

SERVICE

Service businesses have created a haven for people looking to leave the white-collar business world and own a blue-collar business.

by Geoff Batchelder

When you think of business game-changers, you probably think of Amazon—the online giant that disrupted the retail industry and changed how we buy things. Then there's PayPal, another game-changer, which revolutionized how we pay for things. But what are the game-changers in franchising? Do they exist?

Of course they do. Now while I love Subway's fresh baked bread and Jimmy John's fast delivery as much as the next guy, I don't consider them game-changers—there just another way to get a great sandwich. Franchise game-changers either take time-proven concepts and adapt them to efficient franchise models or they change the way business is done in specific categories. By changing the game in franchising, you can take customer service to new heights or change who might be able to own the business. Here are some companies—and some ways—franchises are changing the business world for the better.

FREEING UP THE OWNER

Residential and commercial cleaning services are a good example of game-changing franchises. Services like Merry Maids® and ServiceMaster Clean® have brought a higher level of service, branding, and professionalism to what used to be an owner-is-the-cleaner industry. Similarly, CertaPro Painters® has added a national accounts

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program, a national call center, and professional branding and marketing to a typically Stan-in-the-van industry. The Flying Locksmiths has brought a national accounts programs, volume purchase agreements, a national call center with online booking and executive ownership at the franchise level to the access control sector. Fish Window Cleaning, 1-800-Got-Junk?®, ServPro®, and Lawn Doctor have also brought national-brand services to their respective sectors.

These businesses have created a haven for people looking to leave the white-collar business world and own a blue-collar business, without having to do the blue-collar work. Typically, these businesses can't be displaced by the Internet and can't be sent offshore—a relief for those who have been impacted by those shifts before.

ALL ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Franchises like Merry Maids® and CertaPro Painters®, among others, have brought a higher level of customer service and professionalism to their industries. Owners tend to have experience in customer service rather than say painting or cleaning, and often thanks to the franchise model, they are able

to devote time to professional branding and advertising. (Franchisees have an advantage here—they can pool resources in a way that independent business owners aren't able to). Such franchises have transformed time-proven industries by using an executive ownership model, where the owner focuses on running the business and market development, rather than being the on-call technical expert that delivers the service.

If you are thinking you can't be part of a painting company because you don't know your way around a brush, you're wrong. Franchises like CertaPro® prefer you train in their own systems and let you manage and grow the business instead of performing the actual work.

Service sector franchises offer lower start-up costs, lower monthly overhead costs, and higher net profit margins. However, if you are looking for a business with “glam-factor” and a nice shining storefront, this might not be the sector for you. With offerings in more than 300 different business format categories, the franchise industry has something for everyone who has the desire to break away from the corporate world and take the plunge into business ownership.

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