

## RECESSION? What RECESSION?

*How three companies beat the odds and made 2009 a very good year*

BY TRACY STAPP

**W**hat do dry cleaning, real estate and hotels have in common? The bad news is, they were all hit hard by the economic downturn. The good news is, well, it's not all bad news for these industries. Each had companies that defied the odds, powered through the challenges of 2009 and came out on top of their categories—for the first time, no less—in *Entrepreneur's* Franchise 500® ranking. We talked with the top execs in each company about their secrets to surviving the recession and standing out from the crowd.

### Certified Restoration Drycleaning Network

**A**s consumers cut the luxuries from their budgets, dry cleaning businesses suffered. But not Certified Restoration Drycleaning Network. That's because CRDN's business focuses on textile restoration for disaster victims.

"It's not a 'want to' business, it's a 'have to' business," says CEO Wayne Wudyka. "We solve problems. We help people put their lives back together. We did that for 24,000 families last year."

Thanks to its niche, CRDN had its best year ever in 2009, with sales surpassing \$105 million. Although most CRDN franchisees also own retail dry cleaning businesses, "in many cases, CRDN is saving their companies," Wudyka says. But they're doing far more than just surviving. Thirty-nine of CRDN's 90-plus franchisees saw their 2009 sales exceed \$1 million. And by continuing to build the company's relationships with insurance carriers, Wudyka believes things will only get better.

"While our growth has been noteworthy," he says, "we feel that we have only scratched the surface of what's possible."

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