

FRANCHISE CHATTER

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Franchise Chatter Exclusive: Q&A Interview with Brian Gross, President of Bach to Rock

(Ambrosio's note: Bach to Rock is one of those unique businesses I wish had existed when I was growing up. Their fresh take on music education makes learning an instrument so much more fun and effective, and I can see this as something that can really help kids of all ages gain more self-confidence. With an original concept and top-notch management, I have high hopes that this new franchise opportunity will live up to its full potential.)

[Bach to Rock \(B2R\)](#), America's music school for students of all ages, opened its first corporate-owned location in Bethesda, Maryland in 2007 and has since grown to six schools, two in Maryland and four in Virginia. Co-founded by a Julliard-trained middle school teacher, Bach to Rock transformed music instruction into a team sport by coupling rigorous individual instruction with "jam sessions" that keep students motivated by playing in a group.

Brian Gross was appointed President of Bach to Rock in March 2011 after serving as Vice President of Marketing and Operations. Prior to joining Bach to Rock, Brian served as President of Rileyroos, LLC, a children's footwear company based in Hunt Valley, Maryland. Prior to founding Rileyroos, Brian was the General Manager of Barton-Cotton, Inc., a direct marketing agency based in Baltimore, MD.

Brian began his career in banking at Bank of America, then transitioned into brand management for Kraft Foods in Chicago, Illinois. He also worked in brand management for Cover Girl at Procter and Gamble, and as Director of Business Concept Development for Sylvan Learning Centers.

Brian earned a B.S. in Economics from the University of Delaware and a MBA from University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School.

Franchise Chatter (FC): Can you tell us the story behind the founding of Bach to Rock?



Brian Gross, President of Bach to Rock

Brian Gross (BG): In 2004, Jeff Levin, a Julliard-trained middle-school music teacher opened a new concept in music education that coupled rigorous individual instruction with “jam sessions” that keep students motivated by playing in a group. He used modified arrangements of modern music and grouped students into bands to motivate students and to provide students with immediate success and gratification.

Three years later, an executive with Cambridge Information Group recognized the power of the concept when his middle-school son began taking lessons at the Bethesda school. In 2007, Cambridge Information Group purchased the Bethesda school, renamed it Bach to Rock, and began immediate expansion in the Washington, DC market. Today, we operate six schools in the Washington, DC area and are expanding nationwide.

FC: What made you decide to franchise your concept at this time?

BG: We’ve experienced solid growth at all our Bach to Rock schools and are now ready to begin expanding our footprint nationwide. In fact, Inc. magazine named Bach to Rock as one of the fastest growing private companies in America and the Washington Business Journal named it the number one company to watch in 2012.

The timing is right for Bach to Rock to expand. FRANData estimates that the education services industry experienced the second highest growth in franchising, after the fitness centers sector, in 2010. The number of education-related franchise units increased by 500 from 2009 to 2010 and by a total of 1,000 since 2006.

In addition, interest in playing music is at an all-time high, especially with the popularity of television shows like American Idol and Glee, as well as pop culture phenomena such as Guitar Hero, Rock Band, and iTunes. Bach to Rock is poised to meet the increased need for high quality music education, and we look forward to introducing our unique teaching approach to more students across the country.

Furthermore, several economic, demographic, and psychological trends make this an ideal time to own a Bach to Rock music school. As schools and local governments cut music education programs, many are turning to private music lessons to fill the void, recognizing the value that music can bring. According to a

recent Gallup survey by NAMM (the National Association of Music Merchants), more people are playing music and own musical instruments today than in the last decade.

FC: For those unfamiliar, please tell us about the courses of instruction you offer? How do you differentiate yourselves from other schools offering the same classes?



BG: Bach to Rock helps children, seniors, and adults learn to play and sing the music they love. Our curriculum is based on the knowledge that students learn best when they join together to play the music they like most. We call this our B2R method and it is what fosters teamwork, builds self-esteem, and motivates our students to stay committed to developing their music skills.

Our approach to music instruction brings the team sport concept to what has traditionally been a very isolating experience. The group technique brings teamwork, socialization, and healthy competition to music instruction. Students are encouraged to join groups, ensembles, and rock bands. Once in these groups, we expand the experience by offering them the opportunity to work in our professional recording studio and perform publicly in marquee venues like the 9:30 Club and Strathmore.

FC: Aside from your regular classes, what other revenue streams are available to franchisees of Bach to Rock?

BG: A breadth of revenue streams differentiates B2R from other music schools. From an early childhood education program called Rock City that helps preschoolers build a foundation to read music and develop fine motor skills, to B2R's senior program that challenges active adults to share their love of music and enhance their own learning, we serve all ages. Additional opportunities for a diverse revenue base include a state-of-the-art recording studio, birthday and corporate parties, and summer camp programs.

FC: What is the ideal neighborhood and location for a Bach to Rock franchise?

BG: B2R schools should be located in an area that includes approximately 5,000 to 15,000 households with children and with a median family income of \$75,000 or more. We expect that most schools will

encompass a geographic area that will include customers within a four to five mile radius from the school and/or an approximate 15 to 20 minute drive from a customer's home to the school.

FC: Can you describe the ideal franchisee for Bach to Rock? What skills or attributes are required to be successful?



BG: To fuel B2R's growth, the company is seeking qualified franchise candidates with strong management or business backgrounds. While music experience or ability is not necessary, candidates should be able to build a strong team of committed musicians to ensure the school's success.

FC: What kind of assistance will you offer franchisees to help in recruiting and training instructors? What other forms of

assistance are available to help your franchisees become profitable?

BG: Bach to Rock franchisees are provided with an array of tools to position them for success including: a proprietary web-based management and center operating system; hands-on training to learn our unique teaching methods, management and administration of a school; and proven advertising and marketing programs. Additionally, Bach to Rock provides site selection support and prototypical specifications for the build-out.

FC: Can you tell us about the initial investment and ongoing expenses needed to open and operate one of your schools? What can you share with us about your concept's profit potential?

BG: Individuals seeking to own and operate a Bach to Rock should possess a minimum net worth of \$600,000 and liquid assets of at least \$100,000. Franchisees can expect their initial investment to start at approximately \$397,130, including a \$35,000 franchise fee.

FC: What are some challenges in this line of business that your prospective franchisees need to be aware of?

BG: There will always be challenges in any line of business you encounter. We are constantly improving our processes, expanding our offerings, and seeking ways to enhance the music learning experience for our students. We have a strong base of loyal customers and a unique brand concept that has enabled us to be successful and refine our business model during the past few economically challenging years.

FC: What are your goals for Bach to Rock in the next few years and how do you plan to grow your



business?

BG: Our goal is to continue to fulfill our mission of making learning to play music fun so that we can achieve our vision of being the school of choice for music instruction. We expect to open our first franchise location in the first quarter of 2012 and continue expanding across the country in 2013 and beyond. The first region we're targeting for franchise development is the Mid-Atlantic, from New York to North Carolina.

FC: Is there anything else you wish to share about Bach to Rock?

BG: At the individual school level, our focus is exclusively on the quality of our student experience. This is evident in our hiring and training process for our teachers, the quality and depth of our curriculum, and the performance opportunities we provide.

Our instructors and staff members have a true passion for music. In fact, many of them are professional musicians and often perform at well-known venues around the country. This passion for music is what makes our instructors so good at what they do. They care deeply about their students and are dedicated to helping them learn the music they love most and build the confidence to succeed.

To learn more about Bach to Rock, check out their [website](#), [Facebook page](#), and [Twitter feed](#).

<http://www.franchisechatter.com/2012/01/25/franchise-chatter-exclusive-qa-interview-with-brian-gross-president-of-bach-to-rock>