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HOW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES SUPPORT FRANCHISEE AVOCATIONS

by Mark Henricks

FRANCHISE

Environmental Waste Solutions has enjoyed robust sales growth during the recession, as companies sought cost-savings wherever they could, Shapiro says. "There's no better time than the present to be in corporate cost reduction," she says.

There's no good time for driving under the influence of alcohol, and that goes for drivers as well as owners of establishments where alcohol is served. Alco-Buddy of Bohemia, N.Y., provides a solution in the form of coin- or bill-operated Breathalyzer machines that help bar and restaurant patrons determine whether they are over the legal limit before getting behind the wheel.

Alco-Buddy President John Berlingieri says their opportunity appeals to potential franchisees who want to join a concern for safety with a need for profit. "Anytime you can produce a product that can help alter a human life for the better, while offering it as a business opportunity, you are going to receive positive feedback," Berlingieri says.

Alco-Buddy currently has more than 1,000 machines installed throughout the U.S. and in several foreign countries. Berlingieri says in 2010, the company will achieve both domestic and international growth, helped out by growth among existing franchisees. "Many begin their investment with a smaller number of machines and after they realize the earning potential and are satisfied with the overall quality of the product, they decide to invest a larger amount," he says.

Many athletes realize after their playing days are over that what they really want is a way to make a living while staying engaged with their sport of choice. That's what led former professional baseball players Rob Nash and Joe Luis to co-found Extra Innings, a franchise opportunity that provides amateur athletes with professional instruction, year-round practice fields and a fully equipped pro shop. Nash says that's also what leads potential franchisees to them.

"First and foremost, it's the opportunity to be around the game you grew up in or you are skilled in," Nash says. "A lot of people have passion for the sport. To be able to spend the majority of your day either teaching it or being around it is a dream for a lot of people." And it is a job that pays, as indicated by the system's 39 locations.

Ideally, Nash says, franchisees bring love of baseball, business understanding, and the spirit that motivated them on the field. "We want people who are competitive

and are really going to try to drive their business like they would trying to get a base hit or strike somebody out," Nash says.

Driving a business has more than one connotation for Team Blue Hand Car Wash. "My son, Jason, and I co-founded Team Blue out of our love for cars and our inability to get a great car wash anywhere," says Jeff Haas. "And people who love cars love our Team Blue Hand Car Wash franchise opportunity."

The State College, Pa., company uses no conveyors and expensive equipment, which keeps start-up costs low compared to traditional car washes. Haas has just begun franchising, with a second location under development, but he expects to take off this year. "Based on the amount of franchise inquiries we have already gotten in 2010, I would expect to have franchise agreements for at least 10 or more locations by the end of this year, with 2011 agreements more than doubling those in 2010," he says.

Working out can also benefit from an old-fashioned twist. Retrofitness, a health club chain in Colt's Neck, N.J., combines a modern, well-equipped exercise facility with a 1980s-era theme that includes a theater showing films from the decade. The idea, says founder and CEO Eric Casaburi, is to make exercise entertaining. "Our retro theaters are loaded with cardio machines and all kinds of fun things to exercise with while you're watching a full-length movie on a full-scale movie screen," he says.

When it comes to combining passion with profit, Casaburi sounds a cautionary note. "We have a passion for what we do in fitness," he says. Still, that's not enough. "You want to make sure they care about the product, but you have to make sure they are strong businesspeople," he stresses. Retrofitness has 54 locations and plans another 50 to 75 in the next 12 months.

DVDNow Kiosks is a business opportunity that combines entertainment with convenience. Scott McInnes, CEO of the North Vancouver, B.C., company, says, "Almost all of our kiosk owners are not only passionate about enjoying movies or video games themselves, but also enjoy providing affordable entertainment to other movie lovers."

DVDNow kiosks populate the U.S., Canada, Australia, the U.K., and South Africa. In addition to adding locations this year, McInnes is adding innovations. "Some of the features that we have recently added include membership subscription programs for movie and game renters, as well