

# California Dreaming at the West Coast Franchise Expo

By Joel Goldstein



Entrepreneurial dreams are alive in California where, for the third year in a row, franchise seekers and franchise systems will connect in Los Angeles for the West Cost Franchise Expo, Nov. 3 to 5. More than 9,000 visitors from 41 states and 30 countries attended last year's event, which proved so successful that 70 percent of the exhibitors immediately signed up for 2006. From cosmetics to critters, there will be plenty of franchises to explore to keep new and returning attendees busy at the show. The event is sponsored by the International Franchise Association.

Math Monkey, an emerging franchise opportunity that made its debut at the International Franchise Expo in Washington D.C., is looking to the event to exceed their expectations once again.

"We attended last year's WCFE as visitors and were impressed by the quality of exhibitors as well as the overall organization of the show. We exhibited at the IFE this past June and had a great response. It is important for us to continue gaining the exposure the MFV events provide," said CEO Kirsten Fisch.

Math Monkey presents franchisees the opportunity to give kids a fun solution to a common problem.

A growing issue among an aging population of baby boomers is the need for at-home assistance. It's estimated that during the next 20 years, 15 million Americans older than 65 will be living alone. Senior Helpers is a franchise that is working ahead of the curve to offer a unique business opportunity that provides professional caregivers to senior citizens who wish to stay in their homes rather than going to a nursing home or assisted living facility.

"Deciding to exhibit in the West Coast Franchise Expo was an easy decision," said Peter Ross, CEO of Senior Helpers.

The company, which sold more than 20 franchises nationwide in its first year of franchising, provides in-home personal assistance for senior citizens and selected the West Coast Franchise Expo for its first appearance at a franchising event.

Ross credits the company's growth to a rapidly increasing number of aging adults who want to live in dignity at home, but require part-time or full-time care. To help franchisees meet this need, Senior Helpers has developed a franchise system that features a proprietary marketing "Blueprint," RN-supervised care plan design and case management as well as a management software system that streamlines such management tasks as scheduling and billing. In addition, franchise territories also are typically three to four times larger than those offered by competitors.

"The West Coast, with its aging demographics, is already one of our most successful areas and after talking to others who have attended this show in the past, we realize this is an excellent way to reach hundreds, if not thousands, of potential franchisees in a single weekend," said Ross.

Boston Pizza is another franchise system that expects to make some West Coast connections at the Expo. "We had heard some good things about this show from other casual dining chains, specifically some regional players that are on the West Coast," said Ted Beaman, Boston Pizza's chief financial officer. "We wanted to have an opportunity to introduce our brand to the outstanding group of entrepreneurs that will be attending this show. We know that the investment needed to open a Boston's is higher than some people may be looking for so we are really going to focus our efforts on the quality of our leads. We think there will be enough people at the show looking for a unique brand to justify our investment in attending."

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Boston Pizza has more than 40 years of success as a casual dining restaurant and sports bar in one. "The West Coast is a huge opportunity for our brand," said Beaman. "We think there is an opportunity to build between 150 and 200 restaurants in California alone. Factor in the potential in Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, Washington and you're talking about an extremely attractive area."

Beaman explained that some restaurant experience is helpful for entrepreneurs considering this concept.

"We are primarily looking for individuals that have experience in restaurants and a passion for the business. We find that our model works best when the owner is actively involved in the business," he said. "That doesn't mean they have to be the GM and be there 24 hours a day, but they do need to know what's going on in the restaurant and care about great food quality and customer service."

Another growing franchise system is looking for restaurateurs for its brands in the West Coast. Raving Brands is the

franchisor of Moe's Southwest Grill, Mama Fu's Asian House, Monkey Joe's, PJ's Coffee, The Flying Biscuit Café, Planet Smoothie, Bonehead's Grilled Fish and Piri Piri Chicken, Doc Green's Gourmet Salads, and Shane's Rib Shack.

Dana Mead, director of franchise sales, western region for Raving Brands said, "We measure success in terms of people. We are a 100 percent employee-owned company and that partnership mentality extends to our franchisees. That is what makes us different. We are all in this together."

For Raving Brand's, location is key, prime real estate is a must and people with passion are what they are looking for.

"We look for franchisees who are just as excited about our brands as we are," said Mead. "We want franchisees who are dedicated to their businesses, who are entrepreneurial, and who are willing to do what it takes to take control of their future. We will provide the formula and support, they provide the passion."

MFV Expositions has also gained a reputation for bringing some of the brightest leaders in franchising together

to share their knowledge with attendees.

Two new symposia have been added to this year's agenda, and advance registration for the symposia is encouraged.

"Operations Manual: The Foundation to be Consistent" will be led by Marla Rosser, senior training consultant for Michael H. Seid & Associates, a domestic and international franchise advisory firm. Documenting business processes and procedures is a key step in franchise consistency. The most vital tool for this type of documentation is the operations manual. This symposium will discuss types of operations manuals, topics that should be covered in the manual, how to avoid liability, and the difference between a start up manual and an operations manual. Rosser will also explain how to capture key ideas in the operations manual and how to make the materials clear and easy to follow. This symposium is designed for any business owner who is considering franchising, but doesn't have the processes fully-documented yet or new franchise organizations that want to ensure that they have taken the right approach.

"The Use of Technology in Franchising" symposium will address the latest developments in electronic, telecommunications and Internet technologies that can be used to help a business and its franchise relationships. This symposium will also discuss the latest in intranets and extranets that can be used to enhance communication within a franchise network, as well as system-wide structuring that establishes policies for data, privacy and information exchange. This is an excellent seminar for c-level executives or anyone who is required to have a working knowledge of franchise development and management.

Whether participants are considering attending the West Coast Franchise Expo for networking with peers and prospects, learning opportunities, looking for the perfect franchise, or the great California weather, it's sure to show a significant return on investment. For more information on the West Coast Franchise Expo, see [www.wcfexpo.com](http://www.wcfexpo.com). ■

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