

Work Daze: Franchise thyself, it's later than you think

by *Bob_Goldman*

So, you're sitting at your desk and you're miserable, and you're miserable about being miserable, and so you think to your miserable self - "If I'm so unhappy, why don't I do something about it? Getting a job flipping burgers has got to be better than this."

Know what?

You could be right! Why not throw off the creaking chains of traditional employment and live your dream? And if you don't have a dream, outside of surviving until 5 p.m., no worries. This is America. If you've got enough money, you can live someone else's dream.

Listen up, friend - the secret to success and happiness is to open a franchise.

With a franchise, you don't have to make your own mistakes. You can make somebody else's mistakes all over again. This is a lot easier and much less time consuming.

As if to prove the universal appeal of the franchise to the duly and dully employed, The Wall Street Journal regularly runs a franchising opportunity section, a feature that must have extra appeal to WSJ reporters these days as they contemplate life under Rupert Murdoch.

"Why settle for a pint when you can own the entire shop?" asks an ad for Hagen-Dazs ice cream shops. Alas, the answer to that question is the main reason you must pass on this otherwise irresistible opportunity. The image of you spending eight hours a day in such close proximity to butterfat is enough to predict total economic collapse of the enterprise.

Within a week of the grand opening, you'll be turning down your pint-sized customer's hopeful requests for butter-brickle crunch and cookie dough deluxe because you've personally eaten an entire month's supply. (On the positive side, once the business - and your profile - have gone belly up, you can work out the remainder of your lease by turning the ice cream shop into a local branch of Curves.)

"Opportunity doesn't always knock - sometimes it barks!" is the clarion call of "North America's Full-Service Pet Center Franchise, Petland." The owners of a Petland franchise get "the systems you need to succeed," including "Third Party Financing" and "Public Relations Support." You'll have to call an 800 number to find out if Petland's health plan includes treatment for bird flu, or free burial service for 10,000 guppies when your

water heater goes on the fritz. (I suppose you can always serve your horrified customers cream of guppy soup. Talk about public relations!)

"If you love kids, sports and business, this is the opportunity for you," barks Velocity, a sports performance franchise. Personally, I didn't know that such a business existed, definitely a case of "my bad," since I am informed by the ad that "there are more than 40 million children involved in organized sports who spend an estimated \$4.1 billion on private coaching and sports instruction."

I suspect it was the franchisers who did the estimating, but why be picky. Why shouldn't you get rich for transforming Tommy into Tiger? And how great to make a full-time job of your weekly golf game, while ensuring yourself a lifetime supply of free caddies, as you stroll the back nine followed by a string of PING-lugging students, each one paying \$50 an hour for the privilege of observing your wicked hook.

(Truth be told, even a mediocre athlete could make a nice living with a Velocity franchise. I, myself, could hold weekend seminars explaining how to arrange pillows on the couch for maximum comfort and how to change channels without spilling your drink. Maybe I could even franchise my list of 50 irrefutable excuses for not doing any housework or child care.)

Due to space requirements, and the fact that it is time for my after-breakfast nap, I must skip the opportunities afforded by Math Monkey and not one, but two tax preparation franchises. You already know everything you need to know about monkey math - you see it every two weeks in your paycheck deductions. And let's face it, you already have a full-time job paying taxes.

Which leaves us with the best opportunity of all - V's Barbershop. "A business investment has never before been this fun," says the ad, and I believe it! What could be more fun than handing out sugarless lollies to squirming juvenile delinquents, taking orders from doting mothers and rearranging the few remaining follicles on the chrome domes of angry aging customers. Hey, the best thing about this franchise is that it makes your present job look pretty good.

Next!

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