

How 2 Learning Franchises Switched to Virtual Lessons

By Beth Ewen, April 9, 2020



Bette Fetter, founder and CEO of Young Rembrandts, with a couple of her artist students. In one week's time, her team switched the in-person lessons to virtual and rolled them out to franchisees.

TheCoderSchool, where coaches teach kids how to write computer code, used to conduct its sessions in person. Same for Young Rembrandts, which helps people learn how to draw. Both had to pivot quickly when shutdown orders starting hitting mid-March.

Bette Fetter started Young Rembrandts on a simple premise: one teacher helping students learn to draw while physically together. When schools closed and sent children home, a couple of corporate staff and a few franchisees floated the idea of virtual lessons.

"At first I was hesitant—for about three minutes, just thinking that's not our brand. I want kids OFF the screens." But she soon realized, "this is a great opportunity to still keep teaching and still drive revenue."

Fetter's adult son, the company's videographer, ended up sheltering in place at the family home. The video studio formerly set up in company headquarters moved into her basement, along with the education department.

"We had a call, we talked about it, and by that Friday or Saturday we were filming our first lesson," starring Fetter.

For her, it was a sweet return to the early days, before the system grew and she became CEO. "I love teaching, and I love being with kids and so it's been really sweet. When I'm filming, I really focus on, like I'm talking to one child."

She said whole families in some cases are taking the recorded lessons on demand, and sending in pictures they've drawn, marveling at how long their kids stayed engaged with the activity.

Lessons cost about \$10 each, and families pay for a six- to 10-week season's worth of classes. Revenue has dropped off "a little bit," she said, especially as some families' income has dropped as well.

Based in Elgin, Illinois, Young Rembrandts has 102 units and began franchising in 2001. Total investment is \$40,000, with \$100,000 in net worth required. Mohini Joshi, owner of a Young Rembrandts franchise in Michigan, wrote about receiving "nothing but positive response from my families... They are being very receptive and I am so, so optimistic that this all is going to be behind us and we will be holding in-person classes in no time."

Link to article: <https://bit.ly/2y1tqZs>.