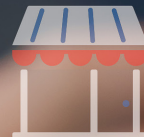




Franchise



Portillo's

**Fastest Growing
Franchisee
2026**

Dames Family

In recognition of your exceptional growth,
unwavering dedication, and outstanding
contribution to the success of the brand.
Your rapid expansion and commitment
to excellence set a benchmark
for others to follow.

Congratulations on your
remarkable achievement!

OUR MISSION IS TO EMPOWER YOUR SUCCESS UNLOCKING GROWTH IN THE FRANCHISE INDUSTRY

PLAYBOOK

A Distributor's Guide to Franchise Market Growth with
Awards, Recognition, Branded Gifts, and Signage



P A C E S E T T E R



SALES AND
MARKETING
TOOLBOX



PACESETTER
WEBSITE

FRANCHISES NEED RECOGNITION

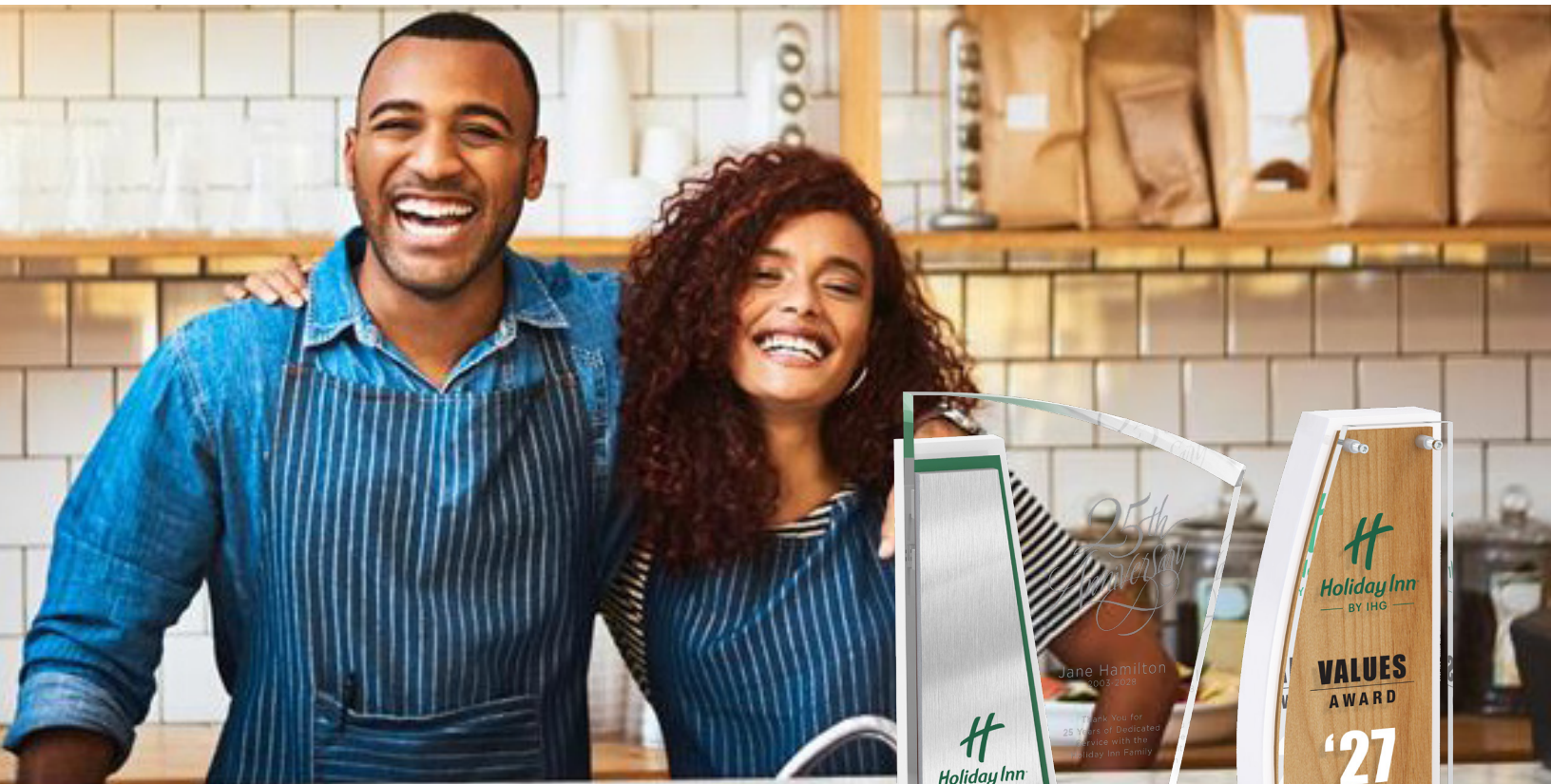
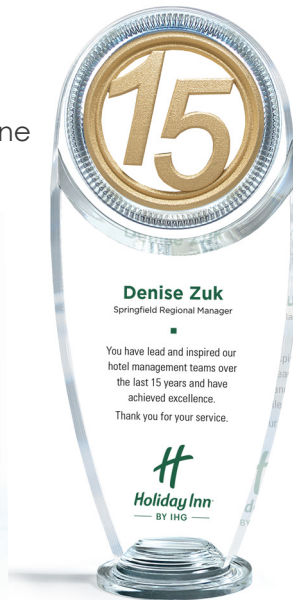
Empower yourself to be the one to deliver it.

Franchises are growing fast, and so is the opportunity. With over 800,000 locations and millions of employees, franchise leaders are investing in recognition programs to build culture, boost engagement, and reward high performance and support retention.

If you're already selling promo products, this Playbook is a guide to growing your business with awards, recognition, gifting, and signage tailored for the franchise market. Inside, you'll learn how to:

- Find key franchise decision-makers
- Pitch recognition as a business strategy
- Build scalable, multi-location programs
- Turn existing contacts into new revenue
- Help franchises thrive and grow your bottom line

Source: *International Franchise Association



GROWING OPPORTUNITY TRENDS THAT OPEN THE DOOR

Recognition isn't a "nice-to-have" for franchises, it's a system-improver.

Why Recognition Matters to Your Franchise Clients:

- Boost team performance and motivation
- Reinforce brand values across locations
- Build a loyal, engaged workforce
- Reduce employee turnover
- Reward franchisees and drive long-term loyalty
- Keep brand culture consistent

It's important to align recognition programs with the unique needs at each level of the business. The chart below highlights proven award initiatives that Promotional Products Distributors have successfully implemented to grow within the franchise market:



FRANCHISEE

Awards given to individual franchise owners who operate one or more franchise locations:

- Franchisee of the Year
- Multi-Unit Franchisee of the Year
- Rookie of the Year
- Top Performer Award
- Fastest Growing Franchisee
- Operational Excellence Award



TEAMS AND STAFF

Awards Recognizing individual staff or teams within the franchise system:

- Manager of the Quarter
- Trainer of the Year
- Shift Lead of the Month
- Employee of the Month
- Team of the Quarter
- Excellence in Service Award



COMPLIANCE / SAFETY

Recognition for franchisees who elevate corporate process/standards:

- Quality Assurance Excellence
- Health & Safety Compliance Award



MARKETING

Awards celebrate creative community engagement and high-impact initiatives:

- Best Local Marketing Campaign
- Innovation Award
- Community Involvement Award



CORPORATE

Awards that honor prestigious or long-term recognition:

- Lifetime Achievement Award
- Founder's Award
- Legacy/Long-Term Impact Award
- Retirement Gift/Award

WHO IS WHO IN THE FRANCHISE WORLD

Who to contact, what they care about, and how to move your conversation up the chain.



CORPORATE / FRANCHISOR LEVEL

TITLE	ROLE	RECOGNITION / AWARD IDEAS	QUESTIONS TO ENGAGE
VP of Franchise Development	Franchisee onboarding, early engagement, long-term success	- Fastest Growing Franchisee - Rookie of the Year (best new franchisee)	"Do you recognize new franchisees during onboarding?" "Is recognition part of your corporate training program?"
Director of Marketing	Oversees Branding and Promotions	- Best Local Marketing Campaign - Community Involvement / Philanthropy Award	"Have you given awards for creative marketing efforts?" "How do you celebrate and recognize local giving?"
Director of Operations	Responsible for Systems and Implements Process	- Quality Assurance Excellence - Safety Compliance Award	"Do you set goals for Quality Assurance?" "How often do you recognize safety compliance?"
Human Resources or Training Manager	Focuses on employee onboarding and retention	- Anniversary Awards - Core Values Recognition	"How do you recognize years of service?" "Have you thought about celebrating core values and employee engagement?"



REGIONAL / DISTRICT LEVEL

TITLE	ROLE	RECOGNITION / AWARD IDEAS	QUESTIONS TO ENGAGE
Area / District Manager	Oversees multiple franchise locations within a geographic territory	- Regional Top Performer Award - Rising Star Award – District Level	"How often do you recognize the location with the highest sales or growth in your district?"
Area / District Representative	Responsible for Systems and Implements Process	- Customer Experience Champion - Most Improved Store – District	"Do you celebrate new locations that have surpassed forecasted revenue in the first year?" "Do your teams celebrate positive customer feedback?" "How do you motivate location leaders to excel?"



FRANCHISEE / LOCAL LEVEL

TITLE	ROLE	RECOGNITION / AWARD IDEAS	QUESTIONS TO ENGAGE
Franchise Owner	Owns and operates one or more individual franchise locations	- Manager of the Year - Trainer of the Year	"How do you recognize your team members for great performance in Staff Leadership?"
Location General Manager	Responsible for staffing, store revenue, customer experiences and employee/team success	- Employee of the Month - Customer Service Excellence Award	"Do you currently run any programs like Employee of the Month or peer-to-peer recognition?" "How do you recognize your team members for great performance or customer service?"

RECOGNITION BEYOND AWARDS

From Custom Signage to Branded Gifts That Tell a Story

YEARS OF SERVICE LAPEL PINS

Years of service lapel pins are an excellent addition to any recognition program, offering a timeless way to celebrate commitment and milestones.

PRO-TIP: Encourage your clients to provide custom pins that employees can proudly wear on uniforms, name badges, or branded lanyards, helping to reinforce loyalty and brand connection every day.



PERSONALIZED NAME BADGES

Customized name badges are a great way for your client to showcase their branding, elevate their team's presence, and honor years of service or titles.

PRO-TIP: Customized name badges are a great add-on to promotional products or recognition programs, offering an awesome upsell to enhance your client's brand.

CUSTOM CHALLENGE COINS

Challenge Coins are a unique way to elevate your client recognition program. We also offer creative display solutions to enhance their impact.

PRO-TIP: Tailoring custom coins to your client's brand is an awesome way to commemorate brand-specific launches and initiatives. We can design around one coin or a series of coins!



SMALL SCALE ACRYLIC SIGNAGE

Small-scale custom signage is perfect for franchise markets, offering versatile solutions like digital menus, feedback surveys, and seasonal promotional messaging.

PRO-TIP: Pitch signage as a cost-effective way for franchisees to stay on-brand while improving customer experience at the local level. Remind your clients that you are a source for signage needs.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

KEY RECOGNITION DATES - SPECIFIC TO FRANCHISE

An overview of when awards and recognition occur in the franchise world:

Q1

January - March

Key Activities:

Year-end awards (for prior year performance)
Employee Appreciation Day (First Friday in March)
Franchise planning and goal setting

PRO-TIP:

Distributors can pitch new ideas early for awards, gifts, and recognition packages.

Q2

April - June

Key Activities:

Regional Franchise Industry trade shows & meetings
Administrative Professionals Day (Last Week in April)
Mid-year performance check-ins

PRO-TIP:

Send an email reminder about Admin Professionals Day gifts, and send creative ideas for "on-the-spot recognition".

Q3

July - September

Key Activities:

Franchise conventions (major award events)
National Franchise Appreciation Day (August)
Finalize year-end recognition plans

PRO-TIP:

Share ideas for National Franchise Appreciation, ask how they celebrate and how you can support them.

Q4

October - December

Key Activities:

Customer Service Week (First week of October)
Year-end celebrations and milestone awards
Final award deliveries for annual programs

PRO-TIP:

Send a branded pitch deck with fresh year-end award designs and a "Good, Better, Best" annual program idea.

SCAN TO ACCESS
PACESETTER'S SALES
AND MARKETING
PLAYBOOK TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT YOUR
VERTICAL MARKETS





CASE STUDY: SCALING SUCCESS

How One Relationship
Sparked a Franchise-Wide Win

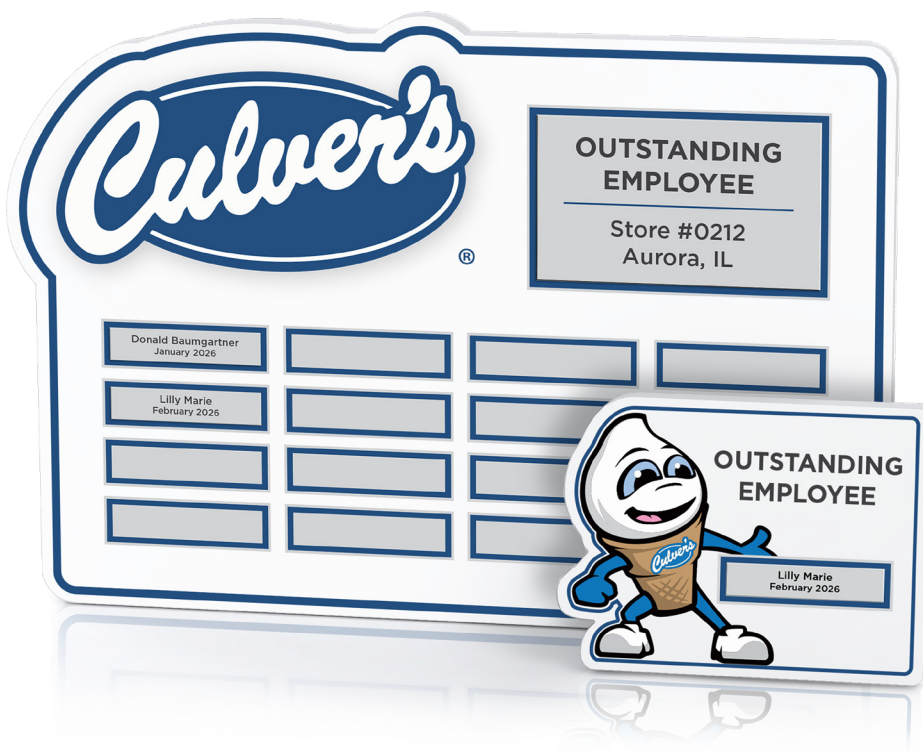
Client: A Southeastern promotional products distributor with a strong connection to one regional manager at a major fast-food franchise.

Challenge: With only one key contact, the distributor needed a way to expand his reach across independently owned franchise locations. The solution needed to be simple, cost-effective, low-maintenance for managers to use, and meaningful enough to drive engagement, without adding extra work.

Solution: The distributor partnered with Pacesetter to launch a simple, scalable Employee of the Month program using the Easy Perpetual Plaque system.

- Each location received a ready-to-use plaque kit with customizable design options
- A one-time setup covered the entire year
- Managers could easily update plaques each month through a secure, user-friendly website
- Employees received companion plaques to take home as a meaningful keepsake

The program was supported and grown using a promotional flyer to help share it across locations. The bonus with Easy Perpetual is that it requires very minimal effort to maintain.



Outcome: The initial locations saw a clear boost in morale, with strong engagement around the companion plaques employees could take home. The program required little effort from managers and was supported by a promotional flyer to share across locations. Leadership quickly took notice, and one area manager rolled it out region-wide. Interest grew rapidly from there.

Long-term Success: It started with one connection and quickly took off as word spread. More franchise groups jumped on board, and to keep things easy, the distributor and Pacesetter put together a simple ordering template so new locations could join without any hassle.

Financial Impact: What started as a small opportunity evolved into a repeatable, revenue-generating program that delivered long-term value for both the distributor and the franchise network. The program showed consistent year-over-year growth in retail sales:

Year 1: 5 locations, \$4,500
Year 3: \$100,000

Year 2: \$35,000
Year 4: \$175,000

Distributors experienced rapid early gains, followed by steady year-over-year growth that continues today.

Key Takeaway: Start with one strong connection and a smart, simple idea. When you solve a real pain point, you can turn a single opportunity into lasting business growth.



MORE CASE
STUDIES

YOUR SUCCESS IS OUR PRIORITY

Partner with Pacesetter
For Tools & Support to
Grow Your Business.



SUPPORT FOR YOUR INITIAL CLIENT MEETINGS

As experts in this product space, we're here to support you at every step and help you close with confidence. Here's how we can help:

- Define meeting objectives
- Provide a list of strategic questions to ask your client

PRODUCT SELECTION ASSISTANCE

Not sure what fits best? Let us help you find the right product fit:

- Free virtual samples so your client can visualize the end result

CUSTOM PRODUCT SOLUTIONS

Deliver unique solutions that stand out:

- We provide free custom renderings to match your client's vision

SALES AND MARKETING TOOLS

Pacesetter is here to help you make a strong impression. We will provide the following marketing tools:

- Client-friendly product flyers and product marketing
- Order forms



P A C E S E T T E R

ONE STOP SHOP

Pacesetter is your source for any and all recognition needs. We offer the latest in awards and branded corporate gifts in all substrates with multiple imprint methods and design within any budget.

NO FEES, NO STRINGS

Free Set-Up

Free Personalizations

Free Renderings and Design

BASED IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

5544 WEST ARMSTRONG AVENUE
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WE ARE PROUD MEMBERS

