



# At Your Service

FRANCHISING'S HOTTEST TRENDS SHOW THAT THE CUSTOMER—NOW MORE THAN EVER—REALLY IS KING.  
by JASON DALEY

**F**ranchising has had its flash-in-the-pan fads. But there are some trends that have true staying power—and potential for growth. These are some sectors of franchising that have been red hot for the past few years and show no signs of cooling down.

### HOME SERVICES

Americans have always had a do-it-yourself attitude; the problem is, for many families with two working parents, busy children and hobbies outside the home, there's just not enough time to DIY. That's why home services franchises, from maid services to plumbers, painters, decorators, flooring companies and many others, have begun to take off.

"People look at their homes a lot differently than they did in the '50s, '60s or '70s," explains Michael Stone, president of CertaPro Painters. "It was a DIY culture, but now dual-income people look at their home as their biggest asset. They want things done right and want certainty. They want to use a company with a national reputation that's trained the right way to a higher standard. If you use a local guy and something happens, what recourse do you have?"

The reason home services brands—and painting in particular—is ripe for franchising is because many home services are dominated by small mom-and-pop companies with no national presence. Companies such as CertaPro have been able to consolidate a slice of that fragmented market, which gives them advantages in marketing and better prices on commodities such as paint. And while CertaPro expects to have 365 franchisees by year's end, with 525 units in North America, Stone says there are still 158 territories available.

N-Hance Wood Renewal was launched in 2002 after

technicians for the carpet-cleaning franchise Chem-Dry kept receiving requests to reseal hardwood floors. Chem-Dry did its research and created a system that uses a proprietary chemical and UV light to instantly cure the wood. So far, the brand has 400 units in North America and expects to add more than 100 next year. "People really are attracted to franchises and established brands," explains Brad Singer, marketing manager of the franchise and development division of N-Hance. "And so are franchisees. Instead of setting up their own business, for a little money they can be part of the \$300 billion home improvement industry. And because we have an exclusive partnership with The Home Depot, all of our franchises have access to great lead generation."

Molly Maid is a 31-year-old brand that recently became part of the Dwyer Group, which owns a dozen home services franchise brands and has 2,100 franchisees. Meg Roberts, president, says that besides consumer demand, home services are growing because they are often much better for franchisees. "In general, people who think about franchising think about owning a restaurant," she says. "But after researching that, they might realize they'd be working more hours than they did at their corporate job and on weekends. Franchises in this segment allow a more desirable lifestyle." Roberts says culture shifts have made the future for Molly Maid and other service brands even more promising. "That do-it-yourself culture has already changed. People realize it's more important to do what they love and spend time with family," says Roberts. "People have figured out that it's OK to have help at the things you don't love doing. You can take time to go paddleboarding and still come home to a place where every-thing is neat and clean."