



**Rich Henderson, USN, a Regional Franchisee with Jani-King shares his franchising story and offers you advice as you consider franchising.**

My Navy service was in the 80's and 90's. More importantly I, like many of you, was in my 20's. I completed a business degree while on active duty knowing something in the business world was in the future of my post military life. The closer I got to my end of service the more one thing nagged at me. Deep down I wanted to own and run my own business. The reality of available information in the early 90's was that if it wasn't standing right in front of me it was very difficult to know that opportunities were out there and more importantly, what benefits might be available to me as a Military Veteran. After three years in Finance a franchise opportunity presented itself and I started doing research. It turns out that my military experience positioned me nicely to work in the franchise business model that provided structure, organization, leadership, but also the freedom of business ownership I craved. Almost 30 years later and now I am the proud owner of multiple franchised locations. I can say franchising and military veterans are a great match.

I am not the only one that has made this revelation. Hundreds of franchise brands in a wide variety of industries feel the same way. Their success is dependent on your success. Offering a franchise to motivated, like-minded go getters who understand structure and leadership is really a no-brainer. It turns out going the extra mile and providing an entry level benefit to assist these go getters with their start has paid immense dividends. Veteran owned franchisees lead many brands in terms of growth and total revenue compared to their peers. Many of these franchisees have become mentors and even taken on significant roles within the franchisor organization.

**What do you need to know?** First the process. Understanding what steps are necessary, and even required in the franchise industry, to educate you on how their programs work. The resources are available through organizations like the IFA to provide education on these steps so you can research with confidence. One step further is the IFA's VetFran committee focused solely on providing those tools directly to business minded military veterans. Brands that are truly committed to providing valued benefits to potential franchisees with military experience are vetted and listed on the VetFran page. Over 500 brands are successfully offering significant benefits to qualified veteran franchise applicants. Now, in 2025, information is literally at your fingertips. It's important to find a business model that matches your interests and then immediately dive into the information gathering process. You will find there are significant discounts, in some cases 25 – 50% offered to military veterans. Some brands offer select candidates a franchise at no upfront cost as a promotion during Veterans Day and some offer no upfront cost to veterans permanently year-round. Additionally, suppliers and contractors participate in offering savings as part of an initiative to attract new franchisees with military experience.



**Here are 4 steps to assist you in moving forward on your journey to business ownership in the franchise industry:**

1. Survey the multiple brands available in the franchise market. Find one that matches your interests, skill set or previous training. Remember that planning and organizing large group movements is a learned skill so there may be a brand or industry you have not considered. Be open-minded at this point.
2. Take advantage of education opportunities offered by franchising. The IFA's VetFran program offers webinars, workshops, and co-ops through university business schools and VBOC's to help lay a foundation for your research. The truth is all franchise companies want to help you get it right. The right fit for you is also a good fit for them.
3. Visit the VetFran website for a list of military veteran forward franchise brands who have created programs specifically geared toward giving a hand up to the veteran community.
4. Schedule a Discovery Day with several companies with similar services to what you are interested in. This is an FTC-required process that is designed to help you vet your options at no cost. The FDD (Federal Disclosure Document) is organized in a way that candidates can easily compare multiple companies to each other. This may require travel, but each company's Franchise Development Coordinator will provide details on their process.

Franchising is only one of many business options you have available on this journey. The true separator is that franchising is a way to go into business for yourself, but not by yourself. The franchise industry measures their success by the success of their franchisees. To me this sounds a good bit like an organization we all served in.



**Rich Henderson, USN, Regional Franchise, Jani-King**

As a Jani-King Regional Franchisee Rich leads, supports, and mentors over 204 Jani-King unit franchisees in six states. For 27 years Rich has been instrumental in the development and growth of hundreds of franchisees in 11 different markets. Although his specialty is in efficiencies and operations, he has personally been responsible for millions of dollars in new business development and growth for Jani-King franchisees across 7 states. With specific expertise in Hospitality and Event/Sporting facilities many of the programs that Rich was involved in starting up are still Jani-King customers as much as 25 years later.

Attention to detail and accountability through systems has created high level results for over two decades. Rich is a Navy Veteran and serves as a volunteer for multiple local and state non-profits as well as appointed municipal capacities.