

Ask Candee

Your Personal Consultant: Candee Wilde answers questions about the franchise business

Q Can I combine business and pleasure when I choose a franchise?

Without question. The broad array of franchise opportunities available today make it easier than ever to find a business that both appeals to one's interests and at the same time offers tremendous prospects for growth and financial success. Furthermore, many of these options demand relatively small investments and enable the new franchisee to work from a home office—eliminating the expense and hassle of commuting and of leasing retail or commercial space.

For many reasons, now is an excellent time to consider a new or supplementary career built on the model provided by a successful franchisor. Two opportunities that are interesting and unique enable franchisees to combine what might be a leisure pursuit, pastime, or even passion, with a promising business.

The first, Seniors Helping Seniors® In-Home Services (SHS), was founded in 1998 as a non-profit organization based on the belief that those seniors who help their peers, and those who require assistance to remain at home, both benefit from being together. SHS ensures that seniors who want a full range of home care, companion, and home maintenance support services can receive them, at a reasonable rate, from seniors who enjoy helping and want to earn an equitable wage.

From the beginning, co-founder and president of the board of directors Philip Yocom recognized that SHS could be a successful national—even international—franchise. But he and his wife and co-founder, Kiran Yocom, took their time.

“We very intentionally spent close to eight years doing this ourselves before we began franchising,” Mr. Yocom explains. “As a result, our policies, processes, and procedures came out of our own experience. My wife built one of these businesses and she can provide special hands-on training to our new franchisees because there is nothing that she hasn't encountered.”

SHS has four master license holders and some 30 franchise partners in the eastern and southern U.S. and California. Mr. Yocom predicts steady growth for SHS since the over-60 population is expanding so rapidly. By 2010, as much as one-fourth of the U.S. population will be over 60 years of age. This will enable SHS franchisees to both recruit a workforce of healthy, active seniors and find a market of seniors in need of assistance.

“This is my 30th anniversary in the franchise business,” Mr. Yocom says. “I have realized that one of the keys to having a successful franchise system is building a strong brand that distinguishes you from the competition.” SHS essentially is two businesses: a provider of in-home, non-medical care for less-active seniors and an employment agency for a highly skilled,

retired labor force that wants to be active and help people while supplementing their social security income.

Executive Director Kiran Yocom, who believes she has a spiritual mandate to help seniors, worked with Mother Teresa in India for 14 years. SHS is highly committed to providing a special brand of “loving, giving, caring and compassionate service,” and seeks franchisees who share this commitment to seniors, she says.

“I don't want to die, as a number, in a nursing home. I want to treat people the way I want to be treated, and work with them so they do not have to become a number, or be lonely, but instead can live independently at home,” Mrs. Yocom says. “In addition, I want to provide an opportunity for seniors who think their lives are over to get out and help their peers.”

Another interesting franchise opportunity comes from an Auckland, New Zealand-based business that is expanding into the United States.

Open2View, which has a strong presence in both New Zealand and Australia, is striving to free real estate agents of many of the details of listing and marketing a home, enabling them to focus on their strongest skills: negotiating and selling. Currently, real estate

agents often take photos themselves, or hire local photographers. In addition, they work with marketing companies that create direct mail programs and make brochures and flyers.

In contrast, Open2View eliminates the need for agents to work with many different vendors to meet their marketing and listing needs, according to Nevada state franchisor Sue Sidwell, who also is supporting U.S. expansion.

So far, Open2View has franchisees in Florida, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, southern California, and Washington State. It has ambitious expansion plans.

“Our vision is to have 7,000 photographer franchisees, 700 area developers, and 50 state franchisors,” Ms. Sidwell says. Many franchisees enjoy photography, and have become skilled at using a camera. Others are more interested in real estate, or managing people and growth.

“Our franchisees seem to be people who have a passion for photography, property and people,” Ms. Sidwell says.

CANDEE'S PICKS

Leading Senior, Photography and Marketing Franchises

Always Best Care

www.alwaysbestcare.com

AristoCare

www.aristocare.com

Business Partner

www.businesspartner.com

ELDirect In-Home Senior Care

www.eldirecthomecare.com

Griswold Special Care

www.griswoldspecialcare.com

Home Helpers

www.homehelpers.cc

Open2View

www.open2view.com

Right At Home

www.righthathome.net

Seniors Helping Seniors

www.seniorshelpingseniors.com

United Marketing Solutions

www.unitedol.com

To contact Candee, or to learn more about franchising opportunities, please visit the inc.com home page and look for “Franchise Inc.”