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What is a franchise that needs to be in Louisville?

BY MARIAM WILLIAMS | CORRESPONDENT
Send comments to egreen@bizjournals.com

2Cents features responses from industry professionals to questions posed by Business First.

For information, contact assistant editor Ed Green at egreen@bizjournals.com.

Louisville should show some muscle

Thom Crimans, president, FranNet

Crimans thought Louisville's large population of aging boomers wanting "to stay active and fit" and Mayor Jerry Abramson's Healthy Hometown initiative would make Max Muscle Sports Nutrition work well here.

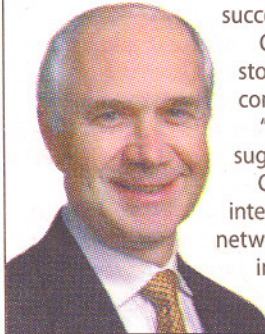
"It's about fitness and nutrition, healthy lifestyles all the way around," he said. It goes beyond dietary supplements.

"The emphasis with Max Muscle is a combination of selling (health and nutrition) products, cooking, helping people to ... be more successful at a healthy combination of diet and exercise.

Crimans said Lexington already has two Max Muscle stores. One opened in Evansville, Ind., and the company is planning locations in Indianapolis.

"The fact that it's done well in similar markets would suggest that it would do well here," he said.

Crimans said the right franchisee "probably has an interest in health and fitness," but strong marketing, networking and customer-service skills are most important. Crimans estimated the investment for Max Muscle to be about \$200,000. |



Room to grow outdoors

Maggie Payette Harlow, owner, FranchiseMart Louisville and Sign-A-Rama Downtown Louisville

If there were a Billboard Connections in Louisville, Harlow could send business to them right now. Billboard Connections is a franchise that focuses on public advertising, such as billboards, posters, taxi tops, buses, bus shelters and airport displays.

Sign-A-Rama "gets a lot of calls asking if we do billboards," she said. "Although we do outdoor advertising, that's not really our strength. A lot of people may not want to commit to a full-service ad agency, and they don't want to call an outdoor company without knowing the facts. ... But they want a billboard."

A franchisee could run this business from home for a total investment of about \$30,000, Harlow said.

Despite Louisville's essential ban on more billboards, Harlow said, "there's a lot of other ideas and new technologies for outdoor advertising" that Louisville hasn't embraced. |



Growing needs point to a few opportunities

Brian Mazar, president and CEO, Fortune Business Transfers and Acquisitions

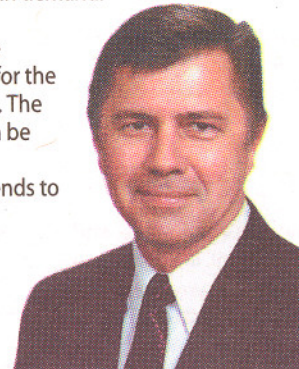
Mazar said he considers services that Louisville needs and the people available to operate a franchise in deciding what opportunities are desirable.

"When you look at the baby boomers aging," Mazar said, most need will be in health care. But business-to-business services such as legal services, accounting and bookkeeping also continue to be in demand.

"And those are just a sampling," he said.

Mazar suggested Bookkeeping Express as one franchise that would do well here. It is intended for the business owner with simple bookkeeping needs. The total investment is \$35,000 to \$48,000, and it can be operated from home.

"Rather than going to an accountant, which tends to be a lot more expensive," Mazar explained, "a bookkeeper can do a tremendous job at a much lower cost. And because they're a franchise, they're very organized. You know what to expect." |



City potentially at your service

Geoff Wilkinson, franchise consultant, Geoffrey and Associates

Wilkinson said that "compared to some of the other top 20 populations," Louisville lacks lower-investment businesses in the service industry.

"There are dozens if not hundreds of opportunities for one- or two-man type of operations, things like senior care, pet-related services, in-home services, lawn care, specialized staffing agencies ... businesses that can be started for \$50,000 to \$75,000 because they're usually home-based or office suite. And once they break even, these are six-figure businesses."

Wilkinson sees a potential trend in Louisvillians who took buyouts or early retirement "turning those checks into real businesses that employ others and have the potential to grow, or be sold down the road."

Cities such as Nashville, Indianapolis and Cincinnati have seen "explosive growth" in service industry franchises. "Places where there's more money than time," he said. |

