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Lia Smith, CEO: *"We're small, but we're not trying to sell a franchise to just anyone."*

Being Better

ABS provides its franchisees with respect and support.

BY ALAN DORICH



President Kurt Buske and CEO Lia Smith serve seniors who are either still in their homes or who are leaving their homes.

A Better Solution In Home Care (ABS) is in the business of providing healthcare, but its franchisees do not need a medical background. With its leaders' extensive industry expertise, "We have all the experience we can pass on to people," Kurt Buske says.

Based in San Diego, ABS provides caregiving and nursing services to seniors in their homes and in facilities. CEO Lia Smith started the company in 2000, after a long career in the health and aging sector.

When Smith wanted to expand ABS in 2016, she chose to partner with Buske, a medical social worker based in San Diego. "I was really a referral source for the company," he recalls, adding that Smith also wanted to streamline ABS's processes.

Together, the two formed A Better Solution Franchise Systems. Buske, who also serves as the president of the company, implemented its processes and systems, including its trademark Wraparound Care Management model.

Today, "We talk to many who are interested in getting into this business," he says, adding that the company sold the majority of its 12 franchises in the last four months. "It's a time where we're actively growing. We have a lot of territory available in the United States."

ABS sets itself apart with its services, which include caregiving services, nursing care, care management, placement services, facility staffing and transportation.

"We've got many different lines," Smith says. "We have [services] applicable to seniors either in their home or leaving their homes. We do a lot of different things."

The Right Ones

ABS requires specific traits in its franchisees. "I'm looking for partnerships with people I can work with and people who can be entrepreneurial," Smith says. "We want people to think on their feet."

The company also looks for those who can engage with a variety of constituents, including healthcare providers in their communities. "You're also interacting with caregivers," Buske adds, noting that franchisees also need to be able to interact well with clients and families in sensitive situations.

"I look for someone who is personable, engaging and has the ability to communicate," he says, adding that previous experience supervising a staff and working in business management helps. "It's certainly something we look at favorably."

ABS's careful consideration process has led it to turn down some potential franchisees. "We're small, but we're not trying to sell a franchise to just anyone," Smith says, noting that its franchisees need to share the company's vision. "We're not pushing and pulling against each other. They're solid in our foundation."

A Big Deal

An ABS franchise represents a strong opportunity for potential investors, Buske says. "Beyond the territory, best-in-industry training program and the experience that Lia and I both bring to the table, our model of service delivery is pretty special," he says.

Smith notes that the company carefully guides franchisees. "When somebody signs with us, Kurt takes them from step A to step Z," she says.



"I'm proud of how people get themselves off the ground," Smith says. "This system is incredible and it really works."



"We look at them as an extension of our company," she continues, adding that the company respects that its franchisees have chosen ABS over other opportunities. "I'm proud of how people get themselves off the ground. This system is incredible and it really works."

ABS also provides its franchisees with special systems for evaluating caregiver performance and ensuring quality service in home and facility-based settings. The company also continuously invests in technology that benefits its franchisees.

For example, "We've migrated to all cloud-based computing, not only for the office platforms that our franchisees use, but also the client service software," Buske says. "We're also in the final stages of redeveloping full-service micro-sites for our locations."

ABS's franchisees often say "they're pretty much spoiled by us," Smith adds. "We realize their importance to our system. I think that's a big deal."

Driving ABS

Smith sees a strong future for ABS, which is growing its marketing program. "We've done some beta testing with commercials in our own market here in San Diego," she says.

The company also wants to continue partnering with entrepreneurs. "[We can] grow our brand and grow their businesses to something they can be proud of," Smith says, adding that the company will continue treating franchisees with respect.

"Our goal is to treat franchisee No. 250 the way we treated franchisee No. 1," she says. "It's important that our integrity level and our values system is what drives this brand."

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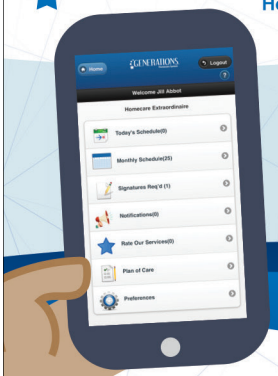

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