

Chiropractic chain Massage Envy growing

by [Sarah Pringle](#) - Feb. 26, 2012 07:06 PM
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After founding and transforming Massage Envy into a nationwide business in just six years, John Leonesio wants to build a similar chain for chiropractic care.

Leonesio's new business, the Joint ... the Chiropractic Place, has awarded 146 franchises that are open or under development in 17 states, including nine open and four preparing to open in metro Phoenix and two in Tucson. The Joint's ambitious growth goal is to have 1,000 franchises in 10 years.

"We are going to be the first company that will take a chiropractic industry like this nationwide," said Leonesio, whose business model consists of franchises with low-cost services, autonomy from insurance companies, long hours, no appointments, minimal overhead and few employees.

The Scottsdale-based businessman accomplished a similar feat with the massage business. After selling his string of Q the Sports Club fitness centers to 24 Hour Fitness in 1999, he used the proceeds to launch a no-appointment massage clinic near Shea Boulevard and Loop 101. The location's brisk business prompted Leonesio to begin selling Massage Envy franchises. The company added hundreds of locations before he sold the business in 2008.

The no-appointment concept appeals to Arizona State University student Amanda

migraine headaches.

She stumbled upon the Joint because her usual doctor wasn't available on short notice.

Faraci, whose migraines come unexpectedly, likes the convenience of not having to plan ahead.

"As soon as I walked in the door, the doctor was able to see me, and then he did a quick adjustment," Faraci said. "I would definitely go back."

The emergence of a business concept like the Joint comes at a time when traditional chiropractic practices are struggling with the balance between patient care and the requirements of insurance companies.

An alternative, all-cash model is attractive to chiropractors such as Steve Gubernick, who owns the Joint franchise at McDowell Mountain Ranch in Scottsdale.

A monthly membership fee of \$49 covers four monthly adjustments, which he said is cheaper than some insurance copays, which typically range from \$30 to \$50 a visit.

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Faraci, who seeks chiropractic care for

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Non-members receive a one-time, initial visit that includes a consultation, exam and adjustment for \$19.

"I would rather my time and efforts go to patient care," Gubernick said. "If you have to sacrifice your quality of care to worry about an insurance company, you're defeating the whole model."

Alan Immerman, founder and president of the Arizona Chiropractic Society, said that more than 100 Arizona chiropractors have closed, filed for bankruptcy or moved out of state in the last year.

"It's the worst financial crisis, the worst insurance coverage for chiropractic that I have seen in my 32 years that I've been here," Immerman said.

Yet the need and the demand for chiropractic care seems to be increasing, according to Dr. Renee Haberl, president of the Arizona Association of Chiropractic.

"The public is learning that natural ways to approaching their health care is more cost-effective for them, as well as more beneficial to them healthwise," Haberl said.

Chiropractors at the Joint are seeing more patients, according to Gubernick, whose patient visits and revenue have grown at double-digit rates each month since opening seven months ago.

"Every week I set a new record for my clinic in patient volume and dollar volume," he said. "That's blowing me away."

The Joint's business model opens up chiropractic services to people who have never visited a chiropractor, Gubernick said.

The majority of new clients are referrals or walk-ins, he said.

The franchises strive for \$40,000 to \$50,000 in monthly revenue, Leonesio said, explaining that it takes about a year and a half to reach that goal.

That would require a busy schedule for chiropractors. Assuming a fee of \$19 per patient visit, chiropractors would have to see approximately 70 patients per day in a 30-day month to reach about \$40,000.

"We're not changing the way the chiropractic is delivered, what we're doing is primarily giving them more opportunities," Leonesio said. "The model is really designed around the customer."

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