

Entrepreneur's

# startups

# HOW TO GROW



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Turn Clients into Lifelong Fans

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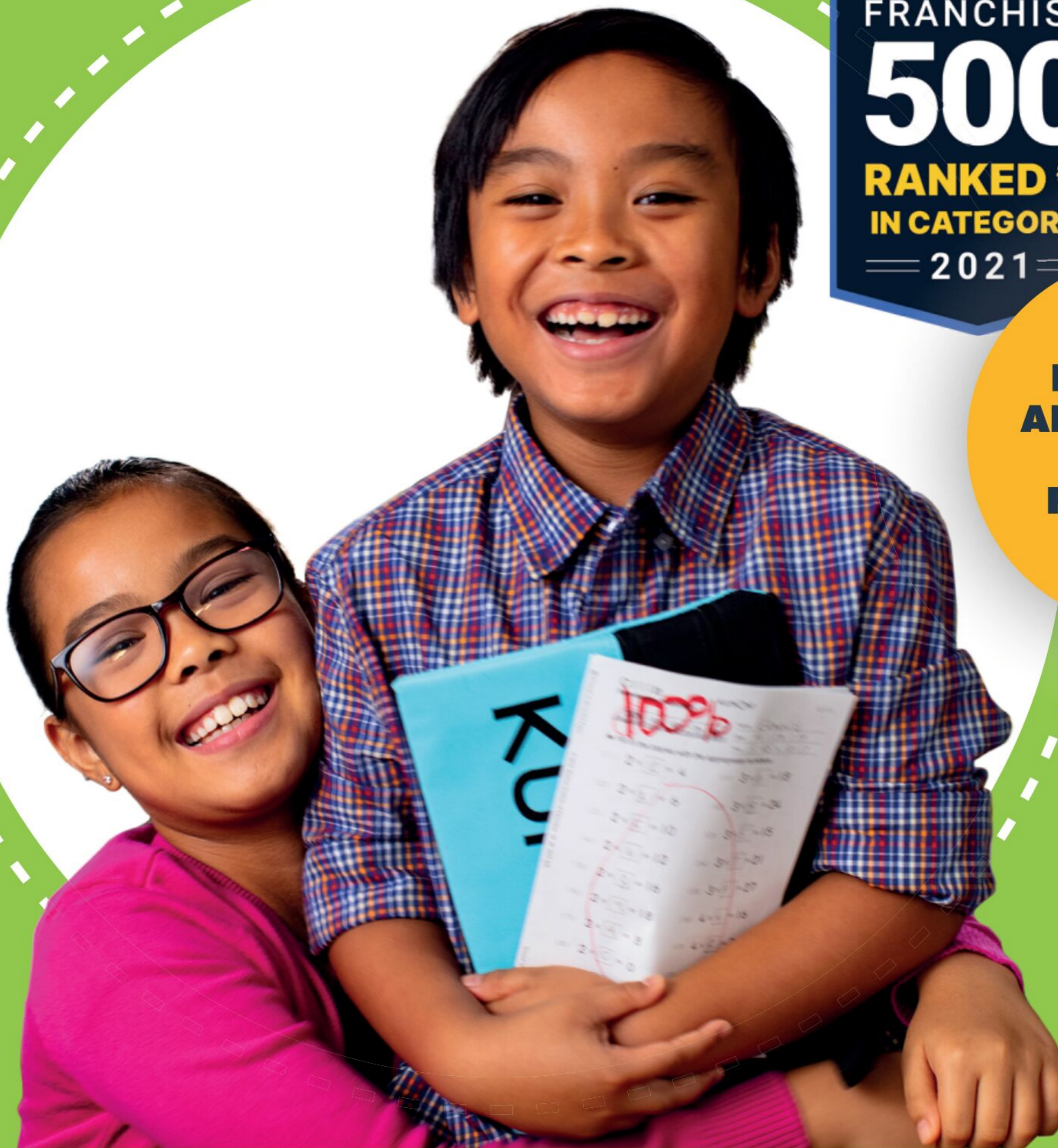
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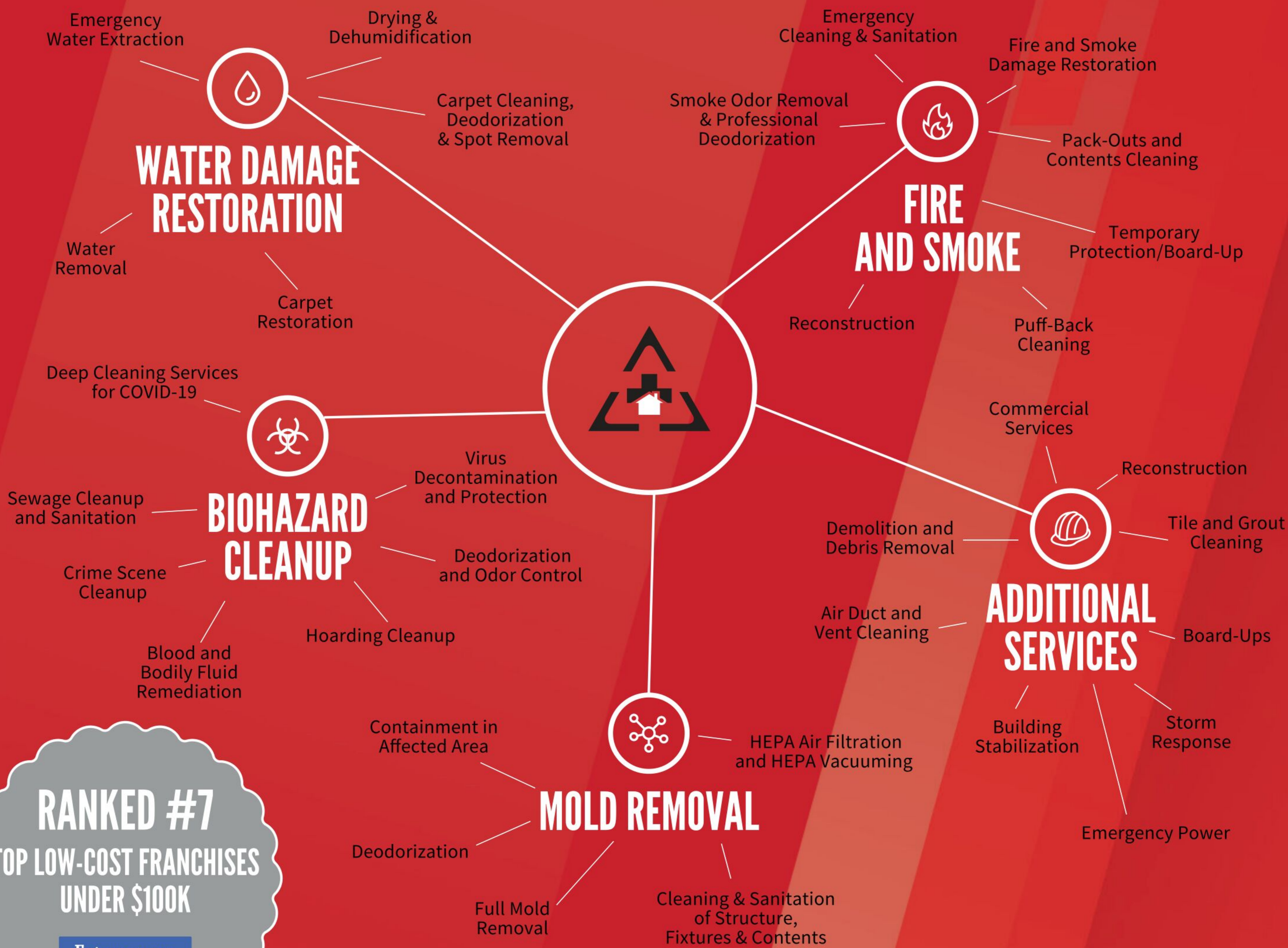
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**CHAPTER**

# CUSTOMER SERVICE

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## Start Your Own Business

# HOW TO SERVE

The complete beginner's guide to superior customer service.

**T**o the ordinary entrepreneur, closing and finalizing the sale is the completion of serving the customer's needs. But for the pro, this is only the beginning. Closing the sale sets the stage for a relationship that, if properly managed by you, the entrepreneur, can be mutually profitable for years to come.

There's a widely recognized rule that states that 80 percent of your business comes from 20 percent of your customers. Repeat customers are the backbone of every successful business. So now that you know how to land customers, it is time to learn how to keep them.

## BUILDING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

It's tempting to concentrate on making new sales or pursuing bigger accounts. But attention to your existing customers, no matter how small they are, is essential to keeping your business thriving. The secret to repeat business is following up in a way that has a positive effect on the customer.

Effective follow-up begins immediately after the sale, when you call the customer to say "thank you" and find out if they are pleased with your product or service. Beyond this, there are several effective ways to follow up that ensure your business is always in the customer's mind:

► **Let customers know what you are doing for them.** This can be in the form of a digital newsletter sent to a large and existing customer base, or, if you have a smaller business built on more personal relationships, consider a phone

call. Whichever method you use, the key is to dramatically point out to customers what excellent service you are giving them. If you never mention all the things you're doing for them, customers may not notice. You are not being cocky when you talk to customers about the work you have done to please them. Just let them know they don't have to worry because you handled the paperwork, called the attorney, or double-checked on the shipment—one less thing they have to do.

► **Keep up with old customers!** Don't underestimate the power of a personal email to check in on a loyal client: "I was just sitting at my desk, and your name popped into my head. Are you still having a great time flying all over the country? Let me know if you need another set of luggage. I can share our latest models anytime." Or if you run into an old customer at an event, follow

up with a note: "It was great seeing you at the Chamber of Commerce Christmas party. I will call you early in the new year to schedule a lunch."

► **Remember special occasions.** Send regular customers birthday cards, anniversary cards, holiday cards...you name it. Gifts are excellent follow-up tools, too. You don't have to spend a fortune; use your creativity to come up with interesting gift ideas that tie into your business, the customer's business, or their recent purchase.

► **Pass on information.**

If you read an article, see a new book, or hear about an organization that a customer might be interested in, drop a note or make a quick call to let them know.

► **Think of follow-up calls as business-development calls.** When you talk to or visit old clients or customers, you'll often find they have referrals to give you, which can lead to new business.

With all that your existing customers can do for you, there's simply no reason not to stay in regular contact with them. Use your imagination, and you'll think of plenty of other ideas that can help you develop a lasting relationship.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

There are so many things you, the entrepreneur, can do to ensure good customer service. And when you're a one-person business, it's easy to stay on top of what your customers want. But as you add employees, whether it's one person or 100, you are adding more links to the customer service chain—and creating more potential for poor service along the way. ►

## ► AHA!

### To ensure you don't drop the ball on follow-up,

check out one of the many contact management or sales software programs on the market. These little wonders can remind you of everything from a big client's birthday to an important sales call. Some will generate automatic—or personalized—emails for you.



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That's why creating a customer service policy and adhering to it is so important. Here are some steps you can take to ensure that your clients receive excellent service every step of the way.

▶ **Put your customer service policy in writing.**

These principles should come from you, but every employee should know what the rules are and be ready to live up to them.

▶ **Establish support systems that give employees clear instructions for gaining and maintaining service superiority.** These systems will help you out-service any competitor by

giving more to customers and anticipating problems before they arise.

▶ **Develop a measurement of superb customer service.** Then reward employees who practice it consistently.

▶ **Be certain that your passion for customer service runs throughout your company.** Your employees should see how good service relates to your profits and to their future with the company.

▶ **Be genuinely committed to providing more customer service excellence than anyone else in your industry.** This commitment

must be so powerful that every one of your customers can sense it.

▶ **Share information with people on the front lines.**

Meet regularly to talk about improving service. Solicit ideas from employees—they deal with the customers most often.

▶ **Act on the knowledge that customers value attention, competence, promptness, and dependability.** They love being treated as individuals and being referred to by name. (Don't you?)

**INTERACTING WITH CUSTOMERS**

Principles of customer ser-

vice are nice, but you need to put those principles into action with everything you do and say. There are certain "magic words" that customers want to hear from you and your staff. Make sure all your employees understand the importance of these key words:

▶ **"How can I help?"**

Customers want the opportunity to explain in detail what they want and need. Too often, business owners feel the desire or the obligation to guess what customers need rather than carefully listening first. By asking how you can help, you begin the dialogue on a positive note. And by using an open-ended question, you invite discussion.

▶ **"I can solve that problem."** Most customers, especially B2B customers, are looking to buy solutions. They appreciate direct answers in a language they can understand.

▶ **"I don't know, but I'll find out."** When confronted with a truly difficult question that requires research on your part, admit it. Few things ruin your credibility faster than trying to answer a question when you are unsure of all the facts. An honest reply enhances your integrity.

▶ **"I will take responsibility."** Tell your customer you realize it's your responsibility to ensure a satisfactory outcome to the transaction. Assure the customer you know what she expects and will deliver the product or

▶ **GO TO THE SOURCE**

**E**xcellent customer service is more than what you say or do for the customer; it also means giving customers a chance to make their feelings known. Here are some suggestions for finding out what your customers want, need, and care about:

**1 ▶ Attend trade shows and industry events that are important to your customers.** You'll find out what the competition is doing and what kinds of products and services customers are looking for.

**2 ▶ Nurture a human bond, as well as a business one, with customers and prospects.** Take them out to lunch, dinner, the ball game, or the opera. In the relaxed atmosphere of socializing, you'll learn the secrets that will allow you to go above and beyond your competition.

**3 ▶ Keep alert for trends; then respond to them.** Read industry trade publications, be active in trade organizations, pay attention to what your customers are doing.

**4 ▶ Ask for feedback.** Survey your customers regularly to find out how you're doing. Send email surveys, call them by phone, set up focus groups. Ask for suggestions, then fix the trouble areas revealed.

Whatever you do, don't rest on your laurels. Regularly evaluate your product or service to be sure it is still priced, packaged, and delivered right.

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▶ **E-FYI**

**Feeling alone?** Wish you had someplace to get advice on better customer service? Try the Professional Association for Customer Engagement ([paceassociation.org](http://paceassociation.org)). You're required to join the organization to reap the benefits, but there are plenty of them—from networking opportunities to customer service training programs.

service at the agreed-upon price. There will be no unexpected expenses or changes required to solve the problem.

▶ **"I will keep you updated."** Even if your business is a cash-and-carry operation, it probably requires coordinating and scheduling numerous events. Assure your customers they will be advised of the status of these events. The longer your lead time, the more important this is. The vendors customers trust the most are those that keep them apprised of the situation, whether the news is good or bad. And make sure you follow up with updates.

▶ **"I will deliver on time."** A due date that has been agreed on is a promise that must be kept. "Close" does not count.

▶ **"Monday means Monday."** The first week in July means the first week in July, even though it contains a national holiday. Your clients are waiting to hear you say, "I deliver on time." The supplier who consistently does so is a rarity and well-remembered.

**GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND**

These days, simply providing adequate customer service is not enough. You need to go above and beyond the call of duty to provide customer service that truly stands out. How do you do this?

Begin by thinking about your own experiences as a customer—what you have liked and disliked in certain situations. Recall the times you were delighted by extra efforts taken to accommodate your needs or outraged by rudeness or negligence. This will give you greater insight into what makes for extraordinary customer service.

To put yourself in the customer's shoes, try visiting a wide range of businesses your customers are likely to frequent. This could include your direct competitors as well as companies that sell related products and services. Observe how customers are treated in addition to the kinds of services that seem to be important to them. Then adapt your business accordingly.

Going above and beyond is especially important when a customer has

complained or if there is a problem with a purchase. Suppose an order is delayed. What can you do?

▶ **Call the customer personally with updates on the status of the order and expected arrival time.**

▶ **Hand-deliver the merchandise when it arrives.**

▶ **Take 20 or 30 percent off the cost.**

▶ **Send a note apologizing for the delay...tucked inside a gift basket full of goodies.**

Going above and beyond doesn't always mean offering deep discounts or giving away products. With a little ingenuity and effort, you can show customers they are important at any time. Suppose you've just received the newest samples and colors for your home furnishings line. Why not invite your best customers to a private show-

ing, complete with music, appetizers, and a coupon good for one free hour of consultation?

Emergency orders and last-minute changes should be accommodated when possible, especially for important occasions such as a wedding or a big trade show. Customers remember these events...and they will remember your flexibility and prompt response to their needs, too.

Being accessible also wins loyalty. One entrepreneur who runs a computer chip company has installed a customer service line on every employee's telephone, from the mail room clerk on up. This means every caller gets through to a real person who can help them, instead of getting lost in a voice-mail maze.

Customer loyalty is hard to win and easy to lose. But by going above and beyond with your customer service, you'll soon see your sales going above and beyond those of your competitors. ■

▶ **GROUP EFFORTS**

**J**oin local community Facebook groups as well as surrounding communities, including those aimed at your market. Often, satisfied customers will recommend businesses on these groups. And as important, if someone has a complaint, you'll see the post and be able to act quickly to rectify it and avoid further word-of-mouth damage.

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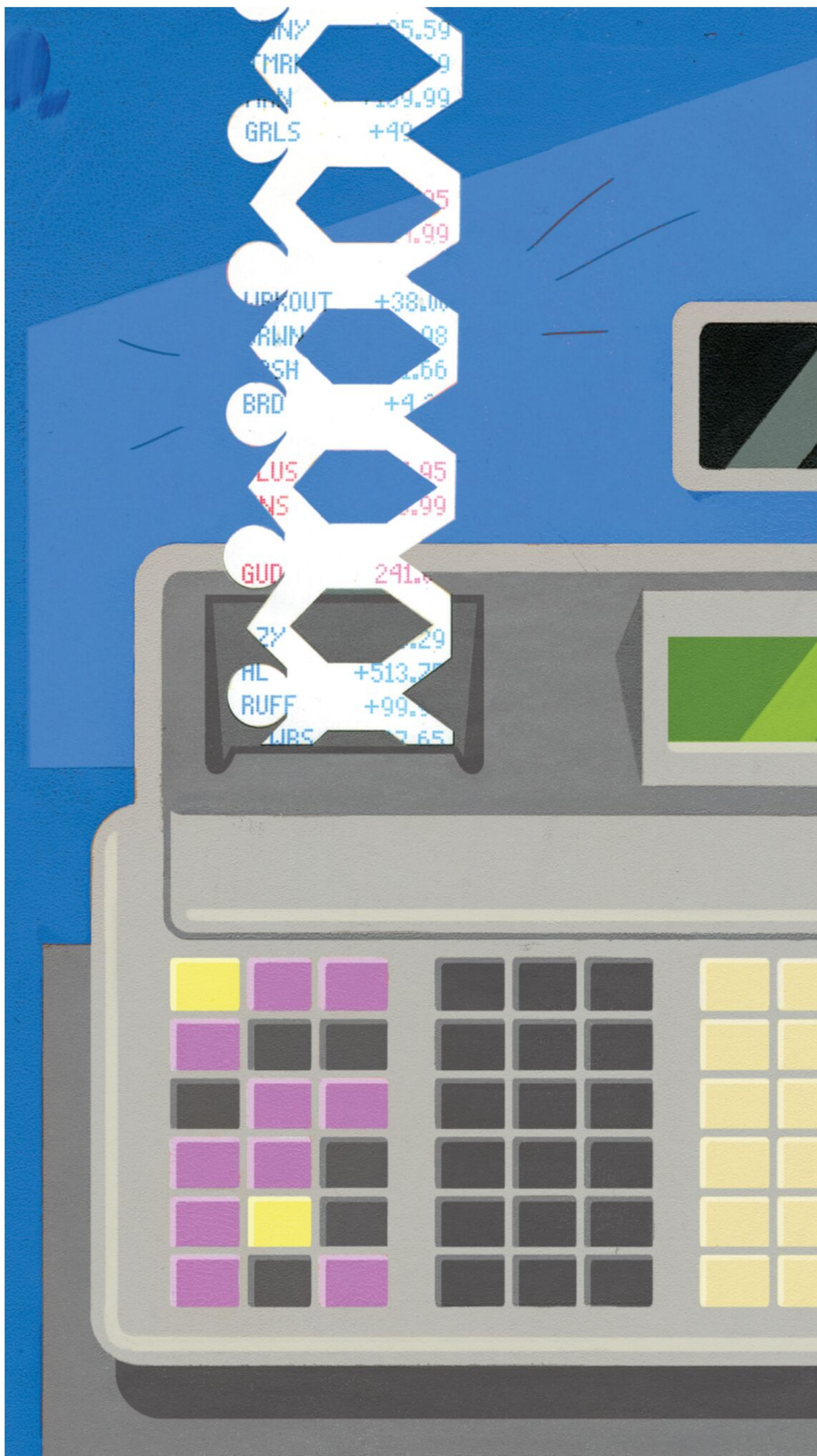
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**Create Connections**

# BUILDING A BOND

Now more than ever, you can't just deliver a good product. You need to improve consumers' lives. We asked six entrepreneurs: How do you strengthen your relationship with customers?

**1 **▶** Provide expertise.**

"We have a mission to help people through guidance, which goes beyond just product. With [our cookware brand] Equal Parts, we have a robust offering of expertise on our website and brand blog. It's a one-stop shop for home cooks that provides them with recipes, tips, and techniques. This helps create trust with our business, and our customers feel like they're gaining value beyond a tangible product."

**—NICK LING, CEO, Pattern Brands**

**2 **▶** Create incentives.**

"We have an ambassador program, where we provide our most loyal customers with a platform to create content that is shared on our social media channels. It transforms them from customers to brand advocates. We are strong believers in the power of community and use our channels as a two-way street for communication between us and our consumers."

**—PARISA FOWLES-PAZDRO, founder and CEO, Max-Bone**

**3 **▶** Empower them.**

"The philosophy of 'fewer, better things' is at the heart of everything we do—so we create content and services that match. In 2013, for example, we launched our Lean Closet program: Customers can donate old clothing or accessories to benefit our philanthropic partner, H.E.A.R.T. This way, our customers can live in a 'fewer, better' way while empowering women in need."

**—SHILPA SHAH, cofounder, Cuyana**

**4 **▶** Entertain them.**

"In addition to my own D2C clothing line, Thakoon, in 2019 I launched a magazine and media platform called HommeGirls, with an aim to highlight menswear style for women. It's a passion project rooted in editorial, my first fashion background. It allows me to be creative and thought-provoking, and create outside of just fashion design. It lets my fans—both from the Thakoon line and the mag—see more of what I'm about, more of what I can offer."

**—THAKOON PANICHGUL, founder and chief creative officer, Thakoon**

**5 **▶** Offer access.**

"Instagram is an interactive space for our experts to share guidance on practices and products to support at-home skin-care remedies. We see high engagement on our stories, where our most seasoned and skilled experts and trainers field our followers' questions. We're also piloting some other digital services that will allow clients to connect with our team of experts, one-on-one."

**—MICHAEL POLLAK, cofounder and chief experience officer, Heyday**

**6 **▶** Speak up.**

"If you can stay top of mind when your customers aren't necessarily looking for [you], you'll be the first person they call when it's time to make a purchase or do a deal. For me, starting a podcast has provided this opportunity and given me a large platform to speak about what we're building. It's even resulted in existing clients looking to get involved from a sponsorship perspective."

**—MATT HILLMAN, partner, Cut + Sew and Zoned Gaming**



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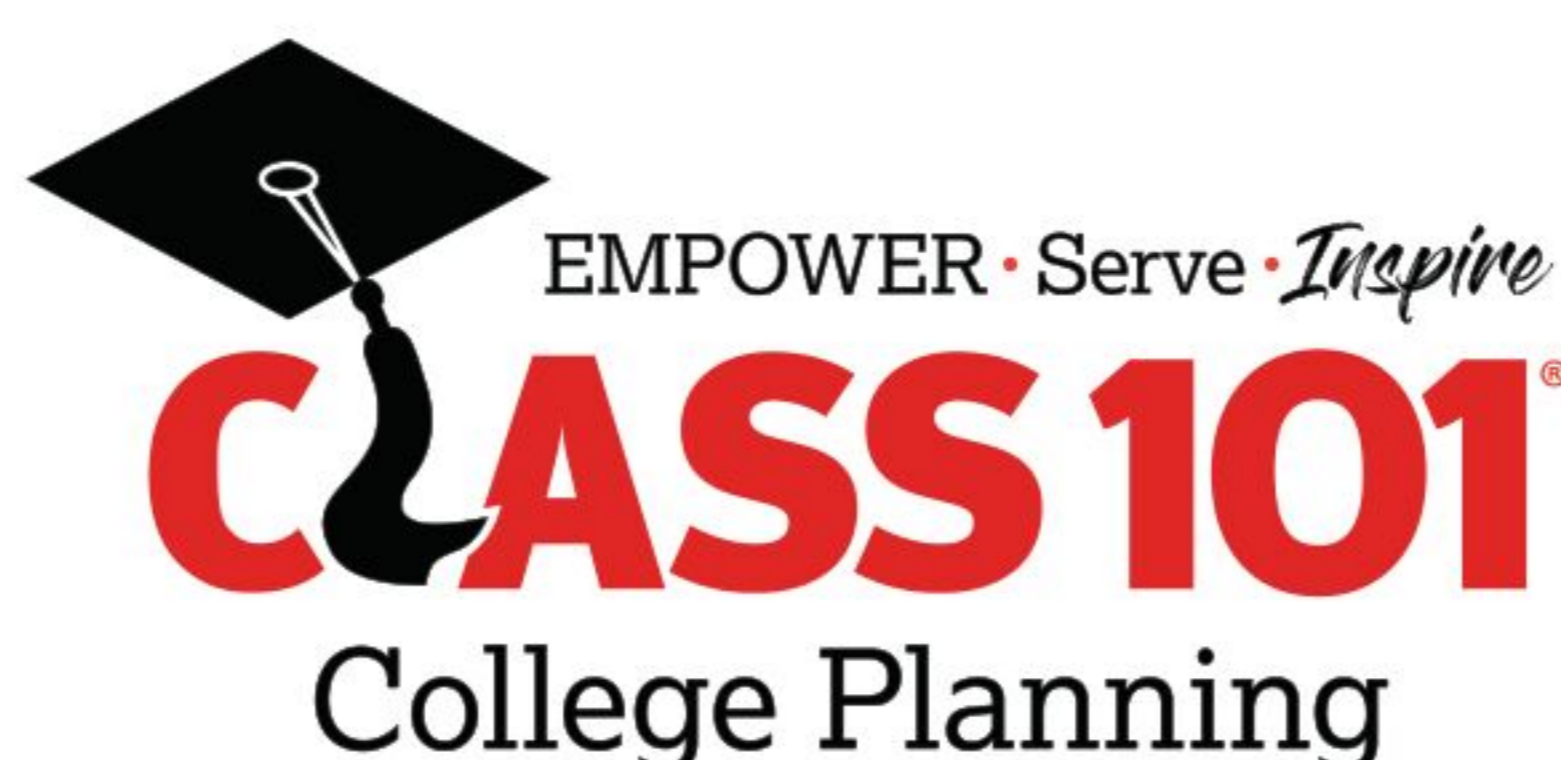


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## Boost Engagement

# ARE WE GOING DIGITAL FOREVER?

The pandemic swiftly moved our world online. Once you discover the power of engaging your customers digitally, you won't want to go back.

by **ADAM BORNSTEIN**



My business has always depended on in-person interactions. Do I need to create a robust digital offering to survive? **—JERRY, ROCHESTER, N.Y.**

COVID-19 rocked every aspect of work, life, and the work-life balance. The big question now is how well entrepreneurs can adjust and set up their businesses—not just for survival but also success.

Here's one big part of that answer: The digital evolution we've experienced is here to stay. According to a McKinsey survey, 77 percent of consumers

will continue using digital channels moving forward. That doesn't mean your business needs to go fully virtual, or that you need to create online-only offerings, but it *does* mean you should embrace the opportunity to add digital solutions to your existing offering.

Embracing digital—now and forever—is a simple way to limit your future vulnerabilities and manage new

competitors in the space.

This isn't about going up against tech-savvy competitors or spending big bucks chasing new customers. It's about doubling down on the folks who already love you. You can use technology to remind your customers what you're about and why your business is different—and then reward them for their loyalty.

Start by focusing on three different aspects of retention:

**1 ► Satisfaction.** Make sure they're thrilled with your offers.

**2 ► Loyalty.** Make them feel that they matter.

**3 ► Advocacy.** Make them feel a part of the business and that your existence is essential to their happiness.

Then ask yourself, *How can I create a digital touch point that will deliver each emotion?*

If you have your customers' email addresses, send out updates, behind-the-scenes access, new offers, or, at the most basic level, discounts. Don't have emails? Use social media to build a simple digital bridge to your customers. (Once you have those emails, you can use referral technology and codes, most of it costing less than \$100 per month. This is a smart, affordable way to reach new customers through your existing community.)

Promotion and reward, even if just on social media, is a great way to build engagement. If you have the infrastructure, consider setting up

a digital Shopify store so that people can buy directly from you online, even if it's just a few select items. But above all, you want to engage people with stories about your products, the people in your business, and even your customers. This can be through email, blogs, or social media, written or audio. People and stories are the heartbeat of every business; don't let yours flatline.

Admittedly, you'll end up with a lot of questions and opportunities. You might not know where to begin, and that's OK. For clarity, ask yourself one question we learned from a longtime client, author and podcaster Tim Ferriss: *If this were easy, what would it look like?*

Sometimes the coolest ideas might also be the most complex for your customer. And right now, your customers don't want complexity. They want simplicity, convenience, and comfort. You don't need to have the most high-tech option. You just need a way to meet your customers or audience where they are. If you do that, your customers will be willing to stick with you, support you, and help build you back up.

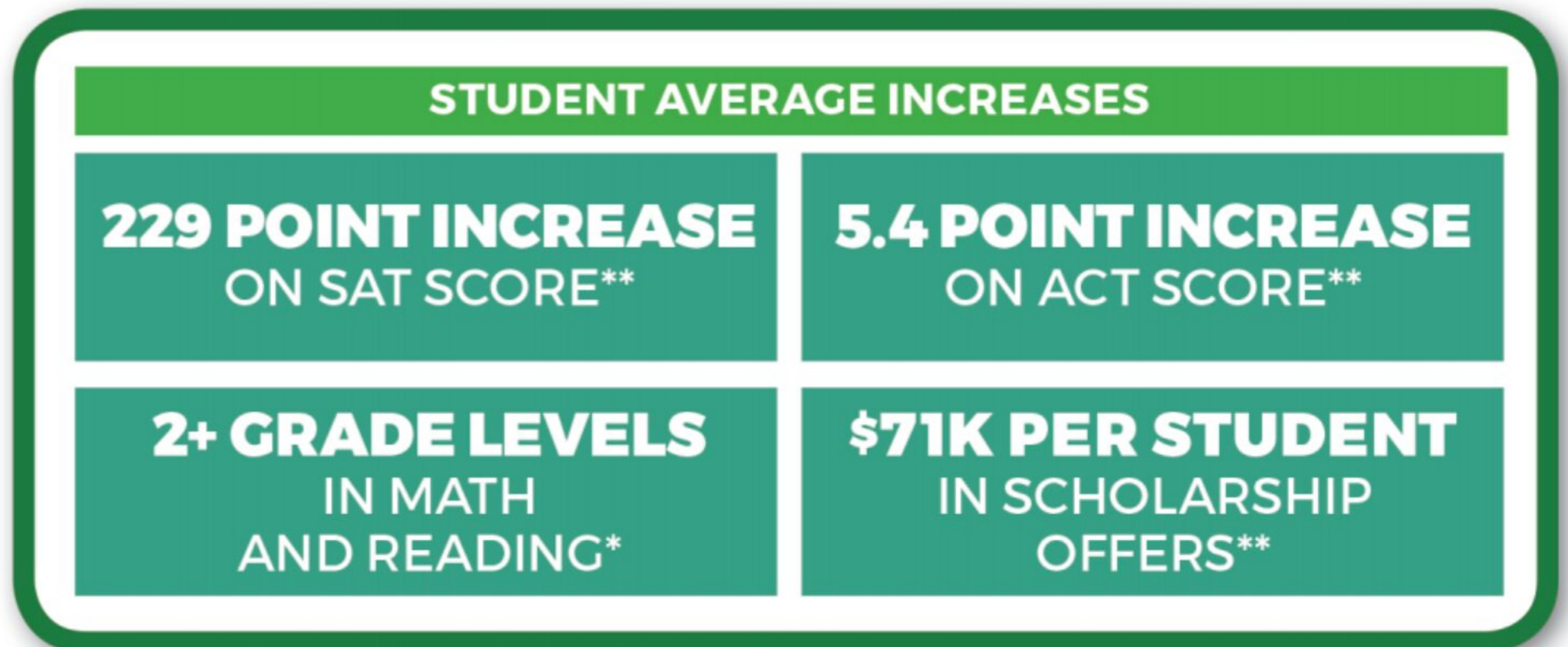
I don't know what the future looks like, but whether it exists online or in-person, your success will still depend on customer advocacy. Make that your goal, and the rest will work itself out.

*Adam Bornstein is the founder of Pen Name Consulting, a marketing and branding agency, and the creator of two12, a mentorship experience for entrepreneurs.*

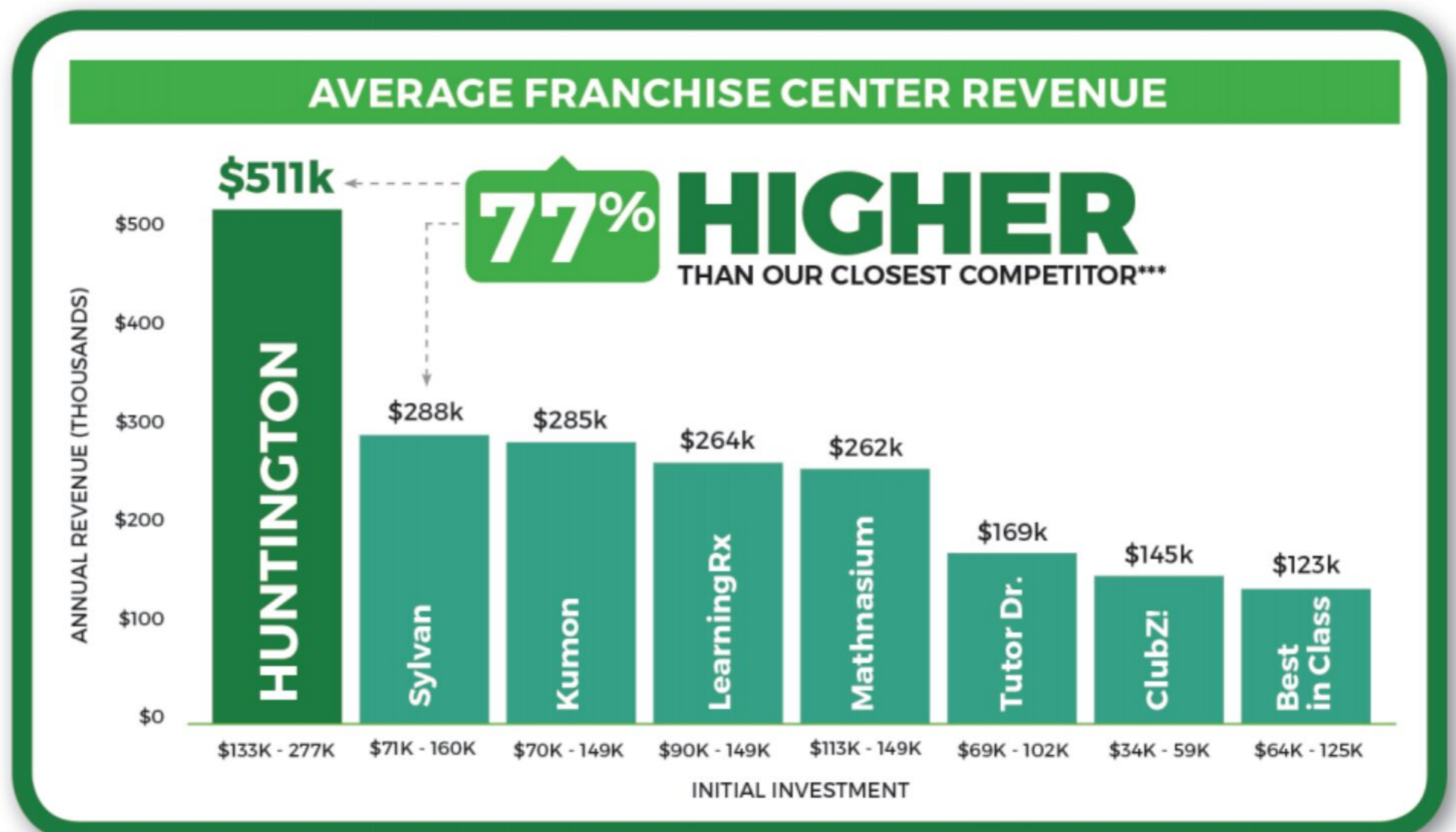
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### Market Research

# “HOW CAN I HELP YOU?”

Don't know exactly what your customers want? Ask them. That's how **Christine Schindler** turned a raw technology into a popular tool to make restaurants safer.

by **STEPHANIE SCHOMER**

**C**hristine Schindler was obsessed with handwashing way before COVID-19 came along.

In 2017, as foodborne illness outbreaks were plaguing businesses like Chipotle and wreaking havoc on public health across the country, she understood how to solve the problem. “No one walks into a restaurant with a vial of *E. coli*,” says Schindler, a biomedical engineer. “Eighty-nine percent of foodborne illness outbreaks caused by restaurants are directly linked to poor handwashing practices.” She got to work on a solution, called PathSpot, that would utilize spectral imaging to detect illness-causing contaminants on a restaurant worker's hands all in a matter of seconds.

But there was a problem: Although Schindler knew how to build the technology, she had no idea what kind of product a restaurant would actually use.

“I truly had hundreds of different versions I thought could work,” she says. She'd gone through a process like this before, having spent time in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania creating cancer-detection tools for resource-restricted communities. But American restaurants were something else. “I considered attaching the technology to a cellphone, mounting it to a countertop, incorporating it into a tablet,” she says.

Eventually, she realized there was only one way to find the answer: Ask restaurant owners.

She sold her car, used the money to buy a 3D printer, and set out on a cycle of intense rapid prototyping. She'd walk around her New York neighborhood, showing up at random restaurants as early as 6 A.M. to steal a few moments from the owners and explain her proposed solution. She'd take their feedback home to her apartment, 3D-print various hardware options, superglue the parts together, and return to cooperating restaurants to test the crude devices.

“I'd put it on the wall [of a restaurant] and watch how people interacted with it,” Schindler says. “The prototypes only lasted for two hours before they fell apart.”

But those two hours of observation created invaluable feedback. Schindler learned what restaurateurs wanted, as well as what they'd pay for. “Sometimes they'd ask for six different available form fac-

tors, or the detection of additional bacterium, but when I told them that would triple the cost, they walked back from those requests,” she says. “We knew we had to make it accessible.”

After six months, one design rose to the top—a kiosk-style, wall-mounted device. Employees place hands under it and receive either a green light (good to go) or a red light (please rewash). Feedback on that version led to an even more robust product.

“Over and over again, teams would ask me for data around overall handwashing frequency in addition to efficacy,” she says. “So now we have a 24-7 dashboard with automatic insight and alerts that we give to restaurants. It's so critical, and I never would have thought of it on my own.”

That data shows that PathSpot helps create a three-fold increase in handwashing, reducing instances of contamination by 75 percent in just 30 days. Brands including Chopt and Dairy Queen became some of Schindler's earliest supporters, and in 2020, as demand skyrocketed, the CEO raised a \$6.5 million Series A and tripled the size of her staff.

The experience provided her with a lasting lesson. “If I'd spent the time building a robust unit from the beginning, it wouldn't have been right,” she says. Her success came from getting feedback early—and building exactly the thing her customers need.

That's how Schindler was able to trade in her superglue for an actual manufacturing process. “I do not build them myself anymore,” she says.



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## Competition

# CAN THERE BE TWO TINDERS FOR CLOTHES?

She was a first-time founder with a fresh idea. Then a \$30 million competitor arrived.

by JASON FEIFER



When Madison Semarjian was a college freshman, she had an idea for an app: It would be like Tinder, but for clothing—using AI to learn her personal style, and then pulling together outfits from a wide range of retailers that she could swipe left or right on (and of course, buy).

Semarjian couldn't shake the idea, so she spent all of college creating it—developing the tech, raising money, and signing partnerships with major brands like Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's, and Prada. She called the app Mada, and it launched in January 2020. It was a hit with the media and style lovers because nothing like it existed.

But that quickly changed. A startup called The Yes soon launched with similar functionality and major backing; it's co-run by the former COO of Stitch Fix and had raised \$30 million. "Here I am, fresh out of school. And here is this industry veteran who has more experience than I have life on this Earth," says 23-year-old Semarjian (who interned at *Entrepreneur* in 2018). She was understandably freaked out, so an adviser gave her some advice: "Blinders on, Madison."

To stay ahead of her well-funded competition, the adviser was saying, Semarjian needed to focus on her strengths. Here's what she did:

**1 ► Built strong bonds.** Mada launched with a bug that messed up some customers' orders. "I'd reach out and be like, 'I'm so sorry; here are 10 more options we think you'll love,'" Semarjian says. Those customers became Mada's biggest fans. It made Semarjian realize the power of personal connections and gave her an idea for a kind of "style concierge"—someone to help with style-related question.

She figured she'd develop it later. But when her competition arrived, Semarjian moved swiftly to differentiate herself and to lock in customer relationships. She launched an email-based concierge program last summer, and user



time spent on Mada spiked. "When we showed that we were engaged with them, they started showing more engagement back," she says.

**2 ► Marketed smarter, not louder.** Semarjian has a modest marketing budget. So even when she was feeling the pressure, she spent slowly and strategically. She interviewed influencers, looking to run a test campaign with one that aligned with Mada. She figured that Instagram would drive the most attention, and the platform did fine...but the influencer casually mentioned Mada on her YouTube channel, too, and *that* triggered a huge response.

"People loved that, versus seeing this very put-together picture on Instagram," Semarjian says. "It completely changed my approach to influencer marketing."

**3 ► Listened to customers and rethought assumptions.**

After flipping through Mada's AI-generated outfits, some customers wrote in to say: "I love this brand I discovered in an outfit, but can I see all products by them?"

At first, the answer was no. Semarjian wanted to keep the focus on outfits. But then she realized her error. "I'm such a control freak," she says. "That's why I've built a team that has some people who are the exact opposite of me."

She listened and created a search-by-brand feature. "It's more of a typical e-commerce experience," she says. But users are happy—and that's what matters.

*Hear Semarjian on our podcast Problem Solvers, available on Spotify or wherever you find podcasts.*



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How to Adapt

# ZOOMING INTO THE FUTURE

In 2020, **Zoom** transformed from a business tool into a lifeline. How did the company keep up? Simple, says founder and CEO **Eric Yuan**: It focused on fundamentals. **by JASON FEIFER**







was a Monday morning in mid-March. Schools in California had just gone remote, and Eric Yuan's daughter was settling in for the first day of her new routine. Then she turned to him and, like kids were doing with their parents everywhere, asked him for help using Zoom.

"She'd never asked me a question about Zoom!" says Yuan. Nor had he ever expected her to, even though he is the company's founder and CEO. "When we created Zoom, the goal was to serve enterprise and business customers. I never thought about my kid having to use Zoom."

That's when Yuan knew his world was about to change. This tool he built, which was once reserved for corporate communications, was becoming a defining part of everyday life. His task was no longer to just build a great company; it was now to make sure his company rose to this unusual but defining moment. And it wouldn't be easy.

Few could have predicted Zoom's star turn—because for much of his career, Yuan was the underdog. He immigrated from China to Silicon Valley in 1997, after being denied a visa eight times. He got a job at Webex, taught himself English, and eventually developed an idea for a simpler, more user-friendly videoconference system. Nobody seemed excited; investors told him the market was full. So he created a screensaver on his computer that said YOU ARE WRONG, to inspire himself to keep going. "It's very small, but it gives you a

strong reason," he says now of that message. "You have to do all you can, and work as hard as you can, to prove other people wrong."

Eventually he did just that: Zoom went public in 2019, catapulting Yuan to billionaire status. But still, before the pandemic, Zoom peaked at just 10 million daily participants. By April 2020, that number spiked to more than 300 million.

"Every employee at Zoom, myself included, felt very excited," he says. "Because after many years of hard work, we're seeing, wow, we really can help people out." But he knew it would be tough going. The company's resources would be strained. It would need to hire rapidly, ensure it could keep up with demand, and react to problems it hadn't considered or faced before.

Yuan says he felt confident—not just because of decisions he was making today but because of the groundwork he'd laid many years earlier. When he



founded the company, he says, "I asked myself what kind of company I want to work at for the next 10, 15, or 20 years." His answer was simple; he wanted a company that made him happy. Then he hired accordingly. "One thing we always tell our employees is 'Every morning when you wake up, the first question you should ask yourself is *Do I feel happy or not?*'" he says.

"If you feel happy, please come to the office quickly. If you do not feel happy, you can stay at home."

Happiness became the company culture's guiding principle, he says. More than 100 employees serve as volunteers in the "happiness crew," which hosts events for team members. The company also looks for ways Zoom can spread happiness, like offering



Yuan in his Bay Area home, photographed via Zoom.

free service to more than 100,000 grade schools across the world. “I don’t need to push my team,” he says. “They know what to do. So we leveraged this opportunity to transform our business.”

When the pandemic hit and user growth soared, Yuan took a moment to consider what he had. Here were the pros: He trusted his team, and his product

architecture was strong and scalable. But problems loomed. The increased growth of participants rapidly outpaced Zoom’s servers, so he set up daily meetings to focus on capacity and kept adding new data centers. (Zoom now utilizes 19.) New participants, who were coming in by the hundreds of millions, weren’t always sure how to use the product—

so Zoom rapidly grew its customer service team to respond to everyone.

By April 2020, security issues threatened to define the company. Zoom had many bugs, including one that enabled hackers to eavesdrop on conversations—or even appear in other people’s chats, in what became known as “Zoom-bombing.” This caused many large com-

panies and government agencies to stop using Zoom, and a wave of negative news stories followed. But inside the company, Yuan says, he had a simple action plan: React fast and hide nothing. Security flaws could be overcome, but a secretive company response could be deadly.

“Users are pretty smart,” he says. “If you keep everything open and transparent,

## CHAPTER 1 ► CUSTOMER SERVICE

they soon realize, *Oh, Zoom is a company I can trust.*"

From April 1 to July 1 last year, Yuan told his team to focus exclusively on security and privacy features. They addressed the bugs and hired rapidly—bringing on a new chief information security officer in June, as well as many new security engineers, and third-party experts to test for flaws. Zoom also launched weekly webinars for users to ask questions—not just about security but about anything Zoom-related. And it posted regular updates on its blog. By May, New York City’s school department and many others had returned to Zoom, and user growth continued. Yuan’s strategy



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\* GlobeNewswire, July, 2020.

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had worked.

From there, the Zoom team moved on to improving its product more generally. Every company can learn from its users, but Zoom had an unusual feedback channel: In addition to hearing directly from consumers, it was also hearing from mainstream culture—where jokes on *Saturday Night Live*, for example, centered around people being unaware that they're muted on Zoom. "When Tom Hanks showed up on Zoom—he's my hero! I thought, *Wow, that's pretty cool*," Yuan says. But he also took it seriously. "Any feedback, we aren't taking that for granted."

Even as Zoom's num-

ber of daily participants swelled, Yuan says, the company didn't have to change how it collected feedback. It already had a system in place to log and review what users asked for, and a team that was trained to look deeper at their complaints. "People tend to tell us what to do—they tell us the solution," he says. "We want to take a step back and understand the pain point." Sometimes a consumer's suggestion may not be right—but that doesn't mean their problem isn't addressable.

This process led to many tweaks throughout the year. In August, for example, Zoom rolled out new filters, lighting,

and enhanced noise suppression. In September, it announced that users could pin multiple videos, and educators got new tools like a virtual seating chart. And in October, at Zoom's annual (and now virtual) Zoomtopia event, it announced enhanced integration with apps like Asana and Slack, a marketplace to sell online events through Zoom, end-to-end encryption for free and paid users, and more.

As Yuan looks to the future of both his business and virtual communication, he sees vast improvements coming. He expects that AI will eventually translate voice in real time, so people speaking different

languages can have live conversations on Zoom. And he says Zoom could eventually generate a perfect, succinct summary of each meeting after it happens. "With technology, we can remove the physical barrier—but also the cultural, language, and emotional barriers as well," he says. "Two people, no matter where they live, in one click can build trust and understand each other."

And how will Zoom get there? The same way it got through 2020, he says. When a company has a strong culture, product architecture, and ability to respond to consumers' needs, it can scale to any challenge. ■

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**CHAPTER**

# **SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING**

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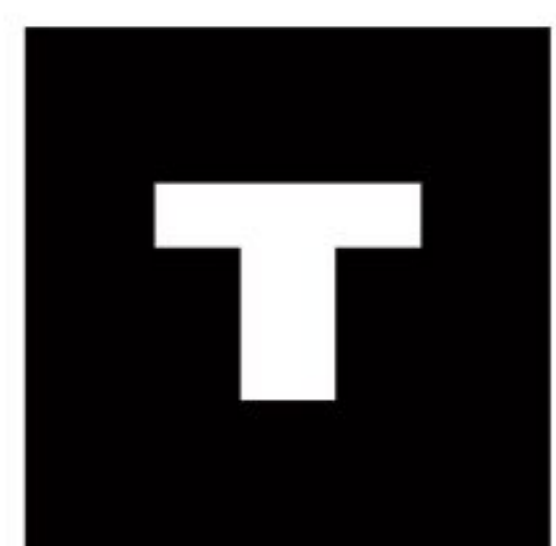
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## Start Your Own Business

# BUILD THE NETWORK

A beginner's guide to networking on social media.



The days of in-person networking are quickly being overpowered by connecting on the internet. In the past decade, connecting on social networking sites has rocketed from a niche activity into a phenomenon that engages billions of internet users.

According to Statista, the number of worldwide active social media users is expected to reach more than 4.41 billion by 2025. In North America, more than 70 percent of the population has at least one social account. In the early years of this social movement, this approach to networking was overlooked as a marketing vehicle for business owners. That's changed dramatically, although many small businesses still fail to take full advantage of social media communities in a meaningful way. But they should. In addition to connecting at in-person events, you can reach hundreds, even thousands, of potential customers online. Social networking can help you reach new markets and enhance your customer service while garnering a halo effect for the face-to-face networking you already do.

## HIGH-LEVEL NETWORKING

When networking online, you need to be efficient with your time and even more effective with whom you choose to connect with. It's important to know how to choose whom to connect with online. There are two different types of networkers online—the posters and the seekers. Your business is a poster, which means you actively post valuable information, resources, tips, and offers. The seekers are your customers—they're actively seeking your products and services. You'll find seekers in discussion areas, forums, groups, and engaging on fan pages.

When searching for quality contacts to net-

work with online, start with connection sites, such as LinkedIn, and look for high-level networkers (HLN). You'll know an HLN when you see one; they're active online, have at least 500 connections, and have powerful profiles, which means their profiles are set up completely and leave out little to no information. Make sure these contacts have at least one of the three criteria before you connect with them online. Some examples of HLNs are decision-makers, executives, the media, and the movers and shakers in your industry. Don't let the fact that you don't yet know the person hold you back from sending an invite to connect. Simply be transparent, and let them know

why you'd like to connect with them online. Whether you're offering your help, sending them a resource, or introducing them to one of your connections, make sure you make it about how you can help them and not how they can help you.

## TARGET MARKET CONNECTIONS

Target market connections (TMC) are a group of consumers at which your com-

pany aims its products and services. Find these people in groups and discussions related to your area of interest or focus. TMCs are mostly seekers who chat and seek out information by posting questions online. In the most basic terms, they're seeking you. The key is to join in the groups and discussions where your target market is talking and engage with them. You can also send them an invite to connect and let them know that you sent them the invite because you have similar interests and you're looking to expand your professional network. You can also find these groups in sites like LinkedIn. Search for groups that match what you have to contribute and then check to see which have not just the largest member numbers but also the most active discussions.

Another way to find your target market online is to investigate competitors' marketing methods. See where another business that offers the same or similar products and services advertises their links and posts on social sites. Be sure each location makes sense and has a large contingent of people in your targeted market. Searching in your field will often turn

## ► QUOTE

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### GROUPS AND DISCUSSIONS

Even the most unsociable entrepreneur can interact online. Groups and discussion areas on social

sites are all over the internet, from LinkedIn and Instagram to Twitter and Facebook. Most social networking sites have community areas for people who have similar interests to gather and connect. (Even Twitter has groups, or you can join people in discussions around hashtags on a

topic—or create your own.) It's important to find a dozen or so of these groups and discussion areas and not only join and monitor them but engage in the conversations as well.

Brands' and businesses' own websites have become another way to engage online. An increasing num-

ber of companies are producing their own content to serve their audience and customers; the communities that grow around that content have created one more opportunity to engage and share ideas and support.

For example, if you own a restaurant, you could connect with food and review writers, vendors who are blogging, or food enthusiasts, and share their posts and content on your own website. This not only builds relationships but also can expose you to their markets, followers, and fans.

### FACEBOOK PAGES

With any social media platform, you need to be creative and find ways to provide value and engage your target market. One of the best ways to accomplish this and position yourself as an industry leader is to build and launch a Facebook page. If you're an entrepreneur, you can't afford to ignore this powerful tool. People who "like" and follow a page are enthusiastic, and if they like what they see and read, they'll connect with you, become loyal supporters, and tell their friends. This is how word of mouth will grow. More than 50 million small businesses use Facebook Pages to connect with customers, according to Facebook. According to research from internet analyst The Drum, Facebook influences more than half of people's online and offline purchases. In short, Facebook is a big deal and is likely to remain so.

## ► THE TROLL EQUATION

**B**eware of "trolling" on the net: A troll is someone who posts inflammatory or off-topic messages in an online community, such as a discussion forum, group, or blog, with the primary intent of provoking other users into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion.

Unless you monitor your blog, social media accounts, etc., there may be no system in place to effectively deal with trolls. This becomes an issue for large platforms like Twitter and Facebook

### WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT TROLLS?

**1 ► Interact.** There's nothing better than showing the world—or at least your audience—that you'll stand up for your company and defend your brand. If someone has something negative to say, challenge them, but do it in a proactive and nonemotional way. This can be hard when you and your company are being attacked, but when you objectively challenge your opponents, the majority of the time they won't even respond. This will show your happier customers that you've made an effort and potentially ward off further trolling. Trolls don't often think about the fact that there's someone on the other side of that comment because they're used to posting negativity that never gets questioned or tested. When they see that you're paying attention, more often than not, their tones change, the conversation shifts, and you've created a positive interaction.

**2 ► Ignore them.** If calmly engaging doesn't work, you might be dealing with someone who's not actually looking for help on a topic related to your company but is rather simply looking to create negative reactions. In that case, don't play their game—instead, ignore them. In some cases, if you refuse to pay attention to them, you deprive them of what they want and they'll go elsewhere. If other people begin to "feed" the troll, you might need to take another tack.

**3 ► Delete.** There are circumstances when it just makes sense to delete the comments. When it's clear that you are not going to be able to get into an effective dialogue with someone, or they've drawn out their trolling buddies, it's time to hit delete.

**4 ► Report.** If a troll is particularly vulgar, disruptive, or worse, report the social media handle to the platform and follow up until you receive a response. Yelp and some other review sites have a formal complaint process, as do sites like Facebook and Twitter.

Ignore it at your peril.

It's very simple to set up a page for your company on Facebook—just a few clicks, and you're ready to go. You can create a company page from your home page on the Facebook site, or follow a tutorial available in the help section on the site. Once you get your page up and running, pay attention to your analytics, or what Facebook calls "Insights." You can view specific demographic information, such as where your followers are from, their gender, and their age. Monitor who becomes a follower, how they're interacting, and how often they're posting. This will help you figure out who and where else you should be targeting online.

To enhance the look and brand image of your company page, use a horizontal image that covers the top of the page invitingly. You should use a smaller logo or image for the inset image that will show up as your page profile photo in follower newsfeeds. You can also set your follower page to have a vanity URL, which is a personalized web name. This will take your page URL from [facebook.com/#/pages/brandnamehere/180746308742](https://facebook.com/#/pages/brandnamehere/180746308742) to [facebook.com/brandnamehere](https://facebook.com/brandnamehere).

One of the main differences between a Facebook profile and a company page is you can send bulk messages to all your followers. You can also invite friends to like your page. Obviously, this is a feature you need to use wisely, and be careful not to annoy your audience. But it's a great way to con-

nect with your target market, especially since these are connections that have opted-in to become a part of your community. They want to hear from you and talk with you.

After you have your company's page published live, you can use the little ads you see in the margins on your profile page to increase your follower base, mostly to kick it off at the beginning. Facebook advertising is very affordable; you can set up campaigns of any size and on any budget, and they're highly targeted. People usually assume that advertising is expensive, but don't let that scare you. Give it a try.

You can boost a few posts and promote your page—and gain hundreds and even thousands of fans, not to mention expose your brand—for a few hundred dollars, sometimes even less. Facebook keeps track of the success of your campaign, and you set targets for viewers and interactions. So you can quickly see the ROI of any post you've boosted or the value of the page promotion parameters you choose. Because ads and post boosting are able to be finely targeted, you can also be sure your target audience (all the way down to location and age range) sees your page and posts.

### **MEDIA CONNECTIONS ON SOCIAL SITES**

The media is an effective conduit for delivering your messages and story to the people you want to reach and can be vital to gaining word-of-mouth online and

## **KEEP IT SEPARATED**

### **It's important, in most instances, to keep your personal social media accounts separate from your business accounts.**

Many people blur the line between professional and personal, but when you own a business, it's more important to be concerned about offending a professional contact with your personal photos or posts. It's best to keep separate Facebook and Twitter accounts, in particular. And if you are a heavy YouTube user, keep your accounts separate there, too. LinkedIn, which is professional in nature to begin with, can be the exception if you keep your posts related to your industry or work.

off. With the help of social networking sites, you can search for media contacts on sites, such as LinkedIn, and reach out to them directly. On Twitter, you can also find up-to-date information about a media outlet and what it's looking for. Look for trending topics in your area or industry and use the prevailing hashtags to get your expertise or product in the conversation when it comes up.

Start by identifying the media outlets you want to target, and visit the website for each one to research it thoroughly. Keep your list brief so follow-up is manageable. Once you've built your list, search for key contacts at those outlets on LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a great resource for finding professional journalists and segment producers. With LinkedIn's search features,

you can dive deeper into user data to find contacts who fit your criteria. For example, you can create a search to find contacts with "reporter" as their professional title within a 50-mile radius of your zip code. You can easily narrow each search by limiting other fields or adding a keyword, such as "business" or "features." LinkedIn also lets you save a certain number of searches so you can be alerted to new contacts who join LinkedIn matching your criteria.

**Key media contact titles include:**

-  **Editor**
-  **Segment producer**
-  **Journalist**
-  **Reporter**
-  **Assignment desk editor**

You can also follow many

## CHAPTER 2 ► SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING

of these people on their broader social accounts like Twitter or Instagram to get a feel for what types of stories they look for and what speaks to the scope of their influence.

### CENTER-OF-INFLUENCE LIST

One of the fastest ways to build referrals and relationships online through social networking is by reconnecting with past friends and family members or simply by reaching out to the top people in your center of influence who respect and admire you. This could be friends from grammar school, high school, or college; past coworkers; family

members; media contacts, etc.

People trust people they already know, and your friends and family will most likely recommend you if the situation is right. Referrals have always been an extremely powerful way of gaining customers. With the web, trust levels can be very low for new visitors. In this environment, a referral from a trusted source can make all the difference in converting a contact into a customer.

Develop that trusting relationship with people who are well-positioned to help you. You must earn their referrals. When you do, your

### ► WORTH YOUR TIME?

**When looking for groups to join, search for ones that have at least 500 members, unless they're industry-specific. Most groups with less than 500 might not be as active or updated and visited frequently enough to be worth your posting time. If you find a group with fewer members, be sure to keep an eye on how active its members are before you spend much time on involvement.**

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marketing will become supercharged with what's clearly the best form of advertising—positive word of mouth.

Facebook is one of the best sites to connect with friends and family as well as past coworkers and your online center of influence. Once you've determined who these contacts are and connect with them online, you need to not only reach out to them but keep in touch. Have you ever had someone you know buy what you sell from a competitor because they didn't know you sold it? That means you're not at the top of their mind. 📧

## ▶ FORGET ME NOT

It is vital that you create a powerful plan to keep your brand top of mind with your contacts. Set aside half a day at least once every three months to reach out to your connections by using one of the following approaches:

**1 ▶ Send them an email once a month.** You can announce something new in your business and simply touch base.

**2 ▶ Phone them (or connect via chat or web meeting) to say hello.** Ask them how they are first, and keep notes so you have a point of contact for the next call. You can close with an event or big announcement about your company, product, or service.

**3 ▶ Write them a personal note.** Notes work well for staying top of mind, and they take time, which shows that you value the relationship. SendOutCards.com is a great site that can help you automate card sending—and we're talking real printed cards, not e-cards.

**4 ▶ Don't tell them, show them how important they are.** If this relationship doesn't include reciprocity, it will degenerate into a "what's in it for me" situation that won't stand the test of time. Send them thank-you gifts or online gift cards (a small amount will do just fine) to let them know you're grateful for them and any referrals they've sent your way.

# Low Start-Up Investment!



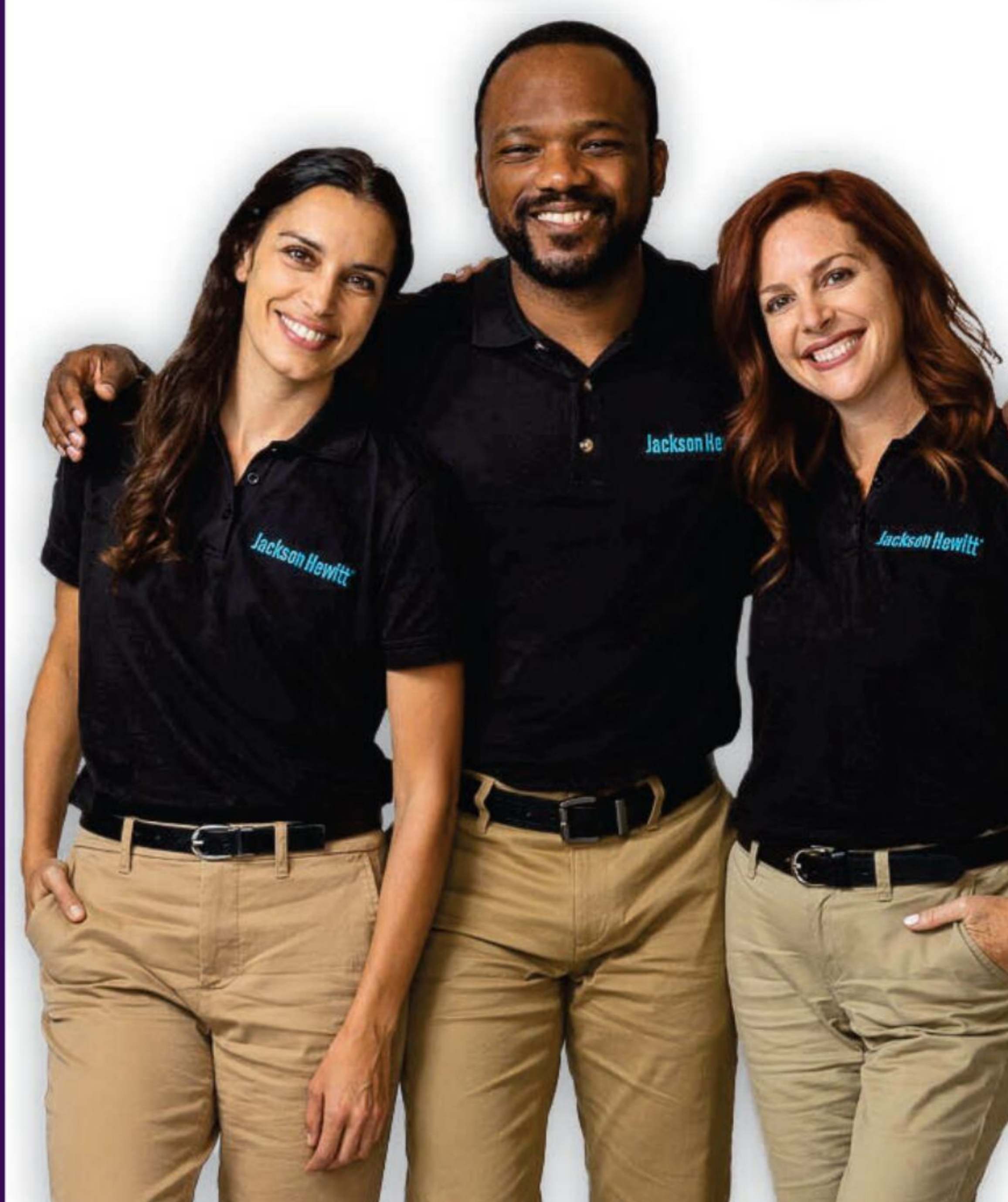
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### Stay in Touch

# TAKE CARE OF YOUR NETWORK

Building a strong network of professional contacts means nothing if you don't take the time to nurture it. That's why entrepreneur and podcast host **Jordan Harbinger** built a tried-and-true system to help him maintain relationships.

by **JASON FEIFER**

**H**e hears it all the time: An entrepreneur thinks they can count on their network for something—to boost sales of a book, say, or create buzz for a new project—and it falls flat.

They think their network is the problem, but Jordan Harbinger has a more educated guess: “The problem is you took your network for granted,” says the host of *The Jordan Harbinger Show* podcast. To make sure he never loses sight of those valuable connections, he does two things consistently. First, he reaches out to five people every day. “This doesn’t happen at random,” Harbinger says. “I use a CRM called Connection Fox, where I’ve organized hundreds of people I’ve built good relationships with. The CRM reminds me when I haven’t connected with someone in a certain amount of time—I set it for three or six months—and then I simply check in via text or email. I’ll ask how they’re doing, share a little about me, and that’s it. It doesn’t take much time.”

Second, Harbinger pays it

forward and asks for help on someone else’s behalf each week, even if it’s just making a valuable introduction. “Truly *advanced* networking is connecting people within your network to each other,” he says. “You want your network to exist outside of you, and you want those people to meet and start companies and fall in love and get married. Then when you need something, you’re reaching out to all the sub-networks you created, instead of just the circle of people you know. And it means your contacts aren’t hearing from you *only* when you need something—nobody wants to get an email from someone they haven’t talked to in three years. When I need help, or someone I know needs help, I know we’re top of mind for each other. And that’s because I stayed in touch the whole time.”



## About 911 Restoration

- Ranked #2 Top Restoration Franchise on Entrepreneur's 2020 Franchise 500
- Ranked #44 on Entrepreneur's 2020 Franchise 500
- Ranked #55 on Entrepreneur's 2020 Top Growth Franchises List

## 911 Restoration Fast Facts

- ✓ Business growth via advanced lead generation system & national clients
- ✓ Sold 200+ territories
- ✓ Proven franchise concept with high profit margins
- ✓ Strong brand recognition
- ✓ Low investment with high return

# Get in While You Can. Territories are Selling Fast!

911 Restoration has seen astounding growth over the past few years, and much of that success is due to a strong support system for franchisees. Founder Idan Shpizear knows what it takes to build a small operation into a thriving business. After all, he built one of the fastest growing restoration franchises out of \$3,000 and a carpet cleaning machine.

Here's what it means to be a 911 Restoration franchise owner:

### Innovative Lead Generation System

"Our goal is to see franchisees succeed," Idan says. "Through our multi-million-dollar marketing platform, we have grown one-man operations into major regional restoration companies."

911 Restoration corporate keeps the lead generation growing through the efforts of their expert in-house marketing team. This team has been solely dedicated to the restoration industry from the beginning, developing and optimizing a powerful lead generation structure that generates thousands of calls on a monthly basis. To help franchisees maximize time, the 24/7 customer service team records initial call information and transfers emergencies to branch managers so their crews never miss a lead.

### Fresh Start Reputation

Shpizear has been deliberate about establishing a meaningful company culture. As he says, "Culture is where it starts." Every team member and franchisee stands united behind the Fresh Start philosophy—the belief that every disaster is an opportunity to rebuild better

than before. Armed with this attitude, franchises and corporate work together to help customers turn crises into new beginnings.

Now known from coast-to-coast as the "Fresh Start Company," 911 Restoration has become the contractor property owners associate with compassionate, client-centered service.

### National Accounts

Through the combined powers of a strong marketing system, a unified team, and a trustworthy reputation, 911 Restoration has secured several national accounts. Shpizear reports that the company's continual growth in this area contributes to the fast success of franchisees. "We actively seek entrepreneurs who have a growth mindset and a desire to make a positive impact," he says. "When they apply those qualities to the boost they get from our lead generation and national accounts, success comes quickly."

### Adaptability

The recession-proof nature of the disaster restoration industry already offers security for 911 Restoration franchisees. What makes this particular company unique is corporate's immediate response to unexpected challenges. "We move quickly," Shpizear says. "When the pandemic hit, we added a sanitization and disinfection focus in our marketing and gave our franchises the support they needed to adjust. When Texas was struck by winter storms, we ensured our franchisees were fully equipped to be the Fresh Start for their devastated communities."



## For 911 Restoration Franchise Information:

👤 Dan Atchison    ✉️ [franopps@911restoration.com](mailto:franopps@911restoration.com)

☎️ (888) 243-6653

Tech Tools

# CAN EMAIL BE BETTER?

Email is useful but often unmanageable, which is why a new slate of apps are offering to help. We test the buzziest of them: Superhuman.

by JOHN BRANDON



**A**ndrew Wyatt receives 300 to 400 emails per day. Some are from investors and partners of CALA, the digital fashion branding platform he cofounded. Others are from potential customers. He doesn't want to miss important notes but can't spend all day searching for them. "I tried every Gmail hack trying to get to inbox zero," he says. "No matter what, it was a big mess."

That's why Wyatt was willing to spend a whopping \$30 per month on a solution: It's called Superhuman, a new and much-hyped email app that has raised \$51 million in funding. And it's not alone; Superhuman is joined by a crop of new email apps, all vying to be the go-to solution for entrepreneurs with untamed inboxes.

"These new email apps

tend to allow for a better blend of capabilities, like social network integration, and can improve individual workflow," says technology analyst Rob Enderle. "Not all of these are ideal for all people, but this trend suggests you can likely find one better for you."

Superhuman makes for an interesting case study. At \$30 a month, it's like buying a Lamborghini when

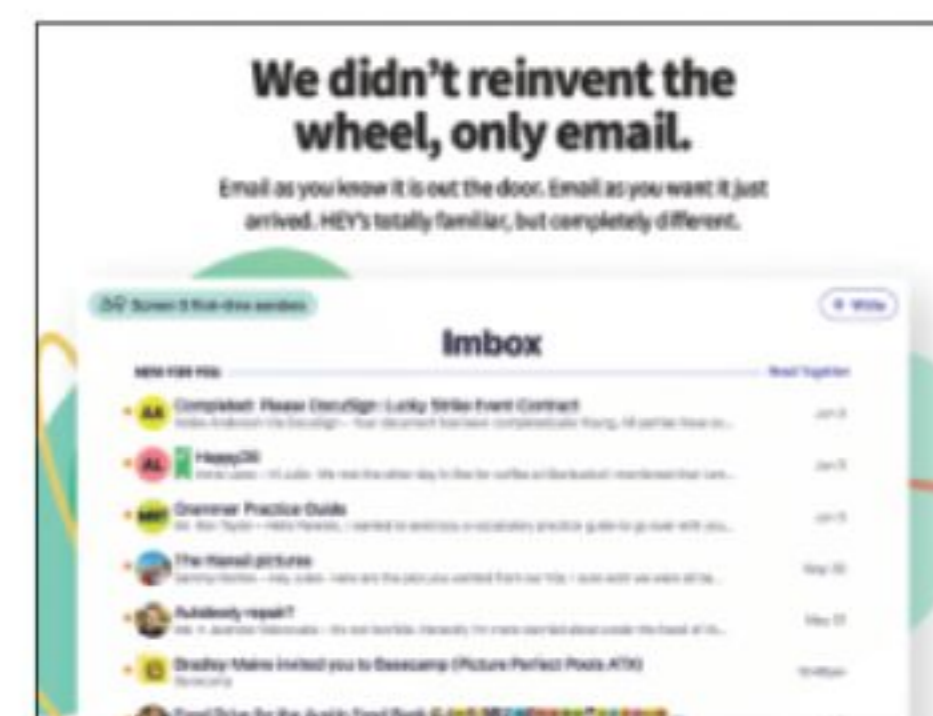
you can get a Toyota Corolla (called Gmail) for free. But it's made for people who have a problem worth paying to solve. Artificial intelligence highlights the most important emails; messages from different kinds of people (investors, customers, friends) are routed to "split inboxes"; keyboard shortcuts process messages at lightning speeds; a "Snippets" feature enables users to send elaborate canned messages; and there's more.

"Entrepreneurs are in a very unique position: The rate at which we respond to email sets the bar for our entire organization. The faster you go, the faster everybody will go," says Rahul Vohra, Superhuman's founder. He wants the app to improve entrepreneurs' "flow state"—helping them focus on emails that matter most.

After trying out Superhuman myself, I can appreciate what Vohra means. The interface is exceptionally clean, with no distractions. On the iPhone version, I found it much faster to swipe away emails and search for old ones—helping email become a tool, not just a task. The key commands are eminently useful; hitting O, for example, toggles to my calendar.

These are the reasons Wyatt is happy to keep paying; he now feels liberated from the slog of email. After our call, I promise to send him a follow-up message. "I know I'll get it, because I already have you marked as important," he jokes. A new status system is born.

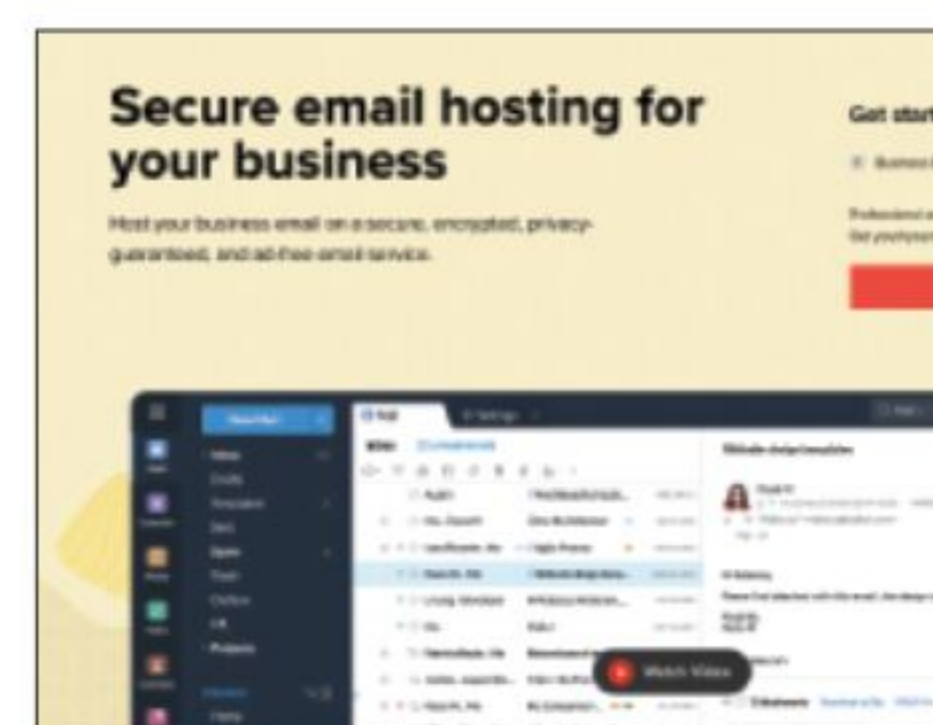
## OTHER NEW EMAIL APPS



### HEY

**Cost** ► \$99 per year

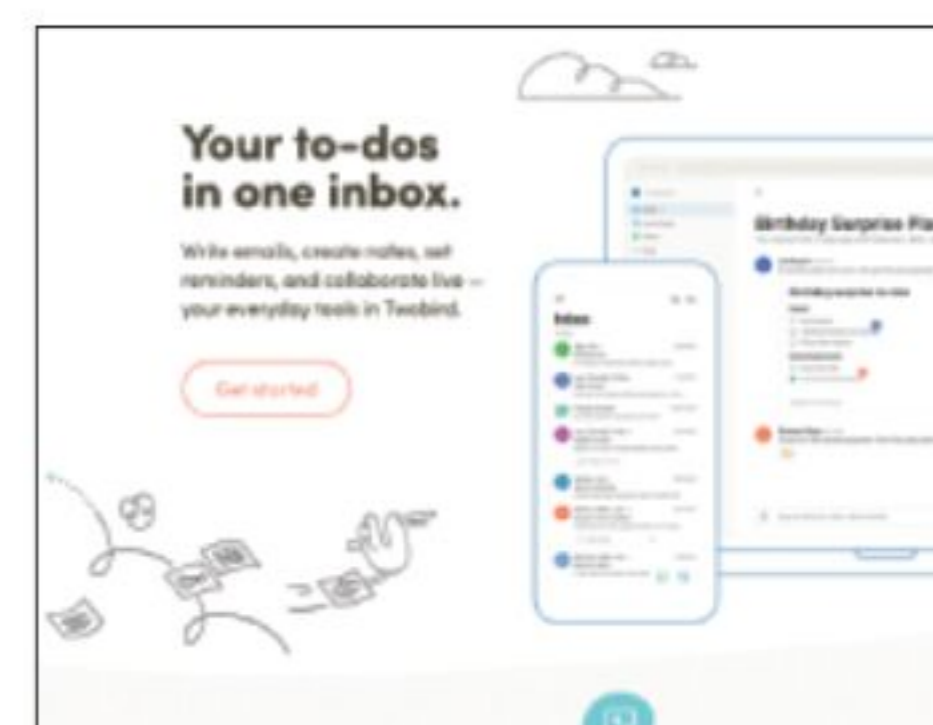
Hey (created by Basecamp) emphasizes receiving over sending. You pick who can email you and where their emails go, and everything else is ignored. Hey for Work, released in February, hosts business domain emails. [hey.com](http://hey.com)



### ZOHO MAIL

**Cost** ► \$1 per month per user for the lite version

One of the best options for hosted business emails using your domain, Zoho is strong on compliance, security, and reliability. You can comment and tag emails, à la your Twitter feed. [mail.zoho.com](http://mail.zoho.com)



### TWOBIRD

**Cost** ► Free

Twobird uses your existing Gmail account. The "two birds" are email and notes, which are all integrated into the app for collaboration purposes. [twobird.com](http://twobird.com)



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Working Together

# IT'S TIME TO GET CREATIVE

We may be physically apart, but actor and entrepreneur **Joseph Gordon-Levitt** says we can (and should!) still find ways to creatively collaborate. **by DAN BOVA**





these socially distant times, Joseph Gordon-Levitt has a message for entrepreneurs and artists alike: *You can still come together to collaborate!* He is best known for his work in film and television, and has starred in such blockbusters as *Inception* and *(500) Days of Summer*—but with production schedules halted, he’s been spending even more time with the company he founded in 2010, HitRecord, which has seen a surge of interest. HitRecord began as a production company, but it has evolved into a platform that enables people to launch and join artistic projects. (In 2020, it won an Emmy for a project it had collaborated on with YouTube.) “People don’t just post things they’ve made on their own and say, ‘Look what I made,’” he says. “People contribute to each other’s projects. It’s a beautiful thing.” Even from afar, he says, there are many ways we can all create together.

**I imagine you haven’t been on set for a while. What’s it been like?**

I’ve found that during this strange time of quarantine and isolation, it’s been really helpful for me to stay creative—to do something creative every day. But for me, it can be hard to do that alone. Just, you know, staring at a blank page and being like, *Now I will write! Right now, I’m going to make a song!* That can be tough. I grew up in more collaborative environments, on movie sets or doing shows, et cetera. I really feed off the creative energy of other people.

**A lot of people feel the same way, which I’m guessing is why your platform, HitRecord, has seen so much growth.**

It’s been a bittersweet silver lining to see people rise to the occasion and cope with everything by being creative together. A lot of art and creativity that happens online nowadays is about *Hey, world, look what I made,* and there’s nothing wrong

with that. Lots of great art gets showcased that way, and people find audiences, and that’s wonderful. But I love the idea that the internet can be something more than just a way to find an audience; it can be a way to find collaborators. When you do that, you find a really profound human connection with other people.

**In the best of times, we might put something online that we think is great, get no feedback, and get depressed. But you’re not just asking people to like something; you’re asking them to build off of that connection.**

That’s just the thing. You know, I’m in the privileged position to have lots and lots of followers, so when I post something, there’s always hearts and likes. But it still doesn’t feel good to me, because I’m always like, *That’s all? I should have more than that guy over there!* It’s a recipe for anxiety. I find social media to be sort of angst-ridden. The creative spirit is a fragile one. And when your own creative process always

goes through the lens of *How many likes am I going to get?*, that’s a poisonous way to think about art.

**That’s an unavoidable part of your career, isn’t it? You work hard on a film or a TV show, and then the critics take over.**

I mean, look, I wouldn’t complain, because I love getting to make movies. But what I love so much about making a movie is the *making* part. It’s being on a set and collaborating with other people, figuring something out, having a challenge. It’s those moments of the process itself that I feel so lucky to be a part of. When the movie comes out, to be honest, that’s never been my favorite part. That can be a little anxiety-inducing.

**I often ask entrepreneurs, “If you weren’t doing this, what else would you be doing?” And they say, “Nothing. This is the only thing I know how to do or want to do.” Do you feel that same way about creativity?**

I’m actually getting a really big kick out of building this company, HitRecord. There’s overlap with being an artist and running a company, but it’s also very different. A movie or a show—you put it out and then you never change it again. It’s out there, people like it or they don’t like it, and that’s it. But building a company is an ongoing thing. It’s never perfect. It’s never done. And you’re just trying to make it better, make it better, make it better. It’s a really different creative process that I’m quite excited about.

**That’s an interesting distinction. Have you found that the two also require different leadership styles?**

When I direct a movie, I like to attend to every detail. I’m completely nitpicky. Whereas running a company day to day, you can’t do that. There’s so much more going on. There’s so many more elements in play.

I discovered this the hard way. For years, we operated HitRecord more as a production company. We made some beautiful art, won an Emmy, all with me approaching it as *I’m the director*. Lots of people would contribute to, say, a TV show we were making, but we could only include so many of those contributions in the final episodes. That meant a number of contributors felt like *Oh, I didn’t make it*. And that was never what we wanted.

We started thinking, how could we solve this riddle where not everybody gets to be included? How could we genuinely say, “Hey, every-

body's welcome to be a part of collaborative creativity"? And we realized, well, it can't always be us. What if we take what we've learned doing these collaborative projects and we build tools and empower anybody to start their own projects and find collaborators?

We'd been approaching it like artists, but that left people out. We realized we needed much better technology. We needed a proper product and tech team. And we raised money from Silicon Valley investors. It would have been easier to raise money in Hollywood, but we didn't need Hollywood investors' guidance. We needed the connections and guidance from proper tech investors.

**So in short: You had a vision, you realized that you hadn't lived up to your vision, and then you went back to the drawing board. That's the entrepreneurial process! Do you think it's also the creative process?**

If you approach art and creativity in a results-oriented way—like, *I hope I make it big!*—it's always going to be disappointing. And I say that as someone who's been lucky enough to enjoy some amount of that success. But I can also say from experience that *that's* never what's really satisfying. I've never gotten to a point where I felt, *Oh, OK, I made it.* It never feels the same as the satisfaction I get when I take my focus off external results and focus on the inherent rewards of the creative process itself. **S**

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Brand Building

# HOW TO OWN A CULTURAL MOMENT: WITH PERSONALITÉ

**Yes Way Rosé** began as a playful Instagram account. Now it's one of the buzziest wines in America. What happened? It's a case study in spotting the cultural moment before it explodes...and giving it a voice. **by STEPHANIE SCHOMER**

Yes Way Rosé founders  
Nikki Hugarir (*left*)  
and Erica Blumenthal  
in France, visiting  
the winemaking  
facilities where their  
rosé is produced.





he year 2020 was a year that demanded wine.

Erica Blumenthal and Nikki Huganir expected this. They didn't expect the *reason*, of course—the horrible stress, the terrible tragedies, interminable lockdowns. Instead, they were envisioning pool parties, summer getaways, and the other carefree activities that lifted them toward the top of the summer's hottest wine category. Blumenthal and Huganir are the founders of Yes Way Rosé, a brand that was born out of a catchphrase on Instagram but whose silly name has led to serious sales: It's the no. 1 French canned wine, the no. 2 sparkling French rosé, and the no. 4 French rosé in America.

Back in March of last year, just days before the nation spiraled into crisis, I visited them as they prepped for what was supposed to be a booming summer. It was 10 A.M. on a freezing morning, inside a photo studio in New York's garment district, and a photographer and a food stylist were on hand to make summertime marketing materials. They'd whipped up a punch that really did look delicious: watermelon juice, vodka, and, of course, Yes Way Rosé.

The two founders toasted each other before glancing my way and becoming acutely aware of the morning hour. "We have to test the product to know that it's good," Huganir said coyly. The team on set laughed, then got to work. No one had any idea what was coming.

But as the world changed in the coming months, and many industries were shaken or destroyed, the alcohol industry held on and, in some cases, thrived. In-store sales across all alcohol categories were up 21 percent year over year across America, and online alcohol sales were up 234 percent. Yes Way Rosé's prominence held steady.

If you were being uncharitable, you could say that

COVID-19 was just one more piece of dumb luck for a brand that's been made possible by 58,000 Instagram followers. Because the thing is, Yes Way Rosé never even set out to *become* a brand. It began as a joke, just three words repeated between two friends who spent years promoting other people's wine before ever thinking to make their own. Yes Way Rosé is a happy accident, you might think. A fluke of social media. But that view misses the point.

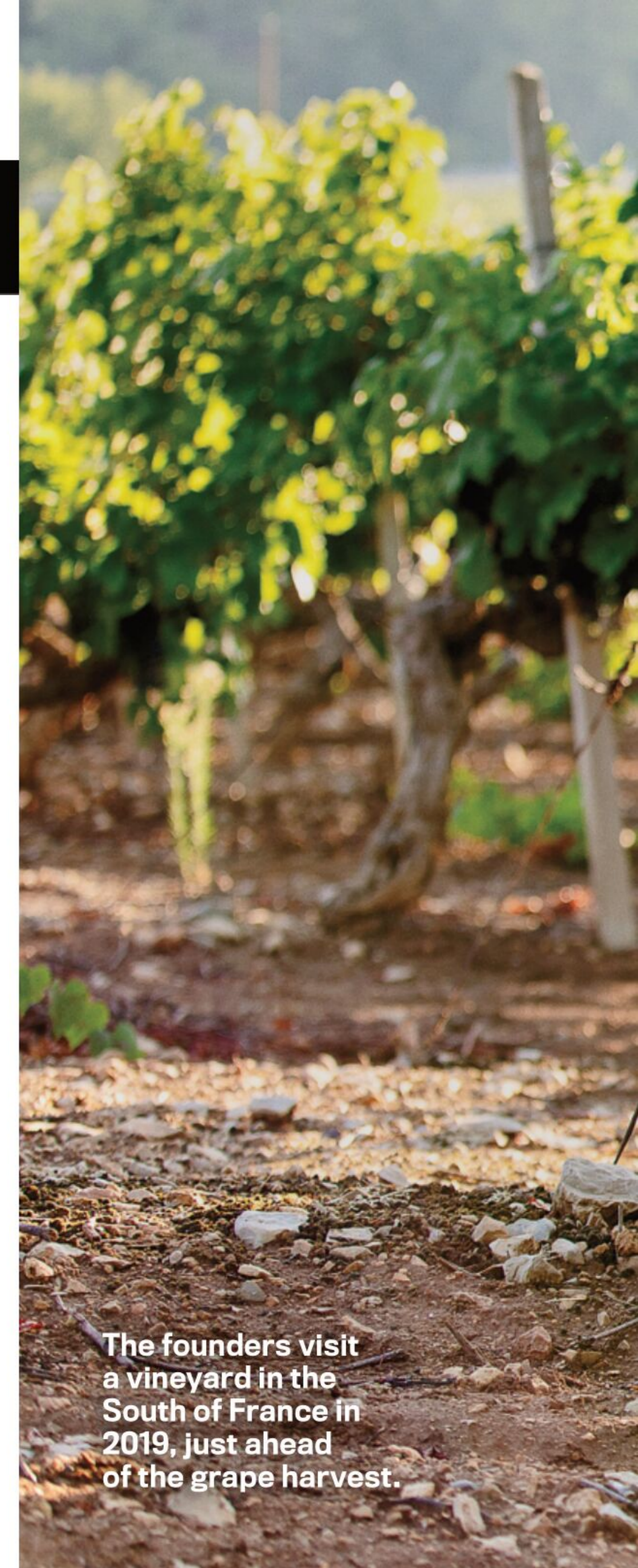
The real lesson of Yes Way Rosé is this: Sometimes the best way to build a business is to build a trusting audience. Relate to them. Become meaningful to them. Don't hawk products to them. And then listen, and let your community show you the way.

**BLUMENTHAL AND HUGANIR** have a long history of shared obsessions. They met in high school in Baltimore and bonded over their love of *Beverly Hills, 90210* star Brian Austin Green. ("Everyone else had crushes on Brandon and Dillon, but we were all about David Silver," Blumenthal says. "He was an underdog!") After briefly losing touch in college, they reconnected when they

both ended up living in New York and found that the easygoing rapport of their teen years transferred to young adulthood. They built careers in adjacent industries—Blumenthal as a fashion writer and editor, Huganir as a graphic designer—growing a shared network of friends and creatives in the city.

"Erica was invited to a lot of fashion events, and I was her permanent plus-one," Huganir says. These events are typically overflowing with free booze (one perk of underpaid creative jobs), but the duo was rarely enthused. "I wasn't that into drinking besides just having a drink in my hand when I was out," Huganir says. Blumenthal felt the same. "If you asked me what I wanted to drink, I'd labor over the decision," she says. "I just didn't know anything about spirits."

Then they discovered rosé. The light, crisp, easy-drinking wine had spent a decade or so as the summer drink of the summering class—popular in places like the Hamptons and Nantucket. By the time Blumenthal and Huganir found it in the late aughts, rosé was on its way to being a cultural marker. Much like cosmopolitans had defined



The founders visit a vineyard in the South of France in 2019, just ahead of the grape harvest.

evenings out in the '90s and early 2000s, rosé was becoming the drink of choice for 20-something women today.

"We couldn't believe how beautiful it was, or how much we loved it," Blumenthal says. "We wanted to wear the color! It just cracked us up how much we liked it."

These are the moments that trend-hunters are paid to find—those things in the ether, just ready to be claimed and owned. Blumenthal and Huganir weren't thinking that strategically, but they instinctively went down the path. They developed a shorthand between them, with evenings out punctuated with wine-based jokes. *Rosé all day. Where there's a will, there's a rosé. Everything's coming up rosé. Clear eyes, full hearts, rosé.* Their friends joined in, regularly texting puns and pictures





of their own pink-filled glasses to the rosé ringleaders.

“After a couple of years of obsession, I just felt like we *had* to do something productive with it,” Blumenthal says. She pitched an Instagram account to Hujanir, who agreed, so long as she could make it “look really good.”

In 2013, @YesWayRosé was born, a mix of silly jokes and shots of the beverage against a sunset or a cityscape. “It was definitely lo-fi,” Hujanir says. “We’d post, like, a picture of Jennifer Lopez with her pink engagement ring,” she says, as Blumenthal jumps in: “Jenny from the block with her rosé-colored rock!”

They were giving voice to the drink of their demographic. An audience started to build of people who loved rosé...and loved to love rosé.

They were also hitting

upon a problem that has vexed the wine industry for years—because although this new audience loved rosé, it didn’t really *know* much about rosé, and it didn’t feel an affinity toward any particular brand. “We knew we were drawn to dry French rosés from Provence, and we also knew that all these old-fashioned labels with names you could never remember didn’t speak to us,” Blumenthal says. Silicon Valley Bank’s 2020 State of the U.S. Wine Industry report echoes this more broadly: “Millennials don’t trust the rich, are skeptical about inauthentic and opaque marketing, and don’t care about your family’s name on the bottle.”

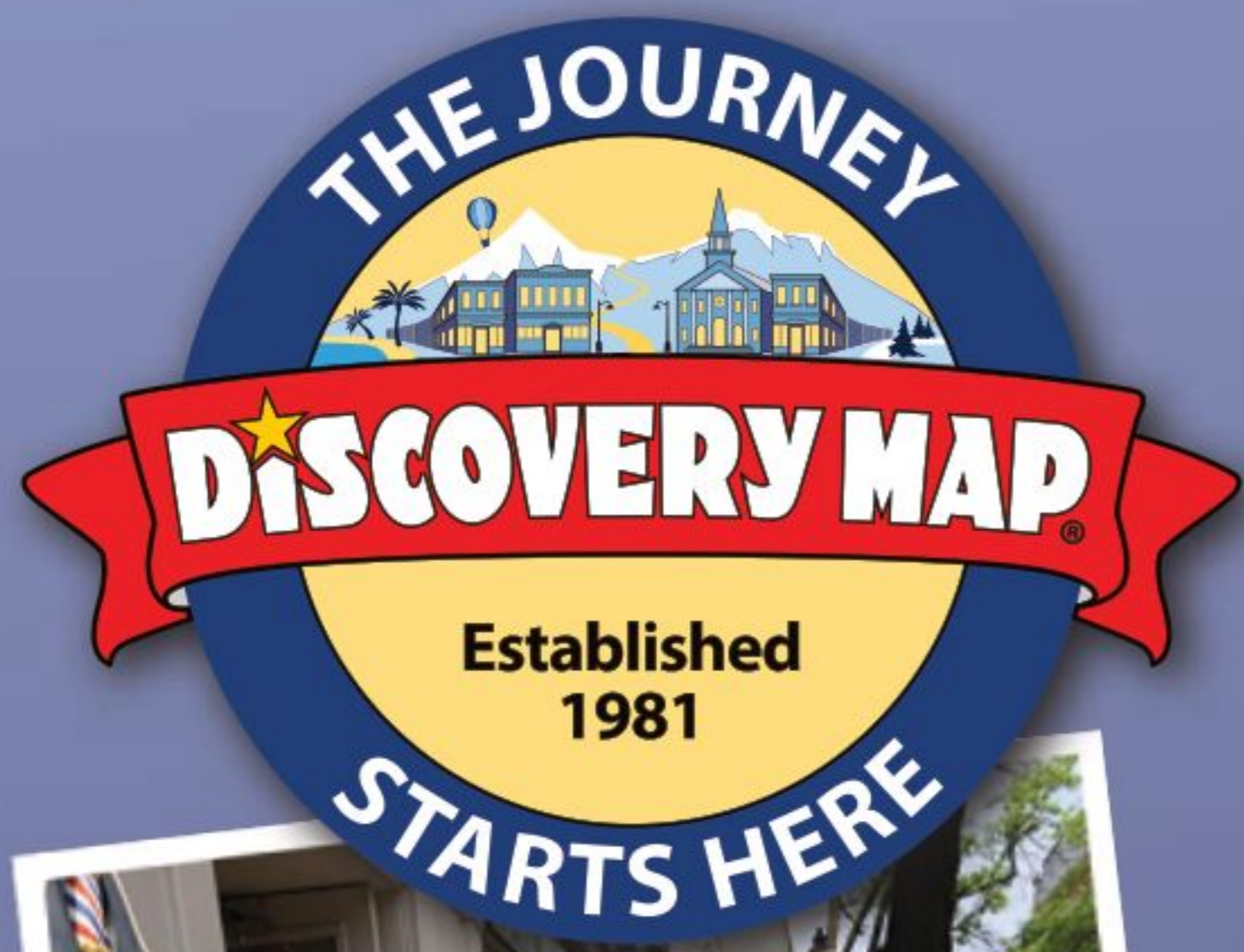
But as their following grew, the two friends felt they needed an education. “We wanted to really know what we were talking about,”

Blumenthal says. They started hanging out at local wine stores, chatting with winemakers and sales reps. When they found a rosé they loved, they’d share it on Instagram. “We’d hear from those local shops and winemakers that some of the wines we posted went viral and would really sell,” Blumenthal says. “We were lifting the category.”

This got them thinking. What if this Instagram joke of theirs was actually the seed of a brand? But if that was the case, then...a brand that sells *what*? “Having our own wine had really seemed unattainable to us—it felt like something you’d need to own a vineyard to do, which we did not,” Blumenthal says. So to bring the project into the real world, they asked a friend to print 50 tote bags with the words YES WAY ROSÉ embla-

zoned on one side. They gave away most, sold a few, and used the money to order more, a cycle that repeated itself until the tote was a coveted accessory for in-the-know New York millennials.

Over the next two years, the friends brainstormed ways to go bigger. They still assumed it was impossible to launch their own wine and started to envision Yes Way Rosé as a lifestyle brand. “I wish we could say we had a grand plan,” Hujanir says. Instead, what they had was enthusiasm. They made sweatshirts and tees, and they turned their apartments into fulfillment centers. At an industry party, Blumenthal introduced herself to Tenover’s nail salon cofounder Nadine Abramcyk and suggested a collaboration; a Yes Way Rosé



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## CHAPTER 2 ■ SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING

nail polish launched that summer.

In 2015, a partnership with the wine subscription service Club W (later rebranded as Winc) introduced a Yes Way Rosé-branded wine to the market—just 300 cases of Napa rosé that the startup had to spare. “We tasted it and liked it,” Blumenthal says, so they agreed to put their branding on it. The wine sold out. The experience made the friends think differently about their future: Maybe they *could* create their own rosé after all.

The moment was ripe. In 2015, exports of rosé wines from the Provence region of France to the United States soared 74 percent in value over the year prior—and in a nod to its new ubiquity, Josh Ostrovsky, the internet celebrity known as the Fat Jew, launched a mocking wine called White Girl Rosé. (It would later be acquired by Anheuser-Busch InBev.) Meanwhile, *Vanity Fair* published an online story that summer titled “When Did Rosé, Like, Become a Thing?” and attributed the drink’s boom in part to Yes Way Rosé’s Instagram. A few months later, *Wine Enthusiast* put Blumenthal and Huganir on the magazine’s cover, a spotlight on “tastemakers influencing what you drink now.” And most meaningfully to Yes Way Rosé’s pop-culture-obsessed founders, they looked at Instagram one day in 2015 and saw a post from actress (and wine lover) Drew Barrymore, to whom they had no connection. “Having a glass of rosé and tipping my hat to my friends at @yeswayrose,” it read.

“It was such a vote of confidence that she wanted to support us,” Blumenthal says. The friends decided to go all in. By 2016, they’d quit their jobs. Their partnership with Club W produced one more release, this time selling 25,000 cases of wine they helped develop, rather than simply market. “It gave us confidence that we could have success with a namesake wine,” Blumenthal says. It also gave them a mission: “We knew enough to do it ourselves.”

It was time for Yes Way Rosé to actually become a rosé.

**THERE ARE**, roughly speaking, three ways to create a wine brand. You can own a vineyard—an option generally reserved for the ultra-rich and generations-deep wine families. You can white-label a wine—essentially slap your name on someone else’s product, the way Yes Way Rosé originally did with Club W in 2015. Or you can create a constellation of partnerships—find a wine manufacturer that will create an exclusive blend, and various distributor and retailer partnerships that can help bring it to the masses.

Years ago, Blumenthal and Huganir had no idea that last option was possible. Now they imagined a unique French wine that was accessible in price and availability, and they set out to make it. “We talked to a lot of different people, asking for advice on how to do this profitably, with control over what we’re making,” Huganir says. “We knew our strengths, and we knew that in order to have the wine be widely available, we’d need help with distribution,” Blumenthal adds. “So let’s find the way that lets us focus on what we’re good at rather than what we’re not good at.”

They began with whom they knew. They’d already been in touch with Target because they’d planned to pitch a line of lifestyle products. Now wine seemed like the bigger opportunity, so they asked their Target contact to connect them with the retailer’s head of adult beverages.

That call was illuminating. “First, we learned that Target sells wine,” Huganir says, laughing. “In 27 states! Just none that we’ve ever lived in.” They also learned that Target might be interested—but that the first step wasn’t really the retailer; it was the distributor and supplier. They walked away with a small Rolodex of companies who might be interested in working with a young brand with a built-in audience. One was Prestige Beverage Group, a Minnesota-based supplier that’s been building adult-beverage brands since 1974.

Blumenthal and Huganir set up a meeting with Prestige’s execs, and they



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came in with an assured vision.

“I had a mockup of the bottle, and it looked exactly like what it looks like today,” Huganir says. “It was really important for us, in choosing a wine partner, to find a company that would trust us to know what we’re doing with this brand and its voice, and to let us make the creative and marketing decisions.”

Prestige liked what it saw and helped connect Blumenthal and Huganir with a winemaker in France. On their initial trip there in 2017—“a life highlight,” Blumenthal says—the founders tasted 12 different blends, slowly narrowing it down until they and the winemakers all agreed upon what would become Yes Way Rosé’s premiere product: a Grenache-Syrah blend with notes of strawberry, citrus, and peach. Target officially signed on as a partner, and Yes Way Rosé hit shelves in 2018, priced at \$12.99. The promotional photos were shot on Huganir’s iPhone in a makeshift studio set up in the basement of a WeWork.

The brand’s tagline: “The *qualité rosé* that doesn’t take itself too serious*lé*.”

Celeste Norlin, Yes Way Rosé’s national account manager at Johnson Brothers, their distribution partner that works with both Prestige and Target, says she sees many young brands stumble after this part. They get the product, they line up the retailer, and then...they overreach. “A lot of brands will strike when the iron is hot, launching eight varietals quickly to keep sales going,” Norlin says. To Blumenthal and Huganir’s credit, she says, they played it differently. “They’re launching products with intention and really thinking about who is purchasing.”

In the three years since launching their debut wine, Yes Way Rosé has created just a handful of new products. Norlin explains them in the voice of the consumer. “Here’s a rosé I can rely on as an everyday drink,” she says. (That’s the standard Yes Way Rosé.) “Sometimes I want to go out on the boat, and it’d be great to have my wine in a can.” (They launched canned rosé.) “Today we’re celebrating, and that calls for sparkling.” (Now there’s sparkling Yes Way Rosé.) And there are a few more. To move upscale, they created a premium Côtes

de Provence blend. To compete with trendy canned hard seltzers, last summer they introduced canned fruity wine spritzes. All this meets Target’s needs: By 2018, alcohol had become the retailer’s fastest-growing food-and-drink category, and it’s working to roll out the offering through even more locations. Of the Target stores that carry Yes Way Rosé, 95 percent carry multiple SKUs produced by the brand.

As the Yes Way Rosé founders think ahead, they now want to balance their ambitions with the patience to get there. “I think we’re in a really good position to be the number one [in every category we sell in],” Huganir says. “But we have to make sure we don’t try to take on more than we can handle.”

**INSTAGRAM IS** often known as the land of the influencer—the person whose brand is built around their face, and whose selfies are a perpetual product. Yes Way Rosé was different, of course: It was all about the voice and the wine, and Blumenthal and Huganir intentionally kept themselves in the background. There were no photos of them on the Instagram account; they wanted the voice they created to speak for itself.

But now they understand how they fit into the brand they’ve built. Their outsider status is something to celebrate. “We didn’t come from wine families,” Blumenthal says. “The traditional ways of getting into wine? We are very much *not* a part of that. And we want people to connect to that, and be inspired to try to tap into something that might seem completely unattainable. We worked and backed into where we were until it *did* seem attainable.”

To this day, they are Yes Way Rosé’s only full-time employees, and they share ownership 50-50. Their partnership is the kind that can communicate effectively with a single look, and that best-friend shorthand is a powerful tool.

“There are a couple ways we make decisions, but one of them is that if we’re not aligned, we don’t do it,” Huganir says.

As the brand has reached new heights in the past three years, the women



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have started grappling with the mounting responsibilities. Just as they knew they'd need distribution help to launch a national beverage, they're now identifying what they're going to need to take Yes Way Rosé to the next level. Managing a rotating team of project-based freelancers, being the voice of the brand, and running the business is starting to feel like too much for two humans.

That's why, back when I visited them at that photo studio last March, they were excited to start working with a digital agency to help them grow their marketing efforts. "We can't stay within our Instagram bubble," Blumenthal says.


"We have all this incredible content and art, and we aren't putting the money behind what we've created as much as we should be, or reaching as many people. And we need to reach as many people as possible, because the wine is in every state—and parts of Canada."

Last March, they put a freeze on 30 percent of their marketing budget to protect themselves against the coronavirus crisis. They'd been looking forward to having more support but found themselves relying on their own skills more than ever to get two new products—the Côtes de Provence wine and the canned spritzes—out into the world.

"I art directed my first remote photo shoot over Google," Huganir says. "We just had to figure it out, how to get photography and get this launch ready."

More change—and more firsts—are undoubtedly ahead. Blumenthal had been thinking about moving to Los Angeles, and COVID-19 accelerated those plans. The cofounders are now bicoastal, and despite the distance, they feel secure knowing their guiding force is unshakable. Their brand isn't about a product; it's about an idea that sparked a community.

"We know our customer; we are our customer," Huganir says. "We're speaking to them and creating what we would want."

"Had we rushed into it," Blumenthal continues, "we wouldn't be as strong." 

Stephanie Schomer is Entrepreneur's deputy editor.



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**CHAPTER**

# 53

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The List

# LOOKING FOR A LOW-COST BIZ?

Here are the highest-ranking franchises that cost less than **\$50K**, less than **\$100K**, and less than **\$150K**.

Compiled by **TRACY STAPP HEROLD**



PHOTOGRAPH BY SHUTTERSTOCK/GAUDILAB



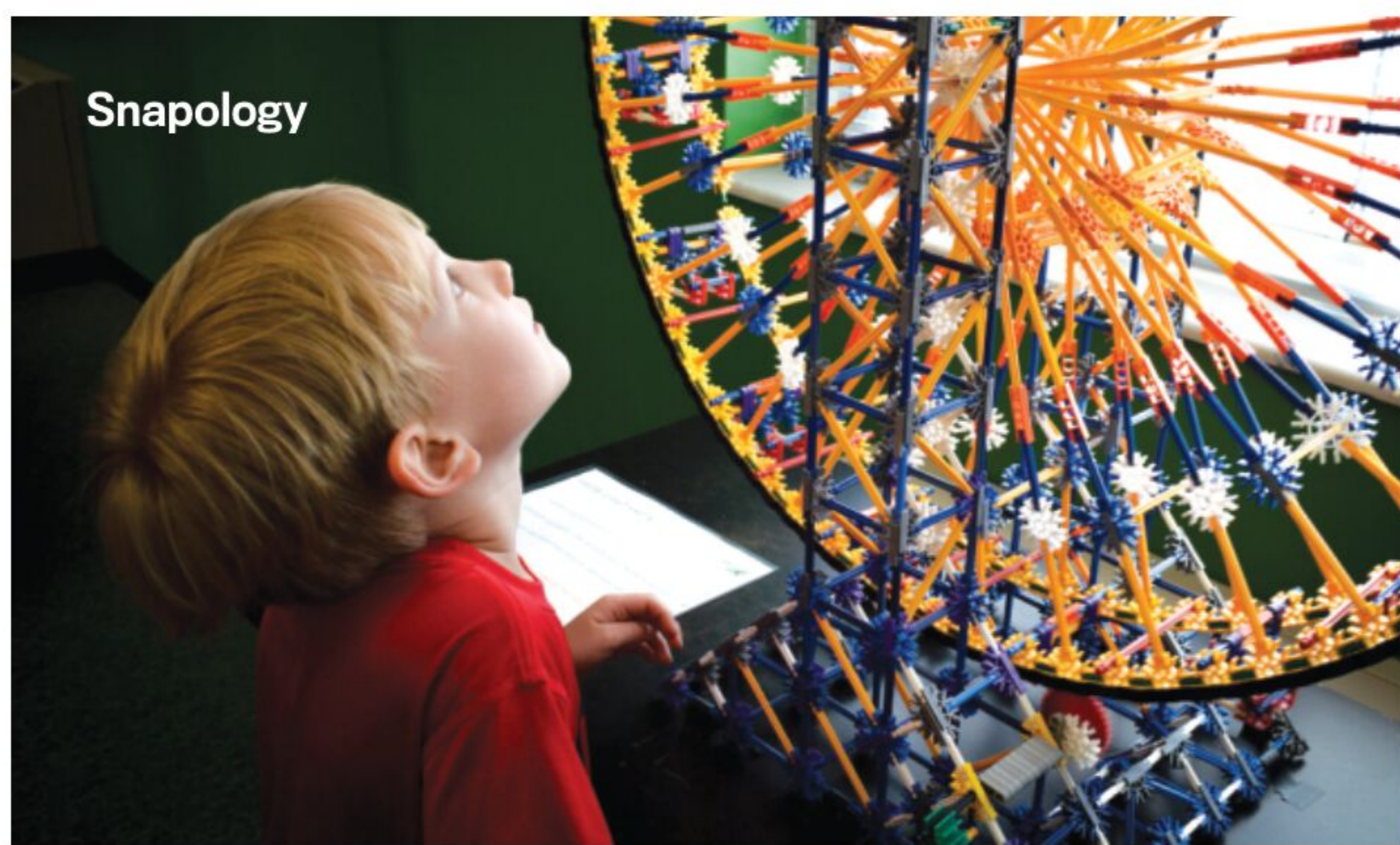
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on't think you can afford to open a franchise? Think again. There are actually franchise opportunities available for a wide variety of investment levels, starting as low as just a couple thousand dollars. Even if your budget is limited, your options are myriad—with low-cost franchises available in almost every industry, from cleaning and home improvement to fitness and children's enrichment. Even some food franchises, which is a notoriously expensive category, can be started for less than \$150,000!

To get an idea of all the affordable options the franchise world has to offer, check out the following pages. They contain our lists of the top franchises that can be started for less than \$50,000, less than \$100,000, and less than \$150,000. The companies we list are ranked based on the scores they received in *Entrepreneur's* 2021 Franchise 500 ranking, a comprehensive analysis that looked at more than 150 data points in the areas of costs and fees, size and growth, franchisee support, brand strength, and financial strength and stability.

Please note that a company's placement within a particular cost tier does not mean that all franchisees will be able to start the business for less than that amount, but simply that it is reasonably possible for some. For reference, we've listed the full initial investment range from each company's franchise disclosure document (FDD). Keep in mind also that this ranking is not intended as an endorsement of any particular franchise. Whatever your budget, it's always wise to carefully research any opportunity in which you're considering investing. Read the company's FDD, consult with an attorney and an accountant, and talk to current and former franchisees to find out if it's a good fit for you.

# TOP 100 FRANCHISES FOR LESS THAN \$50,000



Snapology

## 1 ▀ Jan-Pro Franchising International

Commercial cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$4.2K-\$56K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
10,118/0

## 2 ▀ Anago Cleaning Systems

Commercial cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$11.3K-\$68.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,711/0

## 3 ▀ Cruise Planners

Travel agencies

**STARTUP COST**  
\$2.3K-\$23.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
3,150/1

## 4 ▀ Realty One Group

Real estate

**STARTUP COST**  
\$44.3K-\$222.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
195/14

## 5 ▀ Goosehead Insurance Agency

Property and casualty insurance

**STARTUP COST**  
\$41.5K-\$116.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
748/0

## 6 ▀ Dream Vacations

Travel agencies

**STARTUP COST**  
\$1.2K-\$20.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,553/0

## 7 ▀ Stratus Building Solutions

Environmentally friendly commercial cleaning and disinfecting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$4.5K-\$79.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
2,030/0

## 8 ▀ NextHome

Real estate

**STARTUP COST**  
\$14.8K-\$213.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
414/0

## 9 ▀ Rooter-Man

Plumbing, drain, and sewer cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$46.8K-\$137.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
732/25

## 10 ▀ Chester's

Chicken

**STARTUP COST**  
\$12.4K-\$277.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,347/0

## 11 ▀ Snapology

STEAM education programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$40.9K-\$220.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
155/1

## 12 ▀ Skyhawks Sports & Supertots Sports Academy

Sports camps and programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$27.5K-\$71.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
125/62



**13 ► Challenge Island**  
Educational enrichment programs  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$48.3K-\$62.95K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
122/3

**14 ► STEM For Kids**  
Biomed, coding, business, and engineering programs for ages 4 to 14  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$49.5K-\$83.7K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
117/5

**15 ► Estrella Insurance**  
Auto, home, and business insurance  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$12.3K-\$84K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
164/2

**16 ► Brightway Insurance**  
Property and casualty insurance  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$18.1K-\$173.5K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
207/1

**17 ► Buildingstars International**  
Commercial cleaning  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$2.2K-\$53.2K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
899/7

**18 ► Destination Athlete**  
Equipment, apparel, fundraising, and performance solutions for youth, high school, and college sports teams  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$28.3K-\$93.6K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
151/0

**19 ► Soccer Shots Franchising**  
Soccer programs for ages 2 to 8  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$41K-\$55.1K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
234/8

**20 ► Pillar To Post Home Inspectors**  
Home inspections  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$41.2K-\$50.99K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
559/0

**21 ► National Property Inspections**  
Home and commercial property inspections  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$40.7K-\$43K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
222/0

**22 ► Property Management Inc.**  
Commercial, residential, association, and short-term rental property management  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$42.6K-\$166.6K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
256/1

**23 ► Sit Means Sit Dog Training**  
Dog training  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$24.3K-\$123.9K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
139/0

**24 ► Leadership Management International**  
Leadership and organization training and development  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$20K-\$27.5K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
462/0

**25 ► H&R Block**  
Tax preparation, electronic filing  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$31.6K-\$149.4K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
3,581/6,590

**26 ► Code Ninjas**  
Computer-coding learning centers for ages 5 and up  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$31.4K-\$333.3K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
255/2

**27 ► American Poolplayers Association**  
Recreational billiard leagues  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$20.99K-\$29K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
326/5

**28 ► ShelfGenie Franchise Systems**  
Custom pull-out shelving for cabinets and pantries  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$33.2K-\$109.5K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
151/21

**29** **Sculpture Hospitality**  
Bar and restaurant management solutions

**STARTUP COST**  
\$40.9K-\$69.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
320/12

**30** **Jantize America**  
Facility services and commercial cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$8.4K-\$49K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
125/0

**31** **We Insure**  
Insurance

**STARTUP COST**  
\$46K-\$97.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
111/1

**32** **DPF Alternatives**  
Diesel particulate filter cleaning and aftertreatment system restoration

**STARTUP COST**  
\$45K-\$141.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
40/1

**33** **IntegriServ Cleaning Systems**  
Commercial cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$3.1K-\$50K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
74/0

**34** **Parker-Anderson Enrichment**  
Enrichment programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$15.98K-\$81.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
19/1

**35** **Mint Condition Franchising**  
Commercial cleaning, building maintenance

**STARTUP COST**  
\$4.6K-\$32.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
409/0

**36** **Lendio Franchising**  
Small-business financing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$30.2K-\$117.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
64/0

**37** **Card My Yard**  
Special-occasion yard sign rentals

**STARTUP COST**  
\$4.7K-\$13.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
356/2

**38** **The Patch Boys**  
Drywall repair

**STARTUP COST**  
\$48.4K-\$75.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
92/0

**39** **Jazzercise**  
Group fitness classes, conventions, apparel, and accessories

**STARTUP COST**  
\$2.4K-\$21.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
8,456/2

**40** **Network In Action International**  
Professional networking and referral groups

**STARTUP COST**  
\$19.7K-\$47.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
58/3

**41** **Acti-Kare**  
Nonmedical home care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$32.5K-\$52.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
134/0

**42** **Amazing Athletes**  
Educational sports programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$36.95K-\$64.95K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
121/13

**43** **Hommati**  
3D tours, aerial videos, photography, augmented reality, and other services for real estate agents

**STARTUP COST**  
\$49.9K-\$64.99K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
105/0

**44** **WIN Home Inspection**  
Home inspections

**STARTUP COST**  
\$33.97K-\$36.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
188/0

**45** **TSS Photography**  
Youth sports, school, and event photography

**STARTUP COST**  
\$20.4K-\$74.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
177/0

**46** **Rhea Lana's Franchise Systems**  
Children's consignment events

**STARTUP COST**  
\$20.6K-\$39.95K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
97/3

**47** **Payroll Vault Franchising**  
Payroll and workforce management services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$49.3K-\$65.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
53/11

**48** **Oxi Fresh Franchising**  
Carpet, upholstery, hardwood floor, tile, and grout cleaning and odor control

**STARTUP COST**  
\$45.5K-\$75.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
417/6

**49** **Frios Gourmet Pops**  
Popsicles

**STARTUP COST**  
\$34.5K-\$134K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
37/1

**50** **AbraKadoodle**  
Art-education programs for children

**STARTUP COST**  
\$38.1K-\$81.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
490/2

**51** **Just Between Friends Franchise Systems**  
Children's and maternity consignment sale events

**STARTUP COST**  
\$38.5K-\$54.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
154/12

**52** **Hi-Five Sports Franchising**  
Youth sports programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$20.9K-\$413.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
19/1

**53** **Club Z! In-Home Tutoring Services**  
In-home tutoring

**STARTUP COST**  
\$33.5K-\$52.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
382/0

**54** **Little Medical School**  
Healthcare-themed after-school and summer-camp programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$41.8K-\$58.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
55/6

**55** **Sunbelt Business Brokers**  
Business brokerages

**STARTUP COST**  
\$43.5K-\$104K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
162/0

**56** **Vanguard Cleaning Systems**  
Commercial cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$5.5K-\$37.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
3,118/0

**57** **FRSTeam**  
Restoration of textiles and electronics

**STARTUP COST**  
\$33.4K-\$409K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
38/8

**58** **Grasons Co. Estate Sale Services**  
Estate sales, online auctions, staging

**STARTUP COST**  
\$48.9K-\$73.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
25/0

**59** **Discovery Map International**  
Visitor-information maps and guides

**STARTUP COST**  
\$35.95K-\$45.95K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
129/1

**60** **Drama Kids International**  
After-school drama classes and summer camps

**STARTUP COST**  
\$33.8K-\$73.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
221/0



**Little Kickers**

**61 ▶ Grout Doctor Global Franchise**

Grout, tile, and stone restoration, maintenance, and products

**STARTUP COST**  
\$20.6K-\$33.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
79/0

**62 ▶ Kinderdance International**  
Children's dance, gymnastics, fitness, and yoga programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$18.2K-\$47.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
173/2

**63 ▶ Proforma**

Printing and promotional products

**STARTUP COST**  
\$5K-\$59.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
627/0

**64 ▶ Best Brains**

Tutoring centers

**STARTUP COST**  
\$16.5K-\$78.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
137/4

**65 ▶ Christmas Decor**

Holiday and event lighting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$19.6K-\$62.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
256/0

**66 ▶ Aire-Master of America**

Restroom odor control, scent branding, and commercial hygiene services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$40.5K-\$145.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
111/7

**67 ▶ Class 101**

College planning and educational services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$45.95K-\$63.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
43/1

**68 ▶ SuperGlass Windshield Repair**

Windshield repair, glass scratch removal, headlight lens repair

**STARTUP COST**  
\$18.7K-\$84.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
336/0

**69 ▶ Foliage Design Systems**

Interior plant sales, leasing, and maintenance

**STARTUP COST**  
\$44.4K-\$64.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
25/3

**70 ▶ Coverall**

Commercial cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$16.5K-\$51.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
8,278/0

**71 ▶ Family Financial Centers**

Financial services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$18.5K-\$307K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
51/0

**72 ▶ 1st Class Real Estate**

Real estate

**STARTUP COST**  
\$14.4K-\$209.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
36/2

**73 ▶ Germinator Mobile Sanitizing**

Sanitizing and disinfecting services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$32.3K-\$57K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
20/1

**74 ▶ Augusta Lawn Care Services**

Lawn care and landscaping

**STARTUP COST**  
\$21K-\$82.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
17/2

**75 ▶ DivaDance**

Dance classes and parties for adults

**STARTUP COST**  
\$41.1K-\$57.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
17/2

**76 ▶ Spoiled Rotten Photography**

On-site preschool photography

**STARTUP COST**  
\$33.5K-\$48.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
11/2

**77 ▶ Town Money Saver**

Direct-mail and digital advertising

**STARTUP COST**  
\$5.7K-\$17K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
44/0

**78 ▶ TGA Premier Sports**

Youth sports programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$18.8K-\$68.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
103/4

**79 ▶ Fun 4 US Kids**

Family calendar/directory websites

**STARTUP COST**  
\$10.3K-\$28.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
11/9

**80 ▶ Chefs For Seniors**

In-home meal preparation service for seniors

**STARTUP COST**  
\$11.4K-\$26.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
48/1

**81 ▶ Moms on the Run**

Fitness programs for women

**STARTUP COST**  
\$6.4K-\$13.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
45/6

**82 ▶ Surface Specialists**

Bathtub repair and refinishing, tub liners, bath remodeling

**STARTUP COST**  
\$43.2K-\$56K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
48/0

**83 ▶ Network Lead Exchange**

Business referral networks

**STARTUP COST**  
\$12.1K-\$21.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
29/0

**84 ▶ Assist-2-Sell**

Discount real estate

**STARTUP COST**  
\$24K-\$45.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
137/1

**85 ▶ In Home Pet Services**

Pet-sitting, dog-walking

**STARTUP COST**  
\$9.2K-\$35.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
15/1

**86 ▶ EarthWise Pet**  
Pet food and supplies, grooming, self-wash, training, and walking

**STARTUP COST**  
\$40.4K-\$565.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
59/2

**87 ▶ Parisi Speed School**  
Youth sports performance training

**STARTUP COST**  
\$9K-\$183.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
102/0

**88 ▶ Mr. Sandless/  
Dr. DecknFence**  
Interior and exterior sandless wood refinishing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$26.8K-\$77.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
194/9

**89 ▶ KidzArt**  
Art-education programs, products, and services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$22.8K-\$39.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
42/0

**90 ▶ Get A Grip Franchising**  
Countertop, cabinet, tub, tile, and shower resurfacing; fiberglass repair

**STARTUP COST**  
\$43.6K-\$92.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
23/1

**91 ▶ Home Cleaning Centers  
of America**  
Residential and commercial cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$43.3K-\$45.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
30/0

**92 ▶ Bricks Bots & Beakers**  
STEAM camps, classes, parties

**STARTUP COST**  
\$29.6K-\$37.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
21/2

**93 ▶ You've Got Maids**  
Environmentally friendly residential cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$36.4K-\$107.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
95/0

**94 ▶ Lil' Angels Photography**  
Preschool, childcare, and family photography

**STARTUP COST**  
\$41.3K-\$45.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
42/2

**95 ▶ Succentrix Business  
Advisors**  
Accounting, payroll, tax, and advisory services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$39.1K-\$50.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
31/1

**96 ▶ Bar-B-Clean**  
Barbecue cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$36.95K-\$50.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
28/1

**97 ▶ Driverseat**  
Consumer and commercial transportation services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$37.4K-\$58.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
31/1

**98 ▶ Computer  
Troubleshooters**  
Technology consulting and services for small businesses

**STARTUP COST**  
\$12.2K-\$29.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
241/0

**99 ▶ Executive Image**  
Commercial cleaning and building maintenance services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$24.1K-\$68K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
42/1

**100 ▶ Little Kickers**  
Preschool soccer programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$27.5K-\$41.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
343/2

# TOP 100 FRANCHISES FOR LESS THAN \$100,000

**1 ▶ Kumon Math & Reading  
Centers**  
Supplemental education

**STARTUP COST**  
\$74.4K-\$156.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
26,338/27

**2 ▶ HomeVestors of America**  
Home buying, repair, and selling

**STARTUP COST**  
\$70K-\$426.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,122/0

**3 ▶ ServiceMaster Clean/  
ServiceMaster Restore**  
Commercial/residential cleaning, disaster restoration

**STARTUP COST**  
\$76.5K-\$274.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
4,928/9

**4 ▶ Matco Tools**  
Mechanics' tools and equipment

**STARTUP COST**  
\$78.1K-\$274.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,808/1

**5 ▶ Transworld Business  
Advisors**  
Business brokerages; franchise consulting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$74.9K-\$97.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
321/1

**6 ▶ CPR Cell Phone Repair**  
Electronics repairs and sales

**STARTUP COST**  
\$79.9K-\$205.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
544/0

**7 ▶ PuroClean**  
Property damage restoration and remediation

**STARTUP COST**  
\$78.8K-\$204.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
309/0

**8 ▶ Merry Maids**  
Residential cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$89.6K-\$125K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,705/3

## CHAPTER 3 ► GOOD OPPORTUNITY ► LESS THAN \$100,000

### 9 ► Novus Glass

Auto glass repair and replacement

#### STARTUP COST

\$55K-\$264.2K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

2,024/29

### 10 ► Home Helpers Home Care

Nonmedical/skilled home care; monitoring products and services

#### STARTUP COST

\$84.5K-\$136.6K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

324/0

### 11 ► Fiesta Auto Insurance and Tax

Insurance and tax-preparation services

#### STARTUP COST

\$67.1K-\$121.5K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

226/0

### 12 ► Made in the Shade Blinds and More

Window coverings

#### STARTUP COST

\$55.9K-\$64.5K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

115/0

### 13 ► Motto Mortgage

Mortgage brokerages

#### STARTUP COST

\$52.8K-\$73.8K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

130/0

### 14 ► Chem-Dry Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning

Carpet and upholstery cleaning, tile and stone care, granite countertop renewal

#### STARTUP COST

\$67.6K-\$191.5K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

3,577/0

### 15 ► MaidPro

Residential cleaning

#### STARTUP COST

\$57.6K-\$222.5K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

275/0

### 16 ► Assisting Hands Home Care

Home health care, respite care

#### STARTUP COST

\$80.7K-\$152.6K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

131/4

### 17 ► Mosquito Hunters

Mosquito, tick, and flea control

#### STARTUP COST

\$71.9K-\$94.4K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

93/4

### 18 ► SafeSplash/SwimLabs/Swimtastic

Child and adult swimming lessons, parties, summer camps

#### STARTUP COST

\$52K-\$1.9M

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

150/21

### 19 ► Amada Senior Care

Home care and assisted-living placement

#### STARTUP COST

\$82.2K-\$240.6K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

110/1

### 20 ► Restoration 1

Water, fire, smoke, and mold restoration

#### STARTUP COST

\$84.5K-\$193.1K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

225/0

### 21 ► RE/MAX

Real estate

#### STARTUP COST

\$42K-\$284K\*

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

8,405/0

*\*It is possible to open a RE/MAX franchise for less than \$50,000, but most franchisees will spend more to open their first unit.*

### 22 ► Qualicare

Medical/nonmedical home care, concierge services, and patient advocacy

#### STARTUP COST

\$84.6K-\$194.6K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

62/3

### 23 ► CMIT Solutions

IT and business services for SMBs

#### STARTUP COST

\$94.5K-\$127.4K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

239/0

### 24 ► Fitness Machine Technicians (FMT)

Exercise equipment service and repairs

#### STARTUP COST

\$71.5K-\$118.5K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

38/1

### 25 ► Miracle Method Surface Refinishing

Kitchen and bathroom surface refinishing

#### STARTUP COST

\$84.5K-\$180K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

159/1

### 26 ► Signal 88 Security

Private security guard and patrol services

#### STARTUP COST

\$59.2K-\$223.2K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

520/0

### 27 ► Totally Nutz

Cinnamon-glazed almonds, pecans, and cashews

#### STARTUP COST

\$59.9K-\$216K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

50/16

### 28 ► Right at Home

Home care, medical staffing

#### STARTUP COST

\$80.2K-\$147.2K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

611/3

### 29 ► Patrice & Associates Franchising

Hospitality, retail, and sales recruiting

#### STARTUP COST

\$90.6K-\$108K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

173/0

### 30 ► Tutor Doctor

Tutoring

#### STARTUP COST

\$84.3K-\$128.99K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

686/0

### 31 ► Color World House Painting

Residential/commercial painting, repairs, gutter installation, power washing, holiday lighting

#### STARTUP COST

\$83.9K-\$166.9K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

85/1

### 32 ► Window Gang

Window, gutter, roof, and dryer-vent cleaning; pressure washing; chimney sweeping

#### STARTUP COST

\$80.9K-\$118.3K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

112/111

### 33 ► Bio-One

Crime-scene and trauma-scene cleaning

#### STARTUP COST

\$85.5K-\$133.5K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

103/0

### 34 ► Screenmobile

Mobile window and door screening

#### STARTUP COST

\$91.98K-\$183.8K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

130/1

### 35 ► Jackson Hewitt Tax Service

Tax preparation

#### STARTUP COST

\$74.8K-\$110.3K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

3,833/1,948

### 36 ► HomeTeam Inspection Service

Home inspections

#### STARTUP COST

\$50.1K-\$76.8K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

190/0

### 37 ► Two Maids & A Mop

Residential cleaning

#### STARTUP COST

\$61.4K-\$134.9K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

77/2

### 38 ► 1-800-Packouts

Building contents packing, cleaning, storage, and restoration

#### STARTUP COST

\$69.5K-\$234K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

89/0

### 39 ► RSVP Advertising

Advertising

#### STARTUP COST

\$96.5K-\$269.4K

#### TOTAL UNITS

(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)

67/0

**40** **Sir Grout Franchising**

Grout, tile, stone, concrete, and wood restoration

**STARTUP COST**  
\$78.8K-\$131.5K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
43/2**41** **Assisted Living Locators**

Senior-care referrals and senior-living placement

**STARTUP COST**  
\$67.5K-\$87.2K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
135/4**42** **First Choice Business Brokers**

Business brokerages

**STARTUP COST**  
\$61.9K-\$89.8K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
41/0**43** **Five Star Bath Solutions**

Bathroom remodeling

**STARTUP COST**  
\$75.5K-\$141.1K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
58/1**44** **The Cleaning Authority**

Environmentally friendly residential cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$76K-\$169K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
218/3**45** **ComForCare**

Nonmedical home care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$79.3K-\$150.4K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
206/0**46** **Conserva Irrigation**

Irrigation repair, maintenance, and efficiency upgrades

**STARTUP COST**  
\$81.8K-\$102.3K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
91/5**47** **AR Workshop**

DIY workshops and kits, art education

**STARTUP COST**  
\$71.4K-\$125.7K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
144/2**48** **Gotcha Covered**

Window treatments

**STARTUP COST**  
\$75.95K-\$94.2K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
115/0**49** **Outdoor Lighting Perspectives**

Residential, holiday, and hospitality lighting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$72.6K-\$143.1K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
92/2**50** **Bactronix**

Mold, bacteria, and virus testing and treatment; air-duct and dryer-vent cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$64.6K-\$110.6K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
14/1**51** **Weed Man**

Lawn care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$69.5K-\$86.6K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
308/41**52** **Kitchen Tune-Up**

Residential and commercial kitchen and bath remodeling

**STARTUP COST**  
\$94.97K-\$129.1K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
209/0**53** **Board & Brush Creative Studio**

DIY wood-sign workshops

**STARTUP COST**  
\$63.6K-\$90.5K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
245/5**54** **Fish Window Cleaning Services**

Low-rise commercial and residential window cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$87.3K-\$151.6K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
279/1**55** **Money Pages**

Direct-mail advertising

**STARTUP COST**  
\$82.5K-\$148.5K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
13/15**56** **Painter1**

Painting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$70.9K-\$133.5K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
23/0**57** **Heaven's Best Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning**

Carpet, upholstery, tile, and wood floor cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$59.6K-\$110.1K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
849/0**58** **Furniture Medic**

Wood restoration, repair, and maintenance

**STARTUP COST**  
\$80.8K-\$90.1K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
342/0**59** **Fibrenew**

Leather, plastic, and vinyl restoration and repair

**STARTUP COST**  
\$86.7K-\$99.5K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
256/0**60** **Fully Promoted**

Branded products and marketing services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$85.1K-\$124.2K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
280/0**61** **Dale Carnegie**

Workplace training and development

**STARTUP COST**  
\$93.4K-\$245.8K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
230/1**62** **Color Glo International**

Leather, vinyl, fabric, carpet, and surface repair and restoration

**STARTUP COST**  
\$56.3K-\$61.4K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
137/0**63** **Zerorez Franchising Systems**

Carpet and surface cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$69.1K-\$190.2K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
58/4**64** **GarageExperts**

Epoxy floor coatings, garage cabinets, organization products

**STARTUP COST**  
\$51.4K-\$143.99K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
89/0**65** **All County Property Management Franchise**

Property management

**STARTUP COST**  
\$66.95K-\$98.9K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
56/2**66** **Office Pride Commercial Cleaning Services**

Commercial cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$65K-\$107.2K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
141/0**67** **Bloomin' Blinds**

Window covering sales, installation, and repairs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$53.5K-\$117.4K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
57/0**68** **AmeriSpec Inspection Services**

Home and commercial inspections, ancillary services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$53.6K-\$72.3K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
267/0**69** **Jet-Black/Yellow Dawg Striping**

Asphalt maintenance

**STARTUP COST**  
\$55.1K-\$125.3K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
113/8**70** **Our Town America**

Direct-mail advertising to new movers

**STARTUP COST**  
\$63.8K-\$86.3K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
63/0**71** **Shack Shine**

Interior and exterior window washing, gutter cleaning, power washing, house washing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$67.6K-\$129.1K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
42/0



InXpress

**72 ► Fresh Coat**  
Residential and commercial painting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$53.9K-\$76.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
158/0

**73 ► InXpress**  
Shipping services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$85.6K-\$166.99K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
371/0

**74 ► N-Hance Wood Refinishing**  
Wood cabinet and floor refinishing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$52.4K-\$168.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
546/0

**75 ► Eye Level Learning Centers**  
Supplemental education

**STARTUP COST**  
\$52.3K-\$121.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
839/799

**76 ► i9 Sports**  
Youth sports leagues, camps, and clinics

**STARTUP COST**  
\$59.9K-\$69.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
158/1

**77 ► Supporting Strategies**  
Bookkeeping and controller services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$77.9K-\$103.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
103/0

**78 ► Tutu School**  
Children's ballet schools

**STARTUP COST**  
\$88.6K-\$150.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
37/3

**79 ► GoliathTech**  
Foundation systems for the construction industry

**STARTUP COST**  
\$72.9K-\$176K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
176/0

**80 ► HomeSmart International**  
Real estate

**STARTUP COST**  
\$65.5K-\$205K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
130/34

**81 ► Merle Norman Cosmetics**  
Cosmetics and skin-care products

**STARTUP COST**  
\$39.5K-\$180.9K\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,049/1

*\*The low end of Merle Norman Cosmetics' investment range applies only to opening a studio within an existing business. Franchisees starting a new stand-alone studio will invest more than \$50,000.*

**82 ► Apex Leadership Co.**  
Elementary-school fundraising and fitness programs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$79K-\$109.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
98/12

**83 ► Pelican's SnoBalls**  
Shaved ice

**STARTUP COST**  
\$61.2K-\$195.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
181/0

**84 ► HomeWell Care Services**  
Home care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$96.4K-\$221.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
78/0

**85 ► the Coder School**  
Coding education for ages 7 to 18

**STARTUP COST**  
\$75.3K-\$150.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
44/3

**86 ► Footprints Floors**  
Flooring installation and restoration

**STARTUP COST**  
\$68.1K-\$95.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
56/4

**87 ► HouseMaster Home Inspections**  
Home inspections and related services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$61.1K-\$106.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
305/0

**88 ► Atax**  
Tax preparation, business services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$59.2K-\$74.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
58/2

**89 ► Precision Door Service**  
Residential garage-door repair, installation, and service

**STARTUP COST**  
\$71.3K-\$314.96K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
98/0

**90 ► Farm Stores Franchising**  
Drive-up bakeries/grocery stores/cafés

**STARTUP COST**  
\$96.4K-\$574.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
32/0



**91** **Touching Hearts At Home**  
Nonmedical home care for seniors and people with disabilities

**STARTUP COST**  
\$52.9K-\$75.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
72/0

**92** **360 Painting**  
Painting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$99.1K-\$139.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
119/0

**93** **Pet Wants**  
Natural pet-food stores/delivery

**STARTUP COST**  
\$59.8K-\$202K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
106/0

**94** **Junk King**  
Junk removal

**STARTUP COST**  
\$89.9K-\$175.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
105/7

**95** **Caring Transitions**  
Senior transition and relocation, online auctions, and estate management

**STARTUP COST**  
\$58.9K-\$82.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
212/0

**96** **CarePatrol Franchise Systems**  
Senior living placement, referral, and consulting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$77.7K-\$99.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
137/0

**97** **Your CBD Store**  
CBD stores

**STARTUP COST**  
\$65.2K-\$80.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
181/2

**98** **Options For Senior America**  
Home health care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$65K-\$87K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
9/10

**99** **Mosquito Squad**  
Outdoor pest control

**STARTUP COST**  
\$63.96K-\$90K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
235/0

**100** **TruBlue Total House Care**  
Senior home modification, maintenance, and repair services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$59.7K-\$86K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
48/0

# TOP 100 FRANCHISES FOR LESS THAN \$150,000

**1** **The UPS Store**  
Postal, business, printing, and communications services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$137.9K-\$566.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
5,268/0

**2** **7-Eleven**  
Convenience stores

**STARTUP COST**  
\$69.7K-\$1.2M\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
66,572/2,372

*\*While 7-Eleven's initial investment range varies widely based on different circumstances, most first-time franchisees' startup costs will be above \$100,000.*

**3** **Budget Blinds**  
Window coverings, window film, rugs, accessories

**STARTUP COST**  
\$125.3K-\$254.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,273/0

**4** **Great Clips**  
Hair salons

**STARTUP COST**  
\$146.9K-\$282.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
4,473/0

**5** **uBreakiFix**  
Electronics repairs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$98.4K-\$303K\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
526/59

*\*The low end of uBreakiFix's initial investment range applies only to officers, directors, or employees of uBreakiFix whose franchise and training fees are waived. Franchisees paying the standard fees will invest more than \$100,000.*

**6** **Mathnasium Learning Centers**  
Math tutoring

**STARTUP COST**  
\$112.8K-\$149.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,068/6

**7** **Baskin-Robbins**  
Ice cream, frozen yogurt, frozen beverages

**STARTUP COST**  
\$123.95K-\$558.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
7,981/0

**8** **The Maids**  
Residential cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$64.1K-\$154.3K\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,299/174

*\*Although The Maids' initial investment range starts at \$64,100, the company prefers franchisees to have more operating capital available in order to start the business.*

**9** **Kona Ice**  
Shaved-ice trucks

**STARTUP COST**  
\$145.6K-\$169.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,286/19

**10** **Huntington Learning Centers**  
Tutoring and test prep

**STARTUP COST**  
\$133.5K-\$276.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
286/16

**11** **Fyzical Therapy & Balance Centers**

Physical therapy, balance and vestibular therapy, preventive wellness services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$61.3K-\$729K\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
385/22

*\*The low end of Fyzical Therapy & Balance Centers' investment range applies only to the conversion of an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.*



**12** ▶ **Lawn Doctor**  
Lawn, tree, and shrub care; mosquito and tick control  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$100K-\$125.1K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
592/0

**13** ▶ **Miracle-Ear**  
Hearing aids  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$119K-\$352.5K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,452/59

**14** ▶ **Mac Tools**  
Automotive tools and equipment  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$131.6K-\$287.2K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,122/1

**15** ▶ **Spherion Staffing**  
Staffing, recruiting  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$148K-\$347.5K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
197/0

**16** ▶ **Molly Maid**  
Residential cleaning  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$110.2K-\$155.2K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
492/0

**17** ▶ **Interim HealthCare**  
Medical home care, medical staffing  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$125.5K-\$198.5K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
597/0

**18** ▶ **Mosquito Joe**  
Outdoor pest control  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$102.9K-\$137.2K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
319/3

**19** ▶ **Cornwell Quality Tools**  
Automotive tools and equipment  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$59.5K-\$272.8K\*  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
705/0

*\*The low end of Cornwell Quality Tools' initial investment range applies only to the conversion of an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.*

**20** ▶ **Signarama**  
Sign products and services  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$106.5K-\$308.5K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
727/0

**21** ▶ **FirstLight Home Care Franchising**  
Nonmedical home care  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$112.9K-\$199.4K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
190/0

**22** ▶ **911 Restoration**  
Residential and commercial property restoration  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$70.1K-\$226.9K\*  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
220/3

*\*The low end of 911 Restoration's investment range applies only to those converting an existing business or using financing. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000 without financing.*

**23** ▶ **Senior Helpers**  
Personal, companion, and Alzheimer's home care  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$109.3K-\$150.8K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
313/4

**24** ▶ **Cookie Cutters Haircuts for Kids**  
Children's hair salons  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$132K-\$339.5K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
108/2

**25** ▶ **Mr. Appliance**  
Residential and commercial appliance installation and repairs  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$65.8K-\$144.5K\*  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
296/0

*\*The low end of Mr. Appliance's initial investment range applies only to the conversion of an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.*

**26** ▶ **ASP America's Swimming Pool Company**  
Swimming pool maintenance, repairs, and renovations  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$101.1K-\$138.3K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
299/0

**27** ▶ **Stanley Steamer Carpet Cleaner**  
Carpet and upholstery cleaning  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$117.2K-\$207.2K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
214/55

**28** ▶ **The Exercise Coach**  
Personal training  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$119.3K-\$332.3K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
119/2

**29** ▶ **9Round**  
Kickboxing fitness circuit-training centers  
**STARTUP COST**  
\$106.2K-\$150.3K  
**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
741/7

**30** **▶ Rosati's Pizza**

Pizza, Italian food

**STARTUP COST**  
\$136.2K-\$1.2M**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
142/10**31** **▶ Two Men and a Truck International**

Moving, storage, and junk removal services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$100K-\$595K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
304/3**32** **▶ Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate**

Real estate

**STARTUP COST**  
\$32.4K-\$455K\***TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
393/0*\*The low end of Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate's investment range applies only to the conversion of an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.***33** **▶ 1-800 Water Damage**

Restoration

**STARTUP COST**  
\$105.8K-\$211.5K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
102/2**34** **▶ TeamLogic IT**

IT managed services for businesses

**STARTUP COST**  
\$106.4K-\$146.3K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
204/0**35** **▶ Sanford Rose Associates International**

Executive search and recruiting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$108.3K-\$143.6K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
137/0**36** **▶ L&L Hawaiian Barbecue**

Asian-American/Hawaiian food

**STARTUP COST**  
\$133.7K-\$535K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
205/0**37** **▶ CertaPro Painters**

Residential and commercial painting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$133.3K-\$169.5K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
373/0**38** **▶ British Swim School**

Swimming lessons for ages 3 months and older

**STARTUP COST**  
\$91.3K-\$145.9K\***TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
104/0*\*Although British Swim School's initial investment range starts at \$91,275, the company desires franchisees to have at least \$100,000 cash liquidity.***39** **▶ Minuteman Press International**

Printing, graphics, and marketing services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$74.9K-\$180.1K\***TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
967/0*\*The low end of Minuteman Press International's initial investment range applies only to the purchase of an existing store. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.***40** **▶ BrightStar Care**

Medical/nonmedical home care, medical staffing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$101.7K-\$169.4K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
320/5**41** **▶ Home Instead Senior Care**

Nonmedical senior care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$108.9K-\$124.9K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
1,091/3**42** **▶ Real Property Management**

Property management

**STARTUP COST**  
\$101.2K-\$154.97K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
337/0**43** **▶ Shine Window Care and Holiday Lighting**

Window cleaning, pressure washing, holiday lighting installation

**STARTUP COST**  
\$106.9K-\$181.6K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
37/0**44** **▶ Pop-A-Lock Franchise System**

Mobile locksmith and security services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$96.9K-\$130.3K\***TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
593/7*\*Although Pop-A-Lock's initial investment range starts at \$96,904, the company recommends that franchisees have at least \$100,000 in working capital.***45** **▶ Window World**

Replacement windows, doors, siding, roofing, and other exterior remodeling products

**STARTUP COST**  
\$122.7K-\$328K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
204/0**46** **▶ YESCO Sign & Lighting Service**

Sign and lighting service and maintenance

**STARTUP COST**  
\$65K-\$352.2K\***TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
57/39*\*The low end of YESCO Sign & Lighting Service's initial investment range applies only to someone adding onto or converting an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.***47** **▶ College Nannies, Sitters and Tutors**

Nanny placement, babysitting

**STARTUP COST**  
\$105K-\$158K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
193/0**48** **▶ Dippin' Dots Franchising**

Specialty ice cream, frozen yogurt, ices, sorbet

**STARTUP COST**  
\$112.2K-\$366.95K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
223/0**49** **▶ Coldwell Banker Real Estate**

Real estate

**STARTUP COST**  
\$30.3K-\$438.8K\***TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
2,564/634*\*The low end of Coldwell Banker Real Estate's initial investment range applies only to the conversion of an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.***50** **▶ Bubbakoo's Burritos**

Mexican food

**STARTUP COST**  
\$131.5K-\$398K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
25/11**51** **▶ 30 Minute Hit**

Kickboxing circuit-training programs for women

**STARTUP COST**  
\$122.4K-\$212.5K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
68/0**52** **▶ Bin There Dump That**

Residential-friendly dumpster rentals

**STARTUP COST**  
\$73.1K-\$128.3K\***TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
186/0*\*Although Bin There Dump That's initial investment range starts at \$73,050, franchisees typical invest more than \$100,000 at startup.***53** **▶ Spaulding Decon**

Crime-scene, meth-lab, and hoarding cleanup; mold remediation; house buying

**STARTUP COST**  
\$122.9K-\$139.8K**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
21/11**54** **▶ Spring-Green Lawn Care**

Lawn and tree care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$89.98K-\$106.3K\***TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
126/26*\*The low end of Spring-Green Lawn Care's investment range applies only to the conversion of an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.***55** **▶ Pool Scouts**

Pool cleaning and maintenance

**STARTUP COST**  
\$80.4K-\$133.3K\***TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
25/4*\*Although the low end of Pool Scouts' investment range is \$80,400, the average franchisee spends more than \$100,000 to start the business.*



Century 21 Real Estate

**56** ▶ **Maid Brigade**  
Residential cleaning

**STARTUP COST**  
\$110.3K-\$130.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
406/18

**57** ▶ **Bricks & Minifigs**  
Lego stores

**STARTUP COST**  
\$108.5K-\$276.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
35/3

**58** ▶ **Mr. Handyman**  
Residential and commercial repair, maintenance, and improvement services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$117.5K-\$149.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
249/0

**59** ▶ **College Hunks Hauling Junk & Moving**  
Junk removal, moving, and labor services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$95.7K-\$231.2K\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
126/3

*\*While it is possible to open a small-market College Hunks Hauling Junk & Moving franchise for less, startup costs will typically exceed \$100,000.*

**60** ▶ **Weichert Real Estate Affiliates**  
Real estate

**STARTUP COST**  
\$62.5K-\$324.7K\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
367/115

*\*The low end of Weichert Real Estate Affiliates' initial investment range applies only to the conversion of an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.*

**61** ▶ **Labor Finders**  
Industrial staffing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$128.5K-\$217.96K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
194/0

**62** ▶ **The Tutoring Center Franchise**  
Tutoring

**STARTUP COST**  
\$106.4K-\$180.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
98/0

**63** ▶ **Century 21 Real Estate**  
Real estate

**STARTUP COST**  
\$24.7K-\$456.4K\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
11,435/0

*\*The low end of Century 21 Real Estate's initial investment range applies only to the conversion of an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.*

**64** ▶ **Line-X**

Spray-on truck-bed liners, truck accessories, protective coatings

**STARTUP COST**  
\$130.3K-\$373.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
583/3

**65** ▶ **PrideStaff**  
Staffing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$143K-\$233.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
77/3

**66** ▶ **Concrete Craft**  
Decorative concrete coatings

**STARTUP COST**  
\$141.8K-\$220.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
62/0

**67** ▶ **Griswold Home Care**  
Nonmedical home care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$106.4K-\$133.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
167/14

**68** ▶ **Acai Express Superfood Bowls**  
Acai bowls, smoothies, juices

**STARTUP COST**  
\$107.9K-\$359K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
15/6

**69** ▶ **ApexNetwork Physical Therapy**  
Physical therapy

**STARTUP COST**  
\$149.2K-\$347.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
28/55

**70** ▶ **Any Lab Test Now**  
Health, wellness, drug, alcohol, and DNA lab testing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$133.6K-\$214.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
192/0

**71** ▶ **ATC Healthcare Services**  
Medical staffing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$129.4K-\$217.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
44/0

**72** **Mister Sparky**  
Residential electrical maintenance, repair, and replacement services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$125.9K-\$293.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
107/7

**73** **Big Frog Custom T-Shirts**  
Custom garment printing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$114.5K-\$242.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
86/0

**74** **Kidcreate Studio**  
Children's art education

**STARTUP COST**  
\$108.9K-\$261.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
13/2

**75** **Visiting Angels**  
Nonmedical home care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$123.5K-\$161.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
578/0

**76** **AdvantaClean**  
Restoration

**STARTUP COST**  
\$140.1K-\$238.95K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
207/0

**77** **Painting with a Twist**  
Paint-and-sip studios

**STARTUP COST**  
\$120.5K-\$260K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
272/3

**78** **United Water Restoration Group**  
Water, fire, and mold restoration

**STARTUP COST**  
\$122.2K-\$508.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
16/13

**79** **Hoodz International**  
Commercial cleaning, maintenance, and repairs

**STARTUP COST**  
\$62.5K-\$179.8K\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
131/6

*\*While the low end of Hoodz International's initial investment range is \$62,521, the company indicates that franchisees will typically need to invest more than \$100,000 to start the business.*

**80** **101 Mobility**  
Mobility and accessibility equipment sales and services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$118.4K-\$216.2K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
175/8

**81** **Nextaff**  
Staffing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$123K-\$152K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
17/69

**82** **CKO Kickboxing**  
Kickboxing fitness classes

**STARTUP COST**  
\$125K-\$252K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
65/0

**83** **NaturaLawn of America**  
Organic-based lawn care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$47.5K-\$112.7K\*

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
84/7

*\*The low end of NaturaLawn of America's initial investment range applies only to the conversion of an existing business. Franchisees starting a new business will invest more than \$100,000.*

**84** **Surface Experts**  
Interior surface repair

**STARTUP COST**  
\$137K-\$232.3K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
31/0

**85** **Best Option Restoration**  
Disaster restoration

**STARTUP COST**  
\$114.9K-\$160.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
15/0

**86** **Safe Ship**  
Packing, shipping, freight, office supplies, notary services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$120.4K-\$123.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
31/6

**87** **CareBuilders at Home**  
Home care

**STARTUP COST**  
\$100.4K-\$155.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
14/1

**88** **milliCare**  
Flooring, carpet, and textile maintenance and hygiene services

**STARTUP COST**  
\$113.8K-\$163K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
61/0

**89** **Peace, Love and Little Donuts**  
Doughnuts and coffee

**STARTUP COST**  
\$121.2K-\$235.1K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
24/4

**90** **Renew Crew**  
Environmentally friendly exterior surface cleaning and protection

**STARTUP COST**  
\$100.4K-\$142.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
27/0

**91** **Sandler Training**  
Sales and sales-management training

**STARTUP COST**  
\$113.5K-\$143.5K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
252/0

**92** **Groucho's Deli**  
Subs, salads, sauces

**STARTUP COST**  
\$103.7K-\$594.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
28/2

**93** **The Junkluggers**  
Environmentally friendly junk removal

**STARTUP COST**  
\$105.5K-\$230.8K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
40/1

**94** **Izsam Franchising**  
Construction cleanup, commercial cleaning and sanitizing

**STARTUP COST**  
\$100.1K-\$120.4K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
18/0

**95** **Re-Bath**  
Bathroom remodeling

**STARTUP COST**  
\$139.9K-\$308K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
92/0

**96** **Link Staffing Services**  
Staffing, HR solutions

**STARTUP COST**  
\$112.5K-\$199K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
37/7

**97** **Lay Bare Waxing Salon**  
Sugaring, eyebrow threading, body facials

**STARTUP COST**  
\$122.6K-\$270.9K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
76/57

**98** **D.P. Dough**  
Calzones, wings, sides, salads, desserts

**STARTUP COST**  
\$133.9K-\$435.6K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
29/11

**99** **Granite Garage Floors**  
Garage floor coatings

**STARTUP COST**  
\$128K-\$236.7K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
10/1

**100** **Sweetberry**  
Acai bowls, poke bowls, smoothies, salads, wraps

**STARTUP COST**  
\$123.7K-\$260K

**TOTAL UNITS**  
(FRANCHISED / CO.-OWNED)  
5/9

The New Normal

# THE END OF THE LINE

COVID-19 has forced the restaurant industry to rethink everything. No brand has seen a more dramatic shift than **The Halal Guys**, a food cart turned franchise where long lines and busy stores were part of the appeal. So how do you transform a hot spot into a safe, reliable meal? **by CLINT CARTER**

**P**atrick Mock used to fly across the country with takeout containers of chicken and gyro. “I’d smell up the whole cabin just so I could bring some platters back for my friends and family in California,” he says.

He was picking up those platters at The Halal Guys, a food cart on the corner of 53rd Street and Sixth Avenue in Manhattan. Mock ate there regularly when he lived in New York and worked as a management consultant. Then he moved to California, and the cart became a rare treat. Whenever he was back in town, he’d visit the cart, put in a big order, and stuff it all into a carry-on bag before heading to the airport.

Mock’s friends, many of whom he had personally introduced to the brand, knew he was a Halal Guys devotee. So in 2014, when news broke that the business was franchising, they started texting him messages of encouragement. “I was in a meeting, and I

started getting pinged on my phone,” he says. “It had never even crossed my mind to do a franchise.”

But The Halal Guys wasn’t a typical company, and it wouldn’t be a typical franchise. To start, Mock was hardly the only person obsessed with it. The cart





From left: Founders Abdelbaset Elsayed, Ahmed Elsaka, and Mohamed Abouelenein.

had become a beacon of culinary indulgence for street-cultured travelers and locals. It was dependable—closing only twice in its 30-year history—and wildly popular, especially at night, when people were spilling out of bars and clubs. The line was regularly down the block.

Mock saw the business opportunity, and not just because he was a fan. The food was delicious, replicable, and unlike anything else in the country. He figured The Halal Guys could do for halal food what Panda Express did for Chinese food, or Chipotle did for Mexican food. So a week later, he got on a plane to New York to meet with the brand—and then signed a multi-unit deal for 20 stores in Northern California. His first one opened on a sweltering summer day in 2016.

Even as The Halal Guys transitioned from a food cart into a franchise, it managed to maintain its hype. The industry publication *Restaurant Business* ranked it as the fastest-growing small concept in the country, and units started appearing around the U.S. as well as internationally, in cities like Toronto, Jakarta, and Seoul. Long lines, like the ones in Manhattan, were a regular feature—so much so that when a franchisee launched a Halal Guys Instagram channel in 2015, it posted a photo of a seemingly endless stretch of people at the cart. The caption read, “Tag your friends who have waited in this line for some delicious chicken and rice!”

That became the strategy: Capture the crowd and recycle the excitement.

But then, trouble. Sales slowed. The buzz died down. A few locations were forced to close. And just as The Halal Guys was fixing the problem, COVID-19 came



along and forced it to reconsider *everything*. Because in a time of social distancing, how can you run a brand that’s built on hype and crowds?

The Halal Guys has an answer: It’s going to get a little boring. But that’s a good thing.

**THE HALAL GUYS’** origin story could fill a chapter in a book on the American dream. In 1990, three Egyptian immigrants—Mohamed Abouelenein, Abdelbaset Elsayed, and Ahmed Elsaka—ditched their kitchen and cabdriving gigs to run a food cart. At first they sold hot dogs, but soon after, they switched to halal food, which is prepared in accordance with Muslim law.

The partners recognized an underserved audience of Muslim cabbies, and as an homage, they decorated their cart taxicab yellow. But the audience turned out to be bigger than just drivers; it was also the *passengers*—hundreds of

thousands of whom traveled by cab every day in New York City. If you were to ask your driver where to find a quick bite, there’s a decent chance you’d hear about midtown’s best chicken and gyro cart.

The cart was popular for its food, but it grew legendary for its lines, which came to stretch late into the night. Sameer Sarmast first visited the cart in the late ’90s as a teenager. “It wasn’t even called Halal Guys back then,” says Sarmast, now a financial planner. “It was just called the chicken-rice guy, or the platter guy.”

Sarmast was just old enough to drive, and he used his freedom to eat halal. He and his brother would sneak out after curfew for the 25-minute drive from their home in New Jersey. They’d put their parents’ car in neutral, roll it down the driveway, and start the engine once they were out of earshot.

For Sarmast, the adventure was never just



about food. “It was about experiencing the city lights,” he says. “You’d park your car illegally and mingle with strangers. The line could be 60 people long, and everybody was in good spirits, or at least drunk.” They’d all agree that the chicken-rice guys’ secret white sauce was addictive—which is why every so often, someone would grab a bottle off the cart and sprint away.

Sarmast was a superfan, and he and his brother published the cart’s menu and hours on a fan website they called 53rdand6th.com. In 2006, *The New York Times* gave the site partial credit for the long lines. When the founders finally branded themselves as The Halal Guys, they included 53rdand6th.com on their T-shirts and to-go bags. It was the official unofficial website.

By 2013, The Halal Guys had grown to three carts and a food-prep commissary in Queens. It was a culinary staple of New York. That’s when Dan Rowe, CEO of Fransmart, took notice.

Fransmart is the franchise development company responsible for growing brands like Five Guys and Qdoba, and having spent a fair amount of time establishing U.S. brands in the Middle East, Rowe had started to wonder why there wasn’t a prominent Middle Eastern concept in the U.S. He’d approached a few brands in Dubai, but to no avail. Then it hit him: The Halal Guys. He’d walked past the carts for years but never stopped. “The lines were really long,” he says. “I couldn’t be bothered.” But

the thing that had turned him away was drawing other people in.

When Rowe finally faced the line, he discovered that the food wasn’t technically Middle Eastern. He saw it as vaguely Greek, with yellow rice, a creamy, mayo-based sauce, and loads of seasoning. (The cart’s owners agreed with that; chicken gyros aren’t exactly Egyptian. “Our food is American halal, born in New York City,” says Ahmed Abouelenein, Mohamed’s son, who is now CEO.) Still, it was delicious and original. Rowe reached out to 53rdand6th.com, and Sarmast put him in touch with the company’s operations manager. That kicked off a year of meetings.

“It took a while to get them comfortable with me,” Rowe says. The Halal Guys’ founders had never considered growing beyond New York City and were concerned about compromising the quality of the food. But Rowe was persistent, and in time he convinced the founders to make the leap. Abouelenein moved from executive manager to CEO, and Fransmart began recruiting, focusing on multi-unit franchisees. Bigger investors would be harder to recruit, but in theory, they’d be easier to manage.

“With something like Subway, you’re selling 1,000 stores and you have to babysit 1,000 people,” says Paul Tran, who was a Fransmart senior consultant at the time. “That requires a big infrastructure.” The multi-unit model would instead allow the company to grow without building a

massive corporate office.

In shaping its brick-and-mortar concept, The Halal Guys modeled itself as the Chipotle of halal food, with counter service that lets patrons participate in the assembly process. Stainless steel counters would replicate the street-cart facade, and the signage would continue as taxicab yellow, now accented with more red.

Two brick-and-mortar shops opened in Manhattan—and as a big sign of faith, Tran, the Fransmart consultant, decided to become a Halal Guys franchisee himself. He put together a team of partners to join him in a 30-unit development deal in Southern California. “I kind of double-dipped and did a bit of legal insider trading,” he says. “But I’ve always had a personal love for The Halal Guys.”

In 2015, as Tran was preparing to open one of the company’s earliest franchise locations in Costa Mesa, Calif., excited fans started sharing photos of his branded building on social media. On opening day, Tran’s line stretched six hours long. A picture was posted to Instagram: “Get in line now to eat at The Halal Guys in Costa Mesa later.”

With just 1,440 feet of real estate, Tran’s store did \$14,000 in opening-day sales, a number that increased slightly over the next month. As a Fransmart protégé, Tran knew what to do next. He and his partners rolled the profits back into the system to keep building stores while delivering returns to their investors.

Not all early franchisees were as disciplined. Some franchisees saw the lines and expected to make

easy money; they’d buy up inferior locations and resist proven advice. “We even had guys who, if they opened soft, wanted to put other stuff on the menu, which is the kiss of death in the restaurant business,” says Rowe. “They were not acknowledging that *they* were the reason it was slow.”

This took a toll. Sales at some restaurants started to slump. So in 2017, even though The Halal Guys was expanding rapidly, it effectively put a freeze on franchise recruitment. “We started to be very selective,” says Abouelenein. The company also studied its best and worst performers to figure out what was working and what wasn’t. It terminated agreements with franchisees who weren’t up to par, and it closed underperforming stores.

The brand was solving what felt like its biggest crisis—but the trouble was actually just beginning.

**THE FIRST LAW** of thermodynamics explains that energy is never created or destroyed. That’s why gas loses heat as it expands: All those excited molecules spread out over a bigger area. And as The Halal Guys expanded, it experienced its own version of that. The energy was still there, but it was no longer contained to a space the size of a food cart.

“As you expand that quickly, you might lose a little traction with same-store sales,” says Aaron Allen, a Chicago-based restaurant consultant. “That would be one of the first things that happens as the irrational

exuberance starts to fade.”

The Halal Guys doesn’t share its unit financials, but estimates from Allen’s firm put average sales, just prior to COVID-19, at \$970,000—down about 20 percent from the \$1.2 million it hit in 2016. So the brand was cooling off even before COVID-19 hit it like a gale-force Arctic wind, driving sales down an additional 60 to 70 percent.

The damage is roughly twice that experienced by the fast-food industry as a whole, according to the marketing firm Top Agency. Burger King was down just 25 percent for the second quarter of 2020, while its sister brand Popeyes actually saw a 24 percent spike. But those chains offer drive-through, which consumers likely viewed as less risky than The Halal Guys’ in-store pickup.

“If you think about who [this pandemic will hurt] in particular, it’s those whose brand equity doesn’t sync with the current moment,” says Jonah Berger, Ph.D., a University of Pennsylvania Wharton School professor who wrote about The Halal Guys in his 2013 book, *Contagious*. “The Halal Guys is a great example of using scarcity and exclusivity to drive interest and attention.”

Scarcity and exclusivity synced well with 2016, but it definitely did not sync with 2020.

On the heels of its franchisee cleanup effort, COVID-19 forced The Halal Guys to shut down more stores in Texas and Arizona, along with one ghost kitchen in California. It also fundamentally changed the brand’s message.

The brand planned on

launching a series of excitement-building limited-time promotions and new menu items. But the pandemic made that impossible. The cool, gritty New York City brand had to tell the same careful, cautious story as everybody else: Wear face masks, wash hands, and socially distance. Its buzzy social media now promotes delivery and order-ahead options. It’s introduced new store designs that limit guest interaction.

In interviews for this story, everybody at the company hammered the safety message. What they *didn’t* mention was how the pivot is somewhat awkward for a brand that has historically inspired people to sneak out of their houses to park illegally and eat food on the sidewalk. The cart is many things, but few people visit for its strict adherence to protocol.

On a recent Sunday afternoon, I visited the original Halal Guys cart in Manhattan. Six employees shoveled steaming piles of chicken and meat across the grill; only one employee wore his mask properly, while the others had them pulled down below their noses or chins, and one was entirely mask-free.

Foot traffic is down in Manhattan, so the line was thinner than usual—but it never let up. There were always five to seven people waiting to order, with others eating merrily on benches. Whatever draws people to The Halal Guys, it isn’t the expectation of safety. The brand’s value proposition to date has been something far more social, epicurean, and

perhaps hard to deliver in a world defined by COVID-19.

**THE PANDEMIC** has obviously impacted most businesses, but the outcome hasn’t always been predictable. Sometimes, instead of killing a business, it simply shoved that business into the future—and that may be the case with The Halal Guys. It always knew the long lines couldn’t last. Brands cool as they grow. “We saw the same thing with Five Guys,” says Rowe. “In the beginning, people would go crazy.”

Dunkin’, by comparison, isn’t exactly a cult brand. Its global dominance stems from ubiquity and reliability, and that’s what The Halal Guys now wants to deliver. Says Rowe: “So the restaurants open probably with less fanfare, but then they hold their sales longer.”

Today, The Halal Guys has roughly 90 franchised locations, and after clearing out the underperformers, it still has roughly 265 in development. It’s recovering alongside the rest of the industry, reinforcing itself with a suite of initiatives like a new point-of-sale system and the introduction of family meals to feed those in quarantine. A sleek new website boasts a brand blog and an e-com store with hoodies and backpacks, and the restaurant is refocused on developing and launching those new menu items that were put on pause last year. (The details remain top secret.)

More critically, the brand has a new set of criteria engineered to weed out impatient investors. In 2015, a multi-unit franchise

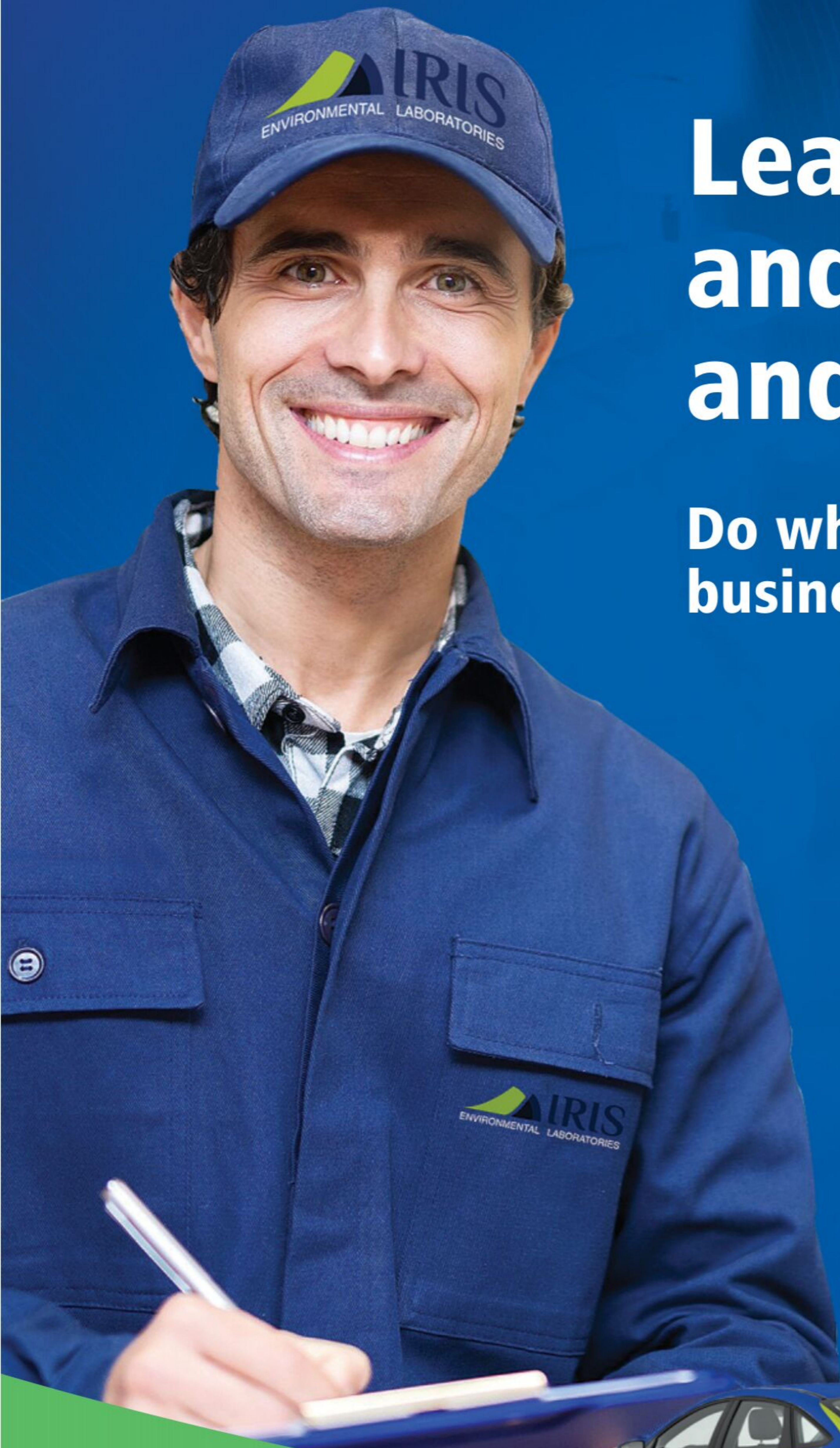
deal included an \$80,000 payment to The Halal Guys’ corporate office. Now that deal starts at \$180,000. And the minimum sign-on includes five stores, according to franchise disclosure documents, rather than the previous three.

Mock opened his sixth location in September. The Halal Guys expects to cross the 100-store threshold by midyear. In recent months, new agreements have boosted its number of franchisees within the system to more than 40—officially putting the brand back in growth mode.

Tran’s revenues in his California stores are up to 80 percent of where they were pre-pandemic, and he’s been hunting for real estate bargains. It’s a strategy he learned from watching his growth-minded Fransmart brands after the 2008 recession. “A lot of my clients were able to take over stores for half the price,” he says. “I expect us to have that same type of harvest next year.”

The Halal Guys may have stumbled, but it didn’t fall. And its ambition certainly didn’t waver. “We’re still a brand-new concept,” says Abouelenein. “And we’re excited, because we believe there are going to be a lot of great opportunities in the next five to 10 years.” For now, the focus is opening 25 to 30 new locations this year. Beyond 2021, plans to open hundreds of additional locations means that most people will have a store nearby—so there will be no need to ever stand in line. 

*Clint Carter is a writer and editor based in New York.*



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## Franchise Success

# FINDING HER HAPPY PLACE

**Dee Clemmons** was excited to open a Painting with a Twist franchise...and then the pandemic hit. She opened anyway, and still feels good. **by STEPHANIE SCHOMER**



**D**ee Clemmons is never not working. The serial entrepreneur has spent nearly 30 years operating a combination of childcare facilities, a business consultancy, and a janitorial supplies company. And in 2016, she joined the Board of Commissioners in Henry County, Ga., where she recently won a reelection campaign. So in 2019, when her two daughters took her to Painting with a Twist on Mother's Day, Clemmons was shocked to find herself ignoring the outside world for two hours of escape. She put her phone down, focused on her painting and her kids, and had an experience she calls "magical." Before she left the studio, she'd googled the business to find out how she could get involved; one year later, she was ready to open her own location in McDonough, Ga. COVID-19 interrupted her opening, but she says it's still been one of her most rewarding entrepreneurial experiences yet.

**You opened your studio on Mother's Day weekend last year. Was that always your plan?**

I was ready to open in March, when the pandemic hit. And I was just tossed into a cyclone: All my businesses temporarily shut down, and I was in the middle of a reelection. It was rough, and it affected me mentally, physically, financially. But I'd come and sit in my Painting with a Twist studio, and I found my happy place. I researched, I read, I figured out how to adjust and reinvent.

**How did you prepare to open?**

I used our platforms and social media to encourage people to stay safe and know that a better day was coming. Building my followers was key at that time, so that when we did open, we'd have that audience. Because I had already hired talent for the studio, we started doing trainings via Zoom so they could really gain experience with the art pieces. And then I realized: *Guess what? We can do virtual paint parties!* So we launched virtual paint parties on Mother's Day weekend, and socially distanced events with private groups.

**How did the home office lend support during such an uncertain time?**

I always say to my corporate operatives, my franchise fee was well worth the money. They've really set us up for

success and streamlined processes for conducting business during this time.

**Has it been nice to be a part of that community, rather than operating independently like with your other businesses?**

I like sharing ideas—that's part of the public servant in me. And in a franchise, you're no longer solo. If I come up with an idea as an entrepreneur, it's no longer just my idea. It's shared with the masses. For example, because I own a janitorial supplies company—and 27 of my customers are medical facilities—I had masks, thermometers, disposable aprons. I've been able to educate and aid the other franchisees in my area to make sure we're doing temperature checks and offering hand sanitizer when customers walk in.

**Have there been any surprises adjusting to that kind of business network?**

You don't make decisions just for yourself. Everything has to be run through the franchise, and that's been new to me—I've never had to answer to anyone! I was asked to file a weekly labor report, and I was like, "Why? I don't have time to do that!" So there are internal processes that are new to me. But I haven't had a negative experience. I wanted to have access to the kind of team I have at corporate.

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## Franchise Success

# BUILDING A STRONG TEAM

**Dan Murphy** is an Army vet and a former NCAA athlete who knows the power of community. Now, as COO of the gym franchise D1 Training, his business is only as strong as its weakest link. **by STEPHANIE SCHOMER**



**A**s an NCAA Division 1 athlete at the United States Military Academy, Dan Murphy quickly learned the value of a strong team—for success, and for his own sanity: “West Point can be stressful, and the soccer team became my respite.” After graduating and serving in the Army, he was craving that community when he discovered D1 Training, at the time a small gym in Nashville focusing on group training programs and coaching, started by fellow former D1 athlete Will Bartholomew. Murphy jumped at the chance to join the brand, and 16 years later, he is COO of the fast-growing franchise with more than 50 locations and 111 more in development. That early lesson from his military days still holds true as D1 scales: There’s strength in numbers.

**Was the plan always to franchise D1?**

No, the model was joint venture partnerships with professional athletes and physicians—and from 2005 to 2017, we grew with that model, though it was slower growth. We had also grown a physical therapy business, and we sold that in 2017 to focus on the training side, where we’d started to franchise the year prior. To make it a national brand, we’d need community leaders. Pro athletes and physicians have day jobs; they can’t be active in the day-to-day of D1. We needed folks who would be passionate.

**That sounds like a challenging shift.**

It was. Our product is delivered by one coach on the training floor. We can have the best programs, but if that coach isn’t motivated, the business will not be successful. So we worked with broker networks to help us identify those franchisees and coaches. We’re not looking for people who are interested in buying 15 gas stations or 25 Wendy’s; we want people who are interested in creating life change for customers.

**Prior to D1, you served in the Army. How has that translated to the business world?**

I learned process and system. Every soldier gets the same training so that if something

breaks down, you can identify it at the highest level. Now, from how we identify sites, to hiring staff, to getting clients in the door—it’s all about keeping those systems dialed in so we can see where we’re missing opportunities.

**As you grow, how do you make an increasing number of franchisees part of that system?**

It’s easy to get wrapped up in what we think is right, or what we see at our corporate location in Nashville. We have a franchise advisory council that gives us intel and meets with leaders in the system to learn where there are holes, and we have a monthly owners meeting where our franchisees can chat best practices.

**So that focus on community isn’t just about the towns and cities you serve.**

When I think back to my time as an athlete at West Point, you get there and realize, yep, everyone was the captain of their high school team. That false belief that *your* effort and *your* goals will make you successful goes out the window. A lot of our franchisees come from corporate America, and they are eager to be their own boss. That’s great—but we quickly make them understand that they’re part of a system and they’re here to make the system better.



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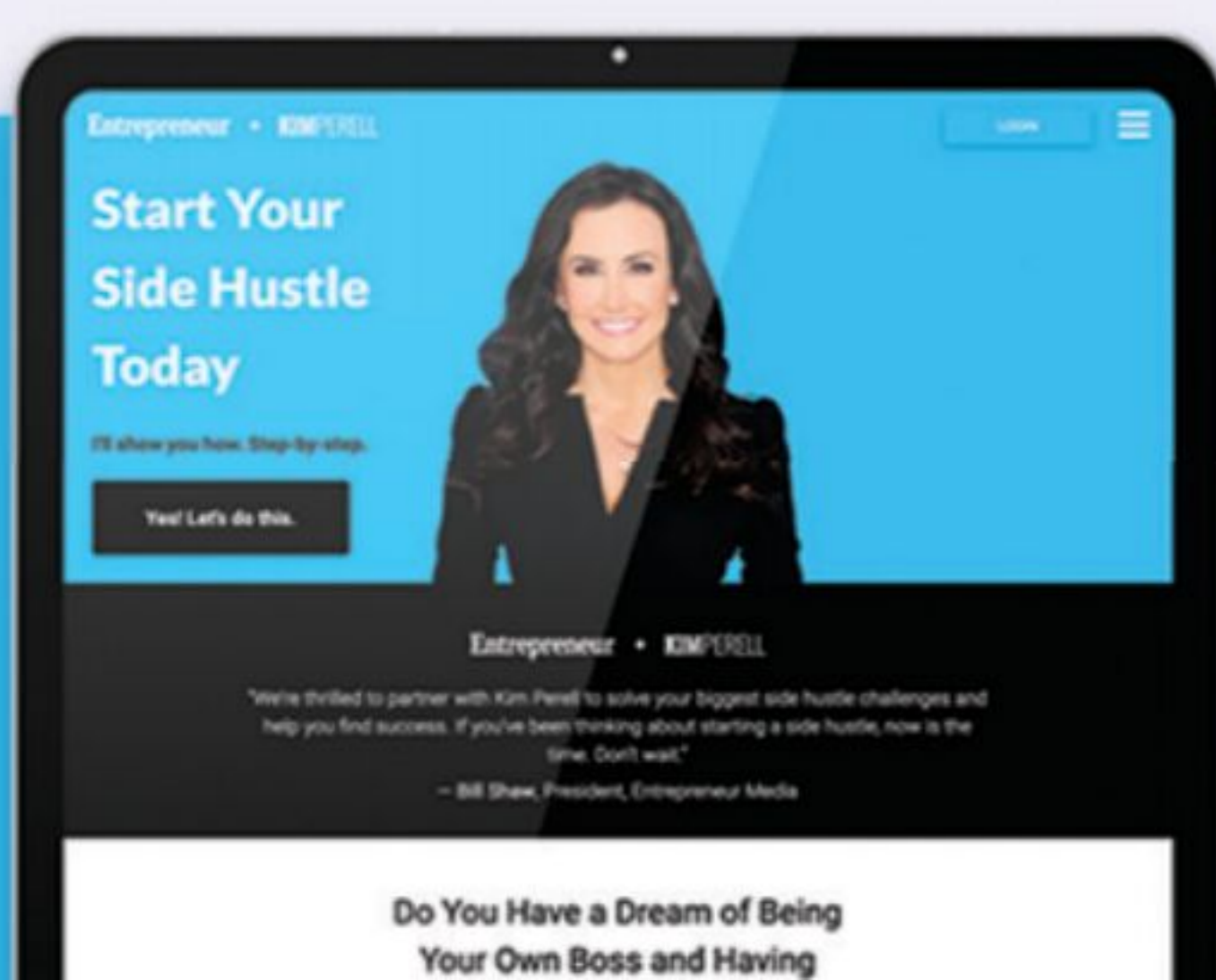
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# DESTROY YOUR BOUNDARIES

Last year taught us about what's possible. This year, let's put that lesson to maximum use.

by JASON FEIFER

**H**ave you ever seen a dog that's trained with an electronic collar? It's quite a thing. They learn where their boundary is and then never cross it. It's as if they're stuck behind an invisible wall.

Now here's a horrifying idea: We humans are a lot like those dogs. We also stop short of invisible walls. We've done it our entire careers. But unlike dogs, we often make those boundaries ourselves.

That was my big take-away from the year 2020—because it was the year a lot of those invisible walls came down. We stopped ruling out ideas just because they seemed hard or incon-

venient. We stopped hewing to old dogma about *the way things have to be done*. We were pushed out of our comfort zones, out past those boundaries, and we discovered everything we

were missing. New ideas and new courage flowed as a result. Then we started to reinvent. To rediscover. To expand our lives and our businesses.

And what were those old boundaries? They came in the form of statements. Maybe some of these will sound familiar: *I can't do that. I don't know how to do that. My customer doesn't want that. I can only sell it this way. I can only build it that way. This idea is too crazy. That idea will never work.*

I often wonder where thoughts like those come from. Why did we carve up a large world of possibility and limit ourselves to just a tiny part of it? Here's my theory: When we find something we're good at, we start to define ourselves by *how good* we can be at it. But in the process, our definition of what we're good at starts to narrow.

I recently spoke with a specialty retailer who exemplifies this problem. In pre-pandemic times, she had a storefront where her staff greeted anyone who walked in. During the pandemic, however, she was forced to see people by appointment only—and even though that meant reaching fewer potential customers, her profits soared! Why? Because most of the people walking into her store were never going to buy from her, but she had to pay a staff to engage with them anyway. The appointment system allowed her to focus entirely on her real customer, at a lower cost.

Consider what happened there. Her business was successful, and she always wanted to make it more successful, but appointment-only operations never occurred

to her before. That's because she'd defined herself narrowly. She was asking herself, *How do I do a better job of operating this storefront?* Framed that way, she could never consider closing the store! She'd created a boundary without realizing it. But the pandemic helped her redefine her question. She instead asked, *How do I do a better job solving my clients' problem?* Then the idea of closing the store suddenly made sense.

This, again, was the beauty of 2020. It forced us to consider what once seemed out of the question. There was simply no other option. And so, the statements we told ourselves had to change. They became: *I can try that. I'll learn how to do that. This serves my customer's new need. I can sell it another way. I can build it another way. This idea is so crazy...it just might work.*

Now here is my challenge to us all in 2021: Let's never forget this lesson. The future will bring great new opportunities, but eventually it will also bring great new comfort. We will once again be tempted to define ourselves narrowly—to protect a simple vision of what we have, at the expense of everything that could have been. And yet, we will also carry the solution. We can always remember this time. We can know that radical thinking isn't beyond our grasp. It isn't some foreign concept, or something fleeting. It is simply a matter of recognizing our invisible boundaries—and then, unlike a trained dog, walking right through them.

*Jason Feifer is the editor in chief of Entrepreneur.*



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