

Franchise Times®

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20^{to} watch

In 2000, when Publisher Mary Jo Larson and I came up with a 20 to Watch list for franchising, we planned to do it for a couple of years and then move on to something new. However, much to our surprise, we discovered that readers eagerly anticipated our list and that some people even looked forward to be included on it—although companies like Burger King would probably gladly give up their annual spot to some other fast-food feeder (good news, BK, you didn't make the list this year).

What we try to do each year is highlight some of the trendsetters, overachievers and luminaries in the franchise community, as well as trends and legislation that will affect how we all do business.

We don't have a crystal ball here at Franchise Times—although we do have one of those Magic 8-balls with the floating answers to any and all questions—but we predict the people, places and things that made our list will achieve greatness in 2007. And, just to show you we don't take this challenge lightly, we've had Business Writer/Editor Stacy Freeborg revisit some of the candidates from last year's list to see how 2006 shaped up for them.

—Nancy Weingartner



6—Amy Bannon For the past two years, Amy Bannon has escorted reporters around the International Franchise Expo in Washington, D.C., introducing the mostly local press to franchisors based in that area. After the interviews, the franchisors would turn to her and say, “I now see the value of PR,” and ask her to recommend a PR agency based in the nation’s capital. “I’d have to tell them there wasn’t anyone,” she says.

It didn’t take long for the 36-year-old manager of media relations for the International Franchise Association to discover a niche she could fill. Plus, “It’s hard to give interviews all day saying ‘control your destiny; be your own boss,’ and not think about it,” she says. “And, I like the people in the franchise business.”

After two months on her own, Bannon already has three clients (one more than she predicted she would need to “keep the shop going and live an air-conditioned life”) and does PR during the day and writes at night.

Her goal is four to five D.C.-based clients, she says.

Her stint at the IFA will prove to be invaluable for her chosen niche, but so will her experience as the policy advisor for an Alaskan senator, which taught her how to make her point in eight seconds or less. Before coming to Washington, D.C., Bannon, a fourth-generation Alaskan, was an English professor.

This year will prove to be a banner one for Bannon: In addition to taking her employers’

advice and becoming her own boss, she’s set to marry her fiancé of 11 years on October 18—“a long-term goal of mine.”

“I figured this was my last chance to take a risk like this before I have a mortgage or kids,” she says. “My goal is not to have a ‘job’ or ‘better paying’ (jobs), but a ‘lifestyle.’”

We’re keeping Amy in our sights, because after being on the receiving end of her efficiency at the IFA for the past two years, and knowing she was trained by the unflappable Terry Hill, IFA vice president of communications, we think her eight seconds to make her point will add up to much more than 15 minutes of fame.

