

Yes, Franchising Is for the Young!

By: Eddy Goldberg |  13,015 Reads



Many young entrepreneurs are discovering that franchising can jump-start them on the road to business success. While people in their 20s and early 30s may lack the business experience and acumen of their elders, with the right attitude, enough determination, and a little bit of help from their friends (and parents), they can plug their passion into a franchise model that has been proven over time. Here is the story of one young franchisee who made the jump to franchising at a very early age.

28 and Thriving!

Chelsea Segura signed her first franchise agreement with The Little Gym two months before she graduated from Louisiana State University with a degree in kinesiology. At the insistence of her hard-working, entrepreneurial parents, she'd worked during high school and throughout college.

In 2010, Segura successfully launched her first business on her home turf in Lafayette, La., with her parents as partners. Five years later, she opened a second location, The Little Gym of the Northshore, in

Covington, La., just above Lake Pontchartrain. In addition to expanding her business, her goal was to offer her loyal employees the opportunity to move up.

She may often be the youngest seated at the table at executive meetings, but the energetic, hard-working 28-year-old (as of 2017) with the “service heart” has no doubt that being a franchisee can be the perfect career for young entrepreneurs willing to work hard and put in the time. She’s also certain that younger franchisees can bring a lot to the table, especially when it comes to leveraging social media to grow and expand the business. She recently joined her brand’s Executive Advisory Committee. She also participates in The Little Gym’s charitable Big Hearts board and sits on the Reunion Committee.

“I work a lot with potential franchisees for The Little Gym, and I meet young franchisees who really have it together,” she says. “They also recognize that, through franchising, they don’t have to reinvent the wheel. So much has been done that makes our lives easier.”

But that doesn’t mean franchisees for The Little Gym can’t be creative, she adds. “What I love about The Little Gym is that they have recommendations and they have guidelines. You can put your own spin on certain things, but not on others, for good reason. That trial and error is why I trust them.”

Segura, who was introduced to The Little Gym when she took a part-time job there in college, says she actually fell into her perfect career. And, in an industry not always quick to use technology, she credits social media for much of her company’s success.

“Social media is really fabulous for our business, especially with the reviews and referrals from clients. Instagram has been great because it allows our members to follow us and us to follow them. For example, if a parent posts about a child who made great grades, we send them a congratulatory postcard in the mail. It brings our relationships to another level,” she says.

And Facebook has been a great advertising tool, she says. “We see people talking us up on Facebook, and we watch and boost the posts. You can see the results live, so it really makes us feel like our money is being well spent.”

Her best advice to young people who want to own their own Little Gym is, “Go there, work there, take your kids there. The big advantage is the room to grow. It’ll be sad for me when my team members move beyond our franchise, but I’m happy for them because they’re getting greater opportunities.”

Finding the right franchise is vitally important, says Segura, who has nothing but praise for the 40-year-old educational and fitness gym for children and parents. In college, when she met with the owner at the Baton Rouge gym about a job, she was stunned. “I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. It combined all my gymnastics, cheerleading, and movement studies in one place. It was perfect for me!”

Segura says she’s been lucky to have had the complete support of her parents throughout the venture and still counts on her mom to give her the occasional tough pep talk. For now, she’s staying steady and maintaining her company’s signature family environment, but plans to add a third unit when the time is

right.

Alex Bingham, COO of The Little Gym, says Segura is a young franchisee to watch. “Chelsea is one of our most passionate and driven franchisees. Her success derives from her dedication to making the lives of children and families in her community better, which aligns extremely well with The Little Gym’s overall mission,” he says. “We are so proud of Chelsea’s growth, and look forward to her continued success in our system.”
