

Father's day at
golden corral: a
franchisee carries on
his dad's tradition



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Franchise Players is Entrepreneur's Q&A interview column that puts the spotlight on franchisees. If you're a franchisee with advice and tips to share, email .

This article originally published June 16, 2016. Inspired by his family's deep roots in the brand, Billy Sewell enrolled in the company's management training program after graduating college. His father, Louis, had started the tradition: Louis had been a high school classmate and college roommate of Golden Corral founder James Maynard. When Maynard began the company in the 1970s, Louis Sewell became an early investor. His son, Billy, then held several roles in the company in the 1990s, from restaurant service manager to district manager, before buying his first two restaurants in 1996.

Expanding his business over the years, Billy Sewell today operates 26 franchises across six Mid-Atlantic states. He's active not only on the business side, but the philanthropic one as well: His restaurants in 2014 raised \$300,000 to support Camp Corral, a summer camp for children of wounded, disabled and fallen military service members. The military means a lot to Sewell, who has a restaurant in Jacksonville, North Carolina, home to Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base. Name: Billy Sewell Franchise owned: I own 26 Golden Corral stores in six states in the Mid-Atlantic region, in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio and Kentucky.

How long have you owned a franchise? I have been in franchising for 19 years. I bought my first two Golden Corral restaurants in Burlington, North Carolina, and Hickory, North Carolina, in 1996. Related: Why franchising? Franchising gives me the opportunity to fulfill the American dream of

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entrepreneurism. I have the ability to be my own boss and work to build a team that can successfully operate 26 Golden Corral restaurants. The great thing about franchising is if someone has the proper drive, ability and desire to own and operate their business, they can become a tremendous success. One rewarding aspect of the job is when a former co-worker goes on and becomes a franchisee on their own.

I also have the opportunity to provide an income for someone who may not have much formal training or experience in the field. In my case, I am in the restaurant industry, which is in the people business. We are able to create a positive experience for people who come hungry and leave happy. What were you doing before you became a franchise owner? I started working in the Golden Corral management training program in 1989 after graduating college. I worked in various roles in the system, from associate manager to general manager to district manager in the early '90s. These positions gave me extensive experience for all of Golden Corral's restaurant operations.

When I became a franchise owner in 1996, there was very little transition for me due to the fact that I was so knowledgeable about the company and the industry. Why did you choose this particular franchise? My father was a high school classmate and college roommate with James Maynard, the founder of Golden Corral. He became one of the original investors in the company and worked on the equipment and operations side for many years. I also had some summer jobs there in high school, and I knew I wanted to get into restaurant management.

Our family has very strong ties to Golden Corral, and I guess you could say I grew up along with the company. How much would you estimate you spent before you were officially open for business? I bought two existing stores from Golden Corral for \$500, 000. These costs included inventory, equipment and a management team. Where did you get most of your advice/do most of your research? Given my personal history with Golden Corral and working in the system for seven years, I was very familiar with the company, management and operations. When it came time to purchase my first two franchises, I had built relationships with Golden Corral's senior management, and I was comfortable in going to them with whatever questions I had or information I needed. Related: What were the most unexpected challenges of opening your franchise? There is a lot of responsibility that comes with franchise ownership.

There are many standards and expectations that must be met with owning a company in the restaurant, from managing employees to satisfying customers. In striving to meet those expectations, I constantly face pressure to hire the right people and properly train them. I currently employ more than 1, 800 people in my 26 restaurants, and I have a responsibility to them and their families. The recent recession was a rough time for many business owners, as we were faced with making some difficult decisions such as closing or consolidating stores. As an owner, you have to be willing to make change in the face of adversity or you will be out of business.

What advice do you have for individuals who want to own their own franchise? Franchising is a great thing, but success comes through hard work. Don't leave any stone unturned that could made you more successful <https://assignbuster.com/fathers-day-at-golden-corral-a-franchisee-carries-on-his-dads-tradition/>

as a business owner. Make sure you follow the brand standards in place and work to execute them on a daily basis. Spend the time to hire and train the right people for your company to carry out your culture and expectations.

Many people have good intentions, but unless they are trained correctly, they cannot execute the desired outcome. Turnover of employees is one of the most costly aspects of the restaurant business. Some of the best leaders in our industry are the ones with the most passion and enthusiasm for their business. Employees want to see their leader with the excitement, enthusiasm and desire to succeed and operate their restaurants successfully. If you care, your employees will care.

What's next for you and your business? My original plan was to own five Golden Corral restaurants, so I have far exceeded my expectations. I would like to continue to successfully operate our 26 stores with a focus to increase sales and profits. Related: