

Quick Service, indeed: Taco John's reduces key phase of buildout to 3 days

New building process creates instant 'wow' factor for the community, speeds up timeframe for opening



CUTLINE: The outer shell of the new Taco John's franchise in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, was erected in about 3 days, including stone and exterior finishes. Taco John's partnership with Fullerton Building Systems gives franchisees the opportunity for a quicker build-out.

When Cathy Lewis and her husband, Cray, got ready to build their new Taco John's franchise in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, they knew they were racing against the clock. New construction, particularly in the unpredictable fall and winter months in Western Kentucky, takes time.

That's why they decided to take advantage of a new partnership between Taco John's and Fullerton that uses off-site manufacturing to pre-build panels for the building. Rather than frame up walls on-site, which can take several weeks, this process allows pre-built panels with most, if not all, of the exterior finishes factory-applied to be joined together without sacrificing anything — aesthetically or structurally — on the finished product. The Lewises were up and running by December 2015.

“That was our best choice for getting open as quickly as possible,” says Cathy Lewis. “It’s just a concrete slab one day and the next thing you know the entire building is up. The speed of it is incredible; it cut about two months off our timeline, which for us meant we were able to open and the end of 2015.

“We were open earlier and earning profits from the store a little bit earlier, and you had a lot of excitement from the town, too,” she says. “We actually got mentioned in the newspaper. It was a big deal in this town.”

How it works

Dave Walock, President and CEO of Fullerton Companies, says his firm has worked with a lot of brands in the fast-casual and QSR space, including Arby’s and McDonald’s, and has counted Taco John’s among its clients for nearly 25 years. The ability to provide a quality build-out in a way that allows franchisees to save money, time or both, depending on what region of the country they’re in, has fueled Fullerton’s leadership in the panelization market.

“In the industry in general, when you walk by one of our buildings and you don’t even know it’s one of ours, that’s the key,” Walock says. “We’ve been more on the cutting edge of designing our panels in such a way that you eliminate things like a joint every 8 feet you may have seen years ago when discussing a “panelized approach” to construction. Franchisees like the flexibility and durability; they want it to perform just as well, and they want it to be as aesthetically pleasing.”

Fullerton’s pre-made panels can add value to franchise build-outs in a number of ways. Far more advanced than stick-framing and not quite as complete as a prefabricated modular building, the panels are built to specification, complete with exterior finishes, shipped to the location and assembled on-site. Taco John’s may have a common prototype, but for Fullerton it’s fairly simple to make market-specific modifications on the factory floor to accommodate, for example, a new franchise in a community with a planned-unit development overlay that might require a certain percentage of brick facing.

Advantages vary depending on the market

Fullerton also offers cost efficiencies as well as consistency when it comes to multi-unit owners. The panels are cheaper to ship, too, than modular buildings, whose sheer weight and size make them too expensive to ship much further than 600 miles from the manufacturer. Fullerton, on the other hand, has shipped its building panels as far north as Fairbanks, Alaska, and as far south as Pensacola, Florida.

The value Fullerton can offer to a franchisee “depends on where we’re building,” Walock says. “If we’re in the Northeast, the clients might say because of the labor market, you’re much cheaper. We go down South where labor is generally a little bit cheaper and they might say, you’re a little more expensive but you’re twice as fast, so that value more than makes up the

difference. Different parts of the country might have different challenges, but we have different value-added pieces that speak to each of these different places.”

Fullerton’s employs field technicians all over the country, so they can accommodate clients quickly if issues arise. With our focus on expansion, Taco John’s anticipates partnering with Fullerton on more projects in the near future.

“A lot of quick-service restaurant chains have some ebb and flow to their growth and development,” Walock says. “Taco John’s has done a good job not only rebranding and refreshing, they’ve gone back and made a real concerted effort to meet with a lot of their franchisees and share that vision of where they’re going and what that new branding means. There’s a lot of competition in the fast-casual and QSR market, and Taco John’s has reenergized. It’s kind of exciting.”



CUTLINE: Fullerton Building Systems’ prefabricated building panels speed up construction time on new franchises.

To learn more

To find out more about Fullerton’s panelized building systems, click [here](#). To learn more about Taco John’s franchise opportunities, please fill out the form at right to download our [free franchise report](#). You can also learn more about the opportunity by exploring our in-depth [research pages](#).