



## Apple Seeds: International Operations Program of the Year

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**What the company does:** Apple Seeds develops large, all-in-one play spaces for children, from newborn to age five. Apple Seeds centers feature indoor playgrounds, more than 100 classes per week, a kids' hair salon, a toy store and bookstore, and a healthy snackbar. The company operates a day camp and hosts birthday parties, play dates, and corporate events. The first of two Manhattan centers opened in 2007; in the past two years, the company has

opened locations in Mumbai, India, and Dubai, UAE, with more to come. Its goal: to provide safe, clean, fun places for communities to gather, socialize, and play.

**Program details:** Apple Seeds's partners in Mumbai and Dubai are master franchisors who will sell sub-franchises on the company's behalf. A similar arrangement is soon to begin in Mexico. In addition to producing upfront fees, these deals produce royalties of between 6 percent and 7 percent of gross revenues. The company recently entered into a partnership to form Apple Seeds International, which will seek new international franchisees, vet and train partners, and offer a variety of financing tools to ensure sufficient capitalization. "We will soon be moving into Singapore, Turkey, China, and Brazil," says co-founder Craig Schlanger.

**Tips for implementing your own program:** Apple Seeds aims to ensure consistent delivery of service in widely varying locations, with the help of its extensive documentation, including employee training manuals, curriculums, intellectual property, and more. "Still, we know that what works in New York might not work in Mumbai," Schlanger says. Both the company's master franchisor programs and its Apple Seeds International partnership will help ensure that good fits are found. "In addition, it's important to be flexible when dealing with international partners. It's crucial to be a good listener in negotiations. What are your potential partner's problems? Here's what we think are solutions; what do you think? If you keep an open mind, you end up building a business that works for everybody."