

# Why owner-operator franchises could be a fix for your entrepreneurial spirit

[Business](#), [Entrepreneurship](#)



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As the saying goes -- “ Different strokes for different folks.” This is just as true for seemingly mundane preferences -- like one’s favorite birthday cake -- as it is for major career decisions, like what type of business you prefer to open. To the latter point, being an entrepreneur doesn’t necessarily mean you have to launch your own startup from scratch, raise funds from venture capitalists or strive for unicorn status, but this is often what mainstream media touts as entrepreneurship.

Many alternative approaches to entrepreneurship exist. We just don’t hear about them as much because they don’t necessarily possess the glamour of a venture-funded business. This doesn’t mean, however, that they are any less important for the business and economic landscape. In fact, these alternatives are creating jobs, supporting communities and producing revenue with much less initial capital investment and financial risk.

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As someone who has been a total hustler, solopreneur, small boutique firm owner, and who now sits squarely in the center of startup land, I continue to grow more and more interested in the many facets of entrepreneurship.

What does it mean? Who is best suited to be an entrepreneur? Is it a skill you can learn or simply a ?

Recently, countless entrepreneurial-minded friends of mine have started to capture my attention with another category of business -- the franchise.

What used to be thought of as mostly fast food chains and gas stations has now exploded into a variety of alternatives. In particular, many of these emerging franchises are providing women with unique opportunities to launch and grow businesses without taking on a tremendous amount of risk, while giving them both the operational and community support they need to venture out on their own.

### **Bidding adieu to corporate life for something bigger.**

At the prompting of a childhood friend of mine, who is preparing to launch her own Barre3 location in the Midwest, I sat down with the founder, Sadie Lincoln, to learn more about her vision as an innovator in the franchise space. After working for 24 Hour Fitness for over a decade, and watching the company grow from 50 to 430 gyms, she recalls, “ I was in the minority as a female executive, and I didn’t see myself in the company.”

Not wanting to work for “ the man” anymore, she founded her fitness studio company in 2008 and now leads more than 100 Barre3 franchise studios

around the world. Nearly all her franchise owner-operators are women, and a whopping 70 percent of them are mothers, like Lincoln.

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She describes her owner-operators as fiercely creative and independent. “They want to make a dent, and they want to leave a legacy,” Lincoln said. “We give them 10 percent. The 90 percent is them inserting themselves authentically into the experience.”

### **Fighting the “cute hobby business” stereotype.**

Another long-time friend and former professional ballerina, Genevieve Weeks, founded in 2008 and has built her company into nearly 20 franchises across the U. S. over the last several years. While she has been wildly successful, and empowered many women owner-operators to launch and run their own boutique ballet schools, she still occasionally finds that people misinterpret what she does.

“I don’t want people to ever see what I do, or what my franchise owners do, as a hobby business,” Weeks said. “If it caters to children, is whimsical and fun, then it often gets dismissed. This is something I fight against and will continue to fight against. A business can be beautiful, creative, inspiring and profitable. Period.”

To repel this misconstrued perception, Weeks thinks it’s worth acknowledging that there are some stereotypes associated with franchises

that we should work to dispel, while being careful of how we communicate being a woman-owned business.

“ There is some danger out there,” she said. “ You see a lot of things being advertised in terms of ‘ how to start your home-based business.’ Some of this seems predatory. The key, if you’re looking to start your own business, is to do your homework, and make sure the purveyor of the opportunity has a track record and an infrastructure to support tangible growth.”

Rita Goldberg’s is another prime example of a franchise business that caters to female entrepreneurs and defies the “ cute hobby business” stereotype. To boot, British Swim School USA ranked no. 18 in list.

### **Franchise opportunities in the cloud.**

But what if heading to a storefront or studio everyday isn’t your cup of tea? produces a collection of city guides that highlight local businesses through highly curated editorial content. Women can apply to own the franchise in their area, and if selected, they will lead everything from advertising sales to distribution and promotion at local events. These “ franchise editors” act as tastemakers, curators and champions for The Scout Guide brand, while building their own rapport with local businesses.

There’s a one-time franchise fee for setup, and the franchise owner pays an annual royalty fee to The Scout Guide, beginning with the second volume of the guide they produce. It’s a great option for those who have established relationships within their local communities and possess marketing/PR and sales acumen. Bonus -- tons of free access to local events, a leg up on

community insider information and ultimately the reward of supporting local business owners – men and women alike.

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### **The benefits of franchise opportunities.**

The explosion of the owner-operator franchise over the last decade has likely shifted the thinking about the franchise industry as a whole. While there is still no guarantee that the business will be a surefire success, the amount of financial risk is reduced greatly, particularly for those who are first-time business owners and are less familiar with all of the many facets of running a business.

The benefits range from having access to training and marketing materials from the umbrella company to ample community support from fellow franchise owners. Additionally, if the franchise has at least 10 locations, there's usually built-in brand recognition, which means built-in credibility and trust with potential customers.

The moral of the story is that there's more than one way to be an entrepreneur -- just like there's more than one way to bake a cake -- and the franchise model is often an overlooked flavor in the narrative surrounding women entrepreneurs. You don't have to be a startup founder to be successful, and you don't have to put up with anyone calling that booming company of yours "cute."

Now, get to it!