



Rapping About Fast Wrap: Yes, There's a Franchise for Everything

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While it's been long established that numerous types of businesses can be franchised, from sign making to decorating homes for the holidays, there's no denying that Mike Enos' business is one of the more unique franchises in existence. His company, Fast Wrap, literally shrink wraps boats, cars, trucks, airport towers, half-finished buildings ... well, there's nothing, they say, that they won't wrap to protect from the weather and prying eyes.

"We wrapped a Ritz Carlton hotel that was under construction and had to be protected during the winter months," says Enos, "and we've wrapped eight or 10 bombers for the military. We've done a Triple-A baseball stadium that was under construction and a terminal at the Sacramento Airport a few days ago -- and a 30-foot FAA air tower in Reno. We have a crew on the Super Dome in New Orleans."

Among other oddities, or at least objects you wouldn't expect to need these services, Fast Wrap has even wrapped a half-constructed church, a

250,000-square-foot unfinished hospital, and alfalfa for a farmer who wanted it stored properly.

The shrink wrap Enos' company uses is fire-retardant, recyclable and available in four colors (two shades of green, blue and white).

Enos, 43, officially started working on Fast Wrap as a business in 2007 but had thought of the idea in the early 1990s when he was running his own porta-potty business, which he started after a brief career as a taxidermist. Fast Wrap came about not because of his businesses, though, but because of what he liked to do during his free time.

"I had a boat that I used for duck hunting, but I could only use it for a couple months every year," says Enos, who is based in Reno, Nevada. He had a blue tarp he could put over it, but he didn't feel it offered enough protection, so he found himself spending a couple months -- before the rainy season -- looking for someone to shrink wrap his vehicle.

"I finally purchased the materials to do it myself," says Enos. "I got it wrapped and parked it out behind my office, which just happened to be near the freeway, and people would see it and inquire weekly, 'Where'd you get that boat wrapped?'"

The requests became so frequent that Enos' receptionist suggested he move the boat somewhere else.

Enos was plenty occupied growing his own company to consider starting up something else, but he kept thinking, *Man, what a great business this would make.*

In the summer of 2006, Enos sold his porta-potty business -- at that point, it had swelled to over 100 employees, and he pretty much dominated the Reno and Lake Tahoe markets. Then he retired to a sports fishing boat in the Gulf of Mexico and enjoyed his newfound wealth, except for a nagging thought.

Thirty nine years old is pretty young to retire, and Enos kept coming back to the idea of shrink wrapping boats. Finally, Enos hooked up with ifranchisegroup.com, a franchise consultancy, to see if they could help him bring his idea to fruition. "Ever since, I've called it 'buying the learning curve,'" says Enos. "I knew nothing about franchising."

Buying the learning curve isn't cheap. Enos estimates he has plowed around \$1 million into his business investment thus far.

But the franchise consultancy clearly knew what they were doing. Enos spent much of 2008 putting together a business model and looking for leadership and management teams to run his initial locations. By January 2009, he formally started his franchise program with six Fast Wraps in business -- now he has 38 locations in 12 states that are either operating or poised to open. And ironically, the recession didn't end up hurting Fast Wrap; it *helped* it.

Because Enos was smart enough to not restrict himself to just wrapping boats, he found customers practically lining up at his franchises during the recession. Foreclosed homes suddenly needed to be wrapped. The church lost its financing, so in mid-construction, it needed wrapping. A boat dealership went out of business and wanted its inventory protected. A huge condominium complex that had started construction but was told the finish line would have to wait indefinitely realized it would need to cocoon itself for the time being.

And while a customer might pay \$250 to wrap a boat, at \$1.15 to \$1.35 a square foot, depending on the size of the project, an entrepreneur wrapping, say, an 84,000-square-foot hotel could make -- well, you can do the math.

Enos also thinks the unique factor is a selling point with attracting franchisees. "There's no competition. There's never been a franchise out there like this."

But when the economy inevitably goes on the upturn, Enos believes his company will do just fine. "My hope is that eventually Fast Wrap is a household name, in houses as well as businesses," says Enos. "I want the average housewife, while the husband is at work, to be able to look outside, realize it's time to wrap up the patio furniture that the family spent \$2,000 on and call up Fast Wrap, have the van pull up, seal it all up, and they're good to go, without having to move it to a storage shed or their garage."

Maybe it'll happen. Enos says he's currently negotiating with a cable company, discussing the possibility of creating a reality series based on their business, where cameras would follow the Fast Wrap workers traveling around the company "wrapping crazy things." That would definitely give the company some exposure, even as they work to keep everything from buildings to lawn furniture from being exposed.