about the franchisor's international performance over the years.** What have been the hiccups and successes, and how has it weathered various market conditions?
- **Ask the right questions:** What's the current state of the franchise network? Are there any ongoing legal or financial matters?
- **Conduct thorough due diligence from your end** – examining financial statements, franchise agreements, and of course, speaking with existing franchisees to get a sense of their experiences.





INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE SHOW LONDON
ExCeL | 12&13 APRIL 2024

INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE SHOW LONDON PREVIEW

Choosing the right brand for you is a big decision: but talking to top businesses from across the industry can help you get that right



It was big news when the International Franchise Association announced it would be sponsoring the International Franchise Show. The collaboration promises to bring new franchise brands to our shores from across the world. The event is playing host to more than 250 businesses, including 50 global brands. Meanwhile, the show is also serving as a platform for keynote sessions for industry experts, who are primed to offer best practice advice on how to invest successfully, become financially successful, and choose the right business for you. For franchisees, it's the perfect place to scope out opportunities, and here, we've outlined just some of the highlights.

Aboutea

STAND 224

The Taiwanese franchise has spent 15 years developing its bubble tea drinks menu and is now established in more than 20 cities around the world. The brand is fronted by mascot Abao, but behind the scenes a strong R&D team support with supply chains and innovation.

More Than Loft Ladders

STAND 741

Although the loft storage franchise was formed back in 2008, it has recently gone through some exciting new changes. Frustrated long-term franchisee Liam Hobbs has taken over ownership of the business with the aim of providing the best possible franchisee support.

BARI-UMA Japanese Ramen

STAND 825

Established in 2002 in Japan, the restaurant franchise has grown to 74 stores in eight regions. The menu, which includes the brand's own ramen soup and in-house noodles, enables high reproducibility, and franchisees are supported with management training.



INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE SHOW LONDON
STAND NUMBER 341

FASTSIGNS

STAND 341

Making your brand stand out in the market is a crucial part of achieving business success, but that's not always easy. FASTSIGNS services are end-to-end, encompassing everything from design and production to installation. Customers access services through a single point of contact within the franchise and can choose from an extensive portfolio of solutions, with the guidance of trained staff, who tailor solutions to individual challenges and budgets. This approach has proven successful, and the franchise has continued its expansion across the UK, achieving an 89% satisfaction rate among franchisees in the process. The brand is now looking for franchisees who are hoping to invest in a versatile industry. A big advantage of this investment opportunity is that everyone in the FASTSIGNS network is positioned to have the best possible chance of success, as teams are curated around a franchisee's individual skillset.

"IF OUR FRANCHISEES HAVE AN APTITUDE FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT, DESIGN, PRODUCTION, SALES OR MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE, WE CAN BUILD A TEAM AROUND THEM TO HELP DELIVER THE FASTSIGNS SERVICE TO THEIR CUSTOMERS"

– John Davies, UK MD at FASTSIGNS

Nurse Next Door

STAND 726

'Happier Ageing' is the philosophy at the centre of this home care agency franchise. The brightly branded business offers all aspects of care from companionship and home help, such as meal prep and cleaning, all the way through to skilled nursing. The brand focuses on standing out in a positive way.

Clip 'n Climb

STAND 827

The leisure brand has more than 240 climbing centres across the world and is currently offering UK franchisees a turn-key business model. This includes design and installation for more than 40 indoor and outdoor climbing challenges as well as discounted equipment, training, and support.

Oasis Accountants

STAND 323

The chartered accountants franchise offers a wide range of services including process standardisation, automation, business and tax consultation, tax planning, and end-to-end Limited Company compliance management. Franchisees are given access to the latest software and technology to enable day-to-day operations to run efficiently.

Doner Shack

STAND 510

The quick-service restaurant was founded in 2017, with the goal of tapping into what's estimated to be a £2.8 billion industry. It has aimed to do this by using fresh ingredients served up in a clean and contemporary setting, and supported by efficient back-end operational systems. The business is now seeking multi-unit franchisees.

Pokerrito

STAND 433

Pan-Asian flavours are at the heart of this franchise's QSR concept. The brand has leaned into the growing appetite for Asian cuisine combined with the latest culinary trends such as plant-based ingredients and product innovation, which has resulted in Burrito-fashioned poke, and hot dogs with bulgogi.

easyStorage

STAND 320

As part of the well-known Easy brand, this business focuses on providing tech-driven storage facilities to customers who need to lock large items away securely. The brand has been diversifying what franchisees can offer, which now includes mobile storage unit, easyPod, and gated container storage, easyContainer.



RADFIELD HOME CARE

STAND 834

There's an opportunity here to spend time making a difference within your community while building a business that matters. Domiciliary homecare franchise Radfield Home Care provides award-winning training and onboarding, aimed at establishing and growing a business that delivers life-changing care. The franchise has a ratio of two franchisees to each support team member and its training has been recognised with a 2022 Princess Royal Training Award and a 2023 National Home Care Award. This means franchisees receive consistent support, as they continue to expand their business further. Radfield Home Care was founded 40 years ago by a family who still own and operate the business today, only now with a support team which has more than 200 years of hands-on experience in the care sector. As a result, owners have access to recruitment and retention strategies, cutting-edge care management technologies, and data-driven marketing campaigns. So far, Radfield's model has supported the launch and success of 30+ offices and is planning to increase this.

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834

"EMPOWER YOUR COMMUNITY WITH RADFIELD HOME CARE: A LEGACY OF COMPASSION, INNOVATION, AND UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR FRANCHISEES"

- Dr Hannah MacKechnie, co-founder of Radfield Home Care

RoboThink UK

STAND C7

There's a big drive to encourage more children into STEM, and RoboThink is part of this initiative. The brand offers coding, robotics, and engineering programmes to children via classes, camps, and workshops. It has continued to expand and is now operating in 24 countries.

Facial Mania Med Spa

STAND 728

The franchise aims to offer a one-stop beauty experience which includes treatments such as Botox, fillers, laser hair removal, weight-loss therapies, and more. Franchisees are supplied with extensive support and technology to help them proliferate the brand further within the beauty industry.

SingPods

STAND 727

The business' karaoke booths have been a hit within the entertainment event space, and franchisees have the opportunity for additional revenue streams such as custom branding opportunities as part of corporate collaborations. The franchise has a turnkey business model to ensure investors hit the ground running.

GoliathTech

STAND 315

Founded in 2004, the Canadian company is intrinsic to building strong infrastructure around the world. The business manufactures and installs helical (screw) piles with the assistance of industry experts. Installation is quick as the process avoids excavation, but as the product is supported by the newest technologies it has a 30 year warranty.

Helen Doron Education

STAND 440

The child-focused language learning franchise has been in operation for 40 years worldwide, under the leadership of linguist Helen Doron. It now plans to expand into the UK market, initially offering Spanish, Maths, English as a foreign language, literacy, drama, and early child development. You can read more about this on page 16.

Jani King

STAND 325

Since being established in 1969, the commercial cleaning franchise has successfully grown to a network of more the 7500 franchisees worldwide, requiring 120+ support offices in 10 countries. Now, it has set its ambitions to expand even further, recruiting franchisees internationally after a 15-year hiatus.

Thistle Gem

STAND 712

The Scottish-founded business specialises in clothing with an emphasis on tartan products throughout. So far, the franchise has an online store supported by multiple physical store locations across the UK. It is currently recruiting franchisees with the aim of opening five more locations than it did in its previous year.

VoxFresh

STAND C3

As a newcomer to franchising, the business is aiming to capture the children's activity market with group pop singing sessions for young people. Those investing can begin by offering core sessions, before expanding their revenue streams with additional services, which welcome creative input from franchisees.

Waves

STAND 719

The hand car wash and valet franchise services big UK retailers included Tesco, Sainsbury's, and Asda. Throughout its 17 years of operation, the business has thrived off its 'wash while you shop' proposition and can provide anyone investing with a turn-key business model and the opportunity to franchise multiple sites.



STAND 637

The South Korean bakery brand has been combining Asian flavours with French patisserie for the past 35 years. In that time, it has established more than 4000 international locations, including Canada, China, France, Malaysia, United States, and Singapore. Now, the franchise has set itself the challenge of aggressively expanding across the UK market, aiming to open 48 stores within the next 24 months. So far, it has appointed three franchisees in the past three months, with 20 more on the cards for this year. These locations will join the Battersea Power Station branch and the High Street Kensington branch which successfully opened in 2022. The brand is already quite well-known within pop culture in both the Eastern and Western world; however, it's looking to drive awareness further with the aid of entrepreneurial franchisees. The business model on offer here has received industry acclaim, with the Paris Baguette ranked 25th among US franchises in the Franchise Times 100.

N.Bar

STAND 625

The nail salon launched back in 2001, and has since grown to 27 stores across six countries - gaining popularity with influencers and celebrities in the process. Now the brand is looking to expand its reach across the UK, by partnering with management franchisees to deliver personalised nail care and beauty treatments in a contemporary setting.

Kayakmat

STAND 221

This 25-year-old Swedish franchise hinges on a slick central online reservation system and integrated 'smart locks' to provide customers with an easy and convenient 24/7 kayak and SUP board rental service. Running costs are low and time required is minimal, allowing franchisees enormous flexibility and the opportunity to earn an income on the side.

Zocalo Restaurant

STAND 414

Inspired by the taquerias in San Francisco's Mission District, this Northern European chain of Fresh Mex fast food restaurants uses the latest technology to ensure operations run as smoothly as possible. For franchisees, the brand offers a well-established and highly effective concept, with everything from food prep to marketing provided as standard.

INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE SHOW LONDON
STAND NUMBER 622



CANOPY CHILDREN'S NURSERIES

STAND 622

The modern requirements of childcare are many and varied. While quality of care and education is paramount, today's discerning parents also expect state of the art security systems, flexibility to fit around evolving working patterns, instant communication, and convenient access to information, as well as highly ethical operating practices. Canopy Children's Nurseries aims to build trusted partnerships with parents by giving children the best possible beginnings. Some locations offer parent and community spaces alongside a nursery provision, making this a particularly appealing enterprise for people wishing to support local children and families. Canopy prides itself on working closely and collaboratively with its franchisees, supporting them to open the nursery business of their dreams. Demand for quality childcare and early years education is high and by selecting the right properties in the right areas and developing them into child-centred environments, franchisees are outperforming their targets.

"'I NOW HAVE THE NURSERY OF MY DREAMS – A BEAUTIFUL ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE HEART OF THIS BUSY, DIVERSE COMMUNITY – I LOVE IT!'"

- Rinu Shah, franchisee at Canopy Wembley Park

Apollo Blinds

STAND 419

As part of the Hunter Douglas Group - the world's oldest and largest window blinds company - franchisees are backed by an established business model when selling and installing quality made-to-measure window blinds, curtains, shutters and awnings. The latest products include motorised, energy-saving, and eco-friendly blinds.

Life4Cuts

STAND 618

Combining easy management with the thrill of being part of a global cultural trend, this fast-growing K-Pop photo machine franchise is looking to expand further in the UK. Customers can choose from an array of cutesy props before heading to a self-operating booth, minimising resources for business operations.

Brokerplan Academy

STAND 538

Established in 2004, the finance brokerage enables franchisees to assist businesses in funding their ideas from a portfolio of high street banks and alternative financing methods. Those looking to invest do not need prior experience in the sector as the franchise offers LIBF-accredited training.



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Franchise Overview

Jackson Fire & Security

Established: 1991

Number of franchised outlets: 13

Location of units: Nationwide

Investment range: £000 -£000

Minimum required capital: £40,000

Contact: franchise@jacksonfire.co.uk

franchise.jacksonfire.co.uk



Deciding to stay

"Renewal of the franchise agreement right now is an absolute no-brainer for me" says Nigel Knowles, Jackson Fire & Security franchisee

In 2017, Nigel Knowles decided to open a Jackson Fire & Security franchise in Warrington, UK. It's been a successful seven years, with Nigel becoming a key person in supporting rookie franchisees. Now, as his franchise agreement comes to an end, he opens up about his decision to renew with the brand.

Why are you renewing your franchise agreement?

Nigel: I personally have expanded my skillset and knowledge base tremendously which has contributed enormously to the growth of the Warrington franchise. I also enjoy the positive work-life balance that running the franchise has given me. As part of the development of the business I'm building a good team with a growth mindset, integrity, and customer focus. I look forward to continuing building on this in the next 10 years.



Nigel Knowles, franchisee in Warrington, UK

How is the franchise model suited to you?

The Jackson Fire & Security franchise model provides a fantastic opportunity to run a branch supporting local companies. Running my own business is what I want to do. The combination of providing an important service to local businesses and the technical aspect of fire and security systems is an ideal match for me. The potential for the growth in profitability and size means renewal of the franchise agreement right now is an absolute no-brainer for me.

What's the main advantage here for you?

The Jackson brand and the website supports each franchisee and demonstrates being part of a larger organisation. The need to have industry accreditations is highly important and sets franchisees apart from their local competition. Our supplier partnerships with companies like Siemens and Orisec will help keep the franchise competitive and profitable ensuring everyone is providing the highest quality of equipment.

Franchise models tend to develop over time. What changes have you noticed during your tenure?

The development of the Franchise Support Team has been excellent and is allowing the franchisees to spend more time on growing their businesses. For example, the quality manager assisting with compliance and auditing takes a big headache away from us.

What's next for the franchise following your renewel?

The investment and development of the new service management software is exciting and will allow us to streamline our customer experience further while reducing admin tasks for our franchisees. The potential the software has to make our service levels stand out against our competition is huge.

TAKING IT FROM THE TOP:

Senior Women at the Forefront of Franchising

The British Franchise Association ascertains what's in store for women in franchising by talking to those who know best



Terry Mullen, CEO at Revive! UK

According to a recent study by Durham University Business School, it has been revealed that female CEOs issue less company debt than male CEOs because women are often more risk averse than their male counterparts and therefore less likely to get the company into financial difficulty. The study also revealed that the younger the CEO the more pronounced the findings, with younger female CEOs very conservative in their debt issuing, in contrast to young male CEOs who are more likely to rack up arrears. Is this one of the reasons women are so successful in the UK franchise industry, are they considered a safer, more reliable pair of hands? With this new information fresh in our minds, and the winds of change blowing through the UK franchise industry, we spoke to three highly successful female franchising CEOs about life at the top, their career paths to their current roles, their views on challenges and opportunities for women in the sector, and their advice for younger women climbing the career ladder in the world of business format franchising.

TERRY MULLEN, CEO, REVIVE! AUTO INNOVATIONS

While co-founding a car repairs franchise might not strike one as an obvious choice for a woman, Terry Mullen, managing director (finance and operations) of Revive! UK is a very successful, well-known name and face in the UK franchise industry. Terry began her career at NatWest as a small business manager where she first encountered business format franchising. During her 21 years with the high street bank she supported a client, Mark Llewellyn, who went on to offer her a position as a franchise recruitment manager. Subsequently, in July 2004, she and Mark set up Revive! which they still run together to this day. Terry recalls: "Those were exciting but scary times. I was a single mum of two young children when I remortgaged my house to raise the capital to set up

Revive! But it turns out it was the best investment choice I've made in life."

Positive industry changes

Reflecting on the changes she's seen for women in the UK franchise sector in her 24 years in the industry, Terry says things are easier than in her days in banking: "I've always found the franchise sector to be very supportive of women, although I suppose I'm comparing it to banking in the 80s and 90s when women had to work hard to be seen in a very male dominated financial sector, but generally the working world is much more inclusive now and women are much less willing to accept some of the stereotyping I witnessed when I was younger. You only have to look at how many young female franchise lawyers appeared at the recent Legal and Ethics Seminar to see how the BFA promote equal rights and how the playing field has levelled out."

Words of wisdom for aspiring leaders

What would Terry's top tips be to a young woman in franchising, aspiring to a senior leadership role? "Firstly I would say just be who you are; there is room in business for all types of leader, be it full on and extrovert or quiet, reflective, and introverted, they all work as long as you are authentic. Secondly, I'd say be kind in business - especially to other women as let's face it, they still have to work just that little bit harder to get to the top than their male counterparts and finally, praise often, but only when you really mean it. Your people will know when it's sincere."

LUCY CAMPBELL, CEO, RIGHT AT HOME

Lucy Campbell, CEO of Right at Home has been a powerful figure in the UK franchising industry for many years. No stranger to accepting awards and speaking at a host of events throughout the year, she has been a shining example of a successful woman in the sector.

In 2024, Lucy will have racked up over 15 yrs of experience in the franchise sector and nearly a decade with domiciliary care franchise, Right at Home. Her success might well have something to do with one of her earliest positions, helping businesses to reinvest their profits for the good; lessons of an altruistic nature that are sure to have left their mark on her for the benefit of her future clients, franchisees, and employers. From there she became CEO of Franchising Works, supporting people to transition into franchising and finally, joined Right at Home, firstly as a senior business support manager, then as operations director, chief operating officer and finally, two years ago, she took the top job of chief executive officer.



Lucy Campbell, CEO at Right at Home UK

Opportunities for women in franchising

What are the challenges and opportunities Lucy believes women encounter in the UK franchise sector today and how can they overcome and maximise on them? Lucy says: "I think there's been a very positive shift in the demographic of gender in franchising over the last decade. BFA CE Pip Wilkins is a great role model for women in franchising and having her in such a prominent and senior position has really encouraged many more women into the sector. The BFA's collaboration with EWIF and their own EWIB event has also really helped support women in the franchise network and I honestly don't think she and COO Emily Price could have done more to improve the industry for women if they tried. In the last five years we have seen many more female leaders in prominent positions and the opportunities in this industry are absolutely there for the taking, with many women now viewing the franchising sector as a place to build a long-lasting and rewarding career."

Challenges? What challenges?

But what about the challenges women face in the UK franchise sector, or have they all but disappeared? Lucy shares her thoughts: "Challenges for me, or should I say perceived challenges, are in my opinion more of a mindset issue for women. I think the franchising community is one of the most encouraging I've ever come across and the network of support it offers to women is exceptional. However, as women we do suffer from imposter syndrome and have self-limiting beliefs, which some perceive as challenges. To overcome this I would say go back to

Overview

British Franchise Association

Established: 1977

Membership fee: £75-£375pcm

Location: Nationwide

Contact: mailroom@thebfa.org

www.thebfa.org

your support network, read about the challenges other women have overcome, and unlock the your full potential."

Seek out strong female candidates

So is the job done or, if not, what more does Lucy think the sector needs to do to promote diversity and inclusion? She says: "When you are living and breathing in the franchising world it is easy to forget that the general population isn't always aware of the benefits of our sector. We know it has been on a really positive journey, that female leaders can absolutely have a seat at the boardroom table and that we embrace all minorities but I think we still need to share the story of how incredibly accepting franchising is, particularly to women currently working for large 'non franchise' organisations. Let's get the message out to them, via strong case studies of women who've made big successes in the industry and encourage them to come and work with us because the people working at the heart of franchising we are the best of the best."



Sophie Atkinson, CEO at Autosmart International

SOPHIE ATKINSON, CEO AUTOSMART INTERNATIONAL

Unusually by today's standards, CEO of Autosmart, Sophie Atkinson has spent her entire career with the vehicle cleaning solutions franchise, starting in 1988 as a graduate trainee in the marketing department, moving through finance, sales and business coaching in the field with franchisees, then franchisee recruiting, until leading a management buy out of the company 21 years ago in 2003.

Sophie recalls her early days with Autosmart: "When I joined as a graduate trainee I was moving away from my first job in London with management consultancy Bain and Company, mainly because I didn't like living in the city, and because I was moving away from something, I hadn't fully appreciated the excitement of the franchising world I was moving to, until I arrived. I find the energy that comes from our franchisees as they invest in and grow their businesses amazing."

"I think we still need to share the story of how incredibly accepting franchising is, particularly to women currently working for large 'non-franchise' organisations"

Successor qualities

Is Sophie already looking for her successor and if so, what qualities will they need to succeed? "Franchising is an art not a science. We have had competitors try to turn themselves into a franchise from having a model of an employed salesforce and they have failed. To lead a franchise well you have to understand that franchisees are independent business owners, and you need to respect their drive, independence and profits. Balanced with this one must look out for the long term, read market trends, make sure the product range remains competitive, and have a framework of policies that help all parties to work together constructively, franchisees with fellow franchisees and franchisees with head office." What would her final words for her successor and indeed any franchisor be? "Stay close to the market, never take franchisees for granted and recruit well."

CEO of the BFA, Pip Wilkins said: "These three exceptional women are a credit to the UK franchise industry and we know their presence gives other women the self-belief that they can achieve the same goals. We have worked hard to make the BFA and the franchising world a more inclusive place not just for women, but for everyone and we feel confident that the next group of future female CEOs are waiting in the wings, ready to grow the industry for over the next decade. We would encourage all franchise organisations to continue to employ a diverse workforce, where inclusivity and kindness run alongside growth and profits."



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Stamp of approval

Hugh Furness explains why an independent postage retailer could be a good fit for your investment portfolio

A huge 3.6 billion parcels were sent in the UK between 2022-2023, according to Statista. One franchise brand catering to both retail and commercial demand in this space is Post & Packing.

The independent postal service positions itself as a walk-in mailroom which aims to dispatch and deliver goods and communications on time and intact. As a result, reliability, trustworthiness, and professionalism are key characteristics the brand has aimed to embed within its service.

Here, Hugh Furness, sales and marketing director talks through what franchisees can expect if they choose to invest in Post & Packing.





Hugh Furness and co-director, Martin Filby



Franchise Overview

Post & Packing

Established: 2015

Number of outlets: 17

Locations of units: UK

Min required capital: £40,000

Contact: franchise@postandpackinguk.com 0845 498 9622

postandpackinguk.com

What services can a franchisee offer?

Hugh: Our tailored services have been developed with a range of customers in mind – they're full solutions which enable customers to fulfil all their postal and courier requirements under one roof. This includes mail and order fulfilment, e-shop drop, discounted parcel rates, private and business post box rentals with mailing addresses, storage and archiving, stamps, stationery and envelopes, boxes, tape, and packaging materials.

Why is now the right time to invest in Post & Packing?

Increasing online sales have resulted in an ever-growing need to send products worldwide, presenting a fantastic opportunity to get involved with the expansion of Post & Packing's operations as a franchisee. We have seen a 50% growth over the past two years from our owned shop site, and we want to continue our success by taking the brand much further.

What type of person would be suited to becoming a franchisee?

If you're a determined and ambitious individual looking to take that next step in your career, then a Post & Packing postal franchise could be right for you. You can come from any environment, business, or service as we will give you all the training needed. This includes an initial induction and further ongoing support with marketing, sales, and operations.

What's the average turnover for a franchisee's first year?

The average turnover is £200,000 but we have some franchisees that make up to £265,000 in the first year.

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- Highly recognizable fitness brand with a 30-year history
- Over 1,400 franchise rights sold
- One of the largest member bases in the worldwide fitness industry

International markets selling quickly. Inquire at crunch.com/franchise for more info. Or, email John Merrion at **john@crunchfranchise.com** to learn more about available territories.

Entrepreneur FRANCHISE 500 FASTEST GROWING FRANCHISE 2022

Entrepreneur FRANCHISE 500 RANKED 2022

Entrepreneur FRANCHISE 500 TOP GLOBAL FRANCHISE 2022 VERIFIED









No judgement here

Crunch Fitness says everyone is welcome as the franchise taps into a diverse, billion-pound global industry

The importance of physical wellbeing and an increased desire for a healthier lifestyle are driving global growth across the fitness industry, with its current value sat at $96.7 billion (£77.6 billion) worldwide, according to Deloitte. Within this is Crunch Fitness, an established fitness franchise based in the US, which aims to operate at the forefront of industry innovations by prioritising inclusivity and making serious fitness fun.

AN INCLUSIVE PHILOSOPHY

Crunch's mission is to enhance people's lives by providing an affordable, high-quality fitness experience in a welcoming and non-intimidating environment. The brand's "No Judgments" philosophy sits at the heart of efforts to create a space where people of all fitness levels feel comfortable exercising.

This inclusivity has enabled Crunch to capitalise on the people attracted to fitness in recent years, beyond traditional gym enthusiasts. Now the franchise has more than 2.5 million members globally, with its membership encompassing a range of people.





"Crunch Fitness has more than 2.5 million members globally, with its membership base encompassing people from all walks of life"

The brand has particularly appealed to millennials and Gen-Z consumers who not only represent Crunch's fastest growing age bracket, but also tend to highly prize the brand's DE&I initiative.

PROVIDING CHOICE

Strength and high intensity interval training are the most popular health club activities among 18–34-year-old Crunch members. As such, the franchise has invested in curating a variety of experiences geared towards consumer needs. This includes offering numerous weights over 68kg, best-in-class equipment, a functional turf area, HIIT work-out classes and personal training.

Going forward, Crunch Fitness hopes to elevate its variety further by expanding its hybrid fitness experience - something that was first prompted by members who couldn't work out at the gym during the pandemic.

So far, Crunch has launched Crunch+, a digital platform that provides on-demand and live-stream workouts for days when members aren't able to get to a physical gym location. Here, subscribers pay £5.57 per month to access a plethora of virtual classes such as HIIT, sculpt, yoga, cardio, Tai Box, Pilates, and meditation.

Franchise Overview

Crunch Fitness

Established: 1989

Locations of units: Over 1,400 franchise rights sold

Contact: John Merrion - sales@crunch.com

Number of outlets: 450+ worldwide

Min required capital: £550,000

crunch.com/franchise

OUT OF OFFICE

Ready to fuel your business growth? Here are some essential books and podcasts to get you started this quarter

THE INDUSTRY INFLUENCER WE'RE FOLLOWING



SARAH CRESSALL OBE

Obtaining an OBE is no small feat, but that's exactly what Sarah Cressall has done. The founder of arts and crafts franchise, The Creation Station, is the first ever franchisor to be awarded the royal honour for her services to creativity in education, entertainment, and business. In 2002, Sarah launched The Creation Station after noticing a gap in the market. In 2007, she began to franchise the business, which now has 61 franchisees offering parent and baby workshops, preschool STEM classes, afterschool and holiday camps, birthday parties, adult creative craft workshops, and sip and paint events. Sarah has also set up a creative activity entertainment agency run by head office to maximise franchisee opportunity for leads and revenue. It's clear that Sarah has accumulated a wealth of knowledge on how to navigate franchising, from launching and scaling, to recruiting and supporting franchisees. And we're looking forward to seeing what she does next.

PODCASTS



A PODCAST FOR BEGINNERS

***HOW TO START UP* WITH JULIET FALLOWFIELD**

Having a good brand is hugely important to business success and will often be the difference in whether you build a community of repeat customers, or not. This means that when you're starting out you must launch a strong offering and be able to contend with already established names. Join Juliet Fallowfield, founder and MD of PR firm Fallow, Field & Mason as she talks to big names who have done exactly this. Now in its tenth season, the podcast will discuss writing a brand story, building a brand on social media, defining your mission statement, making your brand an industry leader, and more.



MUST LISTEN EPISODE

How to build your brand organically through social with Estée Lalonde, CEO & founder of MIRROR WATER

A PODCAST FOR EVERYONE

***MISFIT FOUNDERS* WITH BIRO FLORIN**



It's been quite the journey for Biro Florin, who started life in the UK with limited funds and living homeless on the streets. Since then, he's defied the odds, building Saas company Jexo which he sold in 2019 to become an angel investor. Now, Biro has used his own life story as inspiration for the podcast Misfit Founders, which interviews a diverse range of founders who have created alternative paths into the business world. Here, they discuss their failures, the difficult decisions they've had to make along the way, and advice that's often gatekept within business communities.

MUST LISTEN EPISODE

The challenges of selling on Amazon and how to balance parenting and entrepreneurship

BOOKS



A BOOK FOR FEELING LESS ALONE

Success Secrets for Motivation

Sometimes you can have all the skills, time, and resources in the world – but still feel stuck in moving forward with your business. *Success Secrets for Motivation* recognises the importance of feeling motivated within your work, especially when you're often operating in isolation as a franchisee. Here, 11 entrepreneurs from various backgrounds give their take on maintaining motivation and share how you can do the same. Contributors include Alison Shadrack, Christopher Sigmond, Clive Digby-Jones, Gareth Martindale, Jane Thomas, John Lunn, Keith Holdt, Melanie Attwater, Nick Griffith, Owen O'Malley, and Robin Winnett.

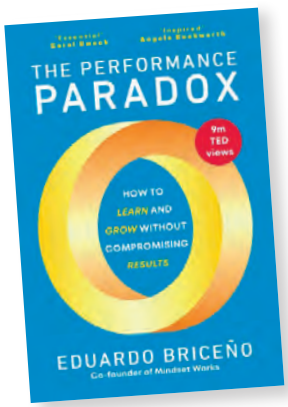


A BOOK FOR FINANCIAL SECURITY

What They Don't Teach You About Money by Claer Barrett

Financial journalist, Claer Barrett writes for the *Financial Times* and regularly appears as a broadcaster and commentator on money issues. Now her latest work *What They Don't Teach You About Money: Seven Habits to Unlock Financial Independence* has hit the *Sunday Times'* Instant Top Ten Bestseller list. Barrett aims to offer unjudgmental advice on how to navigate personal finance – something that can be an incredibly intimidating space. She analyses how readers can unpick their emotional relationships with money and presents easy ways to forge a financially healthy way forward. This includes everything from dealing with debt and planning your future to talking about money and how to grow your income.

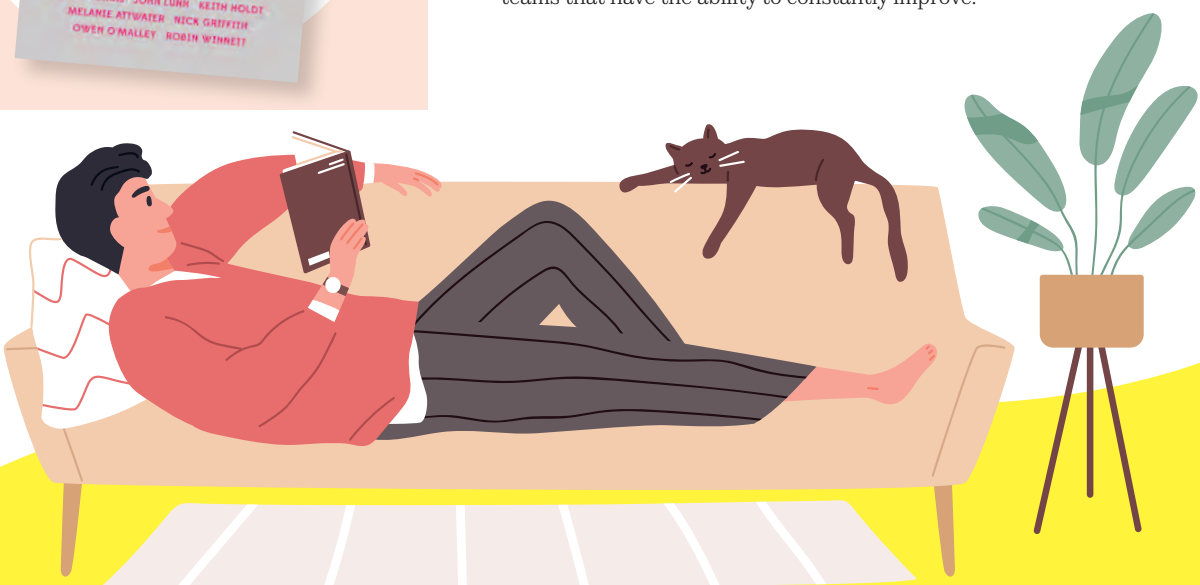




A BOOK FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Performance Paradox by Eduardo Briceño

Do you feel a constant pressure to look like you always know what you're doing and to always be working towards the next big success? You could be experiencing 'chronic performance' which is actually a massive hindrance to growth, according to Eduardo Briceño. In his book, *The Performance Paradox: How to Learn and Grow Without Compromising Results*, Briceño presents a framework to aid readers in implementing learning and development in what can feel like time-stricken and resource tight work environments. Expect to read about the power of mistakes, soliciting useful feedback, and leading teams that have the ability to constantly improve.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

A PERSONAL STYLIST FRANCHISEE

Former banker, Sandy Lancaster, took on a House of Colour franchise for her retirement – a decision she wishes she'd made sooner

INTERVIEW BY MOLLY RAYCRAFT









What Franchise visited Sandy to see her work in action.

Sandy Lancaster spent her career working in national UK banks. However, when the time came to retire, she decided to buy a House of Colour franchise, after experiencing the colour-matching service for herself.

"I was gifted a colour analysis for a significant birthday. I was actually a little bit incensed that somebody felt I needed an intervention."

House of Colour has been in operation since the eighties and has developed its approach from Johannes Itten's colour theory. It aims to help clients assess which colour palette (spring, summer, autumn, or winter) best complements their complexion, as well as assists in styling sessions and personal shopping services.

"I was just blown away by it. I sat in the chair in front of the mirror, and we realised that I was a spring, but I was dressing as a winter," says Sandy.

She then found out that her local House of Colour consultant, Jane, had decided to sell, which encouraged Sandy to buy the location in September 2022. She began training during lockdown.

"The pandemic gave me that space to build up my social media profile and get my ducks in a row."

Sandy received all the fabrics and colour analysis material needed to kickstart her business, while having Jane's pre-existing clients transferred to her. Training involved learning the theories behind styling and colour matching, as well as make up lessons with Paul Herrington, former MUA at Bobbi Brown.

"I knew I was going to like social media the least."

Sandy makes herself post on Instagram every day so her brand remains visible. "I create seven pieces of content for the week on Sunday night, then I just post each day. It takes about an hour altogether."

However, user-generated content and word of mouth have been massively useful in building custom, which is why the experience Sandy offers has to feel personal and special. "I really

"I really want customers to be my advocates. They're my walking billboards"

want customers to be my advocates," she says. "They're my walking billboards, rather than me having an advert somewhere."

"I do quite a lot of networking, and that's where I get my clients from."
Although House of Colour has been particularly appealing to what Sandy calls 'the Davina McCalls', she attracts a broad range of people. Customers can be anyone from someone who's looking to dress powerfully to get a promotion, or someone who needs a confidence boost after a breakup – or they could just fancy a bit of wardrobe guidance.

It's the change that Sandy sees in her clients after the experience that truly fulfils her.

"It's those little texts from people or when you see them looking at themselves in the mirror in a different way," she says. "That just makes me feel so wonderful."

"It's really funny because I say to people if I see you in Sainsbury's and you're not wearing your colours, I don't want you to run away from me, it's not a judgement.
"I'm just giving you the information. I don't want you throwing things away, I want you to just think about the next thing that you're buying. This is about sustainability."

"Light is a big factor."
Sandy operates her franchise in an outbuilding at the back of her garden. The entire front wall is built of glass to enable as much natural light as possible – a crucial factor in assessing clients accurately.

As a result, the seasons dictate her working hours. "In winter I only see clients between 10am and 3-4pm. So, I might see a client for colour in the morning to catch the best of the day light, and then I might have a style client in the afternoon."

"I can work as hard as I want to. I don't have to be always open. It's not like I have a high street shop."
House of Colour provides an online booking system, which means clients can book appointments based on available times selected by Sandy. It's given her the flexibility she hoped for during her retirement and enabled her to continue spending time in her holiday home in Spain.

"I've joined networks because they're my support network. If I need a new profile picture, there's a photographer that I can call on. If I need to update my LinkedIn or get some help with my social media. There'll be a social media expert there."

Sandy also seeks the help of others in the House of Colour network – franchisees who she sees as support rather than competition. "I think it's very collegiate in a way that perhaps if you were buying into something like fast food, it wouldn't be."





GET TO KNOW...



Sandy describes herself as a 'glass half full' type of person. She aims to take a positive approach when assessing all situations, no matter how awful.

Anything you can't work without?
I do like my sleep and definitely function better when I've had my eight hours!

What's your greatest fear?
I'm bird phobic – I was locked in a pigeon coop at seven years old and had a Tippi Hedren moment.

Where would you most like to retire (after the franchising)?
I love Chiswick – it's green and has big spaces but is so close to the culture, nightlife, and buzz of London. My favourite place outside of home is Ischia – a beautiful shabby chic island in the Bay of Naples. The jetset go to Capri, the Italians go to Ischia.

Your favourite possession is?
My lovely little Nissan Figaro car – I imported it from Japan about 18 years ago.

What qualities do you admire in yourself?
Resilience and bouncebackability – as an army child, it was essential growing up and now it holds me in good stead for most situations.

What talent would you most like to possess?
I love to sing (shower, car, kitchen) but I'd really like to be able sing properly.

What's your favourite meal?
Nothing really beats a good Sunday roast – it's even better when cooked by someone else.

Your favourite song is
Aquarius/Let the Sunshine from the musical Hair, sung by 5th Dimension.

Q+A

5 minutes with...

LYNNE LISTER

The MD of X-Press Legal Services explains why human connection and partnership is key to operating within a successful franchise



I didn't go to university. I fell into my first role in franchising many years ago when I met Colin Bradbury. He ran a magazine called *Business Franchise*. At the time, I was a youngish mum with three kids and just needed a part-time job, so I went to work for the publishing company.

At the time, franchising was still really in the dark ages, it was still very much lumped in with multi-level marketing. I ended up becoming the editor of *Business Franchise* and I did it for 10 years. I had no experience, so the imposter syndrome was huge, especially when mixing with very professional people, but I just cracked on and enjoyed every minute.

I spoke to a lot of franchisors, discussing their businesses, and how they put things together, and I also talked to a lot of franchisees. It was an absolute classic education in franchising. I had never run a business, but I knew all the theory because I was writing about it every day.

A decade on, I got to the stage where I was ready for a new challenge and so was my eldest son. One day I spoke to my friend who was a conveyancer, and we then decided to train as conveyancers. From there, my son and I started very small as X-Press Legal Services and we've since built from there. All my children, my husband, and my daughter-in-law are now part of our executive team. I'm one of the luckiest people you're ever going to meet, the right people seem to appear when I'm ready for a change.

What have you found most fulfilling about your latest role?

Like any business, it has its ups and downs, but it has been really fulfilling and I'm delighted to say we have sold all our territories. We've got franchisees that have been with us since the franchise's inception, and quite a few people who have been here for 17 years or more. They've come to us from different walks of life, some not knowing about our business or about franchising. It's just wonderful to see how they've grown very successful companies in their own right, under our umbrella.

We're a very sociable group. I've just come back from a weekend in the Cotswolds with what we call our 'Excellence Club'. So that's our four or five top franchisees with best turnover and those with most improvement. We also put together roadshows where we bring everybody together. We have our own academy, where our franchisees are invited to workshops in-person and online. I also still run our own original business which is now our North Cheshire, Merseyside, and Manchester territory.

What have been the biggest challenges you've encountered?

The biggest challenges are always ones that are outside of your control. When the government



introduces legislation that affects housing, it affects mortgages, stamp duty, and other things like that. The pandemic was difficult for everyone, and in times like those we really do our best to gang together. Everybody was worried because people couldn't go and view houses, so all our solicitors and conveyancers were treading water for a good few weeks.

In this country, properties are key to all financial institutions, including banks and mortgage companies. Everything revolves around homeownership. Our industry was one of the first to open, which felt odd because you still couldn't get a haircut, but the industry is key to the prosperity of this country.

What's your best advice for aspiring business leaders in franchising?

I think of franchising as a business partnership, and if you can't see yourself being in business with your potential franchisees for the next five to 10 years then that's where you need to both consider if this is right to go ahead. People are putting a lot into becoming a franchisee (their future, pension funds, and inheritances) to come into business with you, so it's vital both parties feel they are the right match for each other.

As a franchisor, make sure your business is something you can replicate easily. Don't ever underestimate the time, the money, and effort that you must put in to get your franchisees up and running. There's a lot of hand-holding, talking, and keeping people calm because sometimes in the early days they can wonder what they've let themselves in for.

"Definitely do your due diligence. See how you're treated when you go to your initial meeting. Are they talking to you as a prospective business partner?"

For franchisees, definitely do your due diligence and be thorough with your homework. See how you're treated when you go to your initial meeting. Are they talking to you as a prospective business partner? Could you see yourself working with the franchisor? Could you sign on the dotted line to commit to the next five years? Are you going to be able to get up every morning, self-motivated, and drive your franchise forward?

Build the business you're looking at building and work with the franchisor, because they'll be key to your success. What's the support? How's it going to help you? All of that is key. And you've got to look at each other as business partners, not an 'us and them' situation, which I always feel is wrong. You must be able to work together and have a similar passion for the business you are all a part of.


Lynne with husband Dave Lister, director at X-Press Legal Services



X-Press Legal Services currently sponsor Porsche

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WHY I CHOSE NOT TO GO IT ALONE...

Gary Keating
ActionCOACH Bristol

"I could've set up the Gary Keating School of Business and taught and coached on what worked five, ten, fifteen years ago, but I would've been failing my clients. The ActionCOACH system gives me and my clients what works now AND what will work in five years' time. The system has made ActionCOACH Bristol the go-to place for business growth that creates prosperity and employment in our community."

Gary works four days a week in his business and appreciates the half-way house between retirement and franchise ownership that he's created for himself. He still escapes the English winters by flying to his family villa in Asia, but continues to enjoy his seven figure coaching business and leads his team of coaches and managers via video conferencing.

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