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From Mom & Pop to Professional Op

“I love your ice cream and want to own my own Cold Stone Creamery because I know it will be great fun meeting our neighbors and making their day. To me running an ice cream store in our community would be my dream job.”

We receive thousands of requests like this asking for information about owning a Cold Stone Creamery. I’m sure we’re not that different from other franchise companies. Many get letters and emails from people who adore their products and want to open their own sub shops, fitness clubs, hair salons, you name it. At Cold Stone, we love the spirit of these emails. They convey so vividly the American Dream of ownership, hope and vision.

The fact is, when it comes to potential franchisees, we look for people like this who really display a love for our products, a sincere desire to want to be part of the community and the belief that owning an ice cream store would be their dream job. It almost seems that an attitude like that, along with a solid knowledge of operations and customer service, would assure success. Well whether or not that is true, what we really look for is the person who has the potential to start out as a Mom & Pop, and become a Professional Op (That’s short for operator).

So how do you tell the difference between a great Mom & Pop and a great Professional Op? It’s pretty easy...

Mom & Pop	Professional Op
Love their business	Love their business
Love their customers	Love their customers
Are optimistic about success	Are optimistic about success
Work hard in their stores every day	Set goals, develop plans and work to achieve them every day

Did you catch the difference? Both Mom & Pops and Professional Ops do a lot of things exactly the same with one important exception: Professional Ops set goals. They develop plans to achieve those goals. And then they work their plans to make real what they set out to do.

Now, before we go much further recognize there is nothing wrong with being a Mom & Pop. But if you really want to take your business to the next level – let's say you want a second location – then you're going to have to make the leap to professional operator sooner than later. The reason? It's impossible to be in two places at once. As every Mom & Pop-turned-Professional Op knows, the minute you add that second location you either have teams that work together when you're not around or hopefully you've perfected human cloning. I'm afraid the latter is a long way off.

So how do you know if you're a Mom & Pop or a Professional Op? Take this little test. Answer yes or no to the questions below.

- Do you set an annual sales goal for your business?
- Is it quantifiable?
- Do you have a plan in place to achieve it?
- Is it written down?
- Are there quarterly, monthly, weekly objectives?
- Do you monitor your results according to your plan?
- Do you adjust your plan as needed?
- Do you develop programs, promotions and incentives to achieve your objectives?
- Do you communicate all this to your employees?
- Do they know the specific role they play in your plan?
- Are they engaged in achieving it?
- Do they know when they have succeeded?
- Are there rewards for achieving your goal?

A Professional Op would answer yes to most or all of these questions. But more important than answering these questions the right way, I'm hoping you will use them as a guide. The sooner you can make goal setting the foundation for your business the sooner you will run your current business more profitably or grow it to multiple locations. Make it your goal to set a goal.