

TOP 10  
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# JIMMY JOHN'S GOURMET SANDWICHES

After six years of teaching special education students, and three years at an office supply company, Dan Vansteenburg was itching for a career change. He knew he wanted to get into the restaurant business, though he lacked experience and had never so much as taken a business class. But he has become a thriving Jimmy

John's franchisee all the same. "The simplicity and the thoroughness of Jimmy John's systems and procedures allowed me to be successful within months," he says.

That simplicity is truly key. Unlike chains that offer endless customizations, Jimmy John's menu is mostly fixed, which means a streamlined inventory for franchisees, and consistently fast—or to invoke the chain's motto, freaky fast—service for customers. Plus, corporate support is responsive and reliable. "I can't tell you the last time I had a problem that

didn't get resolved within 24 hours," Vansteenburg says. "That level of service from a franchisor is, from my perspective, unprecedented."

Vansteenburg's enthusiasm helps explain why once someone has bought into a Jimmy John's franchise, they tend to commit for the long haul. The number of Jimmy John's franchise closures in 2016 was six out of more than 2,600 shops. As for Vansteenburg? He is now the company's single largest franchisee, with 59 stores across Minnesota, New York, and Boston. —M.M.



**FOUNDED: 1983, Charleston, Ill.**

**U.S. UNITS: 2,600**

**COST TO OPEN A STORE : \$325.5K–\$555K**

**AGE AT WHICH FOUNDER JIMMY JOHN LIAUTAUD  
OPENED HIS FIRST SHOP: 19**