What Makes These 9 Emerging and Thriving Franchises Unique?

Every company has its “thing,” but what makes a brand truly unique? In reviewing some of this year’s best emerging franchises, we take a closer look at how some of these brands utilize their niches to foster success and continual growth in their industries.

Kika Stretch Studios

The story: As a single parent, Kika Wise wanted a career that allowed for flexibility to do what she loved while still being active in her son’s life. Using her dance training from undergrad, Wise developed her own innovative method of stretching, The Kika Method. “As I started dancing late in life, I had to find unique ways to gain more flexibility,” Wise says, and she eventually perfected her routine into a version that could help others. “I replaced gravity with what we now call a stretchologist.” A new approach to health and fitness was born, and Kika Stretch Studios now has 14 locations across seven states.

What makes it unique: Kika Stretch Studios uses a dancer’s approach to stretching. It doesn’t use tables or bands, and the coach only uses their hands. Kika also uses custom mats that measure a client’s “stretch age,” which is a more innovative way of tracking results. The Kika method of stretching is also only offered within its studios.

Pure Green Franchise

The story: Pure Green Franchise was founded by wellness entrepreneur Ross Franklin. After building and consulting for fitness companies for more than 15 years, Franklin realized that 80% of optimal wellness comes from nutrition, while only 20% comes from fitness. Franklin made the decision to dedicate his life to helping people live a healthier lifestyle and created Pure Green. Franklin spent countless hours formulating and developing recipes for the most nutrient-rich handcrafted smoothies, acai bowls and cold pressed juices for optimal nutrition and incredible taste.

What makes it unique: Pure Green Franchise is committed to sustainability, and its carbon footprint is small compared to other juice bar franchises. Pure Green Franchise can fit into spaces as small as 500 square feet and up to 1,500 square feet. The quality of the products is unparalleled both in taste and nutrition, all at low cost to the franchisor and the environment.

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Island Fin Poke

The story: Friends Mark Setterington and Paul Reas founded Island Fin Poke in 2016. The pair met at Bahama Breeze 12 years prior, and they instantly became “more like brothers than friends.” They stayed in touch through the years and eventually set out to establish their dream of creating a casual, island-inspired restaurant that offered quality Hawaiian-style poke. At the time, Setterington already oversaw 10 restaurants between Las Vegas and LA, and in 2016, Reas flew to the West Coast and the duo went on a food tour to determine what their franchise concept had to have. They narrowed down their findings to three pillars: incredible

food, outstanding service and easy execution. Over the next few months the friends worked to perfect the recipes and house-made sauces offered today, and Island Fin Poke launched with wild success.

What makes it unique: What sets Island Fin Poke apart is both the authenticity and simplicity of the operation – allowing for a pleasant experience for both franchisees and customers. The solid relationships built with vendors allow franchisees to keep costs in line. Reas and Setterington remarked that Island Fin's smooth and efficient system allowed it to stay on course throughout the pandemic and supply chain constraints without having to sacrifice ingredients or quality. What's more is that the dining experience goes above and beyond for a QSR. "We give a full-service experience in a fast-food restaurant," they said. "We bring the food to the tables, refill beverages, and every guest gets a sample of Dole soft serve! We do all of this with two to three people per shift."

AR Workshop

The story: Adria Ruff and Maureen Anders met at a preschool open house in 2010. Within two weeks they launched an Etsy shop called Anders Ruff Custom Designs, selling DIY printable party invitations and other crafts catering to parents. As the shop gained popularity, they expanded the vision and launched their own site, also giving tutorials on how to make the crafts and additional tips to help their clients' parties shine. In 2016, six years after they first got together, they decided to open a brick and mortar store. They wanted to offer in-person workshops set in a lounge-style atmosphere, where clients could mingle, shop handmade crafts or pick out items to pair with their workshops. The outpouring support for and popularity of AR Workshop grew exponentially, and as countless crafty fans inquired about opening their own DIY boutique, Anders and Ruff asked themselves, "If we could do this once, why couldn't we do it all over the country?"

What makes it unique: The concept of AR Workshop is completely singular in the hands-on experience and joy offered to guests at every location – they can create, shop and celebrate all in one space. AR Workshop is also a franchise that has maintained its vision and values throughout every stage of expansion. "The beauty is that we are truly DIY in that we built the entire space ourselves," the owners shared. "After all, how could a DIY studio purchase furnishings? From the tables and shelves, to the check-in desk and bar, even the light fixtures were painted our signature color (aqua)." The letters "AR" are also found throughout the space – A paint "bAR" selection of colors, a hammer hanging chandelier and upside down hammer hooks to hang the aprons.

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ISI Elite Training

The story: Adam Rice, former NCAA D1 baseball player at Coastal Carolina University, founded ISI Elite Training at the age of 23 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Rice first gained passion for fitness when he lost 70 pounds in high school. As a former athlete, Rice wanted to offer an experience that trained individuals at all fitness levels like an athlete. Rice developed ISI, where group fitness creates the community and camaraderie offered in team athletics. ISI stands for "Iron Sharpens Iron" from Proverbs 27:17 "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." After five years of opening five corporate locations in the Myrtle Beach area, Rice and his wife moved to Charlotte to launch the prototype franchise location. ISI's first franchise location opened in Grovetown, Georgia in 2020. Despite the pandemic, ISI's 68 locations across the country maintained strength, with zero closures and all locations well exceeding 100% pre-Covid revenue and member numbers.

What makes it unique: What sets ISI apart from its competitors

is what Rice attributes to having “found our strength in strength.” The group setting and team-based approach gives way to strong relationships and accountability, similar to team sports. “In an industry mostly dominated by female clientele, we are seeing a ratio of about 40% male and 60% female due to our training philosophy of athletic-based training,” Rice says. “Additionally, we have an Inbody analyzer in every location and a glass kids’ room in every location for parents to keep their kids during a workout.”

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Crave Hot Dogs & BBQ

The story: Founders Samantha and Salvatore Rincione were hospitality veterans who wanted to create a brand where they could share their vision while also helping potential franchisees accomplish their dreams of becoming a business owner. Combining their knowledge and passion for the restaurant industry, Samantha and Salvatore founded Crave Hot Dogs & BBQ in 2018. The pair wanted to guarantee authenticity and care at every location. To this day, Samantha and Salvatore personally meet and approve every franchisee and are involved in every step of the process. They’ve also founded a nonprofit called Crave Saves, which focuses on bringing awareness to child trafficking.

What makes it unique: Samantha, a former franchisee and now a franchisor, uses her experience to help franchisees through every step of the process. Crave is also with franchisees every step of the way – assisting in SBA, real estate, operations, ongoing training and support. The team is available 24/7 to the franchisees, for operational reasons or otherwise. Crave also innovates regularly, and truly believes innovation is key to the success of the brand. Recently, Crave announced it’d be adding ax throwing lanes to the restaurants.

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Send Me a Trainer

The story: It starts in 2007 when Bary and Muhssin El-Yacoubi launched Bounce Fitness. Over the course of a decade, Bounce became the leading provider of in-home personal training in the Washington, D.C. area. In Bounce's first 10 years, the duo established a large network of trainers and completed more than 100,000 in-home personal training sessions and group fitness classes. With all the feedback collected from clients and trainers, along with in-depth operational experience running the business, they knew exactly what was needed to take the business to the next level. Once they were ready to launch the beta of the new technology, they wanted to ensure they had the right branding and name. When the pair would tell potential clients the name of their business, "Bounce Fitness," they would continually be met with the question, "Where is your gym located?" to which they'd reply, "We are not a gym." They felt that it was an appropriate time to adopt a more impactful name that represented what they actually did, and Send Me a Trainer was born.

What makes it unique: Innovation is at the heart of what makes Send Me a Trainer unique. It's the first marketplace for in-home services available as a technology franchise. "We are disrupting the franchise industry, as typically each service would be a standalone business," the founders said. "For the first time, you can now offer multiple service categories under one franchise." As a franchisor, you do not need to invest in any physical location or expensive equipment, and you can work from anywhere. The proprietary technology runs the day-to-day operations for you.

Gone For Good

The story: Founder Reid Husmer's brand started with spring cleaning. After being daunted by what to do with all the clutter he needed to get rid of, he started looking into services that would take his stuff and keep it out of a landfill. After countless hours of research, he found that no such thing really existed, and so he set out to start Gone For Good. Husmer wanted to make recycling more accessible and better, allowing people to easily get rid of junk without it coming at the expense of the environment. "My first thought was to name my company Rec this House," Husmer said. "Luckily, I hired a marketing company, and they came up with the name Gone for Good. I felt it was perfect. Gone for Good, good for you, the environment and the community."

What makes it unique: "Our concept may be too high on the unique list," Husmer says. "We show up on the saturated market list of junk removers, but we are also a thrift store company." Gone For Good is essentially two companies under one name, wholly committed to finding a better way to get rid of people's clutter. Gone For Good takes the adage "one man's trash is another man's treasure" to heart, and it has created a system committed to sustainability and environmentally-conscious recycling. "Who would think it is possible to be a junk removal company that takes stuff back to a warehouse and sells it?" Husmer said. "Don't get me wrong, not all jobs come back to the warehouse. Some jobs *are* just trash, but mostly it is stuff we can find a second home for."

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Chefs For Seniors

The story: Chefs For Seniors was founded in 2013 by Barrett Allman, an executive chef and restaurant owner with more than

25 years of experience. Allman wanted to use his skill set as a professional chef to make a difference in his community, while giving him flexibility to spend more time with family. While talking to senior customers, he was struck by how many told him they struggled to cook meals for themselves. He wanted to connect with the people he was cooking for and had the idea for a service that would enable seniors to age in place. For the first year, Allman and his son, Nathan, prepared meals for clients themselves in Madison, Wisconsin, where the company is based. They learned about seniors' specific needs and fine-tuned the business model using lean startup concepts. Since its inception, Chefs for Seniors has prepared more than 690,000 meals for seniors across the U.S. and currently has more than 65 franchises throughout the country. Although there are plenty of meal services available, Chefs for Seniors takes pride in providing this service to the senior population and prioritizes healthful, nutrient-rich meals that can be customized to a senior's dietary needs.

What makes it unique: Several key benefits set Chefs For Seniors apart from other business models. For starters, Allman and his son provide comprehensive support on an ongoing basis for all franchise owners, from inquiry to owning and operating the franchise. They also provide owners with a detailed marketing plan to help franchisees get professional referrals and offer turnkey digital advertising solutions through Facebook and Google Ads. The initial investment for launching a Chefs for Seniors franchise is low in comparison to other business models ($10-25,000 in total startup costs), making it a lower risk business than other franchises – especially in the food service industry.

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