



# 5 TOP BUSINESS LESSONS LEARNED



from Five Smoothie King Multi-Unit Franchisees

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# *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*



Smoothie King franchisees are drawn to our 1,300+ store system because they believe in our mission to inspire people to live a healthy and active lifestyle, they believe in our vision to be an integral part of everyone's health and fitness journey, are proud to serve our products, enjoy a simplified business model and can generate a strong return on investment. While some are first-time owners, others have expanded their franchise portfolio by growing with us. And though each franchisee has their own unique experiences as business owners, they all invariably learn several important lessons that can be applied anywhere. What follows are the top five business lessons some of our most experienced multi-unit, multi-brand franchisees have learned throughout their careers.





# EVOLVE OR YOU'LL DISSOLVE



## Roger Wilder

Multi-Unit Smoothie King Franchisee since 2001



Before opening his first location in Denham Springs, Louisiana in 2001, Roger Wilder worked with the founder at the original location in Kenner. Since then, he's gone on to open 19 Smoothie King stores in the greater Baton Rouge metro area.

Roger wasn't alone for the first decade of owning Smoothie King franchises. His wife, who also worked at Smoothie King, was there alongside him helping open and operate their stores. However, once they started a family, Roger's wife dedicated most of her time to raising their children. She visited one of Roger's stores after a five-year gap, took a look behind the bar and was blown away by the changes that had occurred.

*"We went from having a lot of ingredients that were OK – but could have been a lot better – to Clean Blends, which has been a big change,"* said Roger.

With the Clean Blends initiative, Smoothie King added more whole fruits and veggies to the ingredients used to make smoothies, while removing added sugar to many of the Slim, Fitness and Wellness blends.

“Before, we were using fruit concentrate,” said Roger. “And now, we’ve got whole wild blueberries, raspberries and mango chunks – all natural, 100% fruits.”

In an effort to eliminate the need for added Turbinado, Smoothie King introduced whole dates. There’s also an ever-expanding No-No List of ingredients, including high fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated oils, artificial colors, flavors and preservatives, and many more.

“This dedication to higher quality ingredients has had significant impact on how guests view the products,” Roger added.

After viewing the new-and-improved ingredient list, his wife assumed these changes would add complexity to the process. On the contrary, Roger has seen it facilitate better guest experiences. When someone wants to customize their smoothie by adding ingredients, they can see those products behind the bar and choose exactly what they want – there’s full transparency into the menu and products used to prepare each blend.



“People are resistant to change, but one of the biggest things I’ve learned is that you have to evolve if you’re going to keep up, stay competitive and grow,” he added.

When Roger first got started, his goal was to own two or three stores. Since then, he’s grown and evolved as a leader, leveraging the simplified operations Smoothie King offers to entrepreneurs to build an entire company.

“I’ve got multiple regional managers, a director of operations and a home-office staff of six people,” Roger explained. “When I first started, I never imagined that I would employ that many people.”

The people he has surrounded himself with have helped him evolve into the franchisee he is today – an exceptional leader who has seen the evolution of a truly innovative brand that continues to push the boundaries of what it means to be a smoothie franchise.





**Alexandra Kavi**  
Military Veteran and Multi-Unit  
Smoothie King Franchisee since 2005



Alexandra opened her first Smoothie King store on Hurlburt Field Air Force Base in Florida in 2005 followed by Eglin Air Force Base, also in Florida. Since then, Alexandra has opened Smoothie King stores on or near some of the country's largest military bases, including Ft. Benning, Ft. Hood and Ft. Campbell.

## **LEAD BY EXAMPLE - AND BY LISTENING**

Today, she owns 12 stores and over the past 15 years has grown her portfolio by holding true to a deceptively simple leadership style.

After graduating from high school, Alexandra followed in her older brother's footsteps and attended the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, where she became a naval officer. She served in the Navy as a surface warfare officer and provided support during Operation Enduring Freedom, the U.S. military's response to the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. Alexandra was also stationed in Yokosuka, Japan and San Diego, California.

“Implementing the systems necessary to properly hire, develop and train your personnel is so important to keeping a franchise running smoothly. Being service-oriented and knowing to always put the customer first makes a big difference in a store’s success, too. These are all skills and traits I was lucky to hone during my time in the military,” Alexandra said.

As a leader, Alexandra is focused on being a mentor who sets expectations based on what she has learned works while keeping her finger on the pulse of her team to figure out what they need to keep improving.

For example, Alexandra has pushed her team to elevate guests’ experiences, particularly when it comes to helping guests identify the right blend for their specific nutritional or lifestyle needs. Being able to “read” guests is a skill that requires practice.

“To provide a great guest experience, you need to be able to take guest interactions to the next level – and it’s not always easy,” she said. “For instance, if someone who is diabetic comes in looking for recommendations, it makes a huge difference to be able to point them to the ideal smoothie that’s not only going to meet their dietary needs but also be delicious.”



This level of guest experience not only breeds loyalty, but also results in referral business from happy guests which then builds a strong brand reputation overall.

As a multi-unit franchisee, it’s important to overcome the perception among your team members that you’re not involved or don’t understand day-to-day operations since you won’t be in your stores every day.



For Alexandra, she's been fortunate to have a management team who has worked their way up from team member roles and knows what goes into growing her businesses – they have witnessed her working as a hands-on operator that has been behind the bar and walked in each team members' shoes. That validation filters throughout her network of stores and helps reinforce that Alexandra isn't simply delegating tasks – she's passing on best practices that are meant to make her team and her businesses more successful.

One of those best practices is making it a point to be accessible and conscious of her team members' needs.

"It's important to always be listening your team's questions and concerns and respond to them quickly and efficiently," she added.



Rather than being passive, Alexandra and her management team are proactive in reaching out to her team to identify opportunities so that solutions can be found as soon as possible. This has translated to improved employee retention rates and stronger unit-level performance.

"There will always be external factors that you can't necessarily control that will impact your store," said Alexandra. "But having a great team that helps you keep your operations on track – whether that's your cost of goods or inventory – is fundamental to your stability and longevity."



# ***BUILD A MANAGEMENT TEAM YOU CAN TRUST***



**Yonas Hagos**

Military Veteran, Multi-Brand Operator and  
Multi-Unit Smoothie King Franchisee since 2019



Yonas Hagos purchased his first store in 2019 and is looking to own at least 100 Smoothie King stores within five years. He's a firm believer in the brand, product and business model, which is why he's confident in an admittedly aggressive growth strategy.

"If I tell someone I'm going to do something, I'm going to do it unless there's something out of my control that prevents me from doing so," said Yonas.

His track record of having built a sizable multi-brand, multi-unit portfolio is a testament to his hunger to grow. Yonas developed an affinity for working within the quick-service restaurant (QSR) segment when he was just 14 years old working at a McDonald's. He continued working in fast food throughout high school and college and then his life took a sharp turn after the events of

September 11, 2001, when he decided to enlist in the U.S. Army. Yonas's experience in Iraq was harrowing, and earned him a Purple Heart.

Once he returned from military service, Yonas started a painting business and quickly realized that building a business from the ground up was more challenging than he anticipated. That experience led him toward franchising, and he has since spent a decade building a multi-brand, multi-unit empire.



“What I’ve done over the past 10 years is slowly build my back-of-the-house team and become top-heavy with a multi-unit management team, and now I can go and execute,” he said.

That doesn’t mean Yonas is an absentee operator – far from it, actually.

“My managers will tell you I’m very hands on,” he explained. “I have certain procedures that I have my team follow – I get daily emails about sales. If I see that labor is off one day, I can quickly take action and text the right person to get the situation adjusted.”

By the same token, he doesn’t like to micromanage, and he’s not afraid to make changes if they are required. Yonas has learned that management paradoxically gets easier as you develop and open additional stores – but only if you have the right people in place.

Yonas has built a tight-knit management team he can trust to get the job done without him needing to make every single decision. An area manager who worked with Yonas for 6 years at his quick-service coffee franchise locations eventually became his multi-unit manager for his Smoothie King stores. He had groomed her and molded her to assume the role and he has unwavering confidence in her abilities.





Meanwhile, Yonas's operating partner in St. Louis was a childhood friend who has worked with him through his previous investments. His partner has his own management team that reports to him. Another multi-unit manager is his cousin who has worked with Yonas since he started growing as a multi-brand, multi-unit franchisee. He trusts both with his life, he said.

*"When you grow, you have to forfeit control – that's why a lot of people don't grow," explained Yonas.*

Yonas emphasizes the importance of delegating responsibilities. Doing so gives you more time back into your day, which then enables you to make better decisions in allocating your resources, whether it be capital investments or human capital.

Ultimately, Yonas's mantra in franchising is: Go big or go home. To live up to that standard, it's critical to have the right team in place and keep your finger on the pulse of your businesses.



# *GROW WHEN IT MAKES SENSE*



**Travis Bolster**

Multi-Unit Smoothie King Franchisee since 2001



Growing up in Metairie, Louisiana, Travis Bolster could ride his bike to the original Smoothie King location.

“You could smell the fruit when you walked in the door,” Travis recalled.

As an intern on the Smoothie King franchise development team, he

worked with the founder and helped others pursue their dreams of business ownership. After graduating college in 2000, he managed multiple stores before taking advantage of the opportunity to purchase his first store in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

At one point, Travis and his business partners owned as many as 14 Smoothie King stores and today, he owns five stores spread across the Gulf Coast region. The reasoning behind selling some of his stores is founded in one of the most important business lessons Travis has learned as a franchisee: Grow only when it makes sense.



Strategic growth requires sound planning and access to capital. Travis and his team signed an area development agreement to open five stores in Tallahassee, Florida. One is already open, and he expects two additional stores to open over the next 12 to 18 months, as well.

“So many times, people go into business and they don’t have the capital to get them through the startup phase,” said Travis. “You don’t want to expand too quickly, especially when you’re undercapitalized.”

In 2009, Travis outgrew his first location and had an opportunity purchase property down the street; however, he needed another tenant and decided to invest in a Mexican quick-service concept to build out the space. The experience of opening another concept reinforced many of the reasons Travis invested in Smoothie King in the first place.

“Smoothie King is attractive from an operational standpoint – there are no fryers, no grease traps, no cooking,” said Travis. “Compared to my other concept, the food costs are substantially lower; there’s almost no waste.”



When you do choose to expand, you need to surround yourself with the right people. When he purchased his first location from an existing owner, Travis and his wife spent two hard years turning the store around. Today, the situation is much different. He and his business partner have a management team in place, which helps Travis keep an eye on unit-level performance.



At the same time, the cleanness and simplicity of the business model has made it easier for Travis to attract employees. As opposed to a restaurant with kitchen staff, there are fewer chances to have personalities that clash since everyone is doing very similar work, just with varying levels of responsibility.

While Travis has invested in multiple Smoothie King stores, he has never added locations with his other franchise concept. After nearly 20 years, that's a testament to Travis's belief in the brand and his dedication to strategic growth.



# BE STRATEGIC ABOUT REAL ESTATE



## Bill Colaianni

Military Veteran, Multi-Brand Operator  
and Multi-Unit Smoothie King Franchisee  
since 2015

For Bill Colaianni, the drive-thru is king. When he signed an area development agreement for the Tucson, Arizona market in 2015, Bill and his business partner were stalwart about the real estate they wanted to acquire to open their stores.

“I was fortunate when I made my deal with Smoothie King that I was pigheaded about only opening drive-thru locations,” said Bill.

This was particularly important for Bill as he developed in a brand-new market. It typically takes more time for a concept to gain traction in an area where there’s less brand recognition. He made sure he was selecting the right site to build out his stores, and used local marketing and advertising to drive awareness and in-store traffic.

“There isn’t as much room for mistakes,” said Bill. “I have to put the unit in the right place, get the customer to come in and prove to them the value of the product.”

After being pleased with the performance of his initial two Smoothie King stores, Bill and his partner renegotiated their agreement with Smoothie King. Instead of opening five stores in Tucson and Mesa, they’ll be developing 15 stores in the El Paso, Texas market in addition to Tucson. Thus far, the pair has opened four stores in Tucson and an additional store in Mesa. They’re currently building out two stores in El Paso and have signed leases for three additional locations as of early 2021.

Another reason that Bill renegotiated his development agreement was to take advantage of an existing infrastructure in El Paso. He and his business partner own an electrical contracting business in El Paso, so they’re able to take advantage of their human capital. At the same time, El Paso has many of the same geographic benefits as Arizona market, including warm weather virtually year-round. Additionally, Bill has found that renting commercial spaces is less expensive, and there are more opportunities to secure real estate with drive-thrus.



Bill is a big believer in franchising as a business model. As a seasoned multi-brand, multi-unit franchisee, he’s developed keen sensibilities for expanding his footprint – at the heart of which is being highly strategic about selecting the right locations.



# THE SMOOTHIE KING VISION



One smoothie at a time, our mission has propelled us to 48 years in business and more than 1,300 locations across 34 states, three countries and counting.

As we've powered through each phase of growth, our tactics have evolved, our approach has matured and our guests have become more sophisticated.

But, our purpose has never wavered.

We were, are and always will be here to inspire people to live a healthy and active lifestyle. Our future depends on our ability to stay true to our purpose, deliver our promise and continue to positively impact the lives of each guest we connect with around the globe, one smoothie at a time.

And, with every smoothie served, we also fulfill our promise to help our franchisees pursue a purposeful - and profitable - business.

**For more information,  
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985.635.6984

or visit

[SmoothieKingFranchise.com](https://SmoothieKingFranchise.com)