

## BUSINESS

### SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# Franchise group passes along lessons learned from mentors

Companies grow by cleaning air ducts and kitchen exhausts

BY KAREN DYBIS  
Special to The Detroit News

John Rotche, president of Ann Arbor's BELFOR Franchise Group, counts University of Michigan football coaching legend Bo Schembechler and former pizza magnate Tom Monaghan as mentors.

Having such high-profile leaders mold his business philosophy gave Rotche a strong start in his career, he admits. But the business owner is taking their lessons, adding his own experience and creating mentorship programs for student-athletes and up-and-coming entrepreneurs.

Doing so makes sense financially and spiritually, said Rotche, whose primary franchises include air duct and carpet cleaning company DUCTZ, and HOODZ, which cleans commercial kitchen hoods and exhausts. BELFOR's sales increased to more than \$21 million in 2010 from \$10.5 million in 2007.

Forecasts show that franchising is expected to grow 2.5 percent in jobs and new establishments this year, according to the International Franchise Association, a Washington, D.C., trade group. Much of the growth will be in retail products and services as well as commercial and residential services, such as those provided by BELFOR's franchisees.

Rotche started DUCTZ in 2002 and turned it from a single-van duct air-cleaning business to the largest indoor air quality company in the nation with 175 locations. He launched HOODZ in 2009 as BELFOR's second franchise brand, awarding 120 franchises within its first 12 months.

Entrepreneur magazine has ranked both as No. 1 in their categories for "fastest growing busi-



David Coates / The Detroit News

John Rotche, president of BELFOR Franchise Group, will help student athletes and up-and-coming entrepreneurs succeed in business.

## BELFOR Franchise Group

**Founded:** 2002

**Employees:** 30

**Contact:** [www.belforfranchise-group.com](http://www.belforfranchise-group.com); 731 Fairfield Court, Ann Arbor; (734) 818-7272

**Strategy:** Use a simple, focused strategy for each franchise group.

**Lesson for other businesses:**

Listening to and watching mentors can guide small business owners on how to run and grow their firms.

nesses in America."

The number of BELFOR employees has mushroomed to about 30 now from three in 2003. The overall franchise group has opened more than 300 offices in the past five years.

What provides focus for both companies are their commitment to their core services and a strong connection to his personal values, Rotche said. These values — which emphasize the Golden Rule — are largely inspired by Rotche's relationships with Schembechler and Monaghan.

Schembechler recruited Rotche to play linebacker for U-M, but a career-ending injury

in high school that resulted in him becoming a member of the U-M coaching staff taught many life lessons. One of them is developing a great model — such as the Michigan football program — is a key to success. "(Bo's program) was all about execution and holding people to a high level of standards," Rotche said.

Rotche moved over to Domino's Pizza Inc. to learn Monaghan's system, starting in pizza delivery and eventually working his way into management.

The best lessons Monaghan taught him were the importance of keeping things simple, adhering to a strong business model and maintaining standards.

A stint at the Krispy Kreme doughnut store franchiser led Rotche to DUCTZ. Its acquisition by Birmingham-based BELFOR USA Group Inc. in 2007 resulted in his current position, where Rotche tries to use his mentors as inspiration for others.

"I wanted to give back (and) I knew a lot of people out there like me that are fortunate to have mentors help them," said Rotche, who started Franship through the International Franchise Association. Franship mentors franchisees and franchisees.