

# Meet the Owner

People often ask me how I got started with Papa John's and how I ended up here in the Tri-Cities, well it's kind of a long story that started over 15 years ago! Here we go! I grew up in Mesa, Arizona. A few weeks before I turned 16 I saw some Papa John's coupons in the newspaper and I noticed that on the ad it said, "Now Hiring." This was the first time I had ever heard of Papa John's before (side note: Who knew that I would go from not knowing what Papa John's was to being absolutely passionate about pizza!) Anyways, after seeing the ad I immediately hopped on my bike and rode to the nearest store to pick up an application. I took it home to carefully fill it out and returned it the following day. I handed it to the person at the front register and began to leave. As I walked out the door, the Papa John's manager came out and asked if I was looking for a job. I told him I was and that I would really like to work there. He asked me how old I was and when I told him I would be 16 in a few weeks, he told me he couldn't hire me until then and that he would contact me at that time if they still had a position open. To this day I remember getting that phone call on my birthday from Pete, the manager at that Papa John's. When he asked me if I still wanted a job I replied very enthusiastically that I did! My first day was September 7, 1997. I remember getting ready that day; putting on my khakis, polo and brand new Papa John's hat. My mother gave me one piece of advice that day; she told me to make sure that I was working the entire time I was there, to never stand around and always find something to do even if other's were not doing the same. I have always been grateful for her advice to me that day and the work ethic my parents taught me. During my first day of work I learned about normal stuff like customer service and taking orders, but the best part was that after my shift they let me take home a pizza; my first Papa John's Pizza

ever! It was a small pepperoni pizza and I loved it! I remember noticing how much better it was than any other pizza I had ever had.

I continued to work there learning new positions over time until I had completed training in all positions. After being there for a year the management team told me I had the potential to become a manager when I turned 18 and from that moment on, that was my goal! Right before I turned 18 I started training on management duties (what was really exciting was to finally get one of those white management polos instead of red like everyone else)! I had just started my senior year of high school; my typical week consisted of a full high school schedule along with about 35-40 hours at work. It took some time to get used to closing the store at midnight and then waking up for school at 6 am the next morning all while keeping my grades up, but it didn't matter because this was what I wanted to do and it was what I enjoyed, so I made it work! I continued working there until a few months after I graduated from high school at which point I left to serve a mission for my church for the next two years in Australia. I learned and developed my character more in those two years than I could have ever expected. They helped shape the person I am today in all aspects of my life, not the least of which as a business man. Upon returning home I thought about looking for a different job; maybe trying something new, but my previous general manager at Papa John's talked me into returning.

I was now 21, working as an assistant manager at Papa John's and taking college classes at the local community college with the intent to major in architecture (that had been my dream since I was a young boy). I was asked multiple times to take a position as a general manager, but I wanted to stay focused on school and knew that being a general manager would require too much time and commitment so I declined. I didn't want to do it unless I could

give it my all! After about a year of full time school and full time work I started to realize that I really enjoyed working at Papa John's, but didn't enjoy my college classes. I enjoyed learning but did not enjoy formal education, I started to question and debate between continuing school or taking the promotion and focusing on a management career. When it came down to it, I felt that getting a degree was important, but I wanted to move forward with Papa John's, so I took a general manager promotion and decided to change my major to business management.

Shortly thereafter I was approached with an opportunity to partner with someone in their purchase of a single Papa John's restaurant, they were aware of my history and the success I had had managing stores. This was a huge opportunity! I would have a small percentage of ownership in a store and manage all operations. I decided to take this opportunity and would continue my school studies part-time. I think it is important to note that a few months after taking this position I married the girl of my dreams and she's been by my side ever since!

I spent the next year and a half working my butt off in that store! During that time we had some really great success; receiving national recognition from Papa John's as well as almost doubling weekly revenues in the first year! The next big step in my career came when I was asked by a former coworker to join a partnership in Boise where they had just a year previous purchased the Papa John's stores there. My wife and I thought a lot about what this change would mean. We would move away from our families and for me it ultimately meant discontinuing my college classes. As you may have guessed we decided to take the leap and it is where I spent the next 3 ½ years. During that time my partners and I were able double the number of stores from three to six. Also during that time we decided to try our hand at a little bit of real estate as well as franchising another brand.

We saw some great successes, but we also experienced moments of failure. We made sacrifices and mistakes, some things we learned through trial and error, but I definitely learned a great deal during that time.

Late in 2009 we found ourselves looking to expand, we found a group of stores for sale that were struggling and eventually closed down completely. We immediately went to work to purchase the assets from the bank and re-open the stores. By March of 2010 my wife, our two daughters who had been born in Boise and I found ourselves packing up our lives once again to move to the Tri-Cities while my business partner remained in Boise to run the stores there. We re-opened two stores in the Tri-Cities in March of 2010 and the following month re-opened another three in Spokane. I spent the rest of the year traveling back and forth trying to rebuild the store's reputation and bring the quality of food and service back up to par. The stores were left in terrible shape and with a terrible reputation. It was hard work but it was also rewarding to see the changes come about. However, I soon realized that what I had come to want most was to own a few stores in one place, I wanted to be a local owner. However my business partners' had always wanted to continue to expand and grow in other places and possibly other businesses. I now had a different vision, so in January 2011 not only was our third child (a boy!) born but also my business partners and I split apart amicably allowing us to follow our own visions. They would move forward with the Boise and Spokane stores while I would remain in the Tri-Cities and own the stores here on my own. When we originally came to town we thought we would be here for a year or two before moving on to the next business opportunity, but now it would be home and we couldn't be more excited! We have since built a third store and hope to have a fourth in the future. I have worked hard to become an active part of our community and get to know as many people as I can. We have strived to use the business as a catalyst for

good. The stores have seen great success and improvement thanks to a great community here. My journey to this point was not easy and I definitely didn't have any of it handed to me, I had to work really hard. If I'm being honest I thought about calling it more than once and moving on to something else. It is amazing the twists and turns that occurred but I could not be happier with the destination of today!