

# West Coast Expo Fuels Attendance

Potential investors are looking to trade shows and expos.

BY JOEL GOLDSTEIN



**F**ranchising may be growing at a steady pace, but corporate America is still struggling. According to a recent study conducted by SnagAJob.com, one of the largest job sites for part-time and full-time hourly jobs, 35 percent of those polled this summer said they felt their jobs were less secure than in 2009. Not surprisingly, much of this

anxiety is due to being downsized. The survey showed that 34 percent of people who said they had changed jobs in the past year did so after losing their previous position, up from 25 percent who said they had changed jobs because of a layoff in summer 2009.

This is good news for franchisors planning to exhibit during the West Coast Franchise Expo Nov. 5-7 at the Los Angeles Convention Center. According to the Franchise Business Economic Outlook, franchising is responsible for 18 million jobs and this is estimated to increase by adding 36,000 jobs in 2010. Potential investors are looking to trade shows and expos, such as the upcoming L.A. expo, as prime places to explore viable business investments and speak with top level executives about turning their career around—even in recessionary times. MFV Expositions is pulling out all the stops this year to ensure this show generates more qualified attendees than ever before.

One example is its efforts to attract qualified veterans. As a way of saying “Thank you!” all veterans will receive free admission to WCFE this year with a military ID. And because veterans have remained a pillar of the franchising community, MFV Expositions will also donate 10 percent of all admissions to California’s “Welcome Home,” an initiative of the state’s Department of Veterans Affairs that helps

the estimated 30,000 veterans returning home every year to California obtain employment, education and housing benefits. With WCFE 2009 welcoming the most veterans yet, turnout in 2010 is expected to top those numbers, especially with many of this year’s exhibitors offering discounts through IFA’s VetFran program.

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## Free Franchises Offered

In addition to its “amped up” efforts in attracting niche markets, the WCFE will be hosting some great giveaways that are sure to draw crowds. In a time when schools are forced to cut creative programs and special courses,

KidzArt/Art Innovators brings art directly to classrooms, and this year the company will give away five free franchises during the expo. As part of a larger national giveaway, attendees can register to win one of the three franchises when they stop by booth 720 during the

expo. The winners will be announced at the L.A. Convention Center on Nov. 7 at 1 p.m.

“We have nine franchisees currently in California, and they are doing well. Still, there is room for many more franchisees. We would like to double our numbers in the next year. In the first quarters of 2010, we have signed four new agreements nationally,” said Sue Bartman, CEO of KidzArt/Art Innovators. “Californians understand how important the arts are to personal fulfillment, and there is a great need and

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demand for additional art class opportunities in schools where we teach.”

While not every exhibitor can offer attendees a free franchise, other financial incentives are enticing potential investors. Federally-backed loans to small businesses in Southern California and across the nation are increasing as more banks participate in federal lending programs. During the nine-month period that ended June 30, lenders made 1,725 loans to small businesses in Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, about 50 percent more than in the same period a year earlier. The dollar volume of those loans nearly doubled compared with the year-earlier period, to \$850.8 million.

### **Drive Sales, Attract Franchisees**

Like KidzArt/Art Innovators, many franchisors are exhibiting this year to boost brand awareness and continue their success across the nation. With new programs in place and a solid start to 2010, Driven Brands—parent company to six franchised automotive brands, including Meineke Car Care Centers, Maaco Collision Repair & Auto Painting

and Econo Lube N’ Tune—is the perfect example of how businesses can still drive sales and attract franchisees regardless of the economy.

“Trade shows are a great way to increase brand awareness and recruit potential investors—both of which will help grow our franchises throughout 2010 and upcoming years,” said Dave Schaefer, CFE, senior vice president of franchise development at Driven Brands. “We have had tremendous success on the West Coast—specifically in California. We’ve signed 32 franchise agreements in California alone in the last two years. We are certain this year’s WCFE will yield lucrative results as it has in previous years.”

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With independent-business owners struggling to stay afloat, conversion programs, such as Driven Brand’s

Jump Start Program, are also bringing promising attendees through the door this year. Driven Brands launched Jump Start in 2009. It offers shut-down dealerships faced with closing their doors or becoming used-car dealers the opportunity to become franchisees of the company’s nationally-recognized brands at highly discounted costs. Approximately 20 dealerships have already joined the program, and this is only one of the company’s conversion programs available.

From fresh fast-food concepts to home improvement businesses, the 2010 West Coast Franchise Expo caters to the diverse interests of thousands of future entrepreneurs. With the economy picking up and the registration listing growing, now is an optimal time to plan to exhibit. ■

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*Joel Goldstein is group marketing director at MFV Expositions, the producer of leading franchise events worldwide. For information on the WCFE, International Franchise Expo or other MFV Expositions shows, visit [mfvexpo.com](http://mfvexpo.com). To exhibit at the WCFE, call 201-881-1666 or e-mail [exhibit@mfvexpo.com](mailto:exhibit@mfvexpo.com). To hear the latest on the West Coast Franchise Expo, follow MFV on Twitter @WCFE\_2010.*