

WHAT-FRANCHISE.COM

# What Franchise



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**Global Franchise AWARDS 2026**  
*Recognizing excellence*

**35**  
**TRAILBLAZING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

**PIONEERS TO POWER PLAYERS**  
**WOMEN MAKING THEIR MARK**

**SUSAN MOORE**  
**6 LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP**

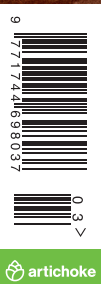
**START SMALL THINK BIG**

**HOW TO CHOOSE A FRANCHISE WITH SCALE POTENTIAL**



**MISS MILLIE'S**

# BOLD FLAVOURS, BIG OPPORTUNITIES



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Your path to franchise ownership starts here

**"We Hit the Jackpot!"**

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Whether you are looking to change careers, expand your investment portfolio, or finally take the leap into business ownership, this is your moment to take control of your future.





# All eyes on franchising

Spring is always a busy season in the franchising calendar, and this issue of *What Franchise* arrives just as the sector gears up for one of the biggest events of the year, The International Franchise Show on 17-18 April.

If you're considering franchising or looking to expand your portfolio, there's no better place to immerse yourself in the industry. From emerging brands to established names, the show brings together the full spectrum of franchising under one roof. It's also a chance to hear directly from the people behind the brands, ask the questions that matter, and start shaping your next move with confidence.

That sense of momentum is reflected throughout this issue. For many investors, the goal isn't simply to own one unit, but to build something bigger. We look at the key indicators of

scalability, the brands designed for multi-unit growth, and the franchisees who are thinking beyond day one on page 38.

We're also celebrating success on the international stage, with the Global Franchise Awards on page 15. The strong British contingent recognised this year underlines just how much the UK continues to punch above its weight internationally, from innovative emerging brands to established industry leaders shaping the future of franchising worldwide. You'll also find insights from franchising's most influential voices. Susan Moore shares six lessons from the front line, drawn from years of experience building and supporting franchise growth. We also hear from industry giant Ray Titus, recently inducted into the Global Franchise Awards Hall of Fame, whose career with UFG has helped shape franchising on an international scale.

Starting on page 47, we meet six incredible franchise owners who took a leap of faith and backed themselves to set up in business. Their stories offer practical insight, honest reflections, and inspiration for anyone considering taking that same step.

Whether you're at the early research stage, ready to invest, or planning your next phase of growth, this issue is packed with ideas, inspiration, and real-world experience to help guide your journey. I hope to see many of you at The International Franchise Show – and please do enjoy the issue!

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**NEXT  
ISSUE  
ON  
SALE:**

SUMMER  
2026

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The story of how this fast-growing chicken brand is creating opportunities across the UK



# SIX IDEAS.

## Susan Moore

Six lessons learned in franchise leadership - why the future will depend on new talent, tech, inclusion and even stronger partnerships

**S**ue Moore has spent more than three decades leading businesses across multiple sectors. After beginning her career in finance and sales, she moved into the franchise sector where she became Managing Director of Bright & Beautiful, part of the global home services group Neighborly, helping to grow the UK network and strengthen support for franchise partners. She has also held senior executive level roles with Metro Rod and GreenThumb, championing franchisee success, and building a strong network culture. Today, Sue is a franchise consultant and mentor, the founder of UK Franchise Guide and an Ambassador for Encouraging Women into Franchising (EWiF).

### 1 BUILD FOR GEN Z

In most mature franchise markets, ownership still leans toward Gen X: experienced operators seeking risk-managed growth, proven systems and lifestyle leverage. That profile has served franchising well. But the next decade may look different.

Gen Z will be tech-first operators who compare your system to the best digital experiences they use daily. They expect transparency, feedback loops and real-time communication. They will choose brands where purpose, values and reputation are embedded in the product, not bolted on in the brochure.

By the early 2030s, many will be ready to step into ownership earlier than previous generations. Their constraint is capital, not ambition. Franchisors that create tech-enabled models with flexible pathways will capture a generation eager to experiment and build.

### 2 CREATE SPACE AT THE TABLE

Franchising prides itself on opportunity. But are we truly widening access or simply recycling the same profiles? Across many markets, boardrooms remain male-dominated. In three decades of leadership roles, from heavy industry to franchising, I have often been the only woman at the table.

Progress has been real, but slow. This is not a pipeline problem. Franchising is rich with capable, commercially astute women - operators, founders and executives. Yet globally, only 7% of private equity and venture capital reaches women-led businesses.

The franchise model is uniquely positioned to change this. Strategic mentoring and new routes to capital, can unlock the talent already present across the sector.

### 3 THE GOLDEN ERA OF FRANCHISING?

When I joined

franchising in the 1990s, systems meant printed manuals, data which was laboriously compiled and payments by cheque. Territories were navigated with paper maps in the boot of the car. The model worked, but it was manual and slow.

Three decades later, the opportunity is very different. Automation replaces repetitive tasks, operating manuals are supported digitally by AI, finances are managed on apps, all of which frees franchisees to focus more consistently on customer experience and growth. AI sharpens decision-making with real-time data, while marketing is targeted, measurable and scalable.

Franchising has always been about systems - now those systems are amplified. With automation, analytics and AI embedded at the core, today's brands can scale faster and more sustainably. This may well be franchising's golden era.

### 4 FRANCHISE BUYING POWER

Some years ago, while MD at Bright

& Beautiful, during a visit to Neighborly's Texas head office, I was introduced to ProTradeNet - Neighborly's preferred vendor network that leverages buying power and connects franchise owners with approved suppliers. Franchise partners praised the benefits as much as the franchisor did.

This contrasts with recent debates about mandating supplies. Some franchisors worry about overcomplicating the model, while others insist strong supply chain management protects quality and consistency.

Managing the supply chain is not about control for its own sake. It delivers visibility and pricing predictability whilst supporting quality, creating commercial advantage for franchisors and franchisees alike.



## 5 FRANCHISING IS TRANSFORMATIONAL

While working with Bright & Beautiful, GreenThumb and Metro Rod, we strengthened recruitment conversations to go beyond territory potential and unit economics to the shift from employment to ownership.

The transition to franchise owner is profound. You move from specialist to generalist, employee to decision-maker, security to accountability. Franchisors must prepare people properly for the emotional and commercial journey ahead. Do it well and stronger leaders emerge; that's when the model truly works.

5

7

6

**WE FAIL  
WHEN WE  
COMMUNICATE  
POORLY**

In franchising, I have seen strong ideas stall not because they were flawed, but because they were poorly communicated. Technology platforms, new services and brand refreshes promised growth, yet rollout often faltered. Franchisees resisted, engagement dipped and momentum slowed.

The issue was rarely appetite - it was clarity. When the "why" is unclear, even good strategy feels imposed. Communication can't be limited to a memo; it is a structured plan: early consultation, clear rationale and space for questions.

Two principles build trust. First, explain the outcome before the instruction. Second, create genuine dialogue through pilots and feedback. In franchising, alignment is everything. We don't fail because we innovate: we fail when we assume people will simply understand.

LOGISTICS

# Specialist shipping success with PACK & SEND

From fragile artwork to large machinery, premium packaging solutions to global freight logistics, here's why entrepreneurs are choosing PACK & SEND

Minimum required capital:

£32,495

**W**ith 30 years of franchising experience, PACK & SEND is a globally recognised brand with a proven track record, offering a high-value franchise model. Originating in Australia more than three decades ago, the network has successfully expanded into the UK and beyond, giving partners confidence in a business model that has stood the test of time and market shifts.

Today, it continues to thrive, with the UK network growing by 50% in 2025 alone. For entrepreneurs looking to carve out their own path, few opportunities offer such a compelling blend of specialist service, proven systems and global reach.

## WHAT'S THE PACK & SEND DIFFERENCE?

PACK & SEND's core strength lies in its specialised shipping focus - providing end-to-end solutions for fragile, large, unique or valuable items that many traditional carriers avoid. This isn't "run-of-the-mill" parcel delivery; franchise partners build a reputation for handling complex logistics with skill and care, opening up a highly profitable niche within a multibillion-pound industry.

## A HIGH-VALUE SERVICE MODEL

The high-value service model is another defining pillar of PACK & SEND's proposition. With premium, value-added services and exceptional customer care at its heart, the business appeals to both retail and business clients alike - from individuals sending heirlooms overseas to companies needing bespoke freight solutions.



## FRANCHISE OVERVIEW

**Established:**  
1993

**Number of outlets:**  
36

**Locations of units:**  
UK wide

**Total investment:**  
£70-80k



This customer-centred approach brings clients back time after time, helping partners build strong repeat business.

## BUILT FOR FRANCHISEE SUCCESS

What's more, PACK & SEND's quick-start business infrastructure accelerates success with proven systems, comprehensive launch packages and in-house marketing support. Franchisees benefit from centralised brand campaigns and tailored local initiatives designed to generate leads and drive growth from day one.

PACK & SEND franchise partners also benefit from ongoing support and development from the head office team. From comprehensive training to shared best practices, dedicated marketing support and field sales support, franchisees are never alone in their journey to business success.

For entrepreneurs seeking a rewarding business opportunity in a thriving sector, PACK & SEND delivers not just specialised logistics services, but the foundations for long-term success.

Start your journey towards business ownership and success today with PACK & SEND. To arrange an initial consultation with the team, get in touch.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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# On the road to growth

Roadside retail is no longer fuel-led – it’s rapidly becoming a convenience-first, multi-purpose destination, says Moiz Vas. For franchisors thinking about their next stage of growth, that shift creates a clear and immediate opportunity



Operators are placing more emphasis on higher-margin offers like food-to-go, coffee and services, while EV infrastructure and frictionless payments are reshaping the forecourt experience. At the same time, cost pressures and more value-driven consumers are pushing operators to think about new formats, partnerships and a broader offer beyond traditional petrol retail.

A lot of this comes back to how people are living and moving today. Retail success isn’t really about a single “best” location anymore – it’s about how well a brand fits into everyday routines. Hybrid working has pulled footfall away from city centres towards more local, suburban and on-the-go locations, while convenience has become a bigger priority. People are making more frequent, smaller trips closer to home, and with car travel and more flexible schedules, this shift is only becoming more pronounced.

What really stands out is how naturally roadside locations fit into those daily commutes, school runs, and quick stops, and how consistently they pick up demand when they offer the right mix of food, services and convenience.

That’s also why franchise brands tend to work so well in this space. They’re built for repeatability and scale, and roadside locations provide predictable, high-volume traffic and consistent customer missions. That makes it easier to standardise formats, replicate operations and drive impulse visits through strong brand recognition. With established supply chains and training in place, you’ve got a model that can be rolled out efficiently across multiple, often dispersed locations. From a landlord or developer’s perspective, it’s a really compelling combination. Franchise operators bring recognisable brands and proven formats, reducing leasing risk while expanding quickly and committing to multiple sites. Backed by franchisors, they also offer operational resilience and the ability to open and run sites efficiently in high-traffic locations.

You can see how this plays out by the types of brands that are already performing well roadside.

Convenience retail hybrids are performing strongly. Formats like Co-op, Morrisons and One Stop combine food, essentials and meal solutions in one place, turning forecourts into genuine “mini



## Moiz Vas

is the founder of Retail’s Best, a series of invite-only events that has been providing a platform for over a decade to facilitate introductions between leading convenience, forecourt and retail operators with innovative food-service suppliers, such as Wild Bean Cafe by bp; Subway and Costa. The Retail’s Best: Roadside Retail Partners event on 14 May 2026 is an evening designed to bring together over 200 key roadside retailers, representing circa 4,000 sites between them, with industry partners in a relaxed, non-competitive setting.

hubs.” Established quick-service brands such as Chicken Cottage and Fireaway Pizza translate well too, thanks to simple menus, fast service and strong brand recognition, and there’s growing demand for high-quality fast food, like LEON. At the same time, more flexible and compact concepts, such as Auntie Anne’s, Smoke & Pepper and micro-kitchen models, are gaining traction because they can adapt to smaller footprints and varied site formats. Even niche or viral brands are finding ways to scale into roadside locations when paired with the right operators. The common thread is speed, familiarity and operational simplicity, delivered in a way that fits the journey the customer is already on.

What still feels underappreciated is the scale of the opportunity. Roadside retail typically drives higher visit frequency and more stable revenue. It also opens up trading across the entire day, from breakfast through to evening. There are practical advantages too. Co-locating with forecourts or travel hubs reduces set-up friction and can accelerate expansion by tapping into existing infrastructure and footfall. As EV adoption grows, dwell time is increasing, creating additional demand for food, retail and services in one stop. Add in opportunities to connect with local services and delivery points, and the model becomes even more serious.

Many brands still haven’t fully explored what a kiosk or concession format could look like for them, particularly as a way to refine operations, lower costs and scale more quickly. That’s exactly the kind of thinking we’re trying to encourage through Retail’s Best: Roadside Retail. It’s about moving towards more joined-up conversations – looking at format flexibility, from smaller footprints to drive-thru integration and EV-adjacent sites – while also encouraging multi-site rollout strategies, better data sharing and longer-term partnerships rather than one-off deals.

Looking ahead, roadside retail is set to play a much bigger role in long-term franchise growth. Roadside locations are likely to account for a significant share of growth for convenience-focused and quick-service brands, bringing together repeatability, visibility and convenience in a very practical way. For brands that move early, there’s a real opportunity to secure strong locations, grow quickly and build a resilient presence before the market becomes more crowded.

# Legacy brand or emerging upstart?

Choosing between established franchise brands and emerging concepts requires more than brand recognition - it demands a clear view of risk, control, and long-term growth potential



## FRANCHISE COUNSEL

### DREW CHALFANT

Drew is a seasoned franchise executive with experience across legal, development, and operations, now serving as COO of FranDevCo, a consultancy firm focused on driving smart, strategic franchise growth.



### Drew Chalfant

CHIEF OPERATING  
OFFICER OF  
FRANDEVCO

**A**s the Chief Operating Officer of FranDevCo and a seasoned legal expert in franchising, I've observed firsthand the nuances and challenges of choosing between investing in well-established legacy franchise brands and emerging or adolescent franchises.

Over years of working with both franchisors and franchisees at different stages of growth, I've seen how this decision can materially shape not just early performance, but long-term satisfaction and exit outcomes as well. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for

entrepreneurs aiming to make informed decisions that align with their business goals, operational preferences, and risk tolerance.

At its core, franchise investing is a trade-off between certainty and opportunity. Investing in a franchise requires a careful balance between the established stability of legacy brands and the innovative potential of emerging franchises. Each option presents distinct challenges and opportunities in market availability, operational flexibility, competition, brand standards, and growth potential. Neither path is inherently "better," but each demands a clear-eyed assessment of what you value most as an owner-operator or multi-unit investor. Let's dive into the complexities of franchising with a well-known brand versus the potential upsides of partnering with a lesser-known, up-and-coming franchise.

First, investing in a legacy brand often means stepping into an already well-defined market. While this can provide immediate brand recognition, the most lucrative markets are frequently saturated. Established franchises or corporate-owned stores typically occupy prime locations, leaving new franchisees with secondary or tertiary markets. In many cases, these markets were intentionally left open because they are harder to operate or slower to mature. These markets may have unique customer demographics, potentially limiting your growth and profitability from the outset.

This reality is especially relevant in mature franchise systems where expansion has been aggressive over decades. While the brand's footprint may be impressive, the remaining opportunities may require higher marketing spend, more operational sophistication, or longer runways

to profitability than originally anticipated. For some investors, that trade-off is acceptable; for others, it becomes an early source of frustration.

Legacy brands come with the benefits of tried-and-tested systems, but this also translates to limited flexibility. These brands have stringent operating procedures and supplier agreements that are difficult to change. From pricing structures to approved vendors and technology platforms, much of the business is pre-determined before you ever open your doors.

If you have innovative ideas or wish to tailor the business to fit your local market better, the process might be slow and cumbersome. Picture trying to turn an oil tanker – changing direction takes time and effort, and your creative input may feel restricted within the established framework. For franchisees who value autonomy or bring strong operational instincts from prior entrepreneurial experience, this rigidity can feel constraining rather than supportive. These guardrails are designed to protect brand consistency and reduce variance across the system, but they can also limit how quickly individual operators respond to local market shifts or consumer behavior changes.

Operating under a well-known brand name can mean facing stiff competition, not just from other brands but also from fellow franchisees. Market saturation within popular brands can lead to customer cannibalisation, where franchisees of the same brand compete for the same customers. This internal competition can dilute your market share, reduce profits, and create friction between neighbouring franchisees.

The promise of a loyal customer base can quickly become a struggle for differentiation and market positioning. In some systems, proximity clauses and territory protections are minimal, leaving franchisees reliant on execution alone to outperform peers selling the same product under the same name. While strong operators can still thrive, the margin for error narrows considerably in these environments.

Upholding the high standards of a legacy brand can be a double-edged sword. While it ensures consistency and quality, the pressure to comply with rigorous standards can be



#### MARKET REALITY

Legacy brands offer recognition but limited territory upside, while emerging franchises provide access to prime markets with greater long-term growth potential.



#### CONTROL SPECTRUM

Established systems prioritise consistency over customisation, whereas emerging brands are sometimes more accommodating to ideas.



#### RISK ALIGNMENT

Legacy franchises reduce uncertainty through proven models, while emerging brands reward patient operators willing to trade stability for expansion opportunity.

## “Ultimately, the choice between a legacy franchise and an emerging brand hinges on your business goals, risk tolerance, and desire for innovation within the system”

overwhelming. Deviation from these standards can lead to penalties or even termination of your franchise agreement.

The legal language in franchise agreements often leaves little room for negotiation, and legacy brands, with their established reputations, tend to enforce these standards strictly to protect their brand image. From remodel requirements to technology upgrades and rebranding initiatives, franchisees may be required to reinvest capital on timelines they do not control. While these initiatives may strengthen the system overall, they can strain individual unit economics if poorly timed.

Another challenge with legacy brands are complex fee structures. While these fees are intended to support and enhance brand value, they can sometimes feel bloated and unnecessary, impacting your bottom line. For prospective franchisees, understanding how these fees have evolved – and whether they correlate to tangible support or performance improvements – is a critical part of due diligence. In contrast, emerging franchise brands offer the allure of untapped markets. As these brands are in their growth phase, they typically have wide-open territories in prime locations. This availability allows you to choose the best markets that align with your business strategy and target demographics, providing a significant competitive advantage.

Investing early in a franchise concept can position you strategically as the brand expands, maximising your potential for growth. Early franchisees often benefit from larger territories, more favorable economics, and a greater voice in how the system evolves. If you have entrepreneurial spirit and innovative ideas, you'll likely find a receptive

audience in the franchisor's team.

Careful due diligence on the brand's fundamentals – such as market demand, leadership capability, unit economics, and long-term viability – can yield high returns as the franchise grows and establishes itself. However, growth is not guaranteed, and investors must be comfortable navigating a period of brand-building rather than brand-leveraging.

Another advantage of emerging franchises is the opportunity to build personal relationships with the founders and executive team. This direct access can lead to better communication, personalised support, and a stronger sense of community within the franchise network. Your input can have a meaningful impact on the brand's development, fostering a collaborative environment where your insights and feedback are valued and acted upon. For many franchisees, this sense of shared purpose and visibility into leadership decision-making is a key differentiator from more institutionalised systems.

Emerging brands are often more willing to adapt their business models to the needs of local markets. This adaptability can be crucial for building a loyal customer base and differentiating your franchise in a competitive landscape. However, flexibility without direction can be just as risky as rigidity.

As you navigate the franchise landscape, weigh these factors carefully. Consider your strengths as a franchisee, your market strategy, and your long-term vision. By aligning your investment with a franchise model that complements your aspirations and capabilities, you can position yourself for success in the dynamic – and increasingly complex – world of franchising.

FOOD & DRINK

# Bold flavours, big opportunities

Minimum required capital:

£50,000

Miss Millie's franchise story reveals how the fast-growing chicken brand is creating exciting opportunities for its franchise partners across the UK



12

## CAPITALISING ON A GROWING MARKET

Miss Millie's is proving that it's far from an 'old-fashioned' fried chicken shop. Under new ownership, the brand has repositioned itself to appeal to younger audiences without alienating longtime customers. Chicken, as a category, continues to outpace beef in the UK, especially among young adults, and Miss Millie's is ideally placed to benefit from this trend.

The brand's focus on bold flavours and quality products means it can respond quickly to consumer trends. "We know our customers love bold, interesting flavours that complement our quality products," says Andy Purnell, CEO. "We will always remain agile to embrace the latest flavour trends and adapt our offerings to keep customers returning and grow our base."

## WHY MISS MILLIE'S?

Franchisees looking to join Miss Millie's benefit from an attractive package of support and systems designed to make launching and running a store as smooth as possible. Highlights include:

- Low cost of entry with affordable initial set-up
- Full support with site identification, layout design, and planning consents
- Comprehensive training for franchisees and teams
- Established operational manuals and supply chain management, including price negotiation and quality assurance
- Menu maintenance and new product development
- Marketing support including pooled resources and social media presence
- Advanced systems for POS, kiosks, delivery, click & collect, loyalty apps, and website management

This holistic approach is aimed at giving franchisees the tools and confidence to succeed while reducing the risks often associated with starting a business.

## BIG BRAND STRENGTH & PERSONAL SUPPORT

Miss Millie's combines the strength and structure of an established national brand with the personal attention of a committed franchisor, delivering comprehensive support at every stage of the franchise journey. From site identification and lease negotiations through to store design, fit-out and recruitment, the brand's experienced team works closely with

**F**ounded in 1988, Miss Millie's has grown into a much-loved and recognisable name across the Southwest, earning a loyal following for its signature Wings of Fire, crispy tenders, burgers, wraps and indulgent shakes. While the brand has expanded steadily in recent years, opening new locations in cities such as Canterbury, Edinburgh, and Newquay, it is now stepping forward with a bold new attitude and refreshed look, complemented by its secret blend of 12 herbs and spices that makes every visit truly soul satisfying while celebrating the diversity of its customers.

With ambitious plans to expand nationwide, a strong pipeline of new store openings over the next 12 months, and upgrades designed to create a friendlier, more efficient customer experience to its existing stores, Miss Millie's is positioning itself as a modern, fast-growing force within the competitive chicken QSR sector.

**“We will always remain agile and adapt our offerings to keep customers returning and grow our base”**

franchisees to ensure a smooth and successful launch. That support extends well beyond opening day, with robust operational procedures, detailed design manuals and coordinated marketing resources in place to maintain consistency and drive performance.

Key functions such as supply chain management, quality assurance, menu development and digital operations - including loyalty programmes, delivery platforms, click & collect and digital menu boards - are centrally managed, enabling franchisees to focus on delivering outstanding customer experiences. Integrated EPOS and inventory systems provide clear cost control and performance tracking, while the head office team ensures compliance with all relevant legislation. In short, Miss Millie's offers the infrastructure of a big brand, paired with the hands-on guidance of a supportive franchise partner, giving franchisees the confidence and foundation to thrive from day one.

### QUALITY & CUSTOMER FOCUS

Product quality remains at the heart of Miss Millie's. Chicken is sourced only from farms with high animal welfare standards, certification and full traceability.

In store, Miss Millie's chicken is hand-breaded in their unique and secret blend of 12 herbs and spices. There is also a hand-picked range of house sauces and dips that perfectly complement the finished product.

The brand constantly monitors flavour trends to ensure menus stay modern and appealing. This approach has allowed Miss Millie's to create a differentiated, high-quality proposition that stands out in a competitive market.

### INVESTOR APPEAL

Beyond the culinary side, Miss Millie's offers a clear and attractive financial model. Low set-up costs, combined with established operational systems and strong marketing support, mean franchisees can achieve a clear path to profitability and a realistic payback period.

This approach removes much of the uncertainty often associated with new ventures, allowing franchisees to focus on growing their business.

### FRANCHISEE PROFILE

Passion for great food - especially fried chicken - a hands-on approach is at the heart of the Miss Millie's franchise model. As Andy explains, "We can help you be a great operator, but you will need to have the desire to be the hands-on leading light in your business to deliver great product and great customer service."

Miss Millie's franchisees do more than run a store - they shape the customer experience, lead local marketing, and engage with their communities, all while benefiting from a proven operational framework and a nationally recognised brand. One new franchisee enthuses, "The chicken tastes incredible - consistently high quality every day - and the local community has been so welcoming to the brand. It's exciting to see people enjoying the great-tasting chicken and embracing Miss Millie's from day one."



Miss Millie's

FRANCHISE  
OVERVIEW

**Established:**  
1988

**Number of outlets:**  
14

**Location of units:**  
Canterbury, Bristol,  
Southampton,  
Weston Super  
Mare, Newquay,  
Musselburgh

**Minimum required  
capital:**  
£50,000

**Investment range:**  
£250,000-£300,000



**“Miss Millie’s is fast positioning itself as a force within the competitive chicken QSR sector”**

Future Flavours & Expansion Miss Millie's is not just expanding its footprint - it's evolving its brand to reflect a diverse, contemporary customer base. With upgraded store designs, an agile menu, and active marketing campaigns, the brand remains relevant, appealing, and ready for the next phase of growth. The combination of tradition, innovation, and robust operational support makes Miss Millie's an attractive choice for ambitious franchisees looking to make their mark in the UK quick-service restaurant sector.

By leveraging deep industry expertise, high-quality products, and comprehensive franchise support, Miss Millie's shows how independent-minded operators can scale their businesses with confidence. Entrepreneurs joining the brand benefit from a proven path to success, whether opening a new location or growing an existing one. With expansion plans across the UK - including a highly anticipated new store in Colchester in spring 2026 - Miss Millie's is inviting the next generation of franchisees to become part of its bold, flavour-filled journey.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

Contact: **Abi Lucas**  
[franchise@missmillies.co.uk](mailto:franchise@missmillies.co.uk)

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# Global Franchise



# THE WINNERS

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From global expansion to domestic strength, our award winners highlight a franchise landscape that's becoming more balanced, more disciplined, and more diverse

**F**or many years, success in franchising has been closely associated with scale, often judged by how far and how quickly a brand can expand into new markets. That ambition still defines the sector. But the Global Franchise Awards 2026 suggest something more nuanced is now at play.

Hosted by Global Franchise and compered by Jack Monson, this year's ceremony took place alongside the IFA Convention 2026 in Las Vegas, bringing together franchisors, suppliers and advisors from across international markets. It was, as ever, a reflection of the industry itself – diverse, outward-looking, and increasingly sophisticated.

What stood out this year, however, was not just who won, but what those wins represented. As Rachael Wenham, Head of Franchise Development at Global Franchise and What Franchise explains, “We’re seeing a broader definition of success come through in the awards. Growth is still important, but it’s no longer the only marker. The strength of the model, the support behind it, and how well it performs in its core market are just as critical.”

That shift is reflected in the introduction of the Single Market category, which recognises franchise systems that have built depth and consistency within a single territory, alongside those expanding internationally.

It is also visible in the profile of this year’s winners, marked by brands that feel considered in their growth, clear in their positioning, and consistent in their delivery.

At the forefront, School of Rock was named Global Franchise Grand Champion – a standout achievement for a brand that continues to scale internationally while staying true to a clear and compelling proposition. Alongside it, Ray Titus’s induction into the Hall of Fame recognises a lifetime of leadership and influence, both through United Franchise Group and across the wider franchise sector.

Among the wider group of winners, Bread Ahead stands out as one of the clearest examples of this fine balance. Recognised across multiple categories, including corporate responsibility, emerging franchise growth and as European regional champion, its repeated wins reflect a business that’s expanding with confidence while remaining closely aligned to core values.

Taken together, this year’s winners suggest an industry that is placing greater value on how growth is delivered, through rock-solid systems, consistent execution, and models that continue to hold up as they scale.

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# Global Franchise Awards 2026

## HEADLINE HONOURS

### GLOBAL FRANCHISE GRAND CHAMPION

School of Rock

### HALL OF FAME

Ray Titus

### CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AWARD

🇬🇧 Bread Ahead

## CATEGORY WINNERS

### BEST CHILDREN’S SERVICES & EDUCATION FRANCHISE

School of Rock – a globally scaled education brand built on a strong, consistent proposition

### BEST FITNESS FRANCHISE

Snap Fitness – a consistent, accessible fitness model with international reach

### BEST FOOD & DRINK FRANCHISE (DRINK)

Gong cha – capitalising on a global thirst for specialist beverage concepts

### BEST FOOD & DRINK FRANCHISE (DESSERTS)

IHOP – a well-established brand continuing to expand its international footprint

### BEST FOOD & DRINK FRANCHISE (FOOD)

Applebee’s – a scalable casual dining model with broad market appeal

### BEST BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FRANCHISE


🇬🇧 ERA Group – a collaborative, network-led model operating across multiple markets

“The main reason people join our franchise is the global network, and it’s the reason they stay. Our franchisees work in joint ventures, providing clients with multiple areas of support, not just one”

— Mark Taylor, Global CEO, ERA Group



**BEST EMERGING FRANCHISE**

 **Bread Ahead** - combining commercial growth with a strong community and educational focus

**BEST ENTERTAINMENT FRANCHISE**

**F1 Arcade** - experiential franchising aligned with global sports branding

**BEST FRANCHISE CONSULTANCY SUPPLIER**

**Franchise Ready** - supporting brands in structuring and scaling their franchise systems

**BEST FRANCHISE FUNDING SUPPLIER**

**MIDAS** - providing access to capital for growing franchise networks

**BEST FRANCHISE LAW FIRM SUPPLIER**

**CMS Francis Lefebvre** - legal expertise supporting cross-border franchise growth

**BEST HEALTH & BEAUTY FRANCHISE**

**Tommy Gun's Original Barbershop** - a strong retail-led grooming concept with international appeal

**BEST FRANCHISE MARKETING & PR SUPPLIER**

**Reshift Media** - digital-led strategies supporting franchise growth

**BEST PROPERTY MAINTENANCE FRANCHISE**

**UNITS** - logistics-focused model serving both residential and commercial markets


**BEST RETAIL FRANCHISE**

**Batteries Plus** - a specialist retail concept with a scalable footprint

**BEST SIGNAGE & COMMUNICATIONS FRANCHISE**


**Signarama** - a long-established B2B franchise operating globally

**BEST LIFESTYLE FRANCHISE**

 **The Travel Franchise** - flexible, home-based model aligned with changing work patterns

**REGIONAL CHAMPIONS**

**EUROPE**

 **Bread Ahead**  
A standout UK brand gaining recognition across European markets

**THE AMERICAS**

**School of Rock**  
Continued strength in its core region and internationally

**ASIA-PACIFIC**

**Franchise Ready**  
Supporting franchise growth across emerging and established markets

**MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA**

**Albaik**  
A dominant regional food brand with strong customer loyalty

**SINGLE MARKET AWARDS 2026**

**BEST AUTO SERVICES FRANCHISE**

**Screen Rescue** - a focused, service-led automotive concept

**BEST CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION FRANCHISE**

**Huntington Learning Center** - long-established education brand with consistent delivery

**BEST EMERGING FRANCHISE**

**JUNKCO+** - demonstrating structured approach to growth in a service-led sector

**BEST FOOD & DRINK FRANCHISE**

**Eat Salad** - strong growth aligned with demand for healthier eating


**BEST FRANCHISE LAW FIRM SUPPLIER**

**Buchalter** - legal expertise tailored to franchise development

**BEST HEALTH & BEAUTY FRANCHISE**

**MassageLuXe** - a membership-based wellness model with recurring revenue


**BEST LIFESTYLE FRANCHISE**

 **Seasons Art Class** - lifestyle-led concept combining creativity with commercial structure

**BEST FRANCHISE MARKETING & PR SUPPLIER**

**Ignite Visibility** - data-led marketing support for franchise systems

**BEST PROPERTY MAINTENANCE FRANCHISE**

 **Maid2Clean** - a proven domestic model built on consistency and local delivery

**BEST RETAIL FRANCHISE**

**Rhea Lana's** - a niche retail concept with strong community engagement

**BEST TECH INNOVATION SUPPLIER**

**Rallio** - smart technology supporting brand consistency across locations



“The Bakery School is still at the heart of what we do - very much the heart of the operation - and we teach school groups, team events and work events”

— Molly O'Connor, Bakery School Manager, Bread Ahead

# A LIFE GROUNDED IN FRANCHISING EXCELLENCE

As franchising evolves, Ray Titus, Chairman and CEO of United Franchise Group (UFG), remains focused on what endures. With private equity rising and succession underway, he reflects on leadership, culture, and the foundations of long-term success

Interview by CHARLOTTE SMITH



**Q: After 40 years in franchising, what excites you most about the industry today?**

In the last few years, we've seen a huge rise of private equity. They're even getting involved in large franchisees and their operations. We're excited about that, including starting our own private equity firm, Oyster Bay Equity, and being able to take things to another level.

Speaking personally, it's about my family too. I have three sons and three nephews in the business, and I continue to meet and work with them every month. To see the company excel under their leadership is incredibly rewarding. Brady is COO, AJ is president of Signarama, Andrew is

president of Fully Promoted, and Austin is president of Accurate Franchising, Inc. They're involved in so many parts of UFG, and it's great to see.

More and more people around the world want to own their own business. Opportunities are endless in franchising. Through the Titus Center at Palm Beach Atlantic University, we get real insight into the next generation and what they're looking for. They're not looking to be employees – they're looking to run their own businesses, and that's exciting to see.

**Q: What does it take to build a strong, lasting franchise culture, especially at scale?**

Culture starts with leadership. It starts with the person building the business committing to the same things they are asking of their employees.

When the team sees leadership rolling up their sleeves – travelling, doing the trade shows – everybody starts to pull together a little more. Leading by example is one of the most critical points.

You also have to be a challenging coach. The best coach or teacher you ever had was somebody who pushed you to be better than you even thought you could be. There are a lot of people who think this young generation is soft. Well, I have news for you – the previous generation thought the last



generation was soft, and you can keep going back.

And you know what? It's true. We had an easier time than our parents, who dealt with World War II and everything else, and they had it a little easier than their parents.

This generation wants the same opportunities we had, but they want them faster. They're not willing to wait five or 10 years. They still must earn it, but you also have to give them those opportunities sooner.

**Q: Why is maintaining franchisee relationships so central to UFG's model?**

Let's be clear: I have nothing without successful franchisees. Our employees know they have nothing without good, hardworking franchise owners. They have



to be committed, work hard, and follow the programme – and the good ones really do.

What I see getting lost today is the relationship between the franchise company and the franchisees.

With private equity firms, there's often a strict focus on the numbers. The numbers are important – don't get me wrong – but it's even more important to have a relationship that allows you to work through any problems with those numbers.

That's been key for us. With 1,600 franchisees in 80 countries, it would be very difficult to do what we do without strong relationships.

I'll be on a plane tomorrow to a franchise owner conference where I'm speaking and attending the awards. You have to stay committed to that relationship side of the business every day.

We have a very friendly organisation, it's part of who we are. It may sound corny, but we all help each other reach our goals.

Some of my best friends are franchise owners or employees. That's how it has worked for us, because we're so focused on building and growing together.

**Q: Where do you think franchisors most often go wrong when trying to scale a concept?**

They skip the basics. They don't roll up their sleeves. They don't try and understand the business, the customers, and how it all really works.

It's not easy, but successful franchises need people who are prepared to get into the business at ground level and understand it fully.

**“The bigger you get, the harder it is – but culture is everything. Without strong relationships, there is no brand”**

**Q: Looking ahead, what will the most successful franchise brands do differently over the next decade?**

I think you're going to see more franchise platforms, like UFG. Private equity investors are increasingly looking for companies that can provide shared services across multiple brands.

That's what we do – bringing together accounting, legal, and other core functions to support our franchise companies.

By taking care of back-office responsibilities, you allow franchise owners to focus on what really matters: building relationships with customers at a local level. If franchise owners are spending the majority of their time servicing customers, they're going to do better, and we're going to do better.

It's not easy – it's about identifying those areas and integrating them effectively – but the future of franchising is about removing the areas that take time away from franchise owners being successful.

**Q: What's one lesson that has stayed with you throughout your career?**

It came from my dad. We bought a large headquarters – 60,000 square feet, eight acres – and he took a tour when he was 80 years old. At the end, I asked him what he thought. He said, “I love it. It's one story.” I laughed and said, “What do you mean?” And he said, “No matter how big your company gets, everybody's feet will still be on the ground. You won't have people up on the 25th floor in an ivory tower. Everyone stays equal.” He worked for Time Life in New York and saw that ivory tower culture. He vowed we'd never have that – and it remains the principle underpinning everything we do.

*UFG has since taken full ownership of Transworld Business Advisors, the world's largest business brokerage network, strengthening UFG's strategy to scale globally, and create even more opportunities for franchisees across the global network.*

# WHAT THE UK CAN SHOW GLOBAL FRANCHISING

A closer look at this year's Global Franchise Awards suggests that some of UK franchising's long-held strengths – consistency and measured growth – are becoming increasingly relevant on a global stage

Words by CHARLOTTE SMITH

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**F**or a long time, the story around franchising has been a relatively straightforward one. Build a model, prove it works, and then take it as far as possible. Growth, particularly international growth, has tended to dominate the conversation.

That ambition still defines much of the sector, but the Global Franchise Awards 2026 suggests that the overall picture is becoming more rounded.

Looking across this year's winners, there is still ambition, still scale, still global expansion. But alongside the obvious signs of success is something more measured. The brands that performed well feel controlled rather than stretched. Their systems appear settled rather than rushed. Above all, growth looks deliberate.

It's not a dramatic shift, but it is noticeable – and one that aligns closely with the way many UK franchise systems have traditionally approached growth.

**“The brands that performed well feel controlled rather than stretched. Growth looks deliberate”**

## Bread Ahead: a success story

If one brand captures this balance particularly well this year, it is Bread Ahead. Its performance across the awards – taking Corporate Social Responsibility, Best Emerging Franchise, and the European regional title – marks out this exciting franchise as one of the more notable success stories of 2026, not simply for the number of accolades, but for what they represent when taken together.

There is a consistency to the model that runs through each of those wins. A sense that growth is being built on something that remains clearly defined, rather than adapted to suit expansion.

This clarity comes through in how the brand continues to position itself. As Molly O'Connor explained to Rachael Wenham when accepting the award: “The Bakery school is still at the heart of what we do, the heart of our operation in teaching school groups, team events and work events.” Her point emphasises how the core values of the business haven't been reshaped to enable growth – they have remained intact, and growth has followed. This tends to be a more durable way of building a franchise.

## Leading in collaboration

A similar sense of structure can be seen in a very different part of the market. ERA Group, recognised for yet another year running in the business and professional services category, operates on a model that becomes even more effective as it grows.

Rather than functioning purely as a collection of individual franchisees, ERA Group encourages collaboration across its international network. As its global CEO Mark Taylor puts it, “The main reason people join our franchise is the global network. It's the reason that they stay as well – that collaboration is at the very heart of what we do...” with franchisees working together across projects and categories, rather than operating in isolation.

It's a slightly different way of thinking about scale, less about how many units a system has, and more about how those units work together once they're in place.

Elsewhere, the other UK brands recognised this year reflect different aspects of the same underlying approach.





Maid2Clean's success within the Single Market category points to the strength of focusing on one territory and doing it well. It is a reminder that scale does not always need to be geographical, and that consistency within a single market can be just as valuable as international reach.

At the same time, Seasons Art Class and The Travel Franchise highlight the continued appeal of models that combine commercial returns with flexibility. These are not positioned as high-growth concepts in the traditional sense, but they are clearly resonating with franchisees and their customers. What they offer is something slightly different: a business that fits around lifestyle as much as it drives income.

### UK trends

Taken together, these examples don't point to a single formula. Instead, they suggest a set of characteristics that appear consistently across the UK brands recognised this year.

One, there is a tendency towards building strong systems *before* pursuing scale. A focus on the strength of the proposition. And, in many cases, a willingness to grow at a pace that reflects the model, rather than the market opportunity alone.

Two, the introduction of the Single Market category reinforces that this approach has value beyond global domination. For some time, international expansion has been treated as the defining measure of franchise success. These awards acknowledge that there are other ways to build a strong system, using

approaches that prioritise consistency, performance, and long-term sustainability within a single market, and the recognition feels particularly relevant to UK franchising, where many brands have traditionally taken a more measured route to growth.

Yes, growth is still important, but so is how it is delivered. Scale still matters, but so does stability. Increasingly, success is being judged not just by how far a brand can expand, but by how well it holds together as it does so.

Bread Ahead's performance this year sits comfortably within that shift – not as an outlier, but as a clear example of an emerging franchise with a well-defined sense of direction. For many other UK franchisors, this confident, considered approach will feel reassuringly familiar.

**BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

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Minimum required capital:

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How Kunal made his business successful

go so far before the owner burns out. Without clear accountability, defined roles and repeatable processes, even strong businesses plateau.

### THE SCALING TRAP

This is exactly where Tooth Club's business owner, Kunal Thakker, found himself. But here's what most business owners miss: the solution isn't to work harder or hire more people. It's understanding how businesses actually scale. Systems run businesses. Teams run systems. Business owners step into leadership. This fundamental shift is what separates businesses that succeed in the medium and long-term. When you try to run everything yourself, you become the bottleneck. When you build systems and empower teams to run those systems, you free yourself to lead. That's core to ActionCOACH's methodology, and it's what transformed Tooth Club from a founder-dependent startup into a scalable enterprise.

### A BRILLIANT IDEA

After nearly two decades in investment banking, Kunal launched Tooth Club in 2020. The idea came from a personal place. "I used to dread going to the dentist so much I'd hide the appointment cards," he said. "The feeling stuck with me." The ambition was simple: build a dental experience people didn't avoid. The concept resonated, and the business grew quickly, but growth brought pressure. "I was making every decision. The team looked to me for everything. We had ambition, but we didn't have the structure to support it."

### THE ACTIONCOACH DIFFERENCE

ActionCOACH isn't just world-class coaching, it's a business building toolbox made up of over 3,500 strategies and tactics, created to multiply profits and turn owner-led businesses into scalable, team-led companies. Over more than three decades, hundreds of thousands of business owners can attest to the effectiveness of their Action Coach and the Action toolbox.

**FROM DAY ONE: KUNAL'S STRATEGIC APPROACH**  
Kunal made a critical decision

**M**ost business owners don't have a business that serves their desired lifestyle. They have a company that depends on them to survive, and multiple jobs within that business.

They're often the one trying to get new customers and keep existing ones happy, fire-fighting and micromanaging employees. As the business grows, so does the pressure. More customers. More complexity. More reliance on the person at the centre of it all. Take them out for a few weeks, and things slow down. Take them out for longer, and things begin to break.

This is where many ambitious businesses hit an invisible ceiling. Not because of market conditions. Not because of competition. Because of structure and a lack of effective systems.

When a business depends on its owner's time, energy and decisions, growth can only

**"Success is built within a system and a community of people who love helping others succeed"**

that many business owners don't: he implemented ActionCOACH from day one and maintained ongoing coaching support throughout his journey. This wasn't a one-time engagement or a quick fix. It was a commitment to building the business properly from the ground up, with an Action Coach always in his corner.

He also made another strategic choice that proved essential. As someone who isn't a dentist, Kunal stuck to what he knew best: sales and marketing. This wasn't a limitation – it was an advantage. By staying in his lane, he was forced to focus on systems and commercial growth rather than getting pulled into the technical side of dentistry. He built the business to run through systems and people, not through his own clinical expertise.

The approach was methodical. With the help of three Action Coaches, Kunal reverse-engineered the business model, put it into practice, and proved it at a single site. He made that one location profitable, then replicated the model. Today, Tooth Club operates across 20 sites, and with each expansion, the efficiency has increased. What once took months of trial and error now takes just 3.5 months to reach breakeven, and less than one year to hit the first £1 million in revenue.

### LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

Kunal's journey wasn't without missteps, and he's open about his biggest mistake: buying an existing dental practice. "It was so hard to shift the system and culture, and it slowed everything down," he explained. The established practice had its own way of doing things, its own embedded culture, and retrofitting the ActionCOACH systems and strategies into that environment proved far more difficult than building from scratch.

### FROM OWNER-LED TO SYSTEM-LED

Through consistent implementation of the ActionCOACH system, Tooth Club underwent a fundamental transformation, starting each quarter with a day at Action's GrowthCLUB to select the biggest priority profit growth and business building strategies for the next 90 days. Leadership capability expanded across the team, moving beyond just Kunal. Decision-making became distributed and embedded in the structure. Accountability became part of the culture, not something imposed from above.

Roles became clearer. Confidence grew across the team. Most importantly, the business became less dependent on one person. Kunal could step back from day-to-day operations and focus on strategic leadership, in line with ActionCOACH's methodology.

### MEASURABLE TRANSFORMATION

Today, Tooth Club operates 20 fully funded clinics and continues to expand its offering. Plans include international patient support services, a business hub in India, and support for overseas dentists seeking to enter the UK. The business is also preparing for a private equity exit, but the most important shift isn't the growth numbers. It's the structure underneath them.

The business now has leadership depth, role clarity and repeatable processes – the things investors look



## FRANCHISE OVERVIEW



**Established:**  
1993

**Location of outlets:**  
UK

**Total investment:**  
£60,000



for when evaluating companies. "We want to build something scalable, sustainable and meaningful," said Kunal. "Growth with integrity."

### WHY THIS WORKS CONSISTENTLY

Tooth Club isn't a one-off success story. It's an example of what happens when a proven system is applied properly. Every ActionCOACH partner is carefully selected (one in 50 candidates make the team) and has access to a shared system, using the same proven frameworks, strategies and tactics that have been refined across hundreds of thousands of businesses worldwide and continue to develop and improve every month.

Business owners don't need to find the "right" personality or hope they get lucky with advice. They need a world-class business coach, a system that works and a network giving them access to key contacts and ideas when they need them.

Across ActionCOACH's UK network, the results speak for themselves: a Net Promoter Score of 84, with 98% of clients saying they would be recommending the service to a family member, friend or associate, and one of only four franchises to achieve five-star franchisee satisfaction every year. These results come from world-class systems, high standards and high-calibre people in the ActionCOACH community.

One of the model's strengths is its underlying network. Franchise partners are supported by shared learning across thousands of client engagements, ongoing development and training, and access to tested strategies and frameworks. Success is not built alone. It is built within a system and a community of people who love helping others succeed. This isn't for everyone. It suits people who love learning, excel at listening, can get their point across in an engaging way and are motivated by making a real difference. People who want the fulfilment of achieving their own success through helping other people achieve their dreams.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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01284 701648

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- **Full support** with site identification, unit layouts, planning consents.
- **Full training** of franchisee and all team.
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- **Menu maintenance** and **new product development**.
- **Benefit from pooled resources** in relation to advertising, marketing including our presence on social media platforms.
- **Established systems** for pos, kiosks, delivery, click & collect, loyalty app, website.

## HIGHLIGHTS

<b>FIT OUT</b>	<b>FROM £250K</b>
<b>SALES</b>	<b>£800K-£1M</b>
<b>PROFIT</b>	<b>10%-15%</b>
<b>PAY BACK PERIOD</b>	<b>3-4 YEARS</b>

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT US  
[FRANCHISE@MISSMILLIES.CO.UK](mailto:FRANCHISE@MISSMILLIES.CO.UK)

*Miss Millie's*

# FUNDING YOUR FRANCHISE DREAM

Funding a franchise is one of the bigger financial decisions you're likely to make. With insights from NatWest, we explore the financial questions every future franchisee should answer before signing on the dotted line



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or many aspiring entrepreneurs, franchising represents a compelling route into business ownership. The appeal is obvious: an established brand, a proven model and the support of an experienced franchisor can make the leap into running a business feel far less daunting than starting from scratch. Yet while the franchise model can reduce certain risks, one reality remains constant – every successful franchise journey begins with careful financial planning.

For lenders, the financial decisions made before a franchise agreement is even signed often determine how smoothly that journey will unfold. From the level of personal investment required to understanding the full scale of start-up costs, the groundwork laid in those early stages can have a profound impact on the long-term health of a franchise business.

Prospective franchisees are often drawn first to the brand. A recognisable name, a compelling product and a clear market opportunity can make a particular franchise feel like the perfect fit. But experienced lenders tend to look at the opportunity from a slightly different angle. Before selecting a brand, future franchise owners should be asking some fundamental questions about their own financial readiness.

How much personal capital can you realistically invest? What level of income will you need the business to generate to support your lifestyle? And perhaps most importantly, can you sustain the business through its early months while it finds its footing?

These questions matter because the early stages of franchise ownership can be financially demanding. While the franchise fee is often the most visible cost, it is rarely the only one. Set-up expenses, working capital, marketing spend and operational costs can quickly add up, and sales may take time to build. Without a clear understanding of these financial realities, even the most promising opportunity can feel more challenging than expected.

Misconceptions around franchising can also influence financial expectations. Some first-time buyers assume that profitability will follow automatically once the doors open, or that the franchisor will generate much of the business for them. In practice, franchise success typically relies on a combination of the brand's support and the franchisee's own drive, local engagement and operational discipline.

From a lender's perspective, the most promising candidates tend to be those who approach the opportunity with both ambition and preparation. They have researched the franchise thoroughly, spoken with the franchisor and existing franchisees, and developed a realistic understanding of the financial commitment involved. They are also prepared for the fact that franchise ownership is rarely a short-term venture. Instead, it is a long-term investment that requires patience, resilience and a clear financial plan.

**“New franchisees frequently underestimate cash flow needs during their first year due to insufficient research. Set-up costs can often escalate too”**

- Vicky Fraser, NatWest



That preparation often includes thinking beyond the first unit as well. Many franchisees enter the system with ambitions to grow their portfolio over time, expanding to multiple territories or locations. Being transparent about those plans early can help shape funding conversations in a more strategic way.

Vicky Fraser, Broker & Franchise Business Support Manager at NatWest Commercial Banking, answers our questions on the financial realities of funding a franchise.

### **From NatWest's perspective, what should prospective franchisees be thinking about financially before they even choose a franchise brand to invest in?**

Before prospective franchisees even select which franchise brand to invest in, there are several critical financial factors they should carefully assess.

Firstly, they need to determine the level of personal financial contribution they can realistically provide. Understanding their cash flow situation is equally important to ensure they can sustain the business through its initial phases.

Franchisees should also consider their personal income requirements, as these will influence how much they need the business to generate. It is essential to look beyond the headline franchise fee and fully account for the total set-up costs, which can be significantly higher.

Lastly, potential franchisees must think about the length of commitment required, recognising that franchise ownership is a long-term endeavour and not a quick return on investment.

### **What are the most common financial misconceptions you see among first-time franchise buyers?**

One frequently observed misconception is the belief that profitability will come automatically, regardless of the individual's



operational approach. Some new franchisees assume the franchisor will provide all the business, underestimating the need to actively seek opportunities themselves.

Another common misunderstanding is viewing the franchise fee as the sole financial outlay; many overlook the various additional set-up expenses that vary depending on the franchise type and scale.

### Are there particular financial indicators or behaviours lenders look for that signal a candidate is well prepared for franchise ownership?

Candidates who demonstrate thorough research and have already engaged in conversations with the franchisor often show strong financial preparedness. Having a contingency plan, or a Plan B, is a positive indicator, as is not relying solely on income from the new franchise during its early stages.

Well-prepared candidates also have a clear rationale explaining why the specific business model aligns with their skills and goals, which suggests a higher likelihood of success.

### Where do new franchisees most often underestimate costs or cashflow requirements in the first year?

New franchisees frequently underestimate costs or cash flow needs during their first year due to insufficient research. Set-up costs often escalate beyond initial estimates, and sales may not ramp up as quickly as anticipated. The timeline to build, fit out, or open a site can be longer than expected, compounding cash flow pressures. Additionally, personal circumstances can change, impacting financial stability if not accounted for beforehand.

### How early in the process should buyers be speaking to a lender like NatWest, and what should they have prepared before that conversation?

We recommend prospective buyers approach lenders such as

NatWest early in the process, ideally once they have shown genuine interest and engaged with the franchisor. Before these conversations, they should have a solid understanding that the franchise brand aligns with their personal and professional objectives.

Additionally, being aware of the total costs involved and how much they can contribute from their own resources enables more productive financial discussions.

### For those hoping to scale to multiple units in the future, how should they be structuring their funding conversations from day one?

For those aiming to expand to multiple franchise units over time, it is crucial to be transparent from the outset about these ambitions. Being realistic about costs and timelines helps in structuring feasible funding strategies.

Candidates should also consider any assets they possess that may improve their funding options. Flexibility in their business plan is vital to adapt to unforeseen challenges encountered during the initial opening and subsequent rollouts.

### Have you seen any shifts in franchise funding expectations or applicant profiles in today's market compared to recent years?

We have noticed that many applicants still expect to borrow 100% of the set-up costs, unaware that lenders typically require a significant personal financial contribution. This misconception persists despite evolving market conditions.

### If you could give someone considering their first franchise investment one piece of financial advice, what would it be?

While NatWest does not provide personalised financial advice, our strongest recommendation is for prospective franchisees to conduct thorough research and utilise the expertise available within the marketplace. Most importantly, they should ensure that the franchise brand is the right fit for their individual goals and circumstances before committing financially.

## INDUSTRY RESEARCH

The BFA's 2024 National Franchise Survey points to strong growth, high profitability and rising confidence across the UK franchise sector, with proven models continuing to outperform independent start-ups.

89%

of franchised units are profitable

£400,000

is the average turnover per unit

82%

of franchisees are satisfied with their franchisors

60%

feel franchising has met their expectations

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CLEANING SERVICES

# Making a million with Molly Maid

Minimum required capital:  
**£23,975**  
+VAT

Meet the high-performing franchisees hitting new industry heights

**A**

t the 2026 Molly Maid Annual Conference, Gill and Rob Dawson of Molly Maid

Burton Upon Trent & Derby made history by becoming the first franchisees in the network to achieve £1 million in annual turnover. Today, they stand as the leading Molly Maid franchisees, setting the benchmark for performance across the network.

Their success has been consistently recognised. Their sales growth achievements have seen them scoop the annual performance award five times and qualify for the prestigious Molly Maid Escape incentive trips on three occasions, visiting Venice, Athens, and Marrakech - a reflection of their sustained, high-level performance.

For those considering business ownership, Gill and Rob's journey offers a powerful insight into what can be achieved with the right support, structure and ambition.

But their story didn't start at the top.

"When we took over the business in 2017, it was turning over just £500 a week," says Gill. "At the time, it felt like a mountain to climb, but we always believed there was more potential."

## SETTING THE VISION

After exceptionally strong early growth in their first five years, Rob explains that everything changed in 2023 when the couple set their sights on going big.

"With the help of the Support Office at Molly Maid UK, we created a clear framework with phased milestones to achieve our goal. That structure gave us clarity and direction - we weren't just working hard, we were working towards something specific."

They set a bold target in 2023 - to grow from £13,000 to £20,000 in weekly sales within four years, and become the first franchisee to reach £1 million in annual turnover.

"Writing it down made it real," Rob adds. "Once we had that plan, it gave us focus every single week." Remarkably, they achieved their four-year goal in just two.



## BUILDING THE RIGHT STRUCTURE

A key turning point was recognising they couldn't do it alone.

"You can't scale a business if you're trying to do everything yourself," says Gill. "The moment we invested in the right people, everything started to accelerate."

For Rob, understanding the financial drivers was critical. "You have to know your numbers inside out, sales, costs and profit," he points out. "Once you understand how they connect, you can make better decisions with confidence."

Growth didn't come without risk. "There were times when investing in marketing and staff felt like a step backwards," Gill admits. "But we trusted in the process, it's about taking one step back to move two steps forward." Like any business journey, there were challenges along the way. "We had setbacks," says Rob. "But the key is not to stop. You adjust, learn and keep going."

Once the structure was in place, their attention turned fully to growth. "Sales became our obsession, but in a good way," Gill says. "We tracked everything weekly and stayed focused on moving forward."

Today, their £1 million milestone is a powerful example of what can be achieved with ambition, discipline and the right support. For those exploring franchise opportunities, Gill offers simple advice: "If you're willing to commit, follow the system and think big, there's no reason you can't achieve the same success."

Rob adds: "Molly Maid gives you the framework, the support and the opportunity - it's what you do with it that makes the difference."

Their message is clear: the opportunity is there, and the next success story could be yours. Please reach out to Jonathan Holden, Chief Operating Officer, Molly Maid UK to find out more about how you could join the Molly Maid family.

## FRANCHISE OVERVIEW



**Established:**  
1984

**Number of units:**  
68 franchisees,  
94 territories

**Total investment:**  
£23,975 + VAT  
(plus £7,000  
working capital)



## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Jonathan Holden, COO [jholden@mollymaid.co.uk](mailto:jholden@mollymaid.co.uk)

FRANCHISE AGREEMENTS

# MAPPED OUT FOR SUCCESS

Discover key insights every franchisee needs to navigate territory rights, with guidance from two of the UK's leading experts



F

ranchising in the UK isn't governed by a single, overarching law, meaning the structure of the relationship between franchisors and franchisees relies on one key document: the franchise agreement. This agreement should clearly outline the rights, responsibilities, and expectations of both parties. Without that clarity, things can quickly become complicated.

The key to protecting your investment often lies in the territorial rights granted within that agreement. These rights can define everything from the market you can target to how you're shielded from competition. Enter our experts: lawyer Emily Sadler, Senior Commercial Solicitor at Harper James, and franchise consultant Maria Misyurina, co-founder of Franchising Guru with 15 years of experience in franchising and law. Both highlight the importance of legal due diligence in ensuring that the territorial terms align with your business goals and provide the protection you need.

As Maria points out, in the UK, franchising is largely based on contract law with guidance from the British Franchise Association's Code of Ethics, so it's crucial to pay close attention to the details. "The relationship between the parties depends primarily on the terms set out in their franchise agreement, which should clearly define the rights and responsibilities of both parties," she points out. "Remember, any discussions or changes about territory must be documented in writing to be legally binding – without that, there's no guarantee of protection. It's highly advisable to engage an experienced lawyer to review these agreements, as some may include very specific territorial nuances."

So, whether you're signing up for a traditional franchise, or considering a more flexible remote digital model, understanding the ins and outs of territorial



rights is essential for long-term success. With insights from Maria and Emily, this article will help you navigate the complexities of franchise agreements with confidence.

### **What's the difference between unit, area development, and area representative franchise agreements?**

Choosing the right franchise agreement is crucial, as each model impacts liability, compliance obligations, and profit-sharing.

"Legal due diligence is essential when determining which structure best suits your ambitions and capabilities," says Emily.

"A unit franchise agreement grants a franchisee the right to operate a single unit in a specific location," she explains. "The franchisor retains significant control, and any further expansion requires separate agreements."

By contrast, an area development agreement allows a franchisee to open multiple units within a defined territory over a set period. "While the franchisor still maintains oversight, the focus is on meeting development milestones rather than managing daily operations, with clear performance targets set in the agreement," she adds.

Failing to meet these deadlines can have serious consequences. "If a franchisee falls behind on their development commitments, the agreement may be terminated, and any undeveloped territories annulled," warns Maria. "That said, this structure can be highly attractive, as it often comes with incentives such as reduced fees or extended development periods, benefiting both the franchisee and the franchisor by accelerating market expansion."

**"In the UK, the franchise territory must be defined in clear, unambiguous terms – typically using maps, postal codes, or detailed descriptions – to ensure that both franchisor and franchisee understand operational boundaries"**

- Maria Misyurina, co-founder of Franchising Guru



An area representative agreement, also known as a master franchise, operates on a much larger scale – covering a region (such as the North of England) or an entire country (such as France). “The area representative, or master franchisee, is responsible for recruiting sub-franchisees, assigning territories, providing training, and ensuring marketing and operational standards are upheld,” continues Emily. “They may also run their own units. In return, they receive a larger share of franchise fees and royalties, passing the remainder to the franchisor.”

This model enables rapid growth but comes with significant responsibilities. “An area representative must handle recruitment, training, and ongoing support, which often requires additional legal and financial structures to manage sub-franchisees effectively,” says Maria.

“Master franchisees operate under a master franchise agreement, which grants them the rights to develop and sub-franchise within a defined territory,” adds Emily. “They must also have a robust sub-franchise agreement that aligns with the original franchisor’s terms while ensuring compliance with UK regulations. Although franchise law in the UK falls primarily under contract law, master

franchisees must also navigate competition law, intellectual property protections, data protection regulations, and consumer rights laws. Acting as intermediaries between the franchisor and sub-franchisees, they need clear contractual obligations to manage their legal and operational responsibilities effectively.”

### How do joint ventures or partnership-based franchise agreements work in practice?

“In a joint venture franchise, the franchisor and franchisee create a new legal entity, often a limited company, where both hold equity and share in the profits and responsibilities. This entity operates the franchised business,” explains Emily. “A partnership-based model, on the other hand, involves the parties entering into a legal partnership, governed by a formal agreement, to run the business together.”

“A detailed partnership agreement is essential,” advises Maria. “It should clearly define ownership percentages, management responsibilities, decision-making authority, and operational roles. Profits, losses, and risks must also be distributed according to pre-agreed terms to protect all parties involved.”

“These structures also give franchisees greater influence over business operations and decision-making compared to a traditional franchise model,” Emily notes. “However, they come with risks, such as disputes over control, profit-sharing, and long-term strategy. When structured well, they can lead to significant financial rewards and a closer working relationship with the franchisor.”

For franchisors, this model can be particularly beneficial when expanding into new regional or international markets. “Partnering with individuals who have local market expertise – such as knowledge of consumer behaviour, regulatory environments, and cultural nuances – allows the franchisor to maintain control while leveraging local insights. Some brands, like Velvet Taco, have successfully used this approach to accelerate expansion,” points out Maria.

### How do you define a territory?

“In the UK, the franchise territory must be defined in clear, unambiguous terms – typically using maps, postal codes, or detailed descriptions,” explains Maria. “This ensures both franchisor and franchisee understand operational boundaries.”

Poorly defined territories can lead to disputes. “Although equal-sized territories may seem fair, factors like demographics and geography determine sales potential,” she adds. Many franchisors use mapping software, and franchisees have the right to request these maps to assess market

## Territory traps: what to watch out for

**Maria Misyurina warns that unclear territorial terms can leave franchisees vulnerable to competition, market dilution, and lost revenue. Watch out for these pitfalls.**

### Overly broad

Franchisors risk granting large exclusive territories to franchisees who fail to develop them. Many agreements allow franchisors to withdraw exclusivity if performance targets aren’t met. Franchisees should ensure territorial changes are a last resort after all other options have been exhausted.

### Inadequate restrictions

If the agreement doesn’t clearly restrict the franchisor from opening additional outlets, franchisees may face internal competition. Risk management should be in place before expansion is permitted.

### Unrestricted selling or delivery

Such clauses allow franchisors to sell or deliver products anywhere, eroding a franchisee’s exclusive rights. This can lead to market cannibalisation, where franchisees lose sales to the franchisor’s own outlets or delivery services.

### Competing brand acquisition

If a franchisor can acquire a competing brand within or near a franchisee’s territory, it can create direct competition and dilute the franchisee’s market. Beyond competition, it may even allow re-branding of the acquired business, confusing customers and undermining local brand presence.

**“If an agreement is vague, legal options may be limited. Strong, clear contracts are the best protection against disputes”**



potential. Performance targets should be reasonable and achievable within the defined area.

Exclusive territory clauses protect a franchisee’s market share by preventing the franchisor from opening additional outlets or granting overlapping rights,” continues Maria. “If exclusivity is not granted, the franchise agreement must clearly outline risk management measures – such as notice periods and operational safeguards – to prevent unfair competition. Franchisees may well be allowed to market or deliver outside their territory, but clear communication is essential to avoid market overlap.”

### **How do territorial rights typically work in non-compete terms?**

The ability for franchisors to open competing units depends on the franchise agreement. “If the agreement grants exclusive territorial rights, the franchisor cannot open another unit – whether franchised or corporate-owned – within that territory without breaching the contract,” highlights Emily. However, if the agreement provides only ‘sole’ rights, the franchisor can operate its own outlet in the area but cannot appoint another franchisee. Clarity in the agreement’s wording is crucial to ensure franchisees are properly protected.

“Territorial rights in franchise agreements often come with non-compete provisions, which limit internal competition,” Maria points out. “These rights typically provide

franchisees with market protection, ensuring no competing franchise units or head-office-owned outlets can operate within their designated area. This protection supports franchisees in building their business and brand without undermining their efforts through internal competition. Some agreements even extend these protections to online sales or delivery services marketed under the franchisee’s local operation.”

Non-compete clauses must comply with statutory requirements, like the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977 and competition laws, ensuring they are not unfairly restrictive. If the territorial clause is too broad, it could be challenged in court, weakening the franchisee’s protection. “For these clauses to be effective, they must be precisely drafted to avoid ambiguity,” Maria continues. “If an exclusivity clause is ambiguous or overly broad, the franchisee’s protection may be weakened.”

Encroachment disputes arise when a franchisor or another franchisee operates in or near a protected territory, drawing customers away. This can be through new physical locations, online sales, or indirect competition. “If the agreement guarantees exclusivity, the franchisee can seek legal remedies such as damages or an injunction to stop the encroachment. However, if the agreement is vague, legal options may be limited. Strong, clear contracts are the best protection against such disputes,” advises Emily.

### **How do territorial rights work with remote franchise models?**

In remote franchise models, such as those involving virtual assistants or digital marketing, territorial rights are defined by market segments or customer bases rather than geographic areas. Some franchisors manage this centrally, while others allow franchisees to freely compete for digital customers. “Franchise agreements should clearly outline how leads and online sales are allocated to avoid disputes,” Emily recommends.

“Franchise agreements often include provisions for assigning customers in an online environment,” explains Maria, adding that if services or products are purchased directly from the franchisor’s website, the franchisor may designate customers to specific franchisees based on criteria like location, service type, or demographics. “This approach balances flexibility with franchisee protection, ensuring fair distribution of business even when territorial exclusivity isn’t granted.”

Alternatively, franchisors may adopt an open territory model, where franchisees aren’t assigned specific geographic areas. “In this approach, franchisees can solicit customers from anywhere within the franchisor’s market reach, competing for digital customers with other franchisees,” Maria concludes. “This model removes traditional territorial boundaries, offering less protection but more freedom.”

LIFESTYLE FRANCHISE

# Charting your own course

Minimum required capital:  
**£790**  
+ VAT

Backed by Fred. Olsen Travel, GoCruise & Travel offers the chance to build a flexible travel business while creating unforgettable holidays

**F**or many people, planning a holiday begins with a quick online search. But for customers who want reassurance, expertise, and a truly tailored experience, the conversation often starts elsewhere - with a trusted travel advisor. That is the philosophy behind GoCruise & Travel, a franchise network built around personal service, specialist knowledge, and independent advice.

GoCruise & Travel brings together a nationwide community of individual business owners who help customers find their ideal holiday, whether that's a luxury cruise, a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, or a carefully planned family getaway. Franchisees work with all the major names in the travel industry, supported by strong partnerships with leading cruise lines and holiday providers. These relationships allow them to curate bespoke travel experiences while offering competitive deals and trusted recommendations.

The brand is part of Fred. Olsen Travel, one of the UK's best-known travel agencies with a heritage dating back to 1988. This backing provides franchisees with access to established industry relationships, operational expertise, and the reassurance of working under a respected and recognised travel brand. Every holiday booked through the network is protected by ABTA and ATOL, ensuring peace of mind for both customers and business owners.

For franchise partners, the model offers a balance between independence and support. GoCruise



FRANCHISE OVERVIEW

**Established:**  
2001

**Number of units:**  
59

**Locations of units:**  
5 Franchise Travel Shops, rest are homeworking

**Minimum required capital:**  
£790 plus VAT for those experienced in travel selling, £3490 plus VAT for those with business experience, or £6490 plus VAT for those with no experience in travel



& Travel provides ongoing training to develop franchisees' travel knowledge across the wide range of products they sell, alongside practical guidance on running and growing their own travel business. From marketing tools to operational advice, the aim is to equip each franchisee with the resources needed to build a strong and sustainable customer base.

A key part of the opportunity lies in its flexibility. Franchisees operate within their own territories and have the freedom to build relationships with customers in their local communities while also growing their own personal client database. Many are drawn to the ability to shape their business around their lifestyle, setting their own working hours and developing their ambitions at their own pace.

At its heart, GoCruise & Travel focuses on the idea that a memorable holiday begins long before departure. By combining expert guidance with personal service, franchisees aim to create travel experiences that customers return for time and again.

For those with a passion for travel and a desire to run their own business, GoCruise & Travel offers the opportunity to turn that enthusiasm into a rewarding career in one of the world's most exciting industries.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Colin Martin-Weekes [colin@gocruiseandtravel.co.uk](mailto:colin@gocruiseandtravel.co.uk)  
07880 290 993



# How to build a franchise system that really works

Six lessons for franchisors who want to build an enduring and sustainable franchise system and not just sell territories



## FRANCHISE COUNSEL

### PREMIER EDUCATION

In 1999, Premier Education started with a few holiday camps. Today, it's the UK's largest provider of four core services for primary school-age children, providing wraparound care, holiday clubs, PE and school sport and extra-curricular clubs.



**David Batch**  
CEO OF PREMIER  
EDUCATION

## 1

### FINANCIAL CONTROL MATTERS MORE THAN GROWTH

"If franchisees are not in financial control, no-one is."

Understanding the financial detail of the business is the most critical skill a franchisee must develop.

In the early phases, the focus is simple: generate enough revenue to survive, grow and keep start-up lending under control.

As the business grows, cash management becomes even more important. More money may flow through the business, but it can

disappear just as quickly.

A company can be profitable and still fail because of poor cash control. Small improvements in financial discipline can dramatically change profitability as revenue grows.

How strong are franchisees' budgeting skills? Do they understand their gross profit margins and the drivers behind them? Are overheads tightly managed? How quickly does cash move through the business? Are these metrics being tracked weekly, not just monthly? And do franchisees have management accounts that provide the information needed to intervene early?

Before launching another franchise territory, ask yourself: can every existing franchisee clearly answer three questions – where am I making money, where am I losing it, and what do I do next?

If not, growth becomes a risk rather than a strategy.

## 2

### OPERATIONAL CONTROL DRIVES PERFORMANCE

"If financial control is the vehicle, operational control is the driver."

Financial results are simply the outcome of the standards applied across every operational function. Operational control means understanding, influencing and improving each of those functions.

Key performance indicators aligned to budgets – and adjusted throughout the year – provide the window into the future performance of the business.

These metrics might cover quality, customers, sales, staff and regulatory compliance. Without them, how can a franchisee realistically change their future performance?

Do franchisees have clear, network-wide indicators? And do they know:

- where to find them
- how to change them
- and what impact those changes will have?

For franchisors, these numbers are equally important as they reveal network trends and allow timely, targeted support.

### 3 ENGINEER ACCOUNTABILITY - DON'T JUST PROMISE SUPPORT

“Saying you support franchisees is easy. Proving it is harder.”

Strong franchisors should be able to pinpoint exactly what tools, training and support have been provided to help a franchisee address a challenge. That transparency creates accountability for the franchisor.

The next step is building systems where franchisees are accountable for operational performance through structured reporting and regular reviews. Clear, documented feedback tied to action plans ensures support is focused where it matters most.

The ultimate stage comes when franchisees use the tools already provided to solve problems themselves, reporting their actions in scheduled reviews. That's when accountability becomes part of the network culture.

Design franchisor support like a product, with clear inputs, diagnostics, interventions and outcomes. If neither franchisor nor franchisee can explain how support changes results, it's probably just noise.

### 4 INNOVATE WITH FRANCHISEES, NOT FOR THEM

“The most successful ideas are collaborative.”

Our biggest-selling product today barely existed three years ago. But innovation isn't just about launching something new. It can be a better process, system or technology. If it helps customers, schools, franchisees or staff operate more effectively, it counts as innovation.

Involving stakeholders in these decisions prevents costly mistakes and builds confidence across the network. Tools like product roadmaps, technology strategies and growth blueprints help everyone see where the business is heading. Structured franchisee groups or innovation committees can also play



#### SYSTEM FIRST

A franchise brand is only as strong as its systems. Sustainable growth happens when franchisees have the tools, data and structure to run their businesses with control.



#### SHARED CULTURE

Strong franchise networks balance support with responsibility. When franchisees take ownership of performance, accountability becomes part of the culture.



#### SHARED GROWTH

The most effective franchise systems evolve with their operators. Innovation works best when franchisees help shape new ideas.

## “Is there a shared vision that both franchisor and franchisees genuinely aspire to? And how do you know that front-line staff act on it too?”

a critical role, not just in developing ideas, but in deciding which opportunities to say no to.

Formalise collaboration through pilot programmes and trailblazer groups. A model isn't truly finished until your best operators would confidently bet their own P&L on it.

### 5 KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS... ALL OF THEM

“Franchising is simply the route to market.”

Franchising brings businesses closer to customers, but the goal remains the same – to build relationships that lead to repeat purchasing.

Franchisees naturally collect feedback. But they can't always see the bigger patterns. That's where the franchisor must step in. Franchisors should aim to have deeper customer intelligence than any individual franchisee.

Network-wide data reveals trends long before they appear locally. Customer insight should extend beyond demographics to include:

- buying behaviour
  - booking patterns
  - heat maps
  - segmentation
  - and long-term demand trends.
- This intelligence should continuously feed training, marketing, product development and operational improvements.

Keep asking: Is this still the best solution to the market's problem? If the data says no, update the solution, not the sales target.

### 6 LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

“Awards are nice, but behaviour is what really counts.”

Our 2025 BFA Leadership & Culture Award wasn't the result of a

polished values statement. It came from turning our Culture Code into something measurable, reviewable and linked directly to performance.

Culture is often measured through employee satisfaction, retention or perks. Those indicators do matter, but they are only half of the equation. The other half is performance, development, accountability and ambition.

Work should challenge people. That challenge is part of the satisfaction, so perks should support performance and not replace it.

Creating this culture inside a central team is one challenge. Embedding it across a network of franchisees and thousands of employees a franchisor may never meet is another thing entirely.

Ask yourself: is there a shared vision that both franchisor and franchisees genuinely aspire to? And how do you know that front-line staff understand it and act on it? Give franchisees the tools they need to strengthen their own culture and measure its impact consistently.

### 7 FINAL THOUGHT

Alongside the BFA awards, 2025 has seen Premier Education recognised as:

- 60th Best Place to Work in the UK
- 37th Best Place to Work for Women
- 44th Best Place for Personal Development

They are proud moments, but they are outputs, not goals. The real goal has always been simple: Happy, Healthy Futures.

If you're building a franchise system, don't chase trophies or territory counts. Chase control, culture, collaboration, innovation and impact and let the awards take care of themselves.

# HOW TO CLIMB THE FRANCHISE LADDER

38

Multi-unit franchise ownership has become one of the sector's biggest growth stories. We explore ways in which the dream of expansion is surprisingly accessible to many first-time investors





**F**or many people entering franchising, the goal is simple: replace a salary, run a business and enjoy greater independence.

The first franchise unit is often seen as a personal venture – a way to take control of income while benefiting from the structure and support of an established brand.

But increasingly, franchising is becoming something far more ambitious. Multi-unit franchising has quietly become one of the sector's most successful growth stories, with a growing number of operators moving beyond the single-unit model, and building portfolios of territories, teams and locations. For those who get it right, franchising can evolve from self-employment into a scalable multi-million-pound business platform.

According to the British Franchise Association, the strategy works because it aligns incentives on both sides of the partnership. Franchisees who already understand the model can replicate it, expanding their operations by adding territories or locations, while franchisors benefit from working with experienced operators who are fully invested in the success of the brand.

Some brands have embraced the model so strongly that they now prioritise multi-unit candidates from the outset.

“The multi-unit franchise strategy is a great success for many franchisors and franchisees across the sector,” the BFA notes. “For the franchisor, they have a franchisee who is 100% motivated to the growth of multiple businesses. Their business still grows without the need to train up and support multiple franchisees, but the franchisor has to be willing to involve the franchisee in decision making, working as a team rather than a traditional franchisee/franchisor relationship.”

For franchisees, the logic can be equally compelling. Once the model is understood, expansion can simply become a case of repeating what already works – building teams, expanding operational capacity and gradually scaling the infrastructure behind the business.

But while the idea of building a franchise portfolio is appealing, the reality is more complex than simply buying a second territory with ambition to grow. The structure of the franchise system, the economics of the model, the strength of operational support and the availability of funding all play critical roles in determining whether expansion is a realistic pathway or an expensive misstep.

For ambitious buyers, the real challenge begins before the first agreement is even signed: identifying a franchise that offers genuine headroom for growth, and laying the foundations that will make climbing the franchise ladder possible.

### Thinking beyond unit one

The idea of rapidly scaling a franchise business can be appealing to first-time buyers, but experienced advisers say the initial goal should simply be to build a stable business. Only once that foundation is firmly in place does the conversation about additional territories or units begin to make sense.

Fiona Boswell, partner at Knights, says the decision to expand should always be driven by operational stability rather than ambition alone.

“Franchise owners should only start to think about growth once they have sufficiently established their existing unit and are confident they can maintain its profitability whilst expanding to operate another,”

she warns. “They’ll also need to be sure they have an operational team that is consistent and experienced.”

Without those foundations, expanding too early can quickly stretch both finances and management capacity, but operational readiness is only part of the picture. Legal structures can also play a critical role in shaping a franchisee’s long-term growth potential. Many franchise agreements grant rights to operate a single territory or unit only, meaning additional opportunities may not automatically be available later.

Boswell notes that ambitious buyers often assume expansion will naturally follow success, but the contractual reality can be very different. “Typical franchise agreements grant rights to open one unit only. This means if you want the opportunity to open more you will need to ask for this and have it reflected in a side letter to the agreement,” she advises.

Understanding the scope of the rights granted at the outset is therefore essential. Failing to do so can quietly limit future opportunities before the business has even begun. Boswell adds, “Those that fail to get advice on their franchise agreements fail to appreciate the scope of rights granted, particularly when it concerns exclusivity.”

Territory design is another factor that can affect whether or not future expansion is realistic. While many prospective franchisees focus on the size of the territory they are offered, Boswell believes the underlying market matters far more.

“It’s not about size, it’s about demographics. Are there sufficient potential customers in your allocated area? In what way can this area be encroached on? What rights has the franchisor reserved?”

For buyers hoping to scale over time, securing expansion opportunities early can be one of the most strategic steps they take. Boswell’s advice is simple: “Get first dibs on adjoining territories.”

### A brand built for growth

For ambitious buyers hoping to build more than a single-unit business, selecting the right franchise brand from the outset is critical. While many opportunities look attractive at first glance, not all systems are designed with long-term expansion in mind.

Charlie Dickson, franchise consultant at Ashtons Franchise Consulting, says prospective franchisees should be careful not to confuse strong branding and marketing with genuine long-term potential.

“For someone considering investing in a franchise business, one of the biggest deliberations is how to separate a brand that simply helps you start a business, from one that provides opportunity, growth and support for the lifetime of the franchise,” he advises.

**“The real acid test of any franchise opportunity is how the current franchise network is performing. This proves the model works”**



“Many franchises look appealing at first glance with strong branding, eye-catching marketing and enticing sales and profit projections. However, a good first impression doesn’t necessarily translate into long-term success.”

Instead, he advises buyers to take time and carefully evaluate whether a franchise is genuinely built for sustainable growth or simply structured to maximise territory sales.

“The real acid test of any franchise opportunity is how the current franchise network is performing. This proves that the model works in the real world, in various geographic and demographic locations,” he points out. “It also reveals the true relationship with the franchisor – in particular, the support the franchisor delivers to franchisees on an ongoing basis, which in my experience is critical.”

Dickson says one of the strongest signs of long-term growth potential is when existing operators choose to invest in employing more people, opening new units or upgrades to existing unit/s. When a franchisee chooses to invest in more location/s, that’s a clear signal of a healthy system, and a strong endorsement for the brand.”

Equally, buyers should pay attention to warning signs within a network. “Are existing franchise owners renewing their franchise agreements? Evidence of a high turnover of franchisees, short ownership or franchise closures is a potential red flag.”

Launching a first unit is only the beginning. The strongest franchise systems are designed to help operators grow beyond that starting point. Phil Mowat, franchise consultant at Ashtons Franchise Consulting, says prospective buyers should be thinking about this long before they commit to a brand. “A franchisor shouldn’t just help you launch; they should help you scale,” he says.



## WHAT THE MULTI-UNIT OPERATORS SAY:

**Lesley & Jamie Clark**

*Multi-unit franchisees, Greensleeves Lawn Care - Doncaster and North Yorkshire*

“Before taking on each territory, we scoped out the competition carefully. We researched how many other lawn care businesses were operating and where they were primarily based. But even if we had felt the areas were saturated, it wouldn't have put us off completely. Good competition is healthy. It just means you have to make sure you're doing a better job.”

**Nikky Watts**  
*Multi-unit franchisee, Stagecoach Performing Arts - Farnborough and Guildford*

“Being part of an established franchise gives you momentum from day one. A recognised name builds trust and drives enquiries in a way that's much harder to replicate independently.”

In practical terms, that means a franchise system should offer more than initial training and a start-up framework. Buyers with long-term ambitions should expect clear evidence that the franchisor has built structures to support ongoing growth.

In practice, that support tends to show up in several key areas. A strong franchise system often includes a clearly defined roadmap for expansion, structured performance reviews and commercial coaching designed to help franchisees build momentum.

Strong franchise networks also tend to foster a collaborative culture, where operators can learn from one another and share practical experience, and evolving systems that actively help franchisees generate and sustain demand. Marketing support, for example, should “generate real leads – not just brand awareness, but measurable ROI.”

However, prospective franchisees should not rely solely on what they are told during the recruitment process. As Mowat puts it: “Don't rely on the messages from the franchisor alone. You **MUST** speak to franchisees.”

One simple test question can reveal how well a system is prepared for growth. Ask the franchisor: “If I want to double in size over the next three years, what practical support will you provide?” If the answer lacks detail, the system may not yet be equipped to support ambitious operators.

### Funding expansion

Even when a franchise system is designed to support expansion, one of the biggest perceived barriers to growth remains finance. Many prospective franchisees assume the real challenge lies in securing funding for additional units when the opportunity arises. But as

Rob Hall, franchise consultant at Ashtons Franchise Consulting, points out, the groundwork for future expansion often begins much earlier. Hall believes many franchisees underestimate how important financial preparation is from the very beginning of their journey.

### Prepare ahead

Too often, new operators focus almost entirely on securing the capital needed to launch their first territory and expansion funding only becomes a consideration once a second location becomes available. But Hall believes this often misses the real issue. “Finance may feel like the biggest barrier to expansion, but in reality, poor preparation is the real constraint,” he says. “Too many new operators focus solely on funding their launch and only think about growth capital when a second site or territory becomes available.”

In Hall's experience, the most successful franchisees take a different approach, thinking about long-term growth from the outset rather than waiting until the first unit is firmly established. “The most successful franchisees plan for expansion from day one. Lenders back predictability, not optimism,” he says.

That predictability is built through consistent financial performance. Demonstrating stable trading, clear reporting, strong margins and reliable cash flow management can significantly improve a franchisee's ability to access funding when expansion opportunities arise. “Whether funding comes from a high street bank, other lenders, or schemes supported by the British Business Bank, what matters is trading stability, clear financial reporting, consistent margins and strong cash flow control,” he explains.

## WHY MULT-UNIT FRANCHISING IS IMPORTANT

The are over **1,009** franchise systems in the UK making it a growing sector

**89%**

OF UNITS ARE PROFITABLE, SUPPORTING EXPANSION POTENTIAL

**30%**

OF FRANCHISEES CURRENTLY RUN MORE THAN ONE OUTLET

**65%**

of franchisors expect at least one unit in their network to be offered as a resale in the coming year

By reinvesting profits strategically and maintaining strong banking relationships, franchisees can create flexibility when the time comes to expand. “Retained profit is often the cheapest and fastest route to growth,” Hall advises. “Extracting too much income early can slow expansion later. Franchisees who build a reserve, reinvest strategically and maintain strong banking relationships create options – and options create momentum.”

For those with long-term ambitions, Hall’s message is clear: expansion funding rarely materialises overnight. “Expansion funding isn’t secured at the point of opportunity. It’s built quietly in the background from the very start.”

### Scaling in the real world

While advisers can outline the frameworks for scaling a franchise business, the realities of growth are often best understood through the experiences of franchisees themselves.

For Lesley and Jamie Clark, who operate Greensleeves Lawn Care franchises in Doncaster and North Yorkshire, local knowledge proved to be one of the most important factors in identifying opportunities for expansion.

“We know both areas very well. Jamie has lived in Doncaster all his life, so he knows the area inside out and understands exactly where to target. Lesley grew up in York and still has family there, so she knows York just as well as Jamie knows Doncaster.”

That familiarity helped them recognise the potential within the territory from the outset. “In fact, we would have taken North Yorkshire on for York alone. To then have all the other great towns and villages within the patch was a big bonus.”

They were also careful to understand the competitive landscape. “Before taking on each territory, we scoped out the competition carefully. We researched how many other lawn care businesses were operating and where they were based. But even if we had felt the areas were saturated, it wouldn’t have put us off completely. Good competition is healthy. It just means you have to make sure you’re doing a better job.”

A similar combination of market opportunity and brand strength shaped the decision to expand for Nikky Watts, who operates Stagecoach Performing Arts franchises in Farnborough and Guildford. In her experience, one of the advantages of franchising is the momentum that comes from operating under a recognised brand.

“Being part of an established



## “You move from being the doer to being the leader”



**Multi-unit franchisee David Gray explains why scaling a franchise business requires a shift in mindset, stronger financial planning and the confidence to trust others to carry the brand forward**

Multi-unit franchisee David Gray owns Petpals Darlington and Petpals Ingleby Barwick & Yarm.

With 55 franchise owners covering more than 150 territories, the multi-service pet care provider has created a network that enables operators like Gray to grow beyond a single territory.

But moving from owner-operator to multi-unit

leader is rarely as simple as repeating the formula that made the first territory successful.

For Gray, the transition has been less about expansion alone and more about learning how the role of a franchise owner evolves as the business grows. We asked him to explain more.

“One of the biggest lessons I’ve learned is that you can’t just replicate

exactly what you did in your first territory and expect it to work in the same way.

When you’re running a single unit, you’re at the centre of it all. Your energy drives it. You’re solving the problems, building the relationships and setting the standards every single day. There’s a skillset to that. But when you move into multi-unit, you have to accept that the role changes. You’re



not just running a business anymore; you're building something that can run without you being in the middle of it. That's a very different mindset.

For me, the real shift was asking, how do I recreate myself in another format? Whoever is managing that second territory must carry the same belief in the brand and the same standards that you naturally bring as the owner. As a franchisee, that advocacy comes automatically. Getting someone else to embody that on your behalf is a big step forward.

You're used to being the person who fixes things. Suddenly, you have to let someone else fix them. That takes trust, and it takes a different skillset. You move

from being the doer to being the leader.

On the financial side, I think people sometimes underestimate the jump. When you're running your own territory, you'll be doing lots of things that you're not technically paying yourself for. That's just how owner-operators work. But when you expand and put someone else in place, every one of those tasks has a cost attached to it. Your cost base will be higher than the one you're used to.

That's why you have to sit down and do a very honest profit and loss forecast, and then really look at your cash flow. It isn't like flipping a switch. It would be lovely if it was, but it rarely is. There will be a period where

you're investing ahead of the income, and you need to be comfortable with that.

You also need contingency. If something dips or doesn't perform as quickly as you'd hoped, you can't always jump in and patch it in the same way as you would with your original territory. You need the financial headroom to absorb that.

But equally, I don't think people should be frightened of ambition. If you've built a strong first territory, if you understand your numbers and if you plan properly, then why wouldn't it work? Do the planning, work through the finances carefully and be realistic about the shift in your role."

franchise gives you momentum from day one. A recognised name builds trust and drives enquiries in a way that's much harder to replicate independently," she says.

As franchisees expand, both operators say the structure of the business itself becomes increasingly important. For the Clarks, maintaining operational efficiency has been key to ensuring growth does not come at the expense of stability, and their early experience working directly in the business helped shape that approach.

"We've always run the business lean. We make sure we're maximising the workload of our existing staff before taking someone new on. Both of us were out on the tools for several years before moving into more office-based roles. That experience means we understand the job inside out."

Watts describes a similar progression in her own role as the business expanded. "The biggest shift when moving into multiple territories was accepting that I couldn't be everywhere at once," she explains, adding that scaling the business meant placing more trust in the team around her. "With one unit, you can oversee everything personally. Once you scale, you rely heavily on your team. Building a stable group of managers and teachers who share my values has been essential," she reflects, noting that the transition inevitably places a greater emphasis on leadership and recruitment.

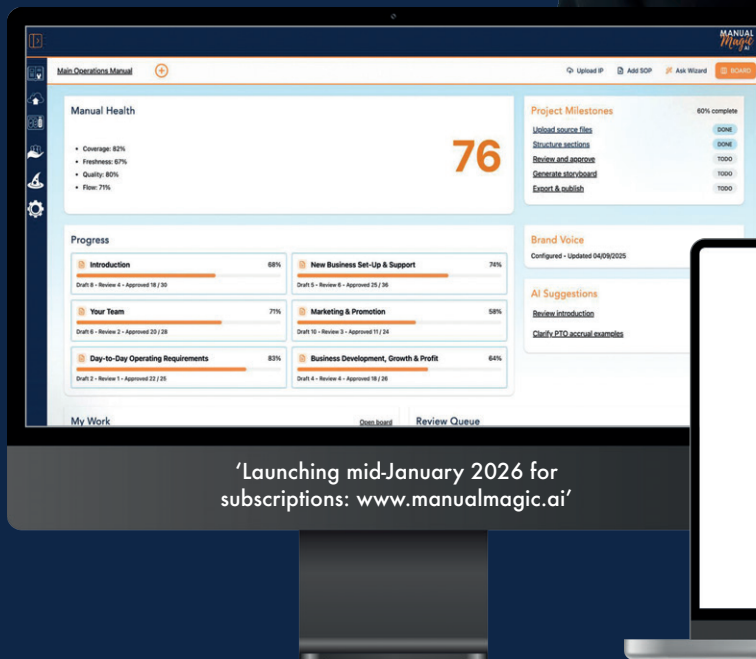
Financial discipline becomes just as important as operational structure once additional territories are added. Watts notes that cash flow management can easily become a pressure point during expansion, as a growing business requires working capital to remain stable and maintain strong relationships. "It's easy to see money accumulating in your account and assume it's all available to draw, but it's so important to always maintain a cash buffer so those relationships are never strained."

Ultimately, both operators emphasise that expansion works best when it is built on the strength of the existing business. For the Clarks, the growth of their original territory provided the confidence to invest further: "We took Doncaster from a £38,000 turnover business in 2011 to £575,000 in 2025."

Watts echoes the same principle when reflecting on her own growth. "For me, scaling has worked because the foundations were secure first. When unit one is solid, unit two becomes an opportunity rather than a gamble."



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expertise, it doesn't replace it.”*

**Penny Hopkinson, CEO, Manual Magic AI Ltd**

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

**– Pip Wilkins, CEO, the British Franchise Association**

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# WHERE THE BEST franchises are investing right now

Where a franchise brand invests says everything about its ambition. Here are five areas where the strongest systems are backing their future – and their franchisees

01

## Smarter tech and digital infrastructure

Tech is quickly becoming one of the biggest differences between average franchise systems and outstanding ones, with leading brands investing in advanced EPOS platforms, inventory management systems, customer relationship tools and data-driven marketing technology. Many franchisors are also improving online ordering, delivery integrations and loyalty programmes to reflect changing consumer behaviour.

For franchisees, strong technology investment means less time spent on administration and more time focusing on customers, growth and profitability.



03

## Operational systems and scalable processes

The best franchisors are constantly refining their operational systems to ensure every location delivers the same high-quality experience.

Investment often includes improved onboarding processes, clearer compliance frameworks and streamlined workflows that reduce complexity for franchisees.

Many brands are also introducing real-time reporting dashboards that provide clear visibility. These systems create a more predictable, scalable business model, allowing franchisees to focus on growth rather than constantly solving operational problems.

02

## Brand marketing and local lead generation

Great franchise brands never assume reputation alone will drive growth. Instead, they invest heavily in national marketing while giving franchisees the tools to generate demand locally. Digital advertising, social media campaigns, AI-powered targeting, SEO and content marketing now sit at the heart of many franchise marketing strategies, along with guidance to enable franchisees to build relationships within their local communities. This combination of national brand visibility and local engagement helps franchisees attract customers more consistently and build long-term loyalty in their area.

05

## Innovation and future growth

The best franchise systems are always thinking about what comes next.

Investment in innovation ensures brands remain competitive and relevant as industries evolve. This may involve developing new products or services, refreshing store designs, exploring sustainability initiatives or expanding into new markets. Some brands are also adopting new technologies that will shape the future of their sector. For potential franchisees, a franchisor that actively invests in innovation sends a clear signal: this is a brand with ambition, resilience and a long-term vision for growth.

04

## Training and leadership development

Successful franchise networks understand that their greatest strength is the power of their people. As a result, many franchisors are expanding their training and leadership development programmes.

Initial training remains essential, but ongoing development is now a major focus. Workshops, mentoring programmes, peer-to-peer learning groups and annual conferences give franchisees the chance to continually develop their skills.

For new franchise owners especially, this ongoing support can be invaluable, helping them grow in confidence, strengthen their leadership abilities and build more successful businesses.

CARE SERVICES

# Where care meets success

Minimum required capital:

£36,000

When you choose Caremark, you join the best in UK franchising, with proof behind it and people behind you

2

026 can be the year you stop circling the idea of business

ownership and finally choose a brand you are proud to stand behind.

Maybe you want a fresh chapter, but not at the expense of stability. Maybe you have built a career, led teams and delivered targets, and now you want something that is yours - something with real purpose, and real commercial strength too.

Caremark is the real care company, helping franchise owners build high-quality home care businesses that are financially strong and immensely rewarding. If you are going to make a move, make it with the best.

### INDEPENDENT PROOF YOU CAN TRUST

Caremark was named HSBC BFA Franchisor of the Year 2025. Its franchise owners have also rated the brand 5 Star Franchisee Satisfaction through the WorkBuzz Best Franchise programme, based on confidential feedback. Caremark is also ranked Top 5 in the Elite Franchise Top 100 for 2026.

“When you join Caremark, you join a network that takes quality seriously”



What matters is what these accolades show. This is not a brand standing still. Caremark is measured, challenged and improving year after year, because its owners expect it and its customers deserve it. When you join Caremark, you join a network that takes quality seriously and backs it up with systems, support and standards.

### A RISING MARKET WITH REAL DEMAND

Families increasingly want trusted care at home, delivered with consistency and compassion. Demand is rising, and the need for strong local providers has never been clearer. In 2026, there is a real opportunity for values-led, business-minded people to build something lasting in their community.

You do not need a background in care. Many Caremark franchise owners come from other industries. What they share is the drive to lead, the confidence to build a team, and the commitment to do things properly.

From day one, franchise owners are guided through setup, compliance, recruitment, operations and marketing, with practical tools and proven processes that help them grow without compromising quality.

Owners are supported by a dedicated Support Centre team and a network of more than 140 franchise offices, with franchise owners sharing lessons at every stage.

### MAKE 2026 THE YEAR YOU JOIN

If 2026 is your year to make a change, start by contacting the team. They will share the investment, the model, the support you receive, and what ownership looks like in practice.

### FRANCHISE OVERVIEW



**Established:**  
2005

**Number of outlets:**  
142 UK,  
12 International

**Minimum capital required:**  
£36,000

**Total investment:**  
£120,000



### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Matthew Glover [franchise@caremarklimited.co.uk](mailto:franchise@caremarklimited.co.uk)  
01903 266 392

# I BET ON MYSELF & HIT THE JACKPOT

How six franchise owners took a leap, backed themselves, and turned franchising into business success





## SCOTT MACRAE

Franchisee for Right at Home  
Maidenhead, Marlow & Henley

Before I started in franchising, I was a sales director for an American semiconductor company covering Northern Europe. It was different – wildly different – and I didn't know anything about care, other than a bit of family experience.

The change came about because, in reality, I was being pushed out of the business. Manufacturing had already moved to Eastern Europe and China, and design was going the same way. Key clients like Nokia and Sony Ericsson were dying and a sales job that I thought would last a lifetime was becoming more and more of a struggle.

I accepted what was effectively a golden goodbye, marking a very important midlife career crossroads. I knew I wanted to do something completely different – something more connected to people. I'd spent a long time working with engineers, and I just wanted something more human facing.

I started looking at different options, and that's when franchising came onto my radar. I did a psychometric test with Match Point and went to a franchise exhibition at the Reading football stadium, which, to be honest, I found quite overwhelming. You're at a point where you don't really know what you want to do, and suddenly there are all these opportunities in front of you.

What drew me to care – and to Right at Home specifically – was that it didn't just present a business opportunity, it meant something, and that really appealed to me. At the same time, I was very aware I didn't have any experience in the sector, and that's where the franchisor support was important. Right at Home gave me a structure, training and a framework to work within, which meant I wasn't starting completely from scratch.

The most important lesson for me came early on, when I got hands-on and involved in the care of our clients. I didn't want to sit upstairs in an office – I needed to understand what we were asking people to do. So, I went out and did the job. I delivered care, worked with clients and saw first-hand what it all involved. That was a real eye-opener. It's not an easy job, but it's incredibly rewarding, and it gave me a completely different perspective.

You can't really understand it until you've done it. Sitting behind a desk, you don't see the reality of what your team are doing every day, or the positive difference they're making to people's lives. That experience shaped how I approached the business. It gave me a much better understanding of the challenges in care work and the importance of getting things right, both for clients and colleagues.

Moving from a corporate environment into running your own business is a big shift. You're responsible for everything, and there's no one else to fall back on. You must learn quickly and make decisions with the information you have. There's a pressure that comes with that – when it's your business, everything matters more. But you adapt. You make decisions, adjust when things don't go to plan, and keep moving forward.



**“I went from boardrooms to delivering care myself – and that's when I really understood the impact of the business”**

After decades in the semiconductor industry, Scott MacRae found himself at an unexpected turning point. What followed was not just a career change, but a hands-on move into franchising and a completely different way of working.

Today, he is a franchisee with Right at Home, a homecare provider supporting people to live independently in their own homes.

Since launching, he has focused on developing a strong local operation in Maidenhead, Marlow & Henley, combining the structure and support of the Right at Home franchise network with a hands-on, people-first approach.

The support from Right at Home was important, especially in the early stages. Having access to people who had done it before, as well as a network of other franchisees, made a real difference when everything was new. At the same time, you still have to put the work in yourself. You're the one building the team, developing the business in your local area, and making everything work properly day to day.

I was realistic about the financial side from the outset. Coming out of a corporate role, you're used to a certain level of income, and you must adjust your expectations quite quickly. This isn't something that gives you an immediate return – you're investing, building the business from the ground up, and it takes time before you start to see the financial benefits. I understood early on that it was going to be a longer-term build rather than something that would generate quick profits, but they followed as the business took off.

Of course, the commercial side is important, but seeing the difference you're making is what really stands out to me. When you're working in care, you make an impact every day. It's not just about numbers or targets, it's about people's lives, and that gives you a very different kind of motivation.

Looking back, buying a franchise was a big step forward, but it was the right one. It has allowed me to build something of my own while working in a field that genuinely makes a difference – and that makes it feel very worthwhile.



**GENEVIEVE WOODFORD**  
Founder of Seasons Art Class

**“I didn’t take a day off, I just kept going. When everything depends on you, you find a way through”**

The idea for Seasons Art Class came at a time when I didn’t have a job. We were in a recession, and my partner, Mike, was working on commission only, so I was trying to sell lino prints on Etsy just to bring in a bit of extra money.

Then one day, the owner of the art shop I used told me he didn’t think he’d still be there the following month because he’d run out of money. I went home and said to Mike, “Take him out for a drink and see what you can come up with.” By the time he came home, he had a plan. We were going to run art classes, the shop owner would teach, we’d use his unsold stock, and Mike would handle the business side.

I took on researching what else was out there because we wanted to offer something different – something that would fill a gap in the market. Mike already had a framework in mind – a 14-week course with four modules – so I looked into materials and formats, and we settled on drawing, oil pastel, watercolour and acrylic, giving people the chance to try everything before deciding what they liked.

We were very aware of the financial climate, so although it was a higher-ticket product, we had to make it feel like good value to encourage repeat business. We thought people would find a medium they liked and move on, but were pleasantly surprised when that’s not what happened.

When we launched the first class in a small venue in Rustington, it was full, which we couldn’t quite believe. I’d put myself forward as a class assistant, expecting to make tea and tidy up, but as the classes progressed, I realised I could see things the tutor couldn’t, like when people were struggling, falling behind, or feeling unsure. I naturally started stepping in to support them, making sure everyone felt comfortable, and that combination of teaching and care just worked.

Genevieve Woodford is the founder-CEO of Seasons Art Class, which offers structured, tutor-led art courses for adults. She launched the business during the recession alongside her late partner, Mike, starting with a single class and gradually developing a scalable model built around creativity, community and accessible learning. Today, Seasons Art Class has grown into an established franchise network with 132 locations across UK and Europe, helping people across the country explore art in a supportive, social environment.



From there, it grew. We opened more locations and built a model that worked. I wrote handouts based on what the tutor was teaching so people could take that learning home, and that gradually became a key part of what we do.

As more classes filled and people kept coming back, we realised we had something that could be replicated, and that’s when we started franchising.

At that point, we didn’t really know much about franchising. Mike had some experience from years before, when he owned a franchise in Australia, but for me, it was completely new. Looking back, I don’t think you need to understand franchising; you need to understand your business well enough to teach it. I documented everything so someone else could follow the process and make it work in their own area.

Of course, we made mistakes along the way. One of the biggest was trying to do everything ourselves, including drafting our own legal agreements because we couldn’t afford solicitors at the time. That decision came back to bite us later. If I could go back, I’d invest in proper legal support from the beginning.

As we grew, there were challenges. Some areas didn’t perform as expected, and when you’re not there on the ground, it’s hard to know why. I felt a huge responsibility because people had invested in us, and I wanted it to work for them, while we were still running our own branches, training franchisees and trying to grow – often without much external support.

And then everything changed. Mike died, completely unexpectedly, and suddenly I had the whole business on my shoulders, much of which I’d never handled before. My way of coping was to throw myself into the business. I didn’t take a day off. Even the morning after he passed away, I was up at 4am, working. I’d carry on until our son went to bed, then do it all again the next day.

For months, I felt constantly anxious, but I just kept going because I felt like I couldn’t afford to drop anything.

What got me through was the team. They were incredibly loyal and supportive, and I was as honest as I could be about what was happening, so we pulled together and kept things moving forward.

There were other challenges too. At one point, we discovered a major VAT issue, where we’d been classified incorrectly and suddenly owed a large amount. It was frightening, but we faced it head-on and worked relentlessly to resolve it within the time frame.

That period showed me what I was capable of. I’ve always thought of myself as quite ordinary – not particularly academic or business-minded – but when you’re in that situation, it’s sink or swim, and I wasn’t going to sink. Looking back, I’m most proud that I just kept going.

As for the future, I’d love the business to outlive me. I want it to continue bringing people together, and we’re now exploring growth in new areas like the USA, as well as new ways for franchisees to grow their income.

At its heart, Seasons Art Class has always been about people. In a world that’s becoming more digital, there’s a real desire for human connection. That’s exactly what we offer, and why I think it works.



## CHARLOTTE CLAYDON

Franchisee for We Love  
Pets Stevenage

Before We Love Pets, my career had already gone through a few big shifts, starting in retail management with Laura Ashley. It was a role I enjoyed, but after having three children the long days and travel simply weren't compatible with family life and I knew I needed something that allowed more flexibility.

That's when I moved into student exchange. I began as a host, looking after students from overseas, then joined the company's head office before eventually setting up my own business. I loved the responsibility of arranging placements, schools, and host families, the work felt meaningful, and for years it seemed I'd built a business with a secure future.

Then Brexit arrived. Almost overnight, the foundation of my business collapsed. Ninety percent of my students were from EU countries, and with the changes to academic opportunities, the entire model I'd relied upon was no longer viable.

I knew from experience how tough it is to build a business. You can only do it if you're genuinely passionate. And for me, outside of the work I'd already done, the only thing I felt that strongly about was dogs.

We'd had a beautiful cocker spaniel called Bella, who transformed our lives before she sadly passed away far too young. Losing her cemented just how much joy and meaning dogs brought to our family, and I knew I wanted to do something in that world. So I began researching pet care franchises, determined to find a business that aligned with my values and lifestyle.

That's when We Love Pets appeared. What struck me wasn't just the model but the personal touch. I sent an enquiry, and Ryan White, the co-founder, called me back within 20 minutes. He didn't send a copy-and-paste email or a glossy prospectus – he just rang and chatted like we'd known each other for years. I instantly trusted him, and I knew it was the right move.

I loved that We Love Pets mirrored exactly what I'd have wanted for Bella: not kennels or crowded van walks, but family boarding, small group walks, and individual care. It also fitted perfectly with my family life while allowing me to continue running my student business, albeit on a smaller scale.

I wanted to hit the ground running with support behind me, and that's exactly what We Love Pets offered. When I joined in March 2021, the timing was extraordinary. We'd just come out of lockdown, and suddenly half the country had new puppies or kittens. Many were first-time pet owners who saw us not just as walkers or boarders but as a lifeline of knowledge and reassurance. Those early customers are still some of my best today.

I didn't anticipate the bureaucracy. Licensing requirements for boarding were far more complex than I ever imagined, but having Head Office handle frequent policy changes provides invaluable support.

The other surprise was how quickly the business took off. Within 10 months, I reached the revenue

## “Pets bring people together, and our business is built on that sense of connection”

Charlotte Claydon, franchisee for We Love Pets Stevenage, has built one of the network's top-performing branches since joining in March 2021. Her success is part of a wider story. We Love Pets has been recognised as a finalist for Franchisor of the Year at the 2024 BFA HSBC UK British Franchise Awards and has won national honours for innovation and franchisee support. Charlotte's branch reflects that same high standard, combining strong business results with a commitment to ethical pet care. Charlotte credits franchising with giving her the structure to scale quickly, while still allowing the flexibility to balance work, family and a genuine passion for animal welfare.



target I'd originally set for five years. I also hit a wall. I remember calling Ryan in tears, overwhelmed by demand. His advice was simple but life-changing: “Charlotte, you need to learn how to say no.” As someone used to saying yes to every customer, that was hard, but it saved me from burnout. I spent year two steadying the ship, building a strong team, and focusing on sustainability.

Four years on, I manage a team of 20-plus. If you'd told me that at the start, I'd have laughed. I thought it would just be me, my husband helping out, and maybe a couple of walkers. Now, when I look around a team meeting, I feel incredibly proud of what we've built together.

The joy isn't just in business success but in what it gives people. Staff often tell me how much the job has helped them, whether it's an 18-year-old who struggled in office jobs but has blossomed working with animals, or a grandmother who loves her weekly dog walks for the mental health benefits. Pets bring people together, and our business is built on that sense of connection.

Customers too often find us to be more than pet carers. One client recovering from a stroke values our visits as much for the chat as for the dog walk. For me, that's what makes this business special: it's not just about profit – it's about earning trust and building relationships, a synergy I'd also experienced in the student exchange world.

When I started, I had a burning ambition to be in the top ten franchisees, then the top five. I achieved both quickly, but now I'm less focused on rankings and more on balance. I want to keep growing, but also have time with my children, flexibility to support my ageing parents, and space for myself.

I always say I feel lucky to have found this industry, although Ryan insists luck has nothing to do with it. Maybe he's right. What I do know is that following my passion has led me to financial security and a lifestyle I genuinely love.



## JENNI MORGAN

Franchisee for ActionCOACH,  
Wakefield

My path to becoming an ActionCOACH franchisee was anything but straightforward. In my third year studying engineering at Imperial College, I took a placement with a petrochemical company, convinced engineering was my future. But after three months, I realised I needed to work with people rather than sit behind a desk. After graduating, I joined Mars Incorporated's Graduate Scheme, but what started as a structured programme turned into years of jumping between projects, gaining experience across multiple departments. I eventually spent five years leading the marketing team – an unexpected direction, but one where I thrived. So, when a company restructure led to my departure, I left with a wealth of experience that would shape my next steps.

I considered a career in education, thinking teaching maths might be the right move. But after a work placement, I realised classroom management wasn't for me. Around the same time, a former colleague approached me about a consulting project. I was hesitant at first, but what started as a short-term project turned into 12–18 months of contract work, restructuring their marketing department.

After relocating north with my family, I joined an SME as head of marketing. Over 18 months, I gained valuable insight into the unique challenges SMEs face. Although the company wasn't the right fit for me, the experience proved invaluable.

With 20 years of coaching experience, an MBA, and NLP training, I took time to reflect on my next steps. I had been on a franchise mailing list since my time at Mars, and one day, I happened to open an email about ActionCOACH. It instantly resonated with me and I thought, "This is the opportunity I've been looking for!"

After meeting Ian and Julie from ActionCOACH, I saw the potential to build and expand my own



**“My long-term vision is to expand to four territories, with the turnover, scale and profitability needed for sustained success”**

Jenni Morgan helps business owners achieve sustainable growth by combining the proven ActionCOACH method along with her extensive corporate experience, coaching expertise, and hands-on approach to problem-solving.

Since launching ActionCOACH Wakefield in 2018, Jenni has rapidly expanded her business, team and territory, while guiding Yorkshire businesses to improve their strategies, profitability, and long-term success prospects.

business. In September 2018, I purchased the Wakefield territory. Within a year, I was offered a resale opportunity in a neighbouring area. With ActionCOACH's support, my business was growing.

When I launched in October 2018, I got up and running faster than most. Some of it was luck, but much of it came down to sheer determination.

The luck? A former colleague heard what I was doing and asked, "Can you do this for me?" I said yes and figured out how to deliver using the ActionCOACH materials. This gave me a head start before I even had to pay the franchise royalty, which doesn't kick in for six months.

With minimal expenses, I reinvested everything back into marketing. My strategy was simple: start selling immediately and figure out the details as I went. I didn't let the fear of not knowing everything hold me back – I trusted that I could tap into the ActionCOACH system and find the right materials when needed. I walked miles, knocking on doors, meeting business owners, and inviting them to my launch event. I also attended every networking event I could find. My sales approach wasn't perfect at first, but every conversation helped me improve and refine my pitch. ActionCOACH supported me every step of the way, and James Vincent, their Performance Director, even came to speak at my launch event. That event was a turning point: some of the attendees are still my clients today.

Within a few months, I was technically profitable – not with a fully-fledged business, but with enough cash flow to sustain growth. By December, I had enough turnover to hire someone part-time.

One of the biggest lessons I've learned is the importance of hiring the right people, those with the skills, the drive, and the right cultural fit for both ActionCOACH and me. Over the years, we've brought in various team members, and about three years ago, we hired Alex as our second coach. If all goes to plan, we'll be adding a third coach this year.

In the coming weeks, we're launching in a new area, focusing on telemarketing and digital marketing to reach new businesses in Bradford and beyond. My long-term vision is to expand to four territories, achieving the scale, turnover, and profitability needed for sustained success.





## JOEY ANTWI-KUSI

Franchisee for McDonald's  
Dagenham and Brentwood

After graduating with my first degree in Ghana, where I was born and raised, I moved to the UK on a postgraduate scholarship with almost nothing to my name. I still remember arriving with an envelope holding just £100, a gift from my dad.

I knew I'd need extra income to support myself. That search led me to McDonald's, a brand I'd heard was a good place to work. You can picture me: a fresh-faced 22-year-old, working as a customer care assistant for this huge global brand. I quickly fell in love with it all – the people, the culture, the operations – and as a business student, I was fascinated by how it all fit together. I'd watch my franchisee come into the restaurant and see the control they had over their own business. That really stuck with me.

After completing my MBA in finance, I worked at several banks before moving into consulting with Accenture. I enjoyed those years and progressed quickly through the ranks. But entrepreneurship was already in my blood. My dad ran his own construction firm in Ghana, and I'd grown up watching the highs and lows of his journey. Soon, I began longing for one of my own.

During the pandemic, I launched a healthcare business. It went really well, and I loved building something from scratch. That success made me realise it was time to go back to McDonald's. I wanted to tell the story of that young man who had once come to the UK with nothing, fallen in love with the brand, and then spent years building skills in banking, consulting, and entrepreneurship. Now I was ready to return – this time as a franchisee.

McDonald's believed in that story and gave me the

**“If you're fortunate enough to succeed, open the door for others. And if there isn't a door, build it yourself so others can walk through”**

Joey runs three McDonald's restaurants with over 300 employees, drawing on 15 years in finance and an MBA in Wales. Beyond operations, he champions diversity, inclusion, and community impact. His mission is simple: serve great food, build rewarding careers, and create opportunities that make a lasting difference.

opportunity. One of the most impressive aspects of their model is the level of support. You go through nine months of training, paired with a consultant who works alongside you. You attend Hamburger University to learn the culture, the operations, and the people side of the business. And at the end of that journey, in 2023, I took over my first restaurant in Dagenham, the same place where I'd done much of my training.

The beauty of franchising is that you open your doors with customers already walking in, trusting the brand, and expecting a great experience. I quickly grew from one restaurant to three, including Brentwood, which hadn't had a McDonald's in over nine years. Being the one to bring it back was an incredible feeling.

Community work has been a big part of my journey, too. In Dagenham, I set up a work experience programme where young people shadow me for a week. I also spend time in schools, helping Year 10 students prepare for interviews and understand the workplace. That involvement has led to recognition, including a nomination for the Barking and Dagenham Hall of Fame awards, which celebrate individuals of African and Caribbean heritage connected to the Borough. I'm also proud to have made it as a finalist for the Black British Business Awards 2025 in the Senior Leaders, Entrepreneurs category, with winners announced mid-October.

Today, we employ around 300 people. For me, it's not just about building a business – it's about giving back, making an impact, and showing young people that if you chase your dream, you can achieve something meaningful.

That's not to say running a McDonald's is easy. The standards are high, and there are countless moving parts. I rely heavily on my team to keep the business running smoothly. Their support allows me to focus not only on operations but also on community work, talent development, and the bigger picture. Recognition, like being featured in Forbes earlier this year, is an honour, but what excites me most is the difference we can make.

Representation in franchising is another passion of mine. Ethnic diversity among franchisees is still very low, including at McDonald's. I want to inspire young people by showing them that someone who looks like them and talks like them can reach this level. I always tell my team: if you're fortunate enough to succeed, open the door for others. And if there isn't a door, build one yourself so others can walk through.

For me, the defining moment was finding the confidence to apply to become a McDonald's franchisee. It's an incredibly competitive process, with a success rate of less than 2%. I had doubts – was I ready, had I achieved enough? But I decided to go for it. That leap changed everything.

Looking ahead, I have two ambitions. In the UK, I want to grow to more than 10 restaurants within the next five years. But my long-term goal is to take the McDonald's brand to Ghana and other countries in West Africa where it doesn't yet have a presence. I believe there's huge potential to create jobs, support local businesses, and make an impact there.

When that happens, it will bring my journey full circle – from a 22-year-old student in East London with £100 in his pocket to a successful entrepreneur building opportunities back home.





## JAMES RIMMER

Franchisee for ERA Group EMEA

Before becoming an ERA franchisee in April 2021, I spent 20 years in NHS management, including 10 years as CFO, as well as serving as an Audit Committee Chair in the university and charity sectors. Managing budgets of £2.6-2.7bn, I was used to big numbers and high pressure. In the NHS, the focus is always on doing more with less – there's never a point where you can say, "That's enough."

I'd toyed with the idea of running my own business, but it felt like a big risk. One NHS organisational restructure too many gave me the push I needed. Franchising struck the perfect balance, offering the backing of an established model with the freedom to build a business of my own.

Nearly four years on, it's clear I made the right decision. What I love about ERA is the autonomy. I didn't want a rigid setup where I was handed a client list and told to follow a set process. Having the freedom to develop my own client base and strategy was important to me.

While I work with businesses across the UK, I've built strong connections in my home county of Hampshire through local networking events like those run by the Chamber of Commerce. When you build relationships, referrals naturally follow. I also have clients in Yorkshire and Manchester, so I'm not geographically limited, but local connections tend to develop more organically.

Good consultancy is all about communication. In my NHS days, the best consultants I worked with could break down complex ideas in simple terms, and I aim to do the same. I make sure my clients hear from me at least once a month, whether it's a project update or something relevant to their industry. Formal quarterly reports are important, but regular touchpoints keep relationships strong.

I also try to visit clients in person whenever possible. It strengthens relationships and gives me a better understanding of their business firsthand. Since we specialise in cost reduction, being on-site often reveals efficiencies that aren't obvious from the numbers alone.

When researching franchises, I looked into Sandler, ActionCOACH, and TaxAssist. None were quite the right fit for me as an investor, but that early research paid off later. As a new business owner, areas like sales were completely new to me, so when I needed sales training, I went to Sandler. When I needed an accountant, I turned to TaxAssist. And when I needed a business coach, I chose ActionCOACH. Working with James Burke as my ActionCOACH has been invaluable – he is world-class and has helped me accelerate my business growth. We focus on the next quarter's goals, review what worked (and what didn't) in the previous quarter, and stay clear on my long-term objectives. Having that structure has been a game-changer.

In the past two years, my business has grown by around 200%. If that continues, I'll need to bring in support. Right now, my time is the limiting factor, but ERA's model is fantastic because I don't have to run every project alone. If a client needs a fuel cost review, for example, I collaborate with the team's



**“Whether I’m working with a mid-sized manufacturer or a multi-million-pound corporation, the goal is the same – finding value where they didn’t think it existed. Seeing those results is so satisfying”**

As an ERA Group franchisee, James Rimmer helps businesses uncover hidden cost savings and enhance financial efficiency, leveraging his 20 years of NHS management experience and expertise in overseeing multi-billion-pound budgets. Combining strategic consultancy with hands-on collaboration, James works closely with clients across the UK to identify cost-saving opportunities, streamline operations, and deliver measurable financial improvements – all while maintaining the high service standards businesses rely on.

fuel specialists.

One challenge is overcoming the assumption that companies have already done all they can to cut costs. A business might say, “We’ve already looked at that,” when, in reality, they’ve shaved off 1% and assumed that’s the best they can do. But our process is different. Take distribution, for example – our team knows the best suppliers and the right processes to get the best deal. When businesses let us review just one invoice, we can often either validate that they’re getting the right prices or uncover opportunities they hadn’t considered. In many cases, that leads to a 15-20% cost improvement without compromising service.

Whoever joins ERA needs to bring a professional mindset. This is a consultancy role where you’re a trusted advisor. You need to manage conflicting priorities, juggle multiple projects, and, ultimately, deliver results for clients.

For me, that’s the most rewarding part of the job. Whether I’m working with a mid-sized manufacturer or a multi-million-pound corporation, the goal is the same – finding value where they didn’t think it existed. Seeing those results and knowing I’ve made a meaningful impact makes all the hard work worthwhile. Looking ahead, I know there’s still so much potential to grow, and with the right support, the business will continue to evolve. The learning never stops – but that’s exactly what keeps it exciting!

# Location advantage

Shelley Batey, COO of GRO Events, on how franchise brands can navigate expansion in today's retail property market



Securing the right locations remains one of the most persistent challenges facing franchise brands.

Bringing franchisors, franchisees and property professionals together in one place, the GRO Franchise aims to simplify that process. Taking place at Old Billingsgate Market on 28th April, and running alongside the wider GRO Retail - Spring Event 2026, the event connects franchise brands with landlords, developers and agents actively seeking new occupiers. For franchisors and franchisees actively pursuing expansion, it offers a rare opportunity to engage directly with the landlords, developers and agents shaping the UK's retail landscape and to secure the sites that will support their next stage of growth.

## 01

### Navigating the property landscape

With rising operational costs, evolving consumer behaviour and increasing competition for prime locations, choosing the right site and the right property partners has become a critical part of successful franchise growth.

According to Shelley Batey, Chief Operating Officer at GRO Events, this is exactly why bringing the franchise community together with the retail property industry is more important than ever.

"Identifying the right locations and navigating the property landscape can be complex. That's where industry collaboration becomes essential," she points out.

## 02

### Franchising fuels retail growth

The UK franchise sector remains one of the most resilient and expansion-focused areas of retail and hospitality, with many franchised brands actively scaling their networks across the country.

"Franchising allows brands to expand quickly while maintaining strong operational standards and local ownership through franchise partners," says Shelley. However, this relies on finding the right locations that support sustainable growth.

"Franchisees are investing significant capital into these businesses, so the choice of location has a direct impact on their success."

## 03

### Sharing property expertise

Lease negotiations, rental structures, incentives, catchment analysis and footfall data are all critical factors when assessing potential sites. "Many franchise operators are experts in running the business itself, but navigating property agreements and identifying the right retail environments requires specialist knowledge," Shelley explains. This is where collaborations become invaluable.

"Having access to experienced property professionals helps franchise brands secure sites that truly support their long-term growth," she points out.



**GRO Retail: 28th April  
2026, London**

Contact the team by  
emailing [groevents@groevents.com](mailto:groevents@groevents.com)



## 04

### Connecting brands with retail destinations

The **GRO Retail – Spring Event** brings together the key stakeholders responsible for shaping retail destinations across the UK.

Attendees include:

- Franchise brands seeking expansion opportunities
- Multi-site operators and franchise partners
- Landlords and developers with retail space
- Property agents advising on acquisitions
- Investors and industry specialists

“By bringing the entire ecosystem together in one place, we help franchise brands accelerate conversations that might otherwise take months,” Shelley says.

### On the agenda

Alongside the one-to-one meetings that drive much of the deal-making, the GRO Retail – Spring Event 2026 also features a programme of insight-led sessions designed to explore the forces shaping retail expansion. Through presentations and dedicated franchise-focused discussions, speakers share perspectives on site acquisition, emerging brand concepts and the wider dynamics of the UK retail property market, enabling delegates to hear directly from retailers, landlords and industry advisers while gaining practical insight into the strategies and partnerships driving store growth and location decisions.

## 05

### A more focused expansion strategy

In the current volatile economic environment, brands are taking a more strategic approach to facilitating growth. Instead of rapid expansion for its own sake, many franchise brands are prioritising high-performing locations, strong catchments and sustainable site pipelines. “Franchise brands today are looking for locations that truly complement their concept and customer base,” Shelley explains. “That means working closely with property professionals who understand local markets, footfall trends and evolving retail environments.”

## 06

### Relationships driving growth

Retail property remains a relationship-driven industry. “Our focus is on facilitating meaningful connections,” says Shelley. “When franchise brands meet landlords, agents and developers face-to-face, it opens the door to conversations that can lead to new sites, partnerships and long-term growth.” With hundreds of retail brands and property professionals attending, the GRO Retail – Spring Event continues to act as a marketplace for the future of physical retail. “In a market that is constantly evolving, collaboration is key,” concludes Shelley.

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# PIONEERS TO POWER PLAYERS

\*Pip Wilkins QFP, CEO of the BFA (British Franchise Association) on how women have shaped modern franchising

**W**

ith EWIB (Empowering Women in Business) coming up in May 2026, when women from all corners of the country will come together for the biggest event for women in the BFA's calendar to meet, learn, share and grow, we thought it was time

to take a closer look at the success of women in franchising.

### Reflections

But before we can look at today's success stories, let's look back, to appreciate how far we've come. Did you know that in 2005, according to a BFA survey, women only made up 20% of franchisees? Thankfully, according to the 2024 British Franchise Survey sponsored by NIC Local, that figure has now doubled to 40% and we have no doubt it will continue to climb.

But how have things changed for women launching and buying franchises since 2005? And what has changed more broadly over the past 30 years?

### Technology in the 90s

Logistically, everything. Can you even begin to imagine running a business now without the internet, email, a mobile phone, social media and, dare we say it, AI?

Here's a little reality check: 30 years ago, mobile phones were largely reserved for the super-rich; the internet was in its infancy, and the only way to remember a meeting was to write it down and turn up.

Whilst these issues may sound almost quaint now, the lack of modern communication methods made things a lot harder – particularly for women, who were still breaking barriers as business owners while juggling childcare issues, even just a few short years ago.



**“The number of female franchisees has doubled to 40% since 2005, and we have no doubt it will continue to climb”**

### The forerunners

Against this backdrop of limited options, and with necessity the mother of invention, a young musician named Angie Coates decided to take matters into her own hands. In 1993, when she couldn't find a fun music class to take her baby daughter to, she created one herself, and Monkey Music was born.

Angie is the epitome of a successful franchisor, building a business from the ground up, in an era when there was none of the technology we take for granted today. Her entrepreneurship and resourcefulness ultimately brought not only pleasure to countless families, but also employment to many.





In 1996, Angie franchised the business and now, 33 years later, has 42 franchisees across the UK.

Today, Angie is not only the managing director of a hugely successful franchise business, but also the mother of five daughters and, more recently, a grandmother – whose granddaughter will no doubt soon be introduced to music through Monkey Music.

### Achieving success

So how did Angie do it, in a world with no internet, no mobile phones and no social media?

“To be honest, I don’t know,” she confessed. “It was pretty chaotic at the beginning. I was writing music and lesson plans on the go, whilst caring for my baby daughter, in between working as a musician. I didn’t come from a business background, so I learned early on that building a team I could trust was crucial. To this day, I have enormous respect for my head office team and partners who support me and the franchise.”

### Early challenges

Were there any particular challenges Angie faced?

“Probably the same as any working parent who has the drive to run their own business: lack of funding, lack of time, lack of childcare and lack of sleep,” she said.

## Meet the experts



**PIP WILKINS**

Pip is CEO of the British Franchise Association (BFA), which supports and educates franchisors and franchisees at every level of their development, setting the highest ethical standards that everyone is treated fairly.



**ANGIE COATES**

Angie is founder and managing director of Monkey Music, a franchise that she set up in 1993 to satisfy a need for fun music classes. Her entrepreneurship and resourcefulness has brought pleasure to countless families and employment to many.



**MIRIAM LEARY-WHITE**

Miriam owns three Stagecoach Performing Arts franchises in Bishops Stortford, Royston and Baldock, and Radlett. For her, it was franchisor support on offer that most attracted her when she bought her first franchise in 2010.



**JOANNE ALDRIDGE**

Joanne is Head of Franchise at The Holiday Franchise Company. She understands deeply the challenges and choices facing female franchise owners, who have to balance business needs with the priorities and commitments of parenting.

### 90s trailblazers

Has it ever occurred to Angie that she, and other female franchisors in that era, were paving the way for others?

Angie reflected: “I do think that working women in the 90s were pretty cool trailblazers for this next generation of fabulous women coming through, as we continued to navigate patchy childcare and new opportunities.”

### BFA insight

Whilst no one can doubt the success of women in franchising, as the UK’s self-regulatory body for franchising we are always keen to understand our members’ challenges, so in February 2026, via our new ‘Question of the Month’ poll, we asked our members: What do you think attracts women most to a career in franchising?

62% said flexibility and work/life balance; 21% said a low risk route to business ownership; 10% said training and support, and 5% said community support and peer networking. These figures reinforce what we have long understood – that women are not only looking for a flexible way to own a business, but a safe route to do so too.

### Franchisee flexibility

Joanne Aldridge, Head of Franchise at The Holiday Franchise Company, agreed that flexibility was key to her franchisees.



“We find most of our female franchisees want to reap the benefits of being a business owner, built around their home life,” she explained. “This allows them to work as and when they want, with family being the main priority, so as not to miss those key occasions that you would sacrifice in an employed role.”

Another respondent was Miriam Leary-White, owner of three Stagecoach Performing Arts franchises in Bishops Stortford, Royston and Baldock, and Radlett.

Like 10% of respondents, Miriam said it was the support that most attracted her when she first bought her franchise in 2010.

She said: “When you start a business, you don’t know what you don’t know. With a franchise, much of that uncertainty is removed, so you can focus on running and growing the business. Franchising gave me a strong starting point, without having to fight for every small win. I’m supported by experts in marketing and safeguarding, which I would have found overwhelming on my own.”

### Lessons learned over 16 years

Like many, Miriam found learning to delegate was hard. She said: “The real shift for me was learning to delegate. As the business grew, I realised that spending money allowed me to make money. Hiring support, like a PA, gave me time to work on the business rather than constantly in it. That’s when growth really accelerated.”

She continued: “I’ve learned to value my time properly and invest in people and systems that free me up. Building a team I trust has been crucial. It’s taken time to let go, but now my business is growing steadily, and I have the healthiest work-life balance I’ve ever had.”

### Reality check

Miriam also has some words of wisdom for anyone thinking of buying a franchise: “The biggest misconception about running your own business is that it gives you more time. It doesn’t. It’s all consuming. There is no 9 to 5. The responsibility sits with you every day of the year.

Is it scary? Yes. Is it time consuming? Yes. Will it bring stress? Absolutely. Is it worth it? Completely. You are stronger than you think. It will bring pride, joy and stories you’ll tell forever. There are so many women willing to support you. Ask for help. Take people for coffee. Learn from them.”

**“The biggest misconception about running your own business is that it gives you more time. It doesn’t”**

### The franchisee class of 2026

Returning to Angie Coates, founder of Monkey Music and one of the earliest female franchisors, what differences has she noticed in franchisees coming forward to start their own businesses in 2026? Are they wiser? Are they benefiting from the path she and other brave women laid down for them more than 30 years ago?

“I think franchisees today are definitely more aware now of the advantages of franchising as opposed to starting up on their own, and also more aware that it takes time and a lot of hard work to grow a business,” she acknowledged. “I think the awareness stems from the fact that the BFA and franchising in general are more widely recognised, and I think young people are a bit braver now, happy to have a change of career rather than stay in one thing forever.”

Women like Angie and her cohort in the 90s were undoubtedly brave, especially in light of the communication challenges that they faced, and we are fortunate they are still driving successful brands forwards, while also sharing their wisdom and experience with the next generation.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Tickets for EWIB are available via the BFA website: [www.thebfa.org/empowering-women-in-business/](http://www.thebfa.org/empowering-women-in-business/)

MARKETING

# World Options: powered by people, built for shipping

A flexible, asset-light logistics franchise helping entrepreneurs build a logistics business, servicing UK SMEs through technology, training and global backing

Minimum required capital:

**£35,000**

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### A SCALABLE, FLEXIBLE MODEL

At the heart of the opportunity is a scalable, non-geographic business model. Unlike territory-restricted concepts, World Options franchise partners can work with SMEs across the UK, opening access to millions of potential customers. By leveraging carrier partnerships and a consultative sales approach, partners focus on winning and managing accounts rather than handling freight directly.

The result is a lean operation with strong margins and the ability to scale rapidly through smart sales growth.

### TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training and personal development are fundamental pillars of the brand. Through structured onboarding, ongoing mentoring and the sharing of best practice across the global network, franchise partners are supported at every stage of their journey. Whether new to logistics or experienced in sales, franchisees gain the commercial skills, sector insight and confidence to compete and thrive. Continuous development ensures partners stay sharp in an ever-evolving marketplace.

### TECHNOLOGY THAT DRIVES GROWTH

Technology is another defining advantage. World Options' custom-built portal gives customers



### FRANCHISE OVERVIEW



**Established:**  
2003

**Number of outlets:**  
90+

**Minimum capital required:**  
£35k

**Total investment:**  
£35k



instant access to multi-carrier shipping solutions, while advanced management and reporting tools provide franchisees with full visibility of their pipeline, accounts and performance.

Ongoing investment in technology keeps the network at the forefront of efficiency, automation and data-driven growth, helping partners deliver a seamless customer experience while building scalable recurring revenue.

### GLOBAL STRENGTH

Crucially, World Options is part of the Fortidia Group, a global logistics network operating in 57 countries and serving more than 850,000 business customers and consumers across ecommerce, shipping and fulfilment, and marketing and print. This international backing provides credibility, buying power and strategic strength, while franchise partners retain the agility of running their own business.

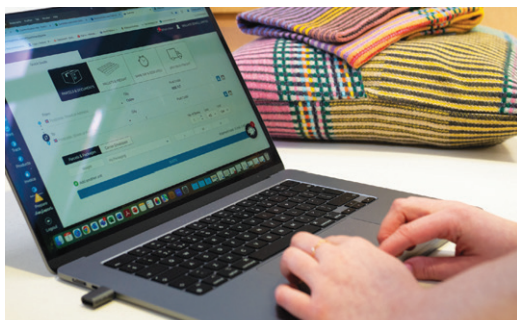
For entrepreneurs who want a modern, flexible franchise in a thriving sector – without the constraints of bricks and mortar – World Options delivers scale, support and global strength from day one.

To find out more about starting a business with World Options, get in touch with the franchise development team.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Charlotte Headington [c.headington@worldoptions.co.uk](mailto:c.headington@worldoptions.co.uk)

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With 50+ licences sold, international expansion underway, and a thriving online community of 120,000+ followers, we're more than a brand — we're a movement.

#### INVESTMENT LEVEL

On average, a 1,000 sq. ft. turnkey store fit-out costs approximately £120-130,000.

This includes a fully finished unit, ready to trade, and designed to impress from day one.

*Investment figures are indicative and may vary depending on location and size.*

*"Now expanding across the UK and internationally — this is your opportunity to grow with us."*

### INTERESTED IN OWNING A YOU WANT BEEF® FRANCHISE?

Speak directly with our Franchise Director today.

Franchise Director:  
Obaid Khaliq

07949 488140

obaid@youwantbeef.co.uk



[youwantbeef.co.uk](http://youwantbeef.co.uk)



## MARKETING &amp; COMMUNICATIONS

# Why advertising services generate revenue

Dani Smith, MD at the online advertising franchise, outlines the low-cost business model behind the brand's success

Minimum required capital:

£798

**W**hat's On In is a platform for people hoping to find out what's going on in their town, city, or holiday location. It's franchise borne from a perceived a gap in the market.

"It was simple, we know the UK online advertising market is worth £189 million and we saw the market was wide open," says Dani Smith, managing director.

"I needed to make sure our web platform was user friendly for the advertisers and that we could offer any business a free sales web page. 82% of UK businesses have no website, so we needed to address this with a free web page for every advertiser.

**"We offer an interest-free finance package and payment over 3-6 months"**

"We also wanted to make our franchise available to anyone and that's why we priced it at £798. The return on investment is amazing. We also offer an interest-free finance package and payment over three to six months."

### THREE FRANCHISE PACKAGES

What's On In offers three types of franchise models. These include a single franchise postcode, a master franchise covering UK or global, and a corporate franchise covering Europe and global.

### FLEXIBLE OPPORTUNITY

A typical What's On In website provides franchisees with three revenue streams: income from main businesses, income from tradesman, and income from affiliates (which earns up to 70% commission).

Bookings are completed online via the website and payment is made within three minutes direct to

What's On In  
MD Dani Smith



the franchisee's PayPal account, which creates fast cash flow.

A franchisee needs no technical knowledge, as all adverts are loaded to the website via the What's On In support team.

### OPTIONAL 50-50 SYSTEM

What's On In has an optional 50-50 system, whereby you have a commission-only salesperson building your postcode area for you. This model offers requires less commitment which makes it ideal for someone with an existing business or job who wants a 'hands-off franchise'.

Potential monthly incomes range between £5,000-£20,000 and franchisees receive a fully exclusive postcode area to operate in.

The exclusive online franchise members' area also provides franchisee support as well as access to tips, advice, and training tools.

### LOW-COST ENTRY

Dani believes What's On In offers the perfect low cost entry into the franchise arena, with new opportunities continuously added throughout the UK.

Ultimately, the online advertising franchise is looking to find those who see the value in providing high visibility, full tracking, and low costs adverts.



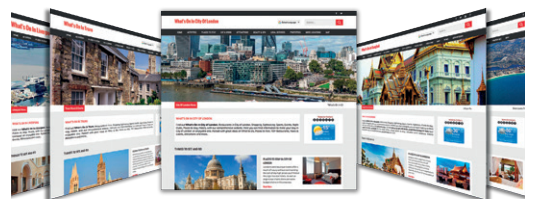
FRANCHISE  
OVERVIEW

Established:  
2018

Number of  
outlets:  
208 worldwide

Locations  
of units:  
UK, Spain, Thailand,  
USA, Europe

Total Investment:  
£798



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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+44 7860 833822

# A market that keeps growing...

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

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

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

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

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

## Why franchises fit so well

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

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



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

### What’s driving the boom?

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

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

If you’re looking to invest, 2026 is shaping up to be a strong year for education brands that combine personalisation, technology, and real-world outcomes. Digital-first models are cutting overheads and making delivery more flexible than ever. At the same time, adaptable curricula are helping brands localise quickly and stay relevant across different markets. Many franchises are also benefiting from recurring tuition models that create steady, predictable revenue streams. And with purpose-driven branding on the rise, more parents and franchisees are drawn to businesses that deliver genuine impact as well as profit.

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

### The fine print

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

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

MATTHIAS H. LEHNER

# What I wish I'd known

**E**arly in my career, success had a very clear shape: growth. More and more Bodystreet studios, more members, more momentum. I was chasing scale.

What I didn't yet understand was that real success in franchising isn't measured by how fast you grow, but by how many people grow with you.

**Bodystreet started with a simple idea:** delivering highly effective EMS workout (electrical muscle stimulation) in a boutique fitness format. The decision to franchise was the moment everything changed. It forced me to stop thinking like an operator and start thinking like a system builder – one that others would trust with their livelihood.

**Not everything worked from the beginning.** Some concepts didn't scale, some decisions needed to be corrected quickly. Those moments were uncomfortable, but essential. Failure taught me focus, discipline and humility – lessons no early success ever could.

**Building a franchise system teaches you something no advisory role prepares you for:** leadership in franchising is not about control. It's about enablement. A brand only becomes strong when franchise partners succeed locally, every day. That belief shaped how we built Bodystreet, from our support structures to our culture.

**“Leadership in franchising is not about control. It's about enablement. A brand only becomes strong when franchise partners succeed locally, every day”**



## Matthias H. Lehner

is the Founder & CEO of Bodystreet, the original and world's largest EMS boutique fitness franchise, operating on four continents.

Matthias currently serves as President of the European Franchise Federation (EFF) and is a passionate advocate for sustainable, partner-driven franchise growth.

**I've been fortunate to share this journey with my wife Emma,** who served for three years as Vice President of the German Franchise Association. Together, we've seen how powerful franchising can be when professionalism and values are aligned.

Today, as President of the European Franchise Association, I see the same patterns repeated. Successful founders respect local markets, invest in support and think long-term. Others underestimate complexity and overestimate speed. Franchising is not a shortcut – it's a commitment.

**If I could speak to my younger self** on the day I signed my first franchise agreement, I'd say: listen more, build slower, and trust your partners. And then I'd let him make a few mistakes anyway, because some lessons need to be lived.

Bodystreet is now the original and world's largest EMS boutique fitness franchise, operating on four continents. But the real achievement isn't scale alone. It's proving that strong brands are built together.

# evolve.

## UPCOMING IFA EVENTS

### 2026

#### MULTI-UNIT FRANCHISING CONFERENCE

March 24-27, 2026 | Las Vegas, NV

#### INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE SHOW - LONDON

April 17-18, 2026 | London, England

#### IFA LEGAL SYMPOSIUM

May 17-19, 2026 | Washington, DC

#### IBA/IFA JOINT CONFERENCE

May 19-20, 2026 | Washington, DC

#### FRANCHISE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE

June 2-4, 2026 | Atlanta, GA

#### IFA ADVOCACY SUMMIT

Sept. 14-16 2026 | Washington, DC

#### THE IFA WORLD FRANCHISE SHOW

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

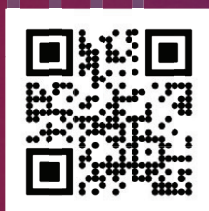
*Partnership event with Fortem International*

#### FRANCHISE LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

October 6-8, 2026 | Atlanta, GA

#### EMERGING FRANCHISOR CONFERENCE

November 9-11, 2026 | Nashville, TN



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# “Help others achieve their dreams and you will achieve yours.”

Les Brown

**Grow businesses and change lives with an Action franchise. Gain financial & personal rewards by helping others succeed.**

## As a Franchise Partner you'll get:

- ✓ Guaranteed earnings of at least £10,000 a month within your first 6 months of operation
- ✓ Access to a proven global coaching system that's been developed, tried and tested for the past 30 years.
- ✓ Ongoing world-class training and support from a dedicated franchise support team.
- ✓ Access to a global community of coaches and strategic partners dedicated to helping you succeed.
- ✓ A well-established, proven recession and pandemic-proof business model.
- ✓ Have the opportunity to build a business with a substantial asset value, creating a lasting legacy for you, your family and your community.

**Discover more...**

“ It makes me feel very empowered. I can have a huge impact, not only on the businesses, but on the lives of people in the community, and that makes me feel very purposeful and intentional. I'm living my purpose. ”



**Anu Khanna, ActionCOACH Franchise Partner**



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or call 01284 701648