

# HOT NEW FRANCHISE OPPORTUNITIES

Franchisors and franchisees alike have found great success following their passions, their entrepreneurial spirits, and their instincts in building their businesses. Here we share the stories of a handful of standouts, whose experiences offer inspiration and advice to those entrepreneurs interested in pursuing franchising.

By Mark Henricks

Each year countless entrepreneurs contemplate launching new franchise opportunities that they hope will become the next hot business. But how many are really new? More importantly, how many have the potential to become the next big thing?

Franchise consultant Michael Seid says that the uniqueness of a concept by itself is not the best way to assess the promise of a franchise opportunity. "What we're looking for today are things that meet market needs," says Seid.

Demographics drives two market needs Seid sees as ripe for new business opportunities. The first is our aging population. This creates openings for a variety of services tailored to meet the health and other needs of a mushrooming population of senior citizens. A second trend concerns the needs surrounding the proliferation of two-earner families that require assistance with the education, entertainment, and care of children.

To fulfill its promise as a future business star, a concept also needs infrastructure. That means a management team with the talent and experience to grow it, the standardized systems that will enable franchisees to emulate the success of others, and the capital to fund continued development of management, systems, and product offerings. Not many new franchise systems have that combination. Here are nine that might.



## Pizza Fusion

Vaughan Lazar didn't invent pizza, but the president and co-founder of Fort Lauderdale-based Pizza Fusion is certainly a pioneer in environmentally friendly dining. Lazar's concept features buildings built to sustainable construction standards, hybrid company cars, mostly organic food ingredients, and numerous other sustainable characteristics--right down to sourcing foods locally whenever possible.

Sustainable restaurants clearly aren't simple, but Lazar cooks Pizza Fusion's appeal down to a simple statement: "We serve organic food in a fast-food setting," he says. "That really sets us apart." The combination of appealing to diners' desire for both healthy food and quick service helped propel Pizza Fusion to 22 locations in only two years of franchising -- a remarkable feat in the hyper-competitive pizza business.

Today, Lazar is focusing on building Pizza Fusion's management team and recruiting experienced master

franchise operators who can provide individual franchisees with the support they'll need to prosper. The company is expanding into airports and Lazar hopes to have from 150 to 200 units within three years. "Business is good," he says. "We're still growing."

### GUAVA Senior Home and Healthcare Services

Mary S. Schreiber, PhD, founder of GUAVA Senior Home and Healthcare Services, and GUAVA Franchising, has paired a fresh new concept with her GUAVA Building Block Healthcare System for healthcare planners preparing to meet the growing needs of Baby Boomers caring for aging parents as well as their own children. Caring for her father after a heart operation, Schreiber realized there was a need for home-based personal healthcare services for seniors. "Finding the personalized, individualized attention when a family member was unable to be there for my father was very difficult," she says. Using her entrepreneurial skills, Schreiber researched the industry and launched GUAVA in 2006.

In January 2009, the Hockessin, DE-based company began franchising the GUAVA concept, using a unique approach that helped franchisees build their revenues from home-based non-medical care providers all the way through operating medical in-home care agencies to staffing. According to Schreiber, this provides many lucrative revenue streams in serving pediatric to geriatric clients. "We give you the tools to put teams in place and to build your business one step at a time," she says.

Schreiber counts the carefully chosen name among the company's assets. "I wanted a fun appeal, a fresh approach that communicated that growing old is one of the best parts of our lives, so enjoy!" she says. Among other providers bearing labels evoking comfort and caring, GUAVA stands out as memorable, she says. Calls to potential referral sources often feature complementary guava juice and guava slices and the odd-sounding name services as a reliable conversation-starter. "I wanted our company to be very different," she says. "Our name is a fabulous marketing device."



### Zamba Chicken

Zamba Chicken is such a new concept that its first franchised location has yet to open. Yet, with franchising veteran John Gennaro as founder and president, plus an

intriguing approach to casual dining, its promise is clear. Zamba's menus focuses on barbecued chicken, ribs and burgers prepared in a style that fuses American, European, and Latin American flavors. Everything is flame-grilled, prepared to order. "There are no microwaves and no pre-cooking," says Gennaro. "It's real food."

The Clark, NJ, entrepreneur previously started and grew a nationwide fitness chain and today is looking for master franchisees to help develop the New York, New Jersey and Florida territories. He got interested in starting Zamba because he saw a lack of places serving the kind of high-quality, carefully prepared food he ate in an easygoing, convenient atmosphere.

The first units of Zamba were built with eventual franchising in mind, and have the feel and function of units in a well thought-out system. Gennaro feels he already has in place what it will take to grow Zamba nationally, especially the all-important products. "It's all about the food. My biggest difference is the quality and type of food that I'm selling," he says. "It's real food, served in a fast, casual way."



### Rotisserie & Fire-Grilled Cooking

#### Kidville

Kidville addresses the trend of an increasing need for the care and education of children. Andy Stenzler co-founded the New York City-based company in 2005 to give parents an alternative to driving pre-kindergarteners all over town to attend different lessons. "We set out to create a place that had all kinds of classes under one roof and also would have additional services, and also we pride ourselves on the facilities being clean, safe, and secure," says Stenzler.

In 2008, Kidville acquired an existing company franchising in the same space and today has seven company-owned and 40 franchised units. Kidvilles come in two sizes: 8,000 square foot hubs and satellite operations about half the size. Stenzler, himself a veteran franchiser, has assembled a sterling team to help drive the concept as far as it will go, and they're aiming high. "Our motto is a Kidville for every kid," he says.

### Games2U

Games2U is a concept that, on the other hand, brings itself to kids, in the form of mobile gaming theater--vans stuffed with high-end video gaming systems, plus outdoor activities like laser tag, air cannons that launch t-shirts and candy and giant inflatable hamster balls. Co-founder brothers David and Stuart Pikoff started selling franchises for the Austin, Texas, company in 2008 and already have 41 operating in 18 states.

The concept is a natural for kids' birthday parties, but also appeals to corporate training and teambuilding events, video game maker demonstrations, fairs, family nights, and many other events, David Pikoff says. They plan to continually expand the offerings, most recently with a patented six-and-a-half-foot tall motorized gadget called the Ubot that lets kids climb inside and pilot a smoke-emitting, light-flashing robot. "It's a simple great way to throw a party," David Pikoff says. "However, we're never done. We're always challenging ourselves to do something new and different and keep it fresh and unique."

### Elements Therapeutic Massage

Elements Therapeutic Massage Inc. of Highlands Ranch, CO, plays to a different side of healthcare that has found a warm reception among franchisers. The company began franchising in 2006 and has 78 units already. One reason for their success, according to President and CEO Jeff Jervik, is that Elements focuses on the therapeutic aspect of massage, as opposed to the self-indulgent angle.

Despite the soft economy, unit average revenues are up and consumers are just beginning to wake up to the real health benefits of massage. Jervik believes the concept could expand at the rate of a couple of hundred new units annually for the next five years. "We are really on the right track," he says. "We're differentiating ourselves from the pack, which is why our growth continues at a sustainable level."

### Snap Fitness

In the health and exercise niche, Snap Fitness Inc. of Chanhasen, MN, has found a similarly comfortable niche with its concept of conveniently located, affordably priced, moderately sized but well-equipped fitness centers. CEO Peter Taunton, a long-time fitness industry veteran, founded the chain in 2003, began franchising in 2004, and has more than 1,000 units in operation.

Taunton says Snap's attraction lies in the way the clubs are designed to fit into a community retail center. That allows them to locate the clubs in people's neighborhoods. "We make it very convenient for them," Taunton says. The modest size keeps

franchisee costs down, and the \$35-a-month membership fee, which includes access to any of its clubs, represents a value in tune with the times. "When you compare it to other fitness concepts out there, it's very affordable," Taunton says.

### HealthSource Chiropractic

HealthSource Chiropractic of Vermilion, Ohio, is unusual among chiropractic franchisers in its emphasis on the business of providing care. Approximately one half of the 42 master franchise-holders in the 243-clinic chain are entrepreneurial businesspeople, not chiropractors. "We have a nice blend of real-world experience as well as doctors," says founder and CEO Dr. Chris Tomshack. "It makes for a much more salable and profitable business."

Healthsource's locations consist of existing offices already in operation, meaning costs of converting to the franchise format are minimal. Tomshack thinks the care emphasis, which focuses on remedying underlying health issues that can cause repeat visits, will help HealthSource grow and also improve the industry. "Five years from now we'll be sitting at over 1,000 clinics," he forecasts. "But more important than the number, we want to change the landscape of chiropractic by raising the bar."

### Green Energy Barrier

No roster of hot new concepts could be complete without one that addresses energy conservation. Green Energy Barrier of Hickory, NC, fills the bill with an insulation installation business opportunity that has sold 37 locations in just a year of trying. Vice President Jason Herald says the company's goal is to reach 250 nationwide.

Herald says Green Energy Barriers' emphasis is less on the product they use, and more on teaching business owners how to market and sell the concept. "The biggest thing is that we bring a comprehensive program," he says. "We go in and analyze the market, and then we really work with them on TV commercials, radio commercials, newspaper ads, Yellow Page, Internet -- a comprehensive marketing strategy." Herald says the company plans to add additional products, such as energy-saving windows or weatherization products, as growth ramps up.

No matter how innovative a concept seems, or how grand the founders' visions, the proof must always be in the doing. Franchisees looking for the next big thing are really looking for the financing, operations, marketing, and the rest as well as a great concept. "They have to be certain that the franchiser has the legs to pull off what they are going to do," cautions Seid. With their recent records of rapid growth and continuing appeal, these franchises are among the few that have demonstrated they have more than just another good idea.