



Here Come the Millennials

The experts weigh in on how a new generation of entrepreneurs is changing the face of franchising.

BY LEAH INGRAM

Nearly 75 percent of millennials in the United States say they want to be an entrepreneur, according to Alesia Visconti, CEO of FranServe Inc., a franchise consulting and expansion organization. However, millennials tend to be risk averse—so if they want to be their own boss, they might find themselves in a bit of a quandary.

“When you start and own your own business,” says Visconti, “you own 100 percent of the risk.”

There’s good reason for millennials—generally considered to

be those born between 1981 and 1996—to avoid risky business. A large number of them graduated from high school or college just as the Great Recession was starting. Simply getting—and keeping—a job became a challenge, not to mention striking out on their own. So how can millennials marry their unique drive to lead and innovate with that risk reluctance? One way is franchising.

“Millennials don’t want to fail; they want to know that they can succeed,” says Visconti. “That is the position of the franchisors—to help set them up to be successful.”

Warren Wright, author of *Second Wave Millennials* (Second Wave Press, 2019), says franchises have a failure rate of only 10 percent. And that’s great news for someone who wants to reap the benefits of being an entrepreneur without facing the risk of starting a business from scratch. Adds Visconti, “Franchising lays out all the steppingstones so you can get to the top. You are in business for yourself, but not by yourself.”

THE MILLENNIAL EFFECT

According to Visconti, there are about 733,000 U.S.-based franchise businesses that, collectively, con-

“[MILLENNIALS] ARE SMART AND THEY KNOW HOW TO WORK SMART . . . FRANCHISING HAS STARTED TO EVOLVE TO EMBRACE THAT IDEA, WITH MORE TECHNOLOGY DRIVING THE INDUSTRY.”

—ALESIA VISCONTI, CEO OF FRANSERVE INC.

tribute \$674 billion to the economy. Franchises are job creators, generating more than 7 million jobs. She says that 2018 ended with the sale and opening of nearly 14,000 new franchise locations, a figure that was up 2 percent from 2017.

There's another increase to consider: the fact that millennials now make up the largest portion of the workforce, with some 56 million people, according to Pew Research. That's compared to Generation X's 53 million and baby boomers' 41

million. And the franchising industry has taken notice.

Many of the franchise brands attracting millennial franchisees are those with a lower cost of entry. While total investment costs for well-known brands such as McDonald's are in the multiple millions, “most of the franchises we work with come in between \$2,000 and \$400,000,” says Visconti of FranServe, which works as a matchmaker of sorts between potential franchisees and franchi-

sors. FranServe represents about 550 franchises; its service is free to potential franchisees. FranServe also helps franchisees navigate financing. “Lenders tend to know franchise brands, so it makes it easier for franchisees to fund their startup,” says Visconti.

Today's franchises are starting to reflect the values and expectations that millennials have of everyday life. This includes being socially minded, technology driven and convenient. In addition, popular franchise brands understand the millennial mindset when it comes to everything from dogs to downturns in the economy.

Sky spoke to more than a dozen franchisees and franchisors about working with millennials as business owners, as well as targeting them as customers. Here are five ways that millennials are changing the franchising landscape.

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1. WORKING SMARTER, NOT HARDER

The old “lazy millennial” trope is a thing of the past—and was never deserved in the first place—says Visconti. Millennials are “not lazy. What they are is smart and they know how to work smart,” she explains. “If they can get something automated, they will. Franchising has started to evolve to embrace that idea, with more technology driving the industry.”

Chris Grandpre, chairman and CEO of Outdoor Living Brands Inc., really appreciates how millennials “help push our team and our organization to enhance the tech platforms we use, both in terms of efficiency and the vehicles we use to communicate with customers. They push us to continue to evolve.”

Outdoor Living Brands offers four franchise brands—Archadeck Outdoor Living, Outdoor Lighting Perspectives, Renew Crew and Conserva Irrigation—that range from landscape lighting to residential and commercial irrigation system maintenance, environmentally friendly home exterior cleaning services and outdoor living spaces across dozens of states and Canada.

Recently, the technology platform used by Outdoor Living Brands’ franchisees debuted a consumer-facing, “Uber-like” experience, which enables customers to pinpoint their technician’s location when he or she is on the way to a house call, says Grandpre.

You’ll find this kind of tech-forward convenience being offered through Sport Clips Haircuts franchises as well.

In late 2018, Sport Clips launched a new mobile app that offers check in and wait time information and a choice of location and preferred stylist, as well as the ability to set personal reminders, explains Karen Young, director of franchise recruitment for Sport Clips Inc.

With more than 1,800 locations across all 50 states and in Canada,

the brand annually provides 33 million-plus haircuts and is continuing to expand.

A new point-of-sale system “provides additional mobility for franchisees to access reports on the performance of their stores,” says Young. “For millennials, this aligns with their immersion into mobile

technology and their desire to work on their time, wherever they have internet access.”

For millennial Rachel Artise, a The UPS Store franchisee in western Pennsylvania, having ready-made social media platform assistance, images and posts available from the franchisor has helped

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her efficiently manage her business. “One of the hardest things for me was getting the word out that mine is a locally owned business,” she says. “But social media helps.”

In addition, “If I’m out of town or on vacation, our [The UPS Store] corporate headquarters does a great job of posting on our page for us.”

2. PRIORITIZING PUPS

According to the American Pet Products Association, millennials are the largest segment of the population that owns pets, making up 35 percent of pet owners and 38 percent of dog owners.

When they go to work, shopping or out with friends, they expect to be able to bring their dogs. So it’s no surprise that some of the fastest-growing franchises focus on fur babies.

Camp Bow Wow is the largest

and leading doggy day care and boarding franchise and now has more than 165 locations across North America.

“We provide a fun, safe environment where pups can play all day and snooze the night away in their own cozy cabin,” explains Julie Turner, vice president of marketing. “Millennials are delaying having human children and opting for dog parenting instead.”

Turner points out that the pet industry is \$70 billion strong and growing, with pet grooming and boarding accounting for more than \$8 billion in revenue in 2017.

“At an annual growth rate of 5.3 percent, it’s a great investment opportunity for passionate millennials to do something they love while building a lifelong career,” she says.

Texas-based franchise Mutts Canine Cantina combines a fast-casual restaurant concept with an

adjacent dog park. Co-founder Kyle Noonan describes Mutts as “experiential dining.”

“It’s a reason to come out of the house for a meal, because you can bring your dog,” he says. Mutts is designed so you can sit outside on the patio with your pup on a leash or you can watch your dog in the adjacent dog park while you eat or enjoy a drink at the bar.

But Mutts is more than just a place to eat—it’s a place to meet. Mutts offers membership packages that allow you and your pet to roam free across its 1-acre, off-leash dog park—with separate areas for small and large dogs. Mutts has attendants on duty to pick up after pets and make sure they have water so customers can focus on relaxing and socializing.

Another franchise hoping to build community among like-minded dog owners is Zoom Room. “We’re

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—CHRIS GRANDPRE, CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF OUTDOOR LIVING BRANDS INC.

an indoor dog training gym with an emphasis on socialization,” says CEO Mark Van Wye.

“People have a desire to be active alongside their dogs, and socialization is great for a dog’s well-being.” Zoom Room offers classes on traditional dog training, with dog owners actively participating, as well as activities such as agility courses or urban herding—where dogs learn to herd exercise balls instead of sheep.

Van Wye says many millennials who express interest in franchising start as Zoom Room customers. You needn’t be a dog expert, either. “You just have to have a winning personality,” says Van Wye. “We’ll teach you everything else you need to know about dog training.”

3. RECESSION-RESISTANT BUSINESSES

Many millennials came of age professionally just as the housing and banking crisis hit in 2008. “Jobs are more secondary to them. It’s more about having a future and more control over their lives,” says Visconti.

Finding a business niche that is recession-resistant—or at least resilient—is key. So how do you go about identifying such a niche? Look at demographics.

While millennials are the largest-growing age group in

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Easy KENKEN

9x	1	3	2	4
	3	4	1	2
3+	2	1	4	3
4	4	2	3	1

Hard KENKEN

1	2	6	5	4	3
2	1	4	6	3	5
3	5	2	1	6	4
4	6	3	2	5	1
6	4	5	3	1	2
5	3	1	4	2	6

Easy Sudoku

5	4	3	7	9	1	2	8	6
8	1	7	6	4	2	9	5	3
9	6	2	3	8	5	4	1	7
2	3	5	1	6	4	7	9	8
4	9	6	5	7	8	3	2	1
1	7	8	2	3	9	5	6	4
7	5	9	8	1	3	6	4	2
3	8	4	9	2	6	1	7	5
6	2	1	4	5	7	8	3	9

Hard Sudoku

5	1	7	3	6	4	2	9	8
8	4	6	2	9	1	3	5	7
9	3	2	5	7	8	4	1	6
3	5	9	7	8	6	1	4	2
6	8	1	9	4	2	7	3	5
7	2	4	1	3	5	6	8	9
4	7	8	6	5	3	9	2	1
2	9	5	4	1	7	8	6	3
1	6	3	8	2	9	5	7	4

S	L	U	G		S	P	L	I	T	S		N	B	A	
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—FRANK SAMSON, FOUNDER OF SENIOR CARE AUTHORITY

America, baby boomers still need to be served.

“The ‘silver tsunami’ hasn’t even hit yet,” explains Frank Samson, founder of Senior Care Authority.

“Over the next 20-plus years, the demand for senior services will increase, no question, and the industry and business will continue to grow just by sheer numbers. It is a great opportunity for someone who wants to start a business that will have continued growth.”

Samson’s franchise, which is in 19 states, specializes in finding care and housing for seniors and offering elder care consulting.

“We are mainly a consulting service to help [customers] with a senior—who could be a parent, spouse or other loved one—to find the best place to live and get proper care,” he explains.

“We are a no-cost service to the family when we’re doing a placement to an assistive living or memory care

facility. We have contracts with these kinds of places, and the franchise owners earn a commission, kind of like [in] real estate.”

Senior Helpers started as a home care, private-duty company providing personal and companion care for families. It now has 310 franchise locations in 41 states plus Canada and Australia.

“Our whole goal is providing phenomenal in-home care for our aging generation but with a focus on chronic care management,” says CEO Peter Ross. Senior Helpers is targeting the “96 percent of seniors who want to age in place”—meaning in their own homes.

Millennial Ross Goodson experienced this “aging in place” concept firsthand with his own grandparents. They lived together until his grandmother died about 10 years ago. Then something amazing happened at his grandmother’s funeral.

“My grandfather had this woman speak at her funeral whom I never met before. She was a caregiver who came for just four hours a day, once a week, to help with laundry; she made such an impact on my grandmother’s life,” he says. “She would put a load of laundry in and sit at the kitchen table with my grandma.”

That experience stayed with Goodson as he considered buying a franchise, which is why he settled on Senior Helpers. He currently has franchises in Stuart, Florida, and Cincinnati, Ohio. That he could start with the support offered by the franchise allowed Goodson to enter a field in which he didn’t have a background. But in the end, it was about helping seniors and their families.

“We have to make sure that every experience [was like my grandmother’s],” he says. “We’re changing peoples’ lives, even if it’s the smallest thing.”

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but offline services offer profitable franchise opportunities, too.

Whereas many millennials spend much of their time shopping online, ordering food or booking a ride share, when it comes to franchise opportunities, they can look to things you can't buy online.

"You can't get a haircut on Amazon," says Visconti of FranServe, which is why franchises such as Sport Clips make so much sense.

"Men need haircuts every four to six weeks," says Young of Sport Clips. "Men's hair care, in particular, is the most efficient segment of the hair care industry. Men's and boys' cuts are simple and easy to train [for]. In addition, haircutting services can't be outsourced or replaced by technology."

Another offline service that can't be replaced by technology? Child care.

It's something that millennial

"MILLENNIALS DON'T WANT TO FAIL; THEY WANT TO KNOW THAT THEY CAN SUCCEED. THAT IS THE POSITION OF THE FRANCHISORS—TO HELP SET THEM UP TO BE SUCCESSFUL."

—ALESIA VISCONTI, CEO OF FRANSERVE INC.

sisters Courtney Adams and Katy Maupin understood as young parents themselves. And it's why they decided to buy a Kiddie Academy franchise in Cypress, Texas.

In addition to helping to educate and care for the youngest generation, being their own bosses allowed them to have the work-life balance they strived for themselves.

"We are in that stage of life where we are raising young families but still want to build our own business," says Adams. "As a fran-

chise, we did not have to reinvent the wheel. We benefited from the blueprint provided by Kiddie Academy and support in areas such as curriculum, marketing, IT and a community of other franchisees."

The franchise allowed them to be business owners and parents.

"If my child has a doctor's appointment, school activity or I want to volunteer, I can do that without feeling guilty that I'm asking for time away from work," says Adams.

"At the end of the day, the buck stops here, so I still have to get the

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work done—but I can just do so on my own schedule.”

5. PASSION AND PURPOSE MATTER

Talk to franchise experts about working with millennials and the word *passion* likely will keep coming up.

Not only are millennials personally passionate about the businesses they want to get into, they are passionate about businesses that have a higher purpose. Whether a company is socially conscious or it generously gives back, millennials support brands that put purpose on the same shelf as profit.

For example, franchises that deal with dogs are expected to support animal-related causes. It's exactly why many Camp Bow Wow franchisees work closely with local rescues and shelters to provide free or discounted daycare to assist in socializing pups in the hopes of accelerating adoption, says Turner.

“We also have a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the Bow Wow Buddies Foundation, that offers a second chance to sick and injured dogs in need by providing medical grants to parents or shelters/rescues that cannot afford to pay for the necessary veterinary care,” Turner says. “In 2018, the Bow Wow Buddies Foundation provided medical grants totaling more than \$180,000 to 189 dogs in need.”

With food franchises, millennials value not only a giving-back element to the business but one that promotes healthy living.

Peter Yang, co-founder of Pokéworks—a franchise brand that serves fast-casual, Hawaiian-inspired dishes that focus heavily on seafood—says the company is aiming to serve only responsibly caught fish and sustainable seafood.

“We get our vegetables from locally sourced produce vendors and we help our franchisees get connected and set up with local vendors, too,” he says.

For the Capriotti's franchise

brand of restaurants, you shouldn't have to read a label to understand what you're getting in your sandwich. “Our turkey has one ingredient: turkey. It's a real Thanksgiving turkey. Steak and beef have one ingredient: beef,” explains CEO Ashley Morris. “Our vegetables are bought fresh from local growers,

chopped daily, and that differentiates us from other sandwich shops.”

As Charles Watson, CEO of Tropical Smoothie Cafe, puts it, “Our motto is ‘Eat better, feel better,’ and that speaks to changing consumer desires in food and beverage—our growth has been driven by that.” ▼



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