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# FranchiseCanada

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CEO PROFILE

## BUCKING the TRENDS

Pro Fleet Care President Greg Lawrie  
blazes his own franchise trail





Pro Fleet Care President Greg Lawrie (left) and his father, Pro Fleet Care founder Bob Lawrie (right) with David Switzer, Niagara Franchisee.

*By Roma Ihnatowycz*

**A**s a young boy, Greg Lawrie often helped out his dad with his rustproofing business. He worked at it part-time as he completed high school and then university.

“I learned the spraying process right from the age of 13, and I’m 41 now,” says Lawrie, President of Pro Fleet Care Mobile Rust Control. “So I learned from the bottom up.”

It was far from a straight career climb. After graduating from university with a business degree in hand, Lawrie set out for greener pastures – preferably ones that didn’t involve manual labour. He first worked for IBM, and then for Human Resources Development Canada.

But it didn’t take long for Lawrie to decide that Pro Fleet Care, his father’s rustproofing business, held far more potential and appeal. “At my earlier jobs, I was starting to slip. I wasn’t motivated,” he says. “I realized that success, for me, is not about going out and getting a job and being told by your boss what it is that you can or can’t do.”

The independent-minded Lawrie preferred the challenge of building up a family business to sitting behind a desk at the mercy of mercurial bosses and an unstable economy. And while he concedes that rustproofing may not be the “sexiest” of work, one needs to take a more pragmatic view.

“People want ‘trendy’ businesses, but I would suggest that ‘trendy’ businesses don’t always pay the bills,” says Lawrie, in regards to the innate allure of ‘flashy’ brands. “When I look at a business, I don’t look at the sex appeal. I look at the hard facts.”

The hard facts staring back at Lawrie when he joined his father at Pro Fleet Care in 2001 were that this was a profitable business that had potential to grow. Most importantly, it could expand far beyond the small service operation for commercial clients that it was at the time.

The downside, Lawrie says, was that it was still a specialized niche market that did not attract the same interest as bricks-and-mortar brands because fewer people want to work outside. The upside, however, was that it was a highly profitable business for anyone willing to do just that.





Lawrie set to work and spent the first five years working alongside his father, learning the trade, researching the industry, and developing a vision for the company. He also worked out a business plan that would stand up to the challenges of a tough marketplace. “My dream,” says Lawrie simply, “was to build a huge business.”

The young entrepreneur settled on the franchise model, hiring a consultant in franchise development to aid him in his task. “I took a good, hard look at the company, did an analysis and determined that we have a lot of strengths but also that we had a lot of weaknesses,” says Lawrie of his decision.

“The main weakness I saw was employment. It didn’t matter what we paid someone; if we didn’t find the right person, they wouldn’t do a good job. So I decided that instead of hiring employees, I would franchise and give away a larger percentage of the profit to people who have skin in the game.”

The decision, says Lawrie, was a strategic one: “I could have built my business faster, and it could have made a lot more money through a more traditional employment strategy. But I decided to pass along the profit of the business to people who are like-minded.”

Pro Fleet Care started franchising in 2007, and now has 15 franchisees in Canada, with two more in the works. It also has three dealers in the U.S. – in Pennsylvania, Indiana and New York state. The Canadian franchises are primarily based in southwestern Ontario, but there is also one in

Alberta. In terms of future growth, the company is open to franchising all across the country and wants to double its business in the next two years.

Each franchisee operates a single mobile unit as a home-based business. The company looks for franchisees who take a hands-on approach and operate the business themselves rather than hiring others to do the work. Once more, it all comes down to the personal involvement that Lawrie feels is necessary to run a successful Pro Fleet Care operation.

***“The benefits to running a mobile business are that there are no property taxes, no heat, no hydro payments, no building insurance, no staffing liability or costly rent.”***

– Greg Lawrie, President, Pro Fleet Care

The beauty of running your own Pro Fleet Care business is that there is enormous flexibility and no overhead costs, with the exception of the mobile unit itself. “The benefits to running a mobile business are that there are no property taxes, no heat, no hydro payments, no building insurance, no staffing liability or costly rent,” says Lawrie.

As well, Pro Fleet Care can be run on a part-time basis for those holding down other jobs. One of Lawrie’s fran-

Pro Fleet Care's target market is commercial companies with fleets of vehicles such as trucking firms and snow clearing enterprises.



chisees, for instance, is a professor of English who is able to run his franchise while continuing his academic post. Others run their franchise as a weekend business. The work is that flexible, stresses Lawrie.

Additional perks tied to the job are a generous two months off every winter – normally from mid-January to mid-March due to inclement weather – and the option of conducting the administrative tasks from just about anywhere. “You do not have to sit at a desk, or pay staff to sit at a desk waiting for customers to show up, as long as you have your phone with you, your business is open,” says Lawrie. “I have booked work with clients while on the beach in Florida.”

Yet remuneration is generous, with many franchisees earning in the six-figure range. “What this company does is it takes away the overhead, creating more profit for franchisees. You can make a doctor’s wages in this business, yet work far less than a general practitioner and you have freedom of schedule,” says Lawrie. Total initial franchisee investment is just under \$80,000, which includes the franchise fee, trailer and equipment, as well as a pick-up truck.

The target market is commercial, with clients ranging from municipalities, to school bus operators, to long-haul trucking firms. While Pro Fleet Care management will help with targeting and acquiring new clients, franchisees are expected to do a lot of the sales legwork themselves in order to build a personal relationship with their customer base.

Lawrie attributes the company’s success to its excellent business model, which gives franchisees this competitive income opportunity while providing customers with an equally

competitive product that comes with an annual rolled-over guarantee.

The Pro Fleet Care system creates a barrier of protection for metals and neutralizes the harmful effects of salt and moisture. The company has developed specialized products that penetrate into hard-to-reach seams and crevices, and they are applied with a unique two-step application process. All areas of the vehicle are protected.

Today, Lawrie is happy to be his own boss and to have the opportunity to help his franchisees become independent business owners as well. “I have the ability to mentor people to success,” he says. “I’m giving people their freedom back. I’m showing them how to be successful without other people putting up hurdles in front of them.”

Who needs ‘trendy’ when you can have all that? 

## PRO FLEET CARE STATS

**Franchise Units in Canada:** 15 **USA:** 3

**Corporate Units in Canada:** 1

**In Business Since:** 1984

**Franchising Since:** 2007

**Franchise Fee:** \$20K

**Investment Required:** \$33K – \$70K varies if purchase truck outright

**Training:** 2 wks training/Technical/Operational/ongoing

**Available Territories:** All of Canada, US

**Website:** [www.profleetcare.com](http://www.profleetcare.com)

**CFA Member Since:** 2007



### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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