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Hot franchise concepts for 2010

by Kelly Horn

Whether it has an outstanding business model or it's the first franchise of its kind, there are several franchises expected to explode in 2010 and upcoming years. Take LED Source, North America's first and only franchisor of LED (light-emitting diode) lighting, which expects to open 10 franchises in 2010 and a total of 150 within three years.

LED Source -
Marcel Fairbairn, President and
CEO

LED lighting is the most energy-efficient lighting solution currently available – it's both fiscally smart and ecologically sound when compared to other options. President and CEO of the company, Marcel Fairbairn, says the LED market is rapidly growing with new products and applications available every week. He's installed his lights everywhere from parking structures to hospitals to residential communities – and saved each of those clients a huge amount of money in the process.

"We recently installed our lights at a furniture store. In energy savings alone, the store was able to see a payback in 1.4 years," said Fairbairn. "In addition, President Obama has created funding incentives for businesses, tax incentives for consumers and is also pushing for utilities to grant even greater rebates for residents who use LED lighting."

Another first, Team Blue Hand Car Wash washes vehicles by hand in order to provide a quality, detailed wash that won't damage the client's vehicle. With no tunnels, conveyor tracks or expensive machines, Team Blue's business model has a start-up cost as low as one-tenth of a typical tunnel car wash. The innovative concept also allows consumers to lessen their vehicle's carbon footprint as it only uses 18 gallons of fresh water per wash.

"Most vehicle owners do not have the time or desire to wash their vehicles at home, yet their only alternative is the use of automated car washes," said co-founder and director of franchise development Jeffrey C. Haas. "The reaction from our customers has been remarkable beginning with the very first day we opened. Over 60 percent of new customers are referred by existing ones."

Team Blue's first location opened in State College, Pa. in May 2008. Despite the economy, sales and profits at Team Blue continue to increase on a quarterly basis. The company plans to execute franchise agreements for more than 15 locations this year and an additional 30 next year.

Energy Kitchen - Anthony Leone,
Founder and President

With a customer list that includes celebrities like Hugh Jackman, Nicole Kidman, Renee Zellweger and Uma Thurman, it's no surprise that Energy Kitchen plans to open 1,000 restaurants in the next 10 years. Energy Kitchen is re-defining the healthy, fast-casual dining industry with its low-calorie menu concept. Everything on the menu is less than 500 calories and either grilled, baked or steamed – never fried. With 10 locations currently in New York, founder and president Anthony Leone is ready to build his brand nationwide.

Extra Inning's unique services and ability to fulfill the needs of baseball players of all ages and ability levels, makes it a hot concept in 2010. Created by former minor-league players Joe Luis and Rob Nash in 1996, Extra Innings is recognized as the nation's premier indoor baseball and softball training center providing state-of-the-art practice facilities, professional instruction and a nationally recognized Pro Shop.



Extra Innings - (left) Joseph Luis, CEO/Co-founder, (right) Robert Nash, President/Co-founder

With 39 locations in 17 states already, the franchise has plans to enter new markets this year with approximately 10 additional locations. Extra Innings continues to expand because baseball is not only a popular pastime, but fast pitch softball is the fastest growing participation sport in the country, says Nash.

ProTect Painters International, LLC
Wayne Scherger, President

Unlike other emerging concepts in 2010, ProTect Painters International, LLC is recognized for its one-of-a-kind marketing program rather than unique product offerings. The franchise manages marketing efforts on behalf of its franchisees with a dedicated call center that handles all inquiries. This way franchisees can focus on their customers, crews and job production instead. The franchise added 19 new units in the last six months of 2009 and plans to add an additional 50 throughout the country in 2010.

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Summer's coming and with it dreams of sunny days and vacations. It's also time to consider that career move you promised yourself during the long, cold winter. Many franchise small businesses gain greater attention when consumers put away their parkas and plan for those strolls along the seashore.

Retro Fitness, for example, not only helps beach lovers build those six-pack abs, but offers tanning time and relaxing juice bars. And to avoid singed toes, beach-goers can drop by Flip Flop Shops for the latest in fashionable footwear.

Too much sun a bother? Tint World franchises provide computerized window tinting for both four-wheel rides and boats. Who's taking care of the property when vacationers are away? That's a profit center for Spring-Green Lawn Care owners.

Imagine yourself operating restaurant franchise Alamo Dratthouse and Cinema, where customers drop in for a tall, cool one and a hot flick.

Careful investigation is always important before buying a franchise. If you're serious about a career change, check out the International Franchise Association's Web site—www.franchise.org—to get the details on more than a thousand great franchises, plus learn the basics about how these unique businesses operate. Many offer special discounts for honorably-discharged veterans too.