

Business Ownership Fuels Teaching Career and Vice Versa



Starting a business is hard. That's why you may have heard, "Are you crazy? Don't quit your day job."

Kurtis North isn't crazy, but he did start a business – and what's more, he didn't quit his day job.

Kurt is the owner of **Our Town Northern Colorado** in Fort Collins, Colorado, but he is also a Communication Studies instructor at Colorado State University, teaching courses such as Introduction to Public Speaking and Evaluating Contemporary Television. Until recently, he was also an assistant football coach at a nearby high school, but after eight years, he turned in his clipboard. He is a busy guy, after all. In addition to teaching and running his business, Kurt and his wife, Bridget—a fifth grade teacher herself—have three daughters, all under the age of nine.

Still, they've made it all work, and they've put together a nice life – and **Our Town America** has been an important piece of the puzzle.

The Our Town piece

While not necessarily motivated by money or material objects, Kurt knew there was more out there for him. He thought about side jobs or entirely new careers. Instead, he found something else: a franchise. “I enjoyed teaching but wanted to try my hand at new things. Being an entrepreneur and a small business owner offered a challenge—something I’ve never done but felt I could do.” The franchise opportunity offered so much more than just a side gig or a career change. In many ways, it offered the best of both worlds, and then some.

And while there can be financial limitations as a teacher, it’s a rewarding profession – and offers stability, something that Kurt never took for granted. He didn’t want to subtract teaching from his life, he wanted to add something else – and being a business owner seemed perfect. “I’d read that starting a *side* business is often less stressful, and often more successful, than just jumping in fully. Because of that, owning a certain kind of franchise seemed like it could be the right fit.” And with some availability over the summers and during the afternoons he *used* to dedicate to football, Kurt felt he would have time to run a small business.

After weighing a few options and thinking about his strengths and experiences, Kurt started researching various franchise opportunities and ended up reading about Our Town America in a franchise publication. He was impressed.

“It has a reasonable franchise buy-in agreement,” Kurt says. “And it just sounded like something that would work out well based on my schedule and commitments. Plus, I liked how well the leadership at Our Town guided me through the process. They made it easy and made me confident in my decision.”

He also placed quite a few phone calls to Our Town America franchisees around the country, and he liked what he heard from the owners, which was important. Not only was it a good fit for his skill set and schedule, Kurt knew a tremendous amount about what it’s like to be a new mover and how unsettling it can be, not knowing what doctor to go to, where to have your clothes dry cleaned, or what restaurants are worth going to.

Amongst some of the places he had lived, he had spent some of his 20s living abroad in Madrid, Spain, teaching English to adults. That’s where he met Bridget, a fellow American doing the same thing. They wound up moving to Fort Collins briefly, next to Costa Rica, then to Los Angeles and, finally, back to Fort Collins –

and in the process, getting married and having three beautiful children.



Kurt North with wife Bridget, and daughters Kenzie, Kelsey, and Kyla

Kurt also had selling in his background. And while he didn't feel that he was a typical salesperson, he had done his share of getting in front of people. Further, he even had experience on the *other* side of the table, having worked in small business—Kurt grew up working in his dad's restaurant, starting at the age of five. Many of Our Town's best partners are restaurants (not to mention doctors and dentists' offices). "Part of why I chose Our Town," Kurt says, "is that the concept made sense—not just for me, but for what I assumed about my potential clients as well. If I owned my dad's restaurant, reaching new residents would seem like a foundation for that business. I feel like I'm a reasonable person, and there isn't any reason why other business owners wouldn't feel the same way as I did."

The more Kurt thought about it, the more he liked the idea of owning an Our Town America franchise. Sure, not giving up his day job could've posed issues, but Kurt felt he could balance both jobs well. By giving up coaching football, he knew he could find the time to put in the work. Plus, as he explained, "Yes, this is a part-time thing for me, but I'm not going to put my time, energy, and money into it and not capitalize on it."

That said, Kurt says he sees himself as a full-time dad and husband first, a full-time teacher second, and a full-time business owner third. He doesn't really do anything part-time.

Moving into Our Town America

If I know I only have four hours to work on my business, I have to be efficient

In 2016, Kurt made the leap and became a franchise owner. Three years later, he has no regrets, other than noting, “I just wish I would’ve done it sooner.”

Still, there are always challenges.

“The biggest obstacle is organizing my time,” Kurt says.

That’s because from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, he is on campus. From 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., he works on Our Town America. During the two days he isn’t on campus, he splits his time on everything from spending time with his kids, just being a dad; to grading papers and working on lectures at CSU; to making calls, sending emails, and meeting with prospective clients for Our Town America.

On one hand, Kurt knows that if he had all week to work on Our Town America, he might double his money. But on the other hand, Kurt sometimes thinks that working on his business part time may give him an edge.

“If I know I only have four hours to work on my business, I *have* to be efficient,” Kurt says.

He knows that his time at home with his little ones is limited. Pretty soon, they will all be off to full-time school, and eventually other things. And once that happens, he says, he would use the extra hours to put back into Our Town America. “I can make that money up, but you can never get that time back with your kids when they’re little.”

And Kurt says he loves Our Town America’s business model. “Our Town America has given me that work-life balance. I know that as long as I knock on ten doors and get three interviews with owners, I’ll get at least one new client,” he says.

He has the ability to work on his business when *he* wants. In other words, he controls his business instead of his business controlling him.

The tricks of the trade

He adds that it isn't that hard to get new clients – provided you have the time to go out and find them. “The ones who get the concept of how valuable it is to get access to new movers, I don't have to convince them. The owners who get it, *get it*,” Kurt says. “I tell them what it is, and I don't have to sell them on it. I'm not very salesy anyway. I'd rather offer services and guidance and let them decide. The challenge, however, is to get in front of those people. They're busy business owners, and they don't always have time to meet.”

Kurt has also found that the skills he has learned from teaching have helped him with owning a business, and vice versa.

For instance, Kurt teaches a public speaking class. He'll share with his students how business owners will tell him: “You have two minutes.” So, North needs to have a 120-second elevator speech about Our Town America prepared and ready to go, which often means having a 40-minute presentation distilled down to the most important points that can be conveyed in two minutes. But then as Kurt explains to his students, “If I'm articulate and give the business owners something of interest, then they may indeed sit down with me for forty minutes.”

In other words, Kurt needs to have his thoughts well organized. Just like his calendar. But while his schedule may sound crazy, Kurt is loving it, and no wonder – business owner, college instructor, co-leading a tight-knit family. It's kind of the American dream.

“I've been very thankful for what Our Town America has done for me – personally, professionally and financially,” Kurt says. “It has made me better on every front.”

Are you looking to take control of your time and your future as a business owner, like Kurtis North? Does the Our Town America franchise opportunity sound like it could be for you? If so, learn more at <https://www.ourtownamerica.com/franchise-us/>.