

# THE KARIE ANNE'S STORY TO FRANCHISING

Lessons Learned from Jessica Mortensen, CEO of Karie Anne's Frozen Desserts Headquartered in Rexburg, Idaho

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Jessica Mortensen is the CEO of [Karie Anne's Frozen Desserts](#), a food truck franchise known for its Italian ice and frozen custard offerings. The business was originally founded by a BYU-Idaho student and later acquired by Jessica as the founder transitioned after graduation. Recognizing the potential for growth, Jessica used this venture as a platform for professional and personal development, supported by mentorship and financial expertise. Karie Anne's quickly became a popular destination in Rexburg, Idaho, known for drawing large crowds during the summer. After a decade of successful operations and process refinement, Jessica launched the franchising model, which has since expanded to three corporate locations and eleven franchise locations throughout Idaho and Utah.

These insights are taken from episode three of *Entrepreneur Voices* where Jessica joined as a guest to share how her experience with purchasing a business and growing it into franchises. The full episode can be listened to on [Spotify](#) or [YouTube](#).

The intended audience for this paper includes entrepreneurs, aspiring small business owners, individuals interested in franchising opportunities, and those seeking practical insights into operating and expanding a mobile food business.

It describes the journey of Karie Anne's Frozen Desserts from a single food truck to a successful franchise, highlighting key lessons learned by CEO Jessica Mortensen, including strategies for community engagement, employee development, overcoming operational challenges, and scaling through franchising.

## Origins and Growth of Karie Anne's

The Italian ice and frozen custard food truck "Karie Anne's" was founded in 2012 by a BYU-Idaho student, who named the business in honor of his wife. To fulfill a graduation requirement, the founder bootstrapped the venture by purchasing and refurbishing used equipment for the food truck. Initially operating in a neighborhood where Jessica Mortensen, the current owner, resided, the business quickly gained popularity. After sampling the gelati with her family, Mortensen became a loyal customer. Upon the founder's graduation, Mortensen, whose youngest child was entering school, purchased the business. She saw the seasonal nature of the enterprise as an opportunity to balance her role as a mother while introducing her children to entrepreneurship.

The growth of Karie Anne's in social media presence and sales occurred organically, reflecting the positive reception of its brand. Jessica Mortensen credits this success to the food truck's emphasis on creating an inviting atmosphere where customers could enjoy their desserts outdoors while feeling recognized and valued. Additionally, Jessica placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that Karie Anne's remained actively engaged within the local community.

*Being connected with our communities... is so important for running a small business. Giving back and being able to integrate yourself with school carnivals for example. We want to be giving the gift cards. We really want to as involved as we can. When there is a homecoming game, we want to shout out to all of our athletes. It's really important for us to integrate into our communities and that's hard to do from a distance.*

*- Jessica Mortensen*

Another fundamental value introduced by Jessica at Karie Anne's is the commitment to "empowering through education." Reflecting the Mortensen family's initial goal of providing their children with business experience through ownership, the company extends this philosophy to its employees. The team is taught not only the technical aspects of their tasks, such as serving ice cream, but also the reasoning behind operational decisions and processes. This approach equips employees with a broader understanding of business management.

Like all businesses, Karie Anne's encountered challenges during its growth. Despite operating as a food truck, its mobility was more constrained than initially anticipated. Dependence on utility connections limited potential locations, and compliance with varying city regulations posed additional hurdles. Jessica concluded that maintaining a single, consistent location throughout the season aligned best with their operational needs. Furthermore, the seasonal nature of the business presented staffing challenges. High school students seeking their first job were identified as the ideal employees. Fortunately, the company's positive culture encouraged many seasonal employees to return each summer, contributing to greater workforce stability.

## Key Takeaways and Tips for Entrepreneurs

### ✓ **Keep learning.**

Jessica claims she is still learning ten years into the business. She says, "Learn as you go. Learn from making mistakes. Learn from your successes. Learn from negative reviews."

### ✓ **Food trucks have lower overhead costs.**

A lot of brick-and-mortar food businesses start in mobile form. Food trucks provide a lower overhead cost, allowing new business owners to work out the operational kinks of their business before moving into an actual store.

### ✓ **Check that the municipality will allow you to operate your food truck the way you want to operate it.**

All municipalities have rules and regulations, and often a lot of them, for mobile, pop-up businesses. You have to understand these rules and requirements before investing too much into your business idea.

### ✓ **Steps to choosing where to place your food truck:**

1. Check on city rules and regulations.
2. Ask the Chamber of Commerce for any ideas or recommendations.
3. Join local business groups on social media. Members of the group will know more about the area if you have never lived there and will give input.
4. Hop in the car and drive around looking for the things your food truck will need (utilities, parking space, good visibility, etc.).

### ✓ **If you value your employees, they will value the customers.**

### ✓ **Know what you stand for.**

Identify this in the beginning and use it whenever you have a decision about the business to make.

### ✓ **Value your team.**

*"It doesn't take a lot for people to feel appreciated."* - Jessica Mortensen

### ✓ **Franchising is a long-term game.**

There is a high upfront cost and huge responsibility on the franchiser to have proven processes in place that will work for all their locations.

For more valuable insights, compelling anecdotes, and practical details, be sure to tune in to the full podcast episode!

Listen on Spotify [here](#). View on YouTube [here](#).

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