

LAYNE'S

— Chicken Fingers —

Why franchisees **LOVE LAYNE'S**

Meet our franchisees, read their stories,
and see how they're growing





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Letter from our CEO

Hey there, I'm Garrett Reed, CEO of Layne's Soon to be Famous™ Chicken Fingers. Like many Texans, I grew up knowing about the legendary chicken fingers coming out of a few small restaurants in College Station. Back then, Layne's was a local institution – just three locations, but with a following so devoted it was clear this brand had something special.

Coming from a family real estate background, I knew an extraordinary opportunity when I saw one. What drew me to Layne's wasn't just the incredible food, it was the potential to take something already great and share it with the world. When we acquired Layne's, we knew we had to preserve what made it special while building the infrastructure to grow.

When people ask me about Layne's secret to success, I tell them it's pretty simple: we chose one thing – chicken fingers – and became absolutely great at it. We're not trying to be everything to everyone. We're laser-focused on doing chicken fingers better than anyone else, with operations so streamlined they're practically an art form.

No compromises, no shortcuts. Just the best damn chicken fingers you'll ever taste.

But what's made our expansion possible isn't just our product – it's our incredible team. Every step of our growth has been powered by passionate people who believe in this brand as much as I do.

In the pages that follow, you'll hear directly from the franchisees who've helped build Layne's into what it is today. Their stories showcase what makes our brand special: the dedication to quality that never wavers, the simple but powerful operations that drive our success and the strong relationships we build along the way.

These franchisees aren't just business owners. They're the heart of our brand, each one contributing to our vision of bringing impeccable chicken fingers – and an even better guest experience – to communities across the country. Their experiences demonstrate why Layne's has become one of the most exciting opportunities in the fast-casual space and why our future is so bright.

If you're ready to be part of something special, to serve the best damn chicken fingers in the business and to grow with a brand that values simplicity, quality and strong relationships, then you're in the right place.

Looking forward to having you join the Layne's family,

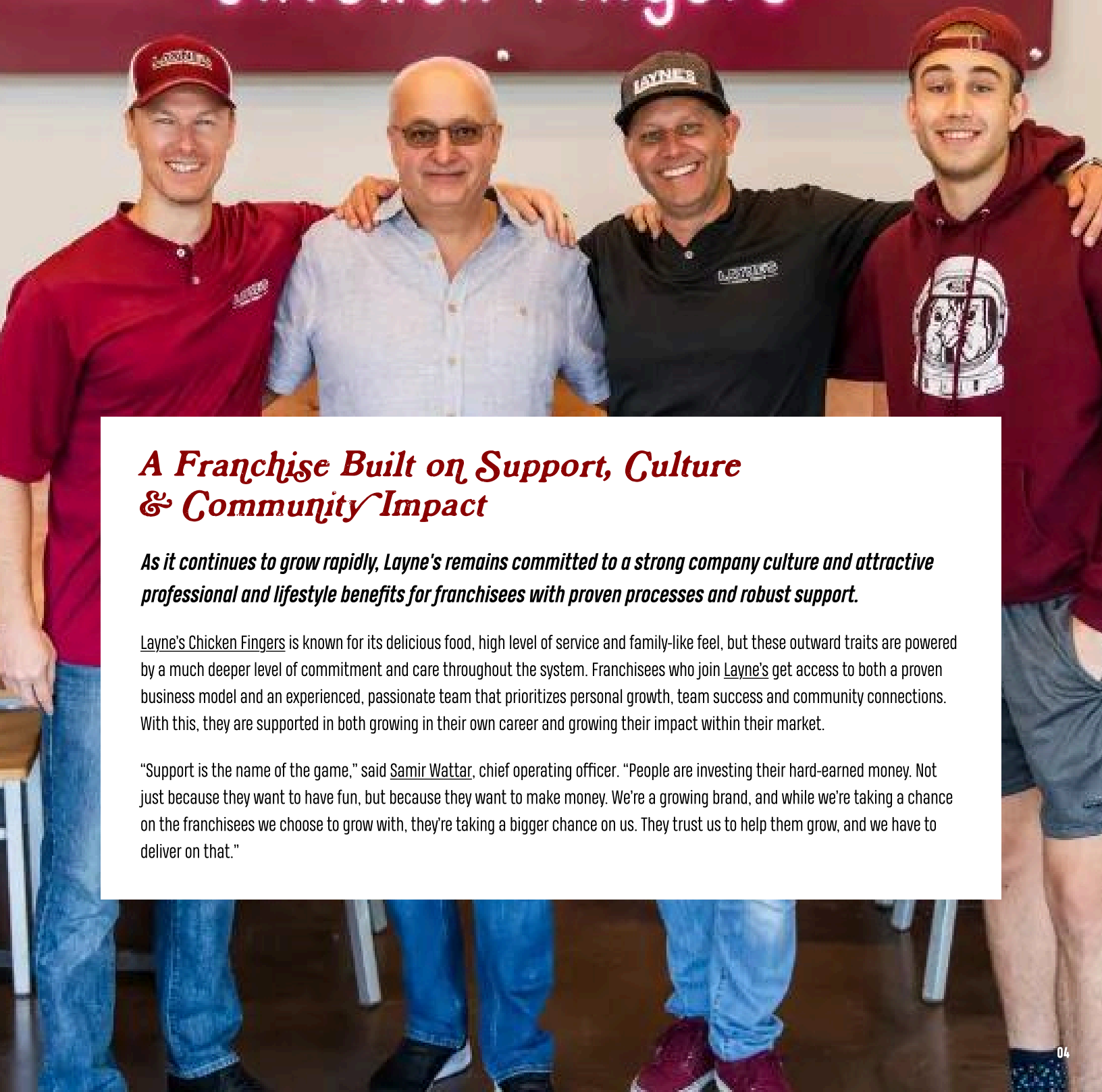
-Garrett Reed

CEO of Layne's Chicken Fingers



LAYNE'S

— Chicken Fingers —



A Franchise Built on Support, Culture & Community Impact

As it continues to grow rapidly, Layne's remains committed to a strong company culture and attractive professional and lifestyle benefits for franchisees with proven processes and robust support.

Layne's Chicken Fingers is known for its delicious food, high level of service and family-like feel, but these outward traits are powered by a much deeper level of commitment and care throughout the system. Franchisees who join Layne's get access to both a proven business model and an experienced, passionate team that prioritizes personal growth, team success and community connections. With this, they are supported in both growing in their own career and growing their impact within their market.

"Support is the name of the game," said Samir Wattar, chief operating officer. "People are investing their hard-earned money. Not just because they want to have fun, but because they want to make money. We're a growing brand, and while we're taking a chance on the franchisees we choose to grow with, they're taking a bigger chance on us. They trust us to help them grow, and we have to deliver on that."

Leadership That Inspires and Guides

The leadership at Layne's believes that a successful franchise system is built on empowerment and transparency. They understand the importance of strong, values-based leadership that doesn't just manage but mentors, ensuring that every franchisee feels supported and equipped for success.

"When we took our trip to meet the Layne's team during the due diligence process, seeing how Garrett [Reed] interacted with Samir, general managers and store-level employees really hit home," said Taylor Thomas, a multi-unit franchisee with Layne's. "It's obvious that there's a level of care there and everyone is pushing in the same direction. That can be hard to find in the franchise space."

From comprehensive onboarding to ongoing guidance, Layne's provides the insights and tools necessary for new owners to succeed. Through open lines of communication and an emphasis on a collaborative culture, Layne's also positions franchisees well to connect and support each other, strengthening their own operations while further elevating the brand's identity and reputation nationwide.

"This is a business, but I expect everyone that we deal with to treat each other the same way we expect our teams to treat the guest," Wattar said. "That's my philosophy. Right now, I have franchisees who will call me about personal things, just asking for advice. 'How would you handle this?' And I'm happy to talk to them. That's leadership – to teach, inspire and lead rather than just managing."

This focus on leadership, rather than just management, has also driven incredible successes within the company ranks, boosting engagement and retention while strengthening the teams and resources to benefit all who are involved.

At Layne's, the team is more than a workforce; it's a family. Franchisees are encouraged to build a positive work culture that prioritizes team development and well-being, creating an environment where employees are valued, respected and given opportunities to grow. This approach is modeled directly at the home office.

For example, Wattar consistently mentors young restaurant-level employees to help them see a pathway to a successful career with the brand. Meeting on a regular basis, they discuss topics apart from the usual job-related ones – like life and leadership – to work toward developing a robust skill set that will help them grow and serve them well for the entirety of their careers.

"I love developing our employees," Wattar said. "I want everyone to be a Jason. A Shaq. An Alex. Jason has an incredible story. Shaq and Alex both worked for me in the past, and they came to Layne's because of me. Even if they go somewhere else, they'll always be able to say, 'Samir was a part of this journey. Layne's helped me get here.' That's my goal."

Layne's franchisees receive support in establishing this culture, from training resources focused on effective team management to mentorship programs that teach franchise owners how to lead by example.

This focus on team well-being also has a practical benefit. Franchisees find that engaged, happy employees contribute to a more positive customer experience, which can ultimately drive customer loyalty and sales growth. By fostering a culture that prioritizes the team's growth, Layne's enables franchisees to create a workplace where employees are motivated to succeed, both individually and collectively.

Support at Every Step

In terms of launching and scaling the business, the Layne's franchise system offers comprehensive support, covering everything from operations to marketing. Layne's provides extensive training to help new owners understand every aspect of running their business, from hiring and onboarding team members to maintaining product quality. This support doesn't end once the doors open. Layne's offers continuous guidance through a network of experienced business consultants and a dedicated support team. Franchisees can count on regular check-ins, access to best practices and the latest operational tools to help them succeed.

"I've never looked back and questioned my decision to go with Layne's," said Jake Willett, the franchisee bringing Layne's to Arkansas. "Everything that Layne's told me they were going to do, not only have they done it but they've exceeded expectations. It's a lot of work to get the business off the ground, but there's a team in place to answer calls and questions no matter when they come up."

Making an Impact Beyond the Business

Joining Layne's means becoming part of a franchise network that values community impact. Franchisees are not only encouraged to participate in community events and local partnerships, but they're also given resources to do so effectively. Layne's supports its franchisees in finding ways to give back and encourages owners to forge genuine relationships with local leaders to support schools, sports teams and other community organizations.

This allows owners to cement themselves as true pillars of the community and take their business a step beyond serving chicken fingers. By getting involved beyond the four walls of the restaurant, Layne's owners can bolster their presence and further communicate to guests that the restaurant is their Layne's, not just another chain.

"The goal is simple," Thomas said. "It's to go into your communities, listen to your people and do what's right. That's easier said than done sometimes, but you really just have to listen. And when you do that, you can build a business that truly serves everyone involved."

For those interested in joining a brand where success is measured in both profitability and positive impact, Layne's offers a unique and rewarding opportunity. Joining the Layne's family means embarking on a journey of growth, leadership and meaningful community involvement – all with the backing of a franchise system dedicated to your success.

To find out more information on costs to buy this franchise, please visit <https://1851franchise.com/layneschickenfingers>.



How These Brothers Are Building a Layne's Chicken Fingers Legacy in Wisconsin

Josh and Luke Bergeson bring three generations of restaurant expertise to Layne's Chicken Fingers, combining passion for operations with a focus on scalable growth.

Brothers Josh and Luke Bergeson have spent their lives immersed in the restaurant industry, following a three-generation legacy that began with their grandparents. Growing up working in their father's sub shop, they developed a passion for food and operations that shaped their career paths. Now, as franchisees of Layne's Chicken Fingers in Wisconsin, the Bergesons are leveraging their extensive experience to expand the beloved chicken concept.

In a recent episode of Nick Powills' "Meet the Franchisee" podcast, the brothers shared their journey as franchisees and discussed their plans for the future. They delved into how their operational expertise and family values have guided their approach to building a successful franchise business.

A transcript of Powills' interview with the Bergesons has been provided below. It has been edited for brevity, clarity and style.

Nick Powills: Before I say these words, I'll put the disclaimer that I do love the franchisors that we work with. But above our franchisors, I love talking to franchisees because you guys have done something phenomenal – making the decision to invest in a business and go into business for yourself. So, Josh and Luke, thanks for doing this.

What I'd like to start off with is just your accidental franchise story. How did you even get into franchising? Whoever wants to go first.

Luke Bergeson: We're a restaurant family through and through – three generations going strong. My grandparents had restaurants, my dad grew up in it, and Josh and I grew up in it, mainly in the franchising world.

We got that taste early on. We both worked at our dad's sub shop. As soon as we were tall enough to reach the far back of the condiments section to build people's subs, we were on that line at a very young age.

We caught the bug early. Later, we both went to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. After graduating, we called up our dad and said, "Hey, I think we'd like to join the 'family business.'" That's how we got started.

Nick Powills: When you guys made the decision that franchising was going to be your life, talk me through that journey. What brands did you look at? Obviously, we're talking about Layne's today, but what was your journey to getting to Layne's?

Josh Bergeson: I went to college thinking I was going to go into the finance world and wanted to get away from restaurants—not follow in the quote-unquote family business. But the more I worked for people post-college, the more I realized this really isn't for me.

I saw what my dad did growing up and thought, "OK, I think that's what I want." He worked his butt off, but he had some freedoms and really loved what he did.

Luke and our dad, Randy, were looking at concepts when Luke was coming out of high school, exploring ideas. They looked at a ton of different concepts before finally landing on one.

My dad wanted something centered on burgers and chicken fingers. We started with burgers, and now we're focused on chicken fingers. Luke was always the one who wanted to get into restaurants with my dad. I came in later, realizing this was something that fit who I am — and it definitely does.

We looked at a lot of different brands, both initially with burgers and then again with chicken, as we considered growing into another franchise to diversify.

Powills: I'm going to lead the witness with this statement, but I want you to challenge the process. Whenever I've talked with franchisees, I simplify the post-purchasing decision-making process like this:

First, I have to believe in the vision—who's the leadership behind this? Even above the product, I need to trust that they'll take care of my investment and have my back. Second, I have to believe in the product. There has to be differentiation so I can market it to a customer base, or it must have cravability or demand.

Next, the cost to get in has to make sense with what I can earn. I need to be able to open in the market I want—I can't be rejected from it. Lastly, the validation has to be there. When I do my due diligence, I ask franchisees, "If you had the opportunity, would you do this again?" The answer has to come with zero hesitation.

How does that relate to how you guys went through the process of deciding that Layne's made sense for you?

Luke: That's a good way to outline it — very well said. Since we had already gone through that process once with our burger brand, we knew that some things you can only learn by doing. You learn from your own successes and failures throughout that process, so we had a pretty good idea of what we were looking for.

We've always said that whatever we sell, we want to be able to stand behind it. We have to be as good as or the best in class at whatever we're doing. We looked at a lot of chicken restaurants and almost landed on one. We were really close.

Then Samir Wattar, the chief operating officer for Layne's, gave us a call. He's an old friend who worked with us at a previous brand, and we had built a strong relationship and trust with him. That was the biggest kicker. He invited us down, saying, "Hey, come check out Layne's, join the team. I think you guys might be interested."

The first thing we did was a taste test. We conducted a side-by-side blind taste test with our ownership group, and Layne's won unanimously — no bias, no dog in the race. That was step one: it was the best product we had tasted, and we'd tried a lot of chicken while vetting different brands.

We trusted Samir, so we went in and spoke with [CEO] Garrett Reed and the rest of the team at Layne's. Yes, every CEO, president or C-suite executive will have passion for what they're doing, but this felt different.



I've talked to prospective franchisees that Layne's has been vetting, and I've told them: you're getting the equivalent of a founder-led company. Think of the great companies that have really exploded, like Jersey Mike's — having that founder-led approach in the growth process ensures the integrity of the brand.

It's clear that Layne's prioritizes taking care of franchisees and customers while also choosing the right franchisees who will protect the brand, the guests and the franchise as a whole. You can tell by the way they talk and how intentional they are in sharing their strategy. They start every meeting by saying, "Protect the brand, protect the franchisee." It's not just a fluff line — it's genuine.

And so far, it's proven to be true. Josh, would you agree?

Josh: One thing we always look for in our people and ourselves is being "genuine." It's a word we use a lot, and Luke used it early on.

We don't expect everyone to be over the top or super bubbly, but we do expect everyone — whether front-facing or in the kitchen, working together — to be genuine and real. That's what we saw when we went to Layne's. We saw a group of people who were genuinely passionate. Nothing was forced.

It wasn't just about coming in to do a job, doing their best to move up in their career or eventually switching to a different brand. Everyone there seemed genuinely passionate about taking Layne's from a small operation to a national presence, and they truly meant it.

That stood out to us, and it's what we preach ourselves. After visiting a lot of different companies and meeting good people, it was refreshing to see that genuine passion from the team at Layne's. It was exactly what we were looking for.

Another thing that excited us comes from being in the restaurant world: we're operators at heart. We look for a brand that understands the importance of bringing in new franchisees and marketing to new customers while also prioritizing streamlined and easily duplicable operations.

If the operation isn't smooth, it frustrates our people. At the end of the day, as franchisees, we sell food, but we're really in the people business. We don't succeed unless we have a great team at every single restaurant.

We focus on operations and look for a system that our team can execute well — whether it's busy or slow — and do it right every time. That consistency is a game-changer in both the franchise and restaurant spaces. There are so many restaurants that come and go, but if you can consistently do things well and get it right every time, that's incredibly important. That's something we definitely saw with Layne's.

Powills: So take me through this process. When you guys went to Texas, I assume you had not tried the product since it's not in Wisconsin, right?

Josh: Correct.

Powills: So, step one is getting on a plane to make sure this thing actually tastes OK. But behind the scenes, at what point are you saying, "Yes, this is what we're going to do?" Obviously, after looking at so many other options you didn't pursue, when in the process did you know, "OK, this is us?"

Josh: Overall, I think it was relatively quick. We went down after trying a lot of different brands and chicken concepts. At the end of the day, when you're in the restaurant world, every time you go out to eat – and this frustrates my wife – I'm never just happy or satisfied.

I'm always nitpicking little things, whether it's the décor, customer service, the food itself, how it came out or how long it took. You develop a knack for recognizing when something is different, something you can duplicate and something people will come back for because it's craveable. Or, you realize it's just good but doesn't set itself apart.

It didn't take super long. We took a couple of weeks to go home, make sure we weren't being overexcited – which we can be at times – and talk to our families. I think our dad even took our mom down to check it out and get her perspective.

She's outside the restaurant world. She's been around it her whole adult life, but it's not her thing. She's more like, "I'm here if you need me, but this is your thing." So it was good to get her perspective. Is that right, Luke?

Luke: Yeah. We met with them in October, did a taste test, and got all of that out of the way before we even met with the team. Then we met with them, saw their operations and got a feel for how they worked.

Like Josh said, when you've operated enough restaurants, you know what works and what doesn't. A bit of backstory: when we opened our first two restaurants, we were the general managers. We ran them ourselves. For three years, we were running the actual restaurants.

When we opened our third, we were still heavily involved, working with managers on day-to-day operations. So we know what works and what doesn't. We can look at an operation and say, "That's really inefficient," or, "That looks like a nightmare," or, "This could work."

With Layne's, it was like, "Could it really be this easy?" That was a big key for us.

We met with them in October, and by December, we signed our development agreement. So it was just a couple of months.

Powills: And now, how many do you have open right now?

Luke: We opened our first in April of this year. We're planning to open two more next year and two more the following year. That's the current projection.

Powills: This might be a silly question, but going from one to five in such a short period is aggressive. That suggests it's meeting or exceeding your expectations, and now you're doubling down.

Do you wish you had started this earlier, now that you're in it? Or is it more, "We're going to continue to press"? Where's your mindset now from a scaling standpoint?

Josh: It's easy to look back and think, "What if I had started here?" But it wouldn't have been as easy as it is now without going through the trials and tribulations of the past. It's tempting to think, "Wow, this is so easy," but the reality is we know more now than we did when we opened our first restaurant.



LAYNE'S

chicken fingers

Even growing up in restaurants, there's a big difference between being a son working for your dad and saying, "This is my livelihood. If this fails, I have to start from scratch." It's a completely different level of responsibility. It becomes your life – you almost have to be married to the franchise and the business to fully understand the ins and outs of running it.

So, while it's easy to look back and think, "If only we had found something this easy first," the experience we've gained along the way has been invaluable.

Luke: That's a good perspective, and it's the right answer. But in a vacuum, yes – I do wish we had started with this brand. Not that we don't love our other brand. We're still involved with them, and they're doing great.

One thing we've always focused on is reducing friction. Anytime operations or marketing teams introduce new processes or products, I always emphasize that it has to be easy to train and easy to duplicate. That's something Layne's does exceptionally well.

For example, our next location is an hour and a half north in a completely different market. Part of that decision comes down to real estate, but we wouldn't take that step if we weren't confident in the operations being easy to train and easy to duplicate, even at that distance.

Powills: As an outsider-insider with Layne's, I'll say this: early McDonald's was all about burgers, fries, and shakes – consistent, easy to train and easy to onboard. Everything you just said reminds me of McDonald's in those early days.

But now, it's almost like McDonald's has become the Cheesecake Factory – driven by greed or the pressure of increasing year-over-year economics. Even though simpler operations might yield stronger profitability, there's this mentality: if we're not growing, we're dying. So they add a million things to the menu and overcomplicate everything.

When I think about Layne's, I remember Samir saying, "We only have 125 SKUs, and that includes the toilet paper." I thought, "Alright, that's pretty good." He also said, "I've had days where the easiest \$10,000 I've ever made was by dropping fries and chicken into the fryer."

If we really evaluate what makes a good franchise opportunity, these other brands that try to be overly innovative with their products often hurt their franchisees and staff by overcomplicating things. To me, simplicity is the win when it comes to restaurants. What are your thoughts on that?



Josh: I think that's true, and we're actually seeing a reversion to that. A lot of brands are starting to simplify.

Part of it was the pandemic, which forced businesses to reduce SKUs due to supply chain issues. But I think it was going to happen eventually. One of the biggest complaints we hear is about inaccuracy. With fewer SKUs to focus on and less product to build or make, you significantly reduce the potential for errors.

This trend is happening across the board – not just in fast food, but also in fast-casual and casual dining. I remember going to a local brewery that served food. Their menu used to be four pages long, but now it's a single sheet.

Supply chain pressures played a role, but it's also about competition. We need to do things right every time and make it perfect for the customer. If we strive for perfection, we'll land at "really good," and that's exactly where we need to be.

Powills: I think you've landed in a rare scenario – a brand that's been around for 30 years but is still emerging. It has the right leadership, takes the right approach to real estate and for you to be growing from one to five locations is impressive.

That said, I'd be remiss if I didn't add this: I think you're in great shape, but my real hope is that your Packers start to struggle so my Bears can take over the NFC North. Just saying – I had to throw that out there. If I didn't say it on a podcast, I wouldn't be a true Bears fan.

Luke: Fair. So, we can't really find someone as their next head coach.

Powills: Exactly. Look, it's a prime example of a bad franchise – poor leadership, poor product, no validation. Everything we just talked about is basically a Chicago Bears show.

Josh: That's fair. That's fair.

Powills: Thanks, guys, for doing this. I really appreciate it. For Luke and Josh, I'm Nick. That wraps up another episode. Thanks again!

Watch the full interview above or on [YouTube](#).



Layne's Chicken Fingers Franchisee on Family Legacy and Teamwork Behind Multi-Unit Success

Franchisee Taylor Thomas shared how his family's franchising roots and passion for teamwork drive his success with Layne's Chicken Fingers.

For [Taylor Thomas](#), franchising is more than a career – it's a family legacy. Growing up in East Texas, Thomas learned the intricacies of restaurant operations while working alongside his father, a multi-unit franchisee with Whataburger. Over the years, his family built a portfolio of 23 locations, teaching Thomas the value of hard work, collaboration and a customer-first mindset. Now, as a franchisee with [Layne's Chicken Fingers](#), Thomas is leveraging his experience to help grow the emerging brand with plans to open 25 locations.

In a recent episode of [Nick Powills' "Meet the Franchisee" podcast](#), Thomas shared how his family's history in franchising prepared him for this new venture and how Layne's culture, simplicity, and team-first mentality resonated with him.

A transcript of Powills' interview with Thomas has been provided below. It has been edited for brevity, clarity and style.

Nick Powills: Taylor, thanks for doing this. The first question is scripted, but the rest are not. So, how did you accidentally fall into franchising? How did you get into franchising and become a franchisee in the first place?

Taylor Thomas: Well, I guess you could say I was pushed into it. Franchising has been a family business, starting with my father and Whataburger. It kind of just spiraled from there. He became a franchisee with Whataburger in 1988, but it grew from there. He grew up around the Whataburger brand when it was about the same size as Layne's is now. He got to watch that growth firsthand and see the Dobson family turn Whataburger into what it is today. He built great relationships with the family.

The best thing about franchising – and why he enjoyed it – is that it feels like a family. It's a group of people growing a brand and working toward the same goal, all pushing in the same direction.

Powills: At what point did you get involved in the family business?

Thomas: This could be a long story, but I'll keep it short. I started working in the stores when I was 16, while I was still in high school. It began as a summer job. I was told, "As soon as you get a car, you start working." Our GMs loved it because it was basically free labor for them, so we worked as much as we could.

Powills: So, out of curiosity, at 16 – when you officially got involved – how many stores did your dad own at that point?

Thomas: At 16, we had right at 10.

Powills: And how big did the portfolio get?

Thomas: We've grown it from there to 23.

Powills: At 16, I'm curious – at that point, you were probably still dreaming of other things. Obviously, there's a benefit to being involved in the family business, but did you understand that your dad put blood, sweat and tears into growing from one store to 10? Did you realize how hard he had to work to get to that point?

Thomas: I can honestly say that going from one to 10 was the hardest part. I came in at a good time when the ball was already rolling and picking up steam.

Franchising, especially in the restaurant industry, isn't a passive investment. You're in it every day, working with GMs and team members. If something happens and you're needed, your phone rings and you're there – especially with Whataburger being a 24-hour operation. There are no off days.

Now, where we are today, it's a little more manageable because of the size and the structure we've put in place to relieve some of that pressure. But franchising is tough, especially in the restaurant world.

Powills: All right, so you're 16, you're involved in the business. Did you ever leave the family business or did you stay committed?

Thomas: I stayed in the restaurants until I graduated high school. After that, I went to UT Tyler here in town, and we shifted my focus to a different aspect of the business.

It was time to learn something new, so I moved into the office and started understanding that side of the operation. Six years later, I finished my master's degree and after that, I moved back into the stores in a director-style role. I did that for about four or five years before transitioning into the role I'm in now.

Powills: Have you had time to reflect and take pride in what you've built?

Thomas: Probably not as much as I should. It just keeps going, and the goal is always to push forward and keep improving every single day. I'm blessed to have a team around me with the same drive. It's really rewarding to look back and see how far we've come and where we are today.

Powills: What's your dream now?

Thomas: Now, we've reached what I'd call our max – at least for Whataburger. We have a few more stores to open in our territories, so we're working on filling out that ADA [area director agreement].

We've also signed on with Layne's for a 25-store deal. We're excited to grow that brand, take it from the small brand it is today and see what it can become.



Powills: Do you feel like Layne's is your turn? I mean, obviously, you've worked hard with Whataburger, but is Layne's your opportunity to say, "OK, this is my time"? You even mentioned earlier that you watched your dad get into Whataburger when it was the size of Layne's. Is this your turn?

Thomas: You could say that. The thing that excites me about Layne's is the team members and the people involved right now.

Just yesterday, we met with two of the other franchisees. There's this level of excitement because it's all so new. Everyone is still trying to figure things out and ideas are constantly being bounced around. It was nonstop feedback, collaboration and problem-solving – working through challenges to figure out the best path forward to build and enhance the brand into what we believe it can become.

Powills: Out of curiosity, did you find Layne's accidentally? Did they reach out to you? How did you even start thinking about diversifying the portfolio?

Thomas: We noticed our territory with Whataburger was becoming limited. We were still trying to grow and acquire more territory, but we needed to figure out which areas would work best for us. In our East Texas market, things were getting tight, so we started looking at other brands that aligned with who we are and shared similar aspirations and values to Whataburger.

We explored a number of brands, but none of them really stood out as "the one." They were good brands, but there was always something missing.

One day, I was having lunch with a real estate contact and he asked if I'd ever heard of Layne's. I told him I had no idea what he was talking about. He explained it was a small brand out of College Station and suggested I reach out. He even offered to connect me with them. I sent out a message and [COO] [Samir \[Wattar\]](#) got back to us.

It just so happened I was heading to San Marcos, which took me right through College Station. I stopped by, sat down with Samir and he introduced me to the brand. He shared who they were – their goals and their vision. Everything he said aligned perfectly with what we were looking for – their concept, product mix and goals – it all resonated with us.

After the meeting, I couldn't stop thinking about Layne's the whole time I was in San Marcos. About three or four weeks later, I reached out again and we set up another meeting. This time, I met [CEO] [Garrett \[Reed\]](#) and his entire family. Their passion and the direction they were taking the brand were exactly what we were looking for. It felt like the perfect match.

Powills: When I talk with franchisees and try to understand what pushes them to make a decision, it often boils down to two things: there has to be a culture match and a solid business model. When those two align, it's not overly hard to sell franchises.

Another thing that stands out to me is when I hear Garrett talk about "protecting the brand" and "protecting the franchisees." That's such a rare mindset to find in this business.

Thomas: Yes, sir. Layne's has that, and at their size, it's exactly what they need. They have a family-style atmosphere. You walk in and I could call Garrett today, pick up the phone and whatever I needed, he'd be there. The same goes for Samir – it's the same dynamic.

As more franchisees come on board, the dynamic hasn't changed. If there's a question or a problem, they respond immediately. It's like, "Hey, we're having the same issue. Let's meet, talk about it, figure out a solution and push through it."

When you have a group of people like that and a brand like Layne's, good things are bound to happen.

Powills: All right, here's what I see. I can't call myself an outsider because I have an intimate view of the business. This is complex because I've been in franchising for 20 years, and I don't know that I've ever seen anything like this.

You have owners—the founders of the franchise—who are very well-capitalized, so they don't need to sell franchises. That alone is rare for a brand this size because most franchisors at this stage need to sell franchises just to keep the lights on.

Then there's their expertise in real estate selection. They're not going to pick bad locations or negotiate bad deals. They're strategic about how to get the building up or secure a favorable lease.

And then you hire someone like Samir. I love the guy—every business he joins, he's like, "First, I'm going to save what they pay me in salary." Then he works his magic on supply chain and operationalizes the business. With no pressure to sell franchises, he has the time to get everything right. By the end of this process, the product itself is pretty damn good.

Then you add Garrett and [CFO] [Matt \[O'Reilly\]](#), who don't bring egos to the table – they're just fun, kind and down-to-earth human beings. I don't think I've ever seen this combination in franchising before. How does that connect with you?

Thomas: It's definitely special. If I had to put it into words, it's the same culture as Whataburger – our other brand. It's the same thought process, the same values.

The two brands mirror each other so much, and we've all seen what Whataburger has grown into. It's impressive – that's really the only word for it. I'm very excited to see where Layne's can go and what they can achieve.

Powills: All right. So, from 1988 to now, you've built up to 23 stores. That's a healthy timeline to grow a portfolio. Do you feel like there's a sense of FOMO with Layne's? Are you accelerating faster on the 25-store plan than you did with Whataburger?

Thomas: We are going to accelerate a lot faster, but I wouldn't call it FOMO. I think it's more about organization and structure.

With the growth from one to 23 stores on the Whataburger side, my dad was starting from scratch – building a team and putting everything in place to make sure things flowed smoothly. Now, we already have that foundation. We have the structure, we know how to operate restaurants and we have the right people behind us. That's what's going to accelerate our growth. Right now, we're planning to open four stores next year and shooting for five.

If you had told me that 10 years ago, I would've said, "You're crazy. That's a bad idea." But with the team we have now and the support Samir provides – especially with supply chain and operations – I feel solid about it.

The only thing that could slow us down is finding the right locations.

LAYNE'S
Chicken Fingers

EST. 1994

Powills: That's a good governor to have because you're saying, "We're not going to sacrifice location just for the badge of opening another restaurant," which can lead to problems later.

Two final questions. First, if you're looking in the mirror – it's a weird question, but bear with me – do you see yourself as a franchisee, a restaurant operator or an entrepreneur? What do you identify as? What's your "business pronoun"?

Thomas: That's a tough one. I guess the easiest answer is I see us as franchisees.

When I use that word, though, I don't just think of it in the literal sense. To me, being a franchisee is all about the teams you're working with. The word "franchisee" mirrors family for me, and that's really important.

I want to make sure we keep that dynamic intact. It's about preserving that niche – that bubble – where we can stay connected. Franchisees working together, supporting each other and growing closer like a family – that's what it means to me and that's what's important.

Powills: Multi-unit franchisees are often seen as the cream of the crop in franchising. Multi-unit, multi-brand franchisees take it a step further. You've built an impressive career and now you're duplicating what you've already accomplished once.

For someone out there who hasn't come across Layne's yet – maybe because the footprint isn't large – but who's in a similar position to you – already building a portfolio – what should they know about this opportunity?

Thomas: What's great about Layne's? One of the best parts is the product. And when I say that, it's not just about the food being great – though it is.

The chicken, the fries, the toast – everything is wonderful. But the key is the simplicity of the menu. Garrett, Samir, the team and all the franchisees are committed to maintaining that simplicity so we can consistently deliver a great product.

A lot of brands try to be okay at a lot of different things. But Garrett and Samir want Layne's to be the best at one thing – chicken tenders. And that focus speaks volumes.

Powills: Well, I appreciate you sharing some of your story. You've accomplished tremendous things, as has your family.

I love that you continue to emphasize family and team. That's the right kind of ego in business, in my opinion – it fosters success, builds wealth, and creates opportunity. Thank you for sharing your story with us today, Taylor.

Thomas: Well, great, Nick. Thanks for having me.

Powills: Love it. For Taylor, I'm Nick. That's another episode of "Meet the Zee."

Watch the full interview above or on [YouTube](#).

To find out more information on costs to buy this franchise, please visit <https://1851franchise.com/layneschickenfingers>.



Former Landscaping Entrepreneur Finds New Passion in Growing With Layne's Chicken Fingers Franchise

Jake Willett shares his journey to becoming a Layne's Chicken Fingers franchisee, highlighting the brand's culture, real estate support, and plans for growth.

Jake Willett, a [Layne's Chicken Fingers](#) franchisee who signed a deal in early 2024 to develop 10 restaurants in Arkansas, recently sat down with 1851 Franchise's [Nick Powills](#) to share his journey into franchising and his vision for the future. Willett, who previously owned and sold a successful landscape maintenance business in Denver, has found a new passion in growing with the Layne's brand.

After moving back to the South to be closer to family, Willett explored numerous franchise opportunities, attending Discovery Days and evaluating brands across the country. His search ultimately led him to [Layne's Chicken Fingers](#), where he was captivated by the brand's strong culture, exceptional leadership team and comprehensive support system. Willett notes that Layne's stood out for its focus on franchisee success, particularly in real estate. With a dedicated real estate team to guide site selection and construction, Willett felt confident in the brand's ability to help him succeed.

For Willett, the combination of Layne's strong operational model and its high-quality menu made the decision an easy one. He emphasizes the cost efficiency of building a Layne's location compared to other concepts, as well as the brand's commitment to helping franchisees grow. Willett describes his experience with Layne's so far as "fantastic" and is excited for what lies ahead.

Willett's goals with Layne's include growing beyond 10 locations, establishing the brand as a regional powerhouse and giving back to the community. He's focused on building one successful location at a time, leveraging his entrepreneurial experience and dedication to assembling strong teams. For Willett, great people are the foundation of any successful business, and he's committed to fostering that culture as he expands with Layne's.

With a clear vision and a strong partnership with Layne's, Willett is poised to make a significant impact in the franchising world. His story is one of thoughtful decision-making and passion for building something meaningful, both for himself and his community.

A transcript of Powills' interview with Willett has been provided below. It has been edited for clarity, brevity and style.

Nick Powills: All right, Jake, the first question is always the easiest, but it tends to be a longer one. How did you accidentally fall into franchising? How did you find your way to Layne's?

Jake Willett: I found my way to Layne's after I previously owned another business out of Denver that I ended up selling. My wife and I moved back home to the South – to the East Texas and Arkansas area. I ran into Layne's after deciding what was next. I went through the gamut of flying all over – talking to different franchises around the country – and I just fell in love with what Layne's had to offer.

Powills: When you were looking at these other franchise opportunities, did you get to the Discovery Day stage, or was it more on the periphery?

Willett: Both. I went to several Discovery Days. Most of them I was able to check off the list before that ever happened.

Powills: Interesting. Out of curiosity, you go to Discovery Day – what made you say no to the other brands you looked at?

Willett: A lot of it was the executive team. I didn't necessarily feel comfortable with some of them. Some of it was other franchisees that I thought maybe weren't a good fit, which probably scared me away as much as anything.

Powills: I'm always fascinated by that. When I've talked with franchisees, I ask about the final things that push them over the edge, and it's usually one of two things: the business model has to be strong, and the culture. I've had a franchisee who was a longtime restaurant employee look at a restaurant brand, and the Discovery Day was so bad that he ended up buying into a flooring franchise instead. He said it just didn't align. It's fascinating because franchisors think they're vetting you, but it's a mutual vetting process to make sure the culture aligns and you actually want to be part of that club.

Willett: Correct.

Powills: You had a landscaping business that you built up. Why food? Or did the industry not matter as much as the culture fit?

Willett: I think it was twofold for me. What really got me interested was the opportunity to develop real estate. From there, it stemmed into what operating business I could put in that real estate to grow faster and be more successful. I looked at several different concepts, not limited to food. Ultimately, it aligned with doing something in the food industry. Once I met the Layne's team, it was almost instantaneous. I just knew that this was the direction I wanted to go.

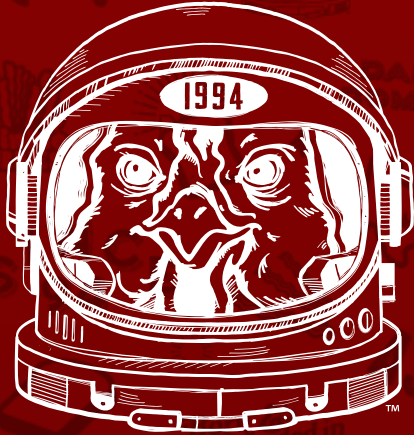
Powills: When I talk with franchisees and try to understand what pushes them to make a decision, it often boils down to two things: there has to be a culture match and a solid business model. When those two align, it's not overly hard to sell franchises. I've told the Layne's team before, you guys are in the real estate business that happens to be in chicken fingers. But the food is actually really good, which makes it unique. It's rare to see these two aspects married so well in franchising.

Willett: Sure. The menu is fantastic; it has a lot to offer. From a real estate perspective, they have a great team – from site selection to construction. We've got a gorgeous building that I can build 20-25% cheaper than with other concepts, including building and FF&E [furniture, fixtures and equipment].

Powills: Do you think that optimized model is a gap franchisors aren't solving? Is it something you noticed during your discovery process?

Willett: It's incredible that more franchisees don't recognize it. At the end of the day, whether you're building your own real estate or not, you have a ton of money invested in a franchise. You want to make a return. When the building and equipment become so expensive that it doesn't allow that, it's a problem.

Powills: That's where single-unit franchisees often stall out. They didn't have the right capital going in, it cost more than expected and now they're pinching pennies just to keep the business alive. It eliminates scale, and when someone else looks at the business, seeing a bunch of single-unit operators might signal it's not the right match for scaling.



We've also signed on with Layne's for a 25-store deal. We're excited to grow that brand, take it from the small brand it is today and see what it can become.

Powills: Do you feel like Layne's is your turn? I mean, obviously, you've worked hard with Whataburger, but is Layne's your opportunity to say, "OK, this is my time"? You even mentioned earlier that you watched your dad get into Whataburger when it was the size of Layne's. Is this your turn?

Thomas: You could say that. The thing that excites me about Layne's is the team members and the people involved right now.

Just yesterday, we met with two of the other franchisees. There's this level of excitement because it's all so new. Everyone is still trying to figure things out and ideas are constantly being bounced around. It was nonstop feedback, collaboration and problem-solving – working through challenges to figure out the best path forward to build and enhance the brand into what we believe it can become.

Powills: Out of curiosity, did you find Layne's accidentally? Did they reach out to you? How did you even start thinking about diversifying the portfolio?

Thomas: We noticed our territory with Whataburger was becoming limited. We were still trying to grow and acquire more territory, but we needed to figure out which areas would work best for us. In our East Texas market, things were getting tight, so we started looking at other brands that aligned with who we are and shared similar aspirations and values to Whataburger.

We explored a number of brands, but none of them really stood out as "the one." They were good brands, but there was always something missing.

One day, I was having lunch with a real estate contact and he asked if I'd ever heard of Layne's. I told him I had no idea what he was talking about. He explained it was a small brand out of College Station and suggested I reach out. He even offered to connect me with them. I sent out a message and [COO] [Samir \[Wattar\]](#) got back to us.

It just so happened I was heading to San Marcos, which took me right through College Station. I stopped by, sat down with Samir and he introduced me to the brand. He shared who they were – their goals and their vision. Everything he said aligned perfectly with what we were looking for – their concept, product mix and goals – it all resonated with us.

After the meeting, I couldn't stop thinking about Layne's the whole time I was in San Marcos. About three or four weeks later, I reached out again and we set up another meeting. This time, I met [CEO] [Garrett \[Reed\]](#) and his entire family. Their passion and the direction they were taking the brand were exactly what we were looking for. It felt like the perfect match.

Willett: Correct.

Powills: Back to your landscaping business – did you plan to exit from the start, or did it just happen?



Willett: I didn't plan to exit, but we had a great business that grew quickly and did extremely well. A couple of years in, private equity groups started reaching out. I always said no until I didn't. It was the right time and place. Selling allowed us to get closer to home and raise our family around friends and family, which was really important.

Powills: When you exited, how did it feel? Were you happy, lost or confused?

Willett: All of those emotions.

Powills: Do you find yourself talking a lot inside your head, trying to navigate what's next?

Willett: Constantly. But not just with exiting a business. I'm always trying to figure out the next move and how to do it successfully.

Powills: How do you stay motivated after building something successful?

Willett: I think it's in your DNA. I love creating opportunities for myself and others. Taking an idea from concept to growth is the most rewarding thing I've ever done.

Powills: What's your dream with Layne's?

Willett: Right now, it's one location at a time. We're focused on quality with our first location and have a second one underway. I'm focused on today.

Powills: Throughout your answers, it all points back to people. Building great people around you seems to lead to building great businesses. Would you say people are the key to scale and success?

Willett: One hundred percent.

Powills: Now that you're with Layne's, are you cross-applying fundamentals from your landscaping business? Or is it different?

Willett: At the end of the day, I look for character in an individual. I found an operating partner who I believe is the best — not just from a talent standpoint but someone I have tremendous respect and appreciation for. When that feeling is mutual, it creates great chemistry and fun.

Powills: Some people bring financial capital and others bring character and grit. When those two things marry well, that character and hustle can be worth more than money itself.

Willett: Absolutely.

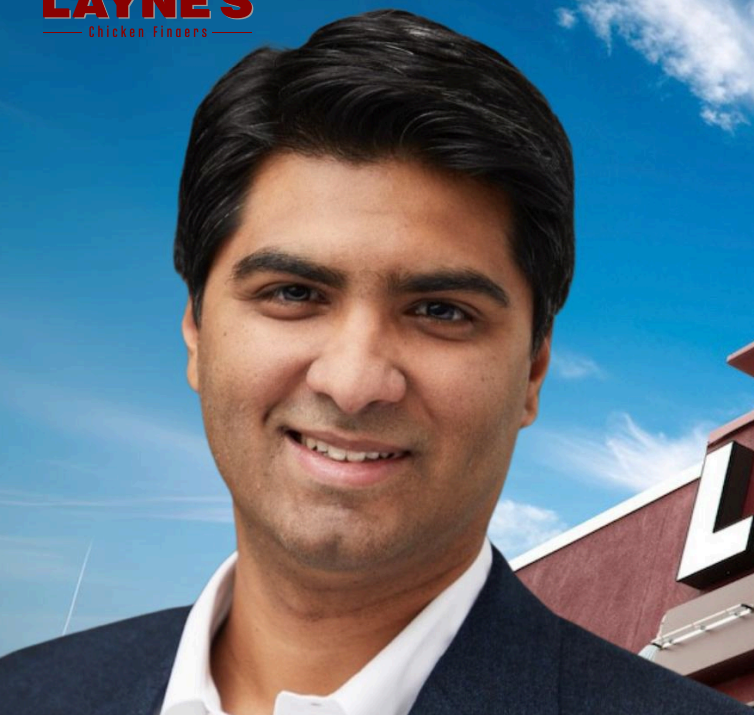
Powills: If someone is looking at Layne's, what would you want them to know?

Willett: Layne's is a great brand. It's new, so that comes with challenges, but we're figuring it out quickly and having a lot of fun.

Powills: Jake, thanks for sharing your story. Best of luck, and I look forward to where your journey takes you.

Willett: Thank you so much.

Watch the full interview above or on [YouTube](#).



LAYNE'S
Chicken Fingers

From Garage Doors to Chicken Fingers: How This Layne's Franchisee Found Success

Masroor Fatany shares his journey from franchising with Sears Garage Doors to scaling The Halal Guys and Layne's Chicken Fingers, emphasizing growth, teamwork and quality.

Masroor Fatany has been in franchising since 2009 when he got his start with Sears Garage Doors, running a successful multi-unit business in Texas. Later, he shifted to the restaurant industry, opening seven units with The Halal Guys. Now, Fatany is focused on growing with Layne's Chicken Fingers. With five locations already open and more on the way, he's working alongside Layne's to build a business that reflects their shared commitment to quality and franchisee support.

In this recent episode of Nick Powills' "Meet the Franchisee" podcast, Fatany talks about his journey into franchising, the lessons he's learned and why Layne's has been the right fit. From navigating challenges to finding success in new markets, Fatany's story is a relatable and inspiring look at what it takes to grow as a franchisee.

A transcript of Powills' interview with Fatany has been provided below. It has been edited for brevity, clarity and style.

Nick Powills: Thank you for doing this. I appreciate it. The first question is the easiest and the hardest. I've looked at your background, and I think it might be the hardest: How did you accidentally fall into franchising? What's your franchise backstory?

Masroor Fatany: You know, honestly, it started with my mom finding an article in the Houston Chronicle about Sears Garage Doors. Franchising appealed to me because I knew there was a playbook and brand recognition. At the time, Sears was a powerhouse, so I decided to take a chance on it.

Powills: So your mom finds this article, which proves that PR and advertising either work or don't work. Kudos to your mom for making people like me look great! She finds this business opportunity – what were you doing at the time? What triggered you to think, "Maybe I want to buy a franchise"?

Fatany: I was in my first year at Ernst & Young, right out of college, working at a public accounting firm. This was early 2009, during the global economic crisis. Things were uncertain – I was being shuffled between clients like United Airlines and large oil and gas companies in Houston.

Companies were having layoffs. I wasn't laid off, but it was fewer people doing the same amount of work. My mom showed me the article, but I initially ignored it. Eventually, I revisited it, and by Labor Day 2009, I was attending a Discovery Day with Sears Garage Doors.

Powills: That's crazy. I mean, I started our company in March of 2008, and some people looked at me and said, "You're insane for doing this." But I thought, "Or am I smart? Because if I'm going to make a leap, now's the time."

Similarly for you, like if I were to poll every franchisee who eventually made the decision to go into this, it tends to be some sort of turbulence in their life or career that makes them say, "Well, maybe I'd like to be in charge of outcomes."

So you go through Discovery Day, you buy into it. Was it a whirlwind? Obviously, you know franchising today, but take me through what it was like when you opened your doors and became a franchise owner.

Fatany: It was me and one tech that I found online through job boards. Our phone rings – first customer. "Sears Garage Doors, how can I help you?" The guy says, "I'm stuck in my garage; I need some help."

We send out the tech and he comes back with some money. That was day one. We did a million dollars in revenue in our first year and then expanded into other markets around Houston – submarkets like Beaumont, Lake Jackson, North Houston and San Antonio.

In 2016, I wanted to diversify. My wife and I went to New York City, where Siri introduced us to The Halal Guys. Siri was kind of new back then, and I asked, "What's the best place to eat in New York City?" It said, "The Halal Guys on 53rd and 6th." We ended up there, loved it, and asked them about franchising. A year later, we became franchisees. When we opened the doors in Houston, Texas, there was a four-hour line. Around that time, I decided to sell Sears because gyros and garage doors didn't have much in common. I wanted to focus on what had the longest runway.

Today, we're at seven Halal Guys units. Then the pandemic hit in 2020. I had been following Layne's Chicken Fingers for a long time and kept asking them to franchise. They weren't sure if they wanted to franchise Houston.

I took a flight to Dallas – felt like a private plane since it was just me and three other people. Today, we have five Layne's open, two under construction and two in conversations.

Powills: Okay, there's a lot to unpack there. First of all, when you had The Halal Guys' hot sauce for the first time, how bad did that kick your butt?

Fatany: Oh, yeah. I didn't know – just totally. It was painful. It was really painful.

Powills: Now I just do one line. Thinking about my Halal Guys experience – and this will lead into Layne's – it does feel like if I were to go into the restaurant business, a smaller kitchen and easier operations down the line would be appealing.

For someone coming from home service franchising into food, was there any fear? Obviously, when you went into home services, you hired a tech – it's not like you were the garage guy. But was it more like, "I knew what it was like to do that, so food can't be complicated if I hire the right person"?

Fatany: Not at all. I wasn't even going to do it. By the time Halal Guys came around and said they were ready to franchise, I was over it. I was looking at another home-services-related disaster recovery franchise, which is now bankrupt – so I'm glad I didn't go that route.

One of my mentors guided me toward Halal Guys at the time. He helped me see that it had a simple menu, a great story, a captive audience and the potential for a simpler operation to scale. The restaurant industry is much more mature compared to home services – especially disaster recovery, where you're dealing with home floods, electrical, mechanical, plumbing and so many different trades. My mentor led me to Halal Guys.



So, no, there wasn't a deep understanding at the time. It was more like, "This is a good brand, simple to execute. Let's jump in."

Powills: Did you start with one unit or did you buy a multi-pack?

Fatany: I always felt like with Halal Guys — I think I was one of the first handful of franchisees to sign on, maybe the first two, three, four or five — I thought, if I'm going to do the work to establish the brand with one, it's all or nothing.

If one is successful, you'll kick yourself for not buying more. And if you fail, you'll just fail a little bigger if you buy a larger territory. So I bought a 12- or 13-unit deal with Halal Guys, and that's still active.

Powills: Got it. There are so many moving parts as a franchisee, but I imagine burning cash on restaurant investments feels different than in home services. Did you almost breathe a sigh of relief when you saw that four-hour line?

Fatany: I mean, we were like, "This is my bank account." And then we opened. We got saved, you know. I remember getting a call at probably seven in the morning on grand opening day.

They said, "Hey, we have a few people in line." By the time it was nine or ten o'clock, the line was really long. By opening time, it wrapped all the way around, and it stayed that way for two days. It was crazy.

Powills: So you build it to seven. Another thing I'm curious about — something I talk about often — is that some people go into franchising with a multi-unit mindset.

You obviously went multi-unit with Sears; you scaled the business. But at some point, the financial side keeps climbing. I've found the number tends to fall somewhere between three and seven units, where you're growing, but it takes even more resources to scale further.

There's almost another dip that happens, and you have to have the mentality that this dip will lead to the hockey-stick growth that gets you much further. Was that something you had to prepare for? Did your experience with Sears help you get to that level? How did you navigate that?

Fatany: I think every brand has its strengths and weaknesses, and that's true for everything. We focus on learning from the strengths. Sears taught me a lot about franchising and business in general.

We brought those lessons over to Halal Guys, and they helped me with Layne's. I don't think I could've convinced the folks at Layne's to bring me on if it weren't for my experience operating Halal Guys.

I didn't go into it thinking about this multi-unit mindset. When you sign a multi-unit deal, everyone around you is geared toward scaling. The whole contract is designed for that — it wasn't even a choice. For me, the mindset was, "If we're going to be successful, we're going to double down and carry this all the way through. If we're not, we won't be." That multi-unit mindset was there from the beginning.

Powills: You said, "If I'm going to do this, why wouldn't I go all in?" Even though that meant mentally battling through the first tranche – your bank account decreasing until the restaurant opens because you're bleeding cash on the build-out.

So you build it up to seven units, and then you go into Layne's. Before we dive into the Layne's story, just out of curiosity: You got into franchising very young, made a million dollars in gross revenue your first year and for anyone watching, that's not profit – that's gross revenue. There are costs to running the business.

But did you ever feel wealthy at that point? Did you feel like a "wealthy franchisee," or was there always this ghost behind you saying, "The sky could fall at any minute"?

Fatany: I think with any entrepreneur, the ghost is always present because it changes as you scale. Each level brings new challenges every year. I don't think that ever goes away – maybe until you exit.

But to say I've ever felt uncomfortable in that sense? Not really. Even in our first year, hitting a million dollars in sales, it was just me and an office manager. You can imagine our overhead was low. That was the first step where we realized, "Okay, now we've got to take a step back to go forward."

That happened many times over in that business. I think learning those lessons early helped. So when we got into the restaurant business – which requires significantly more capital to build each unit – I already had some muscle memory. I knew, "Hey, this is normal. I'm going to have to go through this."

Powills: Yeah, a few comments. One is, I think the best advice I could give as a business operator – and I'm hearing it from you too – is: Don't let the lifestyle be the tail that wags the dog. If you make a lot on unit one, you'll have to make a little less to get to unit two, and so on throughout the journey. You've got to become comfortable with the turbulence.

The other thing I'm hearing from you reminds me of a sports analogy. I'm a big Chicago Bears fan. Recently, they were far out of the playoffs, but they played a rivalry team and had to show up excited to win this one game – even though their season was effectively over. Some people would think, "We're failing, we're done," and just give up. But they found a way to say, "For this one game, we're going to compete," and they ended up winning.

I use that as an example because, for us, once you get over a certain financial threshold, financial success becomes part of the scorecard. The ghost behind us isn't just about money – it's about whether we're truly successful or not.

The reality is, both you and I could probably retire tomorrow if we wanted to. But the scorecard motivates us, and the ghost of failure scares us. As long as those two forces pull at us, they drive us to keep going. Does that resonate with you?

Fatany: Yeah, 100%. With Layne's, I have an aggressive development schedule and I genuinely enjoy working with them. That's really the bottom line. At the end of the day, they have such a great team. Every single person I've interacted with there is just a 10 out of 10. That's really important to me.

In our industry, if you have a solid franchisor that genuinely cares about your success – not just their own scorecard – it motivates franchisees to push even harder. Because we're trying to build something together.

At the end of the day, I don't need an additional unit or two. But if you're working with a great team, having fun and enjoying the process, it makes everything a lot easier.

Powills: So I'm going to tell you what the question is, but first, I want to criticize it. The question is: Have you seen this? Not to put down the other franchisors you've worked with, but have you seen this level of franchisor?

LAYNE'S

Chicken Fingers

And I'll add this caveat: When I've looked at Layne's, I've never seen anything like it. You have strong, capital-backed individuals who are genuinely good people. They brought in the right person to focus on operations, supply chain, and perfecting the model before even starting franchising.

They've said no to people, become real estate experts, private equity experts and shown a real passion for their product. On top of all this, it's a super simple business to operate. I've never seen anything like it.

So the question is: Have you seen a franchisor like this? Not to put anybody else down, but is what I'm seeing with Layne's similar to what you've seen?

Fatany: I couldn't agree more. Everything you've said, plus they have a genuine interest in franchisee profitability, which is key. They've told me not to do deals — that's rare in franchising.

Usually, you sign that form acknowledging that you're making the decision and taking responsibility. But Layne's has told me, "Don't do it. We don't like this one," or, "It's up to you." They're not chasing unit count as an important number in the [Franchise Disclosure Document], and that speaks volumes in our industry.

Powills: The word that comes to mind is how simple this philosophy seems. Every franchisor should follow it: Treat your business that way and your franchisees will treat the business that way, too. You build a culture of genuinely caring about the direction of the company.

I think it also comes down to how well-capitalized a franchisor is from the start. Take Sears, for example — it was a beautiful business for many years. If they had separated the home services division from retail, it could have remained strong for many more years.

Unfortunately, when capital constraints started impacting the business, even the good parts went downhill. Decisions became reactive, like choosing between hiring more corporate support staff for franchisees or saving cash to stay afloat. That's when turbulence happens. With Layne's, it feels simple: Every franchisor should take what you just said and make it their core philosophy. But many don't, and I'd imagine it's because they lack the capital to do so.

Fatany: No, I don't agree completely. Of course, you're right about capital being important. But it's more than that.

You need a thorough understanding that if the franchisee is successful, then we're successful. It's not an "us versus them" situation — we're in the same boat and we have to row in the same direction. You can't have one side rowing; it just doesn't work.

Layne's has done a great job with that and it speaks volumes. That's why they have so many units under development right now. I don't know of any unhappy franchisees and I don't think that's going to change anytime soon.

Powills: I know you don't have to develop units, but when you attach yourself to something as special as this business, you get a sense of urgency. Is that pushing you a little because you know how special this opportunity is?

Fatany: I think for me personally, my development is well ahead of our agreed-upon schedule. That alone should tell the franchisor that we're satisfied with the results and confident enough to keep putting our name on the line with every new unit we develop.



Powills: Is there anything that keeps you up at night?

Fatany: Nothing specific like that, but I do think about how we can better ourselves. The general things that keep any operator up, like: How can we deliver a better, more consistent product? How can we improve service accuracy? How can we open units faster? It's all the general stuff.

Powills: The way I hear the team talk, they focus on protecting the brand, their franchisees and their customers. What you just said mirrors that – protecting the brand and ensuring the customer gets the best experience. You're constantly listening to your staff and asking, "How can we continue to perfect this?"

That's the same mentality Layne's demonstrates and clearly what you're showing with your vision for the company. I say this line way too often, but when I look at a successful business, I bet on the jockey, not the horse. For you to fit culturally with what they're trying to accomplish means they've extended their philosophy into Houston, which will have tremendous impact.

You're 100% right: too many franchisors focus on selling franchises instead of developing franchisees. But successful franchisees will sell franchises, and they'll generate more royalties for the franchisor. It's very simplistic, but that math equation is misunderstood far too often.

Fatany: At the end of the day, they have a great product and that makes everyone's job easier. They've had a product established since 1994. The most prominent player in this industry, Raising Cane's, actually came after Layne's.

That helps tell the story and explain to customers who we are and what we're doing. We also have a built-in audience. People are aware of the brand, at least regionally.

Layne's started at Texas A&M, which now has 50,000 to 70,000 students rotating in and out of the university every year. That's a huge number of people being introduced to the brand annually.

For those who don't know the brand, like in new markets, it's the product that draws them in. For example, we just opened a store in Pasadena, a suburb of Houston. That's a new market, but at the end of the day, people come in because they like the product.

Powills: I love this story. I love your story – it's awesome.

Thank you for sharing it. From quitting your job to home services, falling into restaurants and scaling with that mentality, I feel like there's so much more to learn about your journey.

I'm really grateful you gave me some of your time today.

Watch the full interview above or on YouTube.

LAYNE'S

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