

Highlights

Rapid Financial Results; Lasting Cultural Change

Since it got its start nearly two decades ago, PFSbrands has grown at a double-digit rate every single year. But expenses also seemed to keep pace with that rapid growth rate. Since the company began playing the Great Game of Business, however, the bottom line has begun to grow just as fast as the top lines.

“I love Jack Stack’s quote that goes something like this: adding more sales without more profit is just a hell of a lot more work,” says founder and CEO Shawn Burcham.

Burcham’s first step in implementing the Great Game of Business was to assign general ledger codes on the income statement to members of his leadership team, as a way to begin driving financial literacy and accountability throughout the organization.

“The increased engagement we have seen among people since we began playing the Great Game of Business has been phenomenal,” says founder and CEO Shawn Burcham.



Organizational Background

PFSbrands, which was founded in 1998, provides turnkey, branded hot-food programs to more than 1,000 grocery stores and convenience stores across 36 states. The company delivers to 65 different wholesale distribution facilities that ship a full product line – everything from proteins like poultry to sides like mac and cheese – sold under the PFSbrands, Champs Chicken, and Cooper’s Express labels.

“I’m grateful I get to work in an environment where team members are respected, treated like adults and given access to all the financial information. We all know what our goal is and we’re all working together to reach that goal.”

~ John McElroy,
Director Customer Success

Playing the Game Together

PFSbrands has embraced a regular weekly cadence of leadership huddles, where they both review their key performance indicators from the prior week and forecast for the coming weeks. Results are shared live with the entire company. The company also holds a monthly all-company huddle, which gives remote employee owners the ability to connect via a video conferencing line. "Our monthly huddles are a quick, collaborative session where everyone gets a clear line of sight to the KPIs of the company," says Burcham. "We not only review key financial information, but we also provide each department the opportunity to touch on their key wins from the prior month, things to focus on for the upcoming month, and things to learn from."

High-tech scoreboards are another way PFSbrands keeps their team engaged and informed. Throughout their main 65,000-square-foot facility, they have 9 digital boards that display real-time vital metrics for each department. For example, if you take a walk through their customer success department, you would be able to quickly tell if the team is hitting their goal of answering each call within 30 seconds.

"One aspect of GGOB that excites me is constant gamification. Why simply track a metric when you can make a GAME out of it? If I could have a full time job making games and constantly finding ways to improve KPI's through pinpointing weaknesses, I would. Gamification makes work life FUN."

~ Karina Amsden, Graphic Designer

What's Next?

In January 2017, Burcham and his wife Julie sold 100% of their business to their employees. "I'm in my mid-40s, and plan to stay at the company for the long haul," says Burcham. "I plan to remain as CEO, and continue to work with the senior leadership team and all of our employee owners to scale the company."

"By selling the business to our employees," Burcham says, "we have created an opportunity for our employees to no longer just 'think like owners,' but to become the actual owners. As employee co-owners, the members of our team will become even more motivated, committed, and accountable to each other to drive growth and profitability. And as shareholders, they now have a real stake in the outcome of their company's success."

To that point, PFSbrands is doubling down on its focus, High Involvement Planning, and forecasting in general as a way to empower the employee-owners to chart their own future. "I'm excited to see where these co-owners take the business," says Burcham.

At the same time, Burcham wants to find ways to share the magic of the Great Game of Business with his customers and partners as well. "When you combine open-book management and financial transparency with employee-ownership, you can change the world," he says.

"We have a lot of opportunity and room to grow in how we use this knowledge to our advantage. We can see how our jobs build worth. We can see how our jobs affect those of all the others in the company. We use that information to our advantage, and we must continue to do so. There is excitement in knowing that we can make this business succeed by our efforts – individual and communal."

~ Andrew Reinkemeyer, Print Shop Production
