

SCALING BEYOND THREE LOCATIONS: ADDRESSING FRANCHISE CHALLENGES WITH SMART STRATEGIES



Let me introduce myself: I'm Kristie Booker, founder of Imagine Collective and an experienced leader in helping food and beverage brands grow from their earliest days to thriving national and international operations.

Working with some of Australia's most ambitious brands has shown me that serving up success in franchising takes more than passion and a dash of good luck—it requires robust systems, fresh thinking, and the right people around the table. I've found that the recipe for sustainable growth is as much about attention to detail as it is about vision, and I've spent my career helping businesses get the ingredients just right.

Expanding a franchise is no small task. Once businesses move past three locations, the complexities begin to accumulate rapidly. From guiding young brands in their infancy to supporting established groups as they open new venues around the world, my focus has always been on giving businesses the strategy, support, and collaborative energy needed to succeed at every stage of growth.

Collaboration sits at the core of everything we do at Imagine Collective. I started this company because I believe that great brands are built by bringing together top talent—founders, chefs, operations managers, marketers, and sector experts—each contributing their unique skills and creativity. At Imagine Collective, we roll up our sleeves and get involved—helping brands tackle real-world challenges, streamline their day-to-day operations, and put practical systems in place that unlock growth and protect what makes each business special.

Guiding Brands from First Ideas to National Rollout

Whether you're an early-stage business developing your first menu or an established brand ready for national or international expansion, we work side by side with clients through every step. Whether early-stage businesses are fine-tuning their first menu or established brands are embarking on national or international expansion, we work hand-in-hand with clients at every stage. Whether you're launching a new concept, refining your operations, or looking to grow into new markets, Imagine Collective exists to give you the tools, support, and strategy you need to thrive—without losing sight of your brand's heart.

Key Challenges for QSR Franchises (and How We Tackle Them)

Working with QSR businesses across Australia, we consistently see a familiar set of hurdles that can threaten growth and profitability:

- **Rising Labour Costs:** Inefficient rostering and unclear team structures lead to bloated wage bills.
- **COGS Blowouts:** Weak supplier deals, and a lack of tight SKU control push up food costs.
- **Operational Wastage:** Inconsistent prep systems and poor forecasting cause unnecessary waste.

- **Confusing P&Ls:** Many brands encounter scaling roadblocks at site 3, site 10, or site 20, and struggle to understand why profits aren't increasing.
- **Risky Site Selection:** Too many companies rely on gut feel, not data, when choosing their next location—resulting in costly mistakes.

At Imagine Collective, we roll up our sleeves and work alongside brands to tackle the challenges they face head-on. Our whole team pulls together, figuring out the best systems and operations to implement, reviewing data to support smart decision-making. Or even implementing new ways to collect information to drive further growth. With a practical, on-hand approach, our clients love working with us. By leveraging the support, they need to excel in their business growth.

Our Holistic Approach: Everything Under One Roof

We partner with ambitious brands to offer hands-on support and practical solutions that boost operational excellence and strengthen your brand from the inside out. Here's how we do it:

- **Venue Consulting:** We overhaul back-of-house and front-of-house systems, redesign roles, and streamline workflows for consistency and efficiency.
- **Brand Representation:** We proudly share your story with key partners and audiences, ensuring your brand stays authentic even as you grow.
- **Product Sourcing:** We help build and renegotiate pantry lists, manage SKUs, and nurture supplier relationships for better costs and fresher offerings.

From initial strategy to national rollout, we're standing firm alongside you—guiding each step with practical, commercial insight.

Data, Technology & Contractor Negotiations

Today's most successful QSR brands rely on hard data, not hunches. Embracing digital



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POS systems like Square equips our clients with real-time insights about peak sales periods, enabling them to roster accurately and avoid shortages during data-proven rushes. Our labour reviews often reveal opportunities to trim wage costs by up to 15%—with zero dip in customer experience.

We also prepare you for contractor negotiations and tender processes—breaking down expenses, benchmarking quality, and arming you with the facts you need—no more being blindsided by hidden costs or subpar service contracts.

Smarter Store Placement and Franchise-Ready Systems

Site selection is both an art and a science. We use data-backed market mapping, foot traffic analysis, and demographic insights to inform every placement—from Olympic precincts in Brisbane to bustling city centres or promising suburban opportunities. As you develop your growth strategy, we assist in building the franchise infrastructure (manuals, training, systems) tailored to your ideal model—whether company-owned, franchise, license, or hybrid.

Menu Engineering & Commercial Strategy

Menu development isn't just about taste—it's about deliverability, cost, and performance.

We partner with brands to re-engineer menus for ease of execution, negotiate smarter with suppliers, streamline prep, and identify high-margin stars that boost your bottom line.

Sustainability: From Trend to Table Stakes

Modern consumers and stakeholders expect brands to take sustainability seriously. We guide companies through transitioning from surface-level eco gestures to meaningful, operationally-integrated sustainability programs. From reducing energy use and waste to setting supplier and menu standards, our frameworks set QSRs up to meet 2030 goals and future-proof their reputation.

The Dream Team: Joel and Matt's Impact

Imagine Collective's strength comes from dedicated QSR experts you'd usually only find in top executive roles. Joel and Matt are seasoned leaders with deep roots in the quick-service restaurant sector:

- **Joel Chrystal** (*Culinary & Hospitality Innovation*): With decades of hands-on QSR experience, Joel is a systems thinker whose talent for menu engineering and streamlined back-of-house operations consistently elevates speed, quality, and cost control. He's renowned for aligning menu development with operational

realities, ensuring every new offering is both delicious and executable at scale.

- **Matt Conroy** (*Operations & Strategy*): Matt has a reputation for turning around underperforming QSR venues and building high-performing teams. His background spans compliance, profitability, and developing rock-solid systems that withstand the pressures of rapid growth and multi-site management. Matt's strategic, people-first style drives lasting improvements in culture and performance across entire networks.

Together, Joel and Matt serve as your "plug-in" QSR operations team—delivering proven expertise without the commitment of full-time hires and giving your brand an edge in an increasingly competitive market.

Success Stories: Results that Matter

While most of Imagine Collective's clients prefer to remain anonymous—something we fully respect and protect with strict NDAs—we're still able to share some highlights of what we've achieved together. This commitment to privacy allows us to work quietly and effectively behind the scenes, focusing on meaningful results rather than publicity, and fostering the trust our clients count on.

Imagine Collective has supported brands to:

- Develop franchise-ready SOPs for nationwide rollouts.
- Restructure kitchen ops, cut wage costs, and enhance service speed.
- Rebuild supply chains and negotiate better deals, saving hundreds of thousands every year.
- Guide early-stage brands from single-site launches to multi-site stability.
- Support Olympic-focused placement strategies and U.S. market entries, including major juice and smoothie QSR launches.

Global Growth Expertise

Imagine Collective is equipped to support brands looking to expand into the U.S. and international markets. Our experience goes beyond local growth—we've guided clients through the complex challenges of overseas expansion, from building detailed operating manuals to managing supplier relationships and rolling out training programs tailored for new regions. This ensures that no matter the location, brands can deliver a consistent, high-quality customer experience. With a proven record in navigating market entry strategies and operational rollouts abroad, we're ready to help your brand succeed on a global stage.

Borrowed Expertise When You Need It Most

You don't always need a long-term exec to unlock growth. Our "borrow the ops manager" service parachutes in the skills required—from menu troubleshooting to rapid training, overseeing launches, and untangling challenging systems—so founders and operators can keep their eye on the strategy, not get buried in the weeds.

A Final Helping of Parting Wisdom

The QSR industry—and the wider hospitality world—are now shaped by global trends that move faster than ever before, bringing fresh opportunities but also new challenges that demand a nimble, thoughtful response. Helping brands adapt and rise above these shifts is my job and one of my greatest joys, but here's what really matters:

At the heart of food and hospitality is connection. People drive this industry, and every menu, every meal, is a chance to spark joy, build memories, and create



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moments that keep customers coming back. Your impact goes far beyond a great P&L or perfect kitchen systems; it's in the satisfaction of your team, the smiles across the counter, and the sense of belonging you foster with each bite served.

If you take away one thing from this, let it be this: scaling a food brand isn't just about rapid growth or hitting bigger numbers. It's about building something meaningful, memorable, and lasting—crafting experiences that matter to customers, teams, and communities. That's what makes this

work important, and that's what makes it worth doing.

Are you an Aussie franchise owner ready to give your business a boost? Borrow some of the best operations managers in the market and instantly level up your systems, team culture, and profits—without the commitment of a full-time hire. Visit www.imaginecollective.net to see how Imagine Collective can help you scale smarter, faster, and more sustainably.