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http://www

Job Seekers

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Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

—[Proverbs 22:29](#)

Self-Employment - why me, why now?

Jim Wolff, JobSeekers Coordinator

My job is monitoring and auditing the internal control effectiveness of the CFO organization. That means that I help provide assurance to our investors that internal control activities act to prevent fraud and significant errors. A big driver of errors in any business, whether in operations or back-office functions, is inadequate staffing. The sales declines and lack of liquidity in the capital markets internationally have caused many businesses to risk assess these errors differently than in the good times. Therefore, I monitor staffing levels as well as operating effectiveness in our CFO organization. So far MarkWest has weathered the need for layoffs, a rare occurrence in this marketplace. But many companies have made cuts or not hired for normal turnover. Based on a recent survey, it appears that there will be no quick turn-around in the hiring practices of the CFO organizations.

[Not Hiring: CFOs Look to Keep Ranks Steady](#) (*WebCPA, 3 September 2009*)

While the economic outlook remains cloudy, organizations remain hesitant about hiring. A study of 1,400 global CFOs found that 84% plan to maintain their current accounting and finance staff levels across Q4 of 2009, 10% foresee more staff reductions, and a mere 4% expect to add new staff.

That is not good news for unemployed finance and accounting people. That outlook may lead some to consider self-employment via the franchise route. Read on to investigate that option.

Never continue in a job you don't enjoy. If you're happy in what you're doing, you'll like yourself, you'll have inner peace. And if you have that, along with physical health, you will have had more success than you could possibly have imagined.

- Johnny Carson

Consider This Advice

from Isabel Isidro for Power Homebiz Guides. Read her blog at [PowerHomeBiz Small and Home Business Blog](#)

"Some franchises are very good. They treat both the franchiser and the franchisee very well. Others are very one-sided. Still others are almost total rip-offs that trap one into paying ten to fifty times the actual value of the business idea, equipment, or whatever it is they are trying to get you to buy.

"Before putting any money into a franchise, you should investigate everything completely. We've prepared a list of questions you should be asking, and should get satisfactory answers to before investing.

1. Has your attorney studied the franchise contract, discussed it completely with you, and do you both approve it without reservations?
2. Does the franchise require you to take any steps which are either illegal or even border on illegal, or are otherwise questionable or unwise in your state, county or city?
3. Does the franchise give you an exclusive territory for the length of the franchise period, or can the franchiser sell a second franchise in your territory?
4. Is the franchiser connected in any way with any other franchise company handling similar products or services?
5. If you answered yes to the above questions, what is your protection against the second [franchising](#) company?
6. Under what circumstances can you end the franchise contract, and at what cost to you?
7. If you sell your franchise, will you be compensated for your goodwill or will it be lost to you?
8. How many years has the firm been offering you the franchise been in operation?
9. Does the company offering you this franchise have a reputation for honesty and fair dealing among its franchisees?
10. Has the franchiser shown any certified figures indicating exact net profits of one or more of its members, and have you personally checked the figures with these people?
11. Will the franchiser assist you with:
 - A management training program;
 - An employee training program;
 - A public relations and [advertising program](#);
 - Capital;
 - Credit; and
 - Merchandising ideas?
12. If needed, will the franchiser assist you in finding a suitable location?
13. Is the franchising firm adequately financed so that it can carry out its sated plans?
14. Does the franchiser have experienced management, trained in depth?
15. Exactly what can the franchiser do for you that you cannot do for yourself?
16. Has the franchiser investigated you carefully enough to assure itself that you can successfully operate a profit to both of you?
17. Does your state have a law regulating the sale franchises, and has the franchiser complied with that law to your satisfaction?
18. How much equity capital will you need to purchase the franchise and operate it until your income equals your expenses?

"If you can get the answers to each of these questions, and those answers satisfy you, then you're probably thinking about buying a pretty good franchise deal.

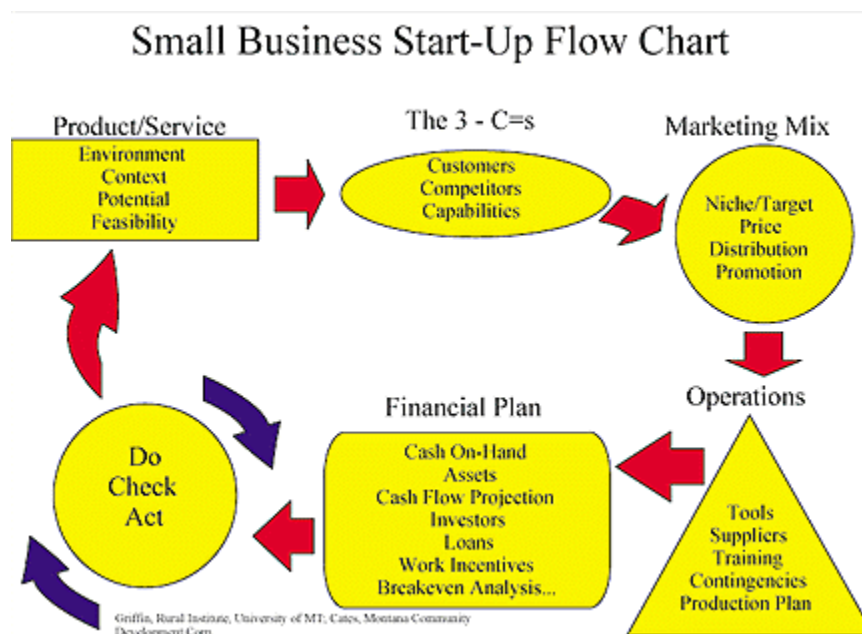
"Business surveys show that fewer than 20 percent of all franchised businesses fail. This is in comparison to a 60 to 80 percent failure rate for ALL new businesses started in this country each year. If you can afford the entry into this business, statistics are on your side. You are now armed with some CAUTION and STOP and GO signs!"

Ten More Questions to Ask Before Buying a Franchise

Here are more questions to ask, courtesy of AllBusiness.com, a D&B company:

When you buy a franchise, you're putting big dollars on the line – and your success doesn't entirely depend upon you. The quality of the company that stands behind your franchise also matters a great deal. Thus, it's important to find out as much as you can about the parent company before you lay your money down. Here are 10 questions to ask:

1. **What type of franchise is it?** Most franchises are "package franchises" – businesses such as fast-food restaurants, muffler shops, or motels that come complete with a business model laid out by the parent company. That model covers everything from financial controls to hiring guidelines. "Business-format franchises" include businesses such as car dealerships and gas stations that exist mainly to distribute the parent company's goods. Owners of product franchises have more control over the way they run their businesses.
2. **Does the business lend itself to the franchise model?** Fast-food businesses, for example, greatly benefit from their association with the brand name and products of the franchisor.
3. **What does the disclosure document say?** The Federal Trade Commission requires franchisors to provide prospective franchisees with a Franchise Disclosure Document (FDD) that contains basic facts about the company. Read this document; it will contain information about the firm's business experience, legal history, and – perhaps most useful – its other franchises.
4. **How many franchises does the organization have?** A large number of franchises indicates a successful, established business. Be careful, though, if a firm's other franchises are located near yours, you could wind up competing with a nearly identical business.
5. **How much is the franchise fee?** The franchise fee is the upfront money you pay a franchisor for the right to license the business. Most franchise fees are less than \$40,000. But you might pay much more for a franchise affiliated with a blue-chip national chain.
6. **How much will you have to pay in royalties?** Most franchisors charge their franchisees an ongoing royalty fee that's calculated as a percentage of gross sales. While most royalties are in the range of 3 percent to 6 percent, some firms charge flat fees on an ongoing basis.
7. **How much money will your business really make?** Many franchisors don't give you projections, so talk to an accountant who can assess the business's potential. Also talk to other franchisees; the offering circular will tell you how to contact them.
8. **Can you work with these people?** When you buy a franchise, you're in for the long, expensive haul, so you'd better be able to work with your franchisor. Make sure to visit the company's home office, even if it's in a different state. And ask other franchisees about their experiences with the parent company.
9. **How will the franchisor help you?** A franchisor may help you select a site for your business, negotiate a lease, advertise for and interview prospective employees, get business licenses, finance the franchise fee or equipment costs, or provide other services. Ask what the franchisor will do for you – and get it in writing.
10. **Is the franchise company legitimate?** Some franchisors try to bilk new entrepreneurs. Check with other franchisees, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Better Business Bureau to determine the legitimacy of the franchise.



But it is not all glamour and money. There are lots of gears to monitor when you are the boss. Preparation and access to **expert advice** are key to success. You do not want to be surprised! You need a **solid plan**, sufficient **cash resources** and the appropriate **tolerance for risk-taking**. Significantly, the support your family can provide, both emotionally and in work effort, are must be considered. **Your family is taking the gamble with you** and must be educated and involved in the decision making process.

Read this advice from [Rieva Lesonsky](#), also of AllBusiness.com, a D&B company:
Is 2009 the Year to Buy a Franchise?

Almost every day the majority of Americans (and an increasing number of people around the world) spend money at a franchise. Whether we're buying donuts, hamburgers, or sporting goods, whether we're getting our taxes done, our carpets cleaned, or a package mailed, chances are the business owner we're doing business with is a franchisee.

So, when you're standing in line at Dunkin' Donuts or sitting in the drive-thru lane at McDonald's, do you dream about being on the other end of the action? Have you ever thought about what it would be like to own a franchise? Well, you're certainly not alone. In fact, according to the Franchised Business Economic Outlook for 2009, prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers for the International Franchise Association (IFA), there are over 850,000 franchised outlets in the U.S. alone, earning a total of \$835 billion. Franchising dominates some industries -- well over half of all quick-service (industry term for fast food) restaurants are franchises.

Buying a franchise is not for everyone, but if you're considering starting a business this year, you should at least take a look at the franchise option. There are inherent advantages and disadvantages to being a franchisee. Let's look at the positive side first. If you buy a franchise from an established company, you are essentially investing in a proven business concept. There's no experimenting with recipes or figuring out where to source products or how much cat food people buy in a month. You don't need to come up with a catchy company name or design an eye-catching logo. The franchisor has already done all that for you.

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Cont. Is 2009 the Year to Buy a Franchise?

Franchisors recognize that every outlet carries their name, not yours. So with their reputation on the line, they do their best to make sure you are fully trained, equipped, and ready to run the business. In many cases, help is but a phone call away. You get to take advantage of their name recognition, the power of a bigger marketing budget, and the know-how that can take years to learn on your own.

You pay for this, of course, in the fee you pay when you purchase the franchise and the ongoing royalty fee that's collected from you, which is generally a percentage of your gross sales. Your initial investment will vary greatly depending on the industry and type of business you're interested in. These startup costs can be relatively low (less than \$20,000) or fairly pricey (over \$1 million). According to the IFA, the average investment is between \$350,000 and \$400,000.

Is it worth the money to buy a franchise? Well, that depends. Buying a franchise gives you, in most cases, instant familiarity in the market. In established industries, this can make a big difference. Say you've always wanted to own an ice cream store. Opening a Dairy Queen is going to initially bring you more instant recognition in your market than, say, a Dairy Princess.

On the other hand, if the franchise you're thinking about buying has little name value, you want to make sure what you're getting is worth what you're paying. For instance, if you want to start a business in a field you know nothing about, then buying a franchise might make more sense, since they'll show you everything you need to know to run that business.

Before you buy a franchise, you need to fully investigate the franchisor. By law, the franchisor must give you their FDD (Franchise Disclosure Document) before you sign a deal. Read it over carefully. It gives you the inside scoop on what you can expect from the franchisor in return for your fees: the level of training and ongoing support you're going to get, the background of the people who run the company, and the franchisor's financials.

Perhaps the easiest way to start researching a franchise is to find and speak with existing franchisees. Sure, a list of franchise outlets is listed in the FDD, but why wait for the document? Call franchisees in your community and across the country. Since franchisees all use the same company name, they're easy to locate. Ask the franchisee about their experiences with the franchisor. Did they get adequate training? How's the support from headquarters? Ask about their challenges and concerns. And most important, ask if they were buying into the system today, would they still do it? Why or why not? Franchisees, happy or unhappy, love to share their experiences.

Franchising is not recession proof. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) is predicting the number of franchised units to decline somewhat in 2009 (except for fast-food and full-service restaurants), but franchising is a fairly resilient industry. From 2001 to 2005, PwC reports that franchising grew at a faster pace than many other sectors of the economy, expanding by more than 18 percent.

Franchisors are optimistic. According to an IFA Franchise Business Leader Survey, more than 85 percent of them expect to see unit growth in 2009. And almost half believe their companies will do better this year than last.

As I've said, franchising is not for everyone. If you yearn to be an entrepreneur because you can set your own hours, not have to follow orders, and march to the beat of your own drum, you are likely to *not* be a good fit, since as a franchisee you must follow the system the franchisor has set up. On the other hand, as a franchisee, you're still responsible for your own unit's success. You're likely to be responsible for hiring, local marketing and advertising, attracting customers and clients, and being involved in your community.

Buying a franchise is not a decision to be made lightly. Before you join the hundreds of thousands of happy franchisees, make sure you do your research and weigh your options carefully. In fact, we've already done some of your initial homework for you. Take a look at our new [AllBusiness AllStar Franchises](#) for 2009, a list of the 300 franchises we feel are the strongest and best opportunities out there. Happy hunting.

- Go to www.crossroadscareer.org and click the red tab **Register Now**.
- Then click **Explorers** and follow the online instructions to register
- Select name of church: **St. Lukes United Methodist Church**
- Enter church membership key for Career Explorers:
seekers

Browse, explore and make yourself at home. Each week work one step of the process.

JOB SEEKERS E-MAIL LIST

When you join Job Seekers, you may want to add your name to the Job Seekers Group e-mail list on St. Luke's Web site. It is through this e-mail list you will receive information about Job Seekers, as well as job opportunities and information, on this list

- The web site for St. Luke's is <http://www.StLukesHR.com>
- Go to the e-ministry page from the top menu bar
- Go to e-mail lists
- Find the Job Seekers Group
- Add your e-mail address.
- Information and Job opportunities will be distributed via this list.



FACILITATORS

We currently have four group facilitators and we are looking for additional volunteers to serve as coaches, resources, presenters, and coordinators for the Job Seekers group. Please contact Job Seekers coordinator, Jim Wolff or any of the facilitators for more information.

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Stephen Ministry

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Pay it Forward!