

# Franchise Times®

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### INTRO

It seems like just yesterday Publisher Mary Jo Larson and I were stressing over the 2003 list and here it is time to announce the 2004 candidates.

Thanks to all the readers who sent in nominees. And, remember if you don't see your pick here, that may mean that we've decided to "watch" them at a later date.

As a disclaimer, we should say the list isn't meant to endorse, nor criticize anyone. It's made up of people and trends that we think are going to be doing some movin' and shakin'. And then to be fair, we'll revisit our predictions next January and see how we did.

—Nancy Weingartner

### NEAL ARONSON, ROARK CAPITAL

Roark Capital has well over \$100 million invested in the franchise community so far and they still have "a large appetite to invest in this industry," says Neal Aronson, managing partner for the private-equity firm.

Investing in companies is not unusual for equity firms, but the fact that Roark has chosen to only invest in franchise companies is, Aronson says.

To date, Roark has snapped up Carvel Corporation, Money Mailer and Fastsigns. And the medium-sized companies they're looking to acquire in the new year will have some of the same traits as these companies—they'll be service and/or storefront retail concepts. Plus, they need "ethical, motivated management teams" with "good franchisee economics" and "good consumer appeal on a national level" that will be excited about being acquired. "We only do deals that are friendly,"



### 2004's LIST

<b>Arby's</b>	<b>Sid Feltenstein</b>
<b>Famous Dave Anderson</b>	<b>Charles Modell, ABA program chair</b>
<b>McDonald's</b>	<b>Cheryl Babcock, CFE</b>
<b>Burger King</b>	<b>Fatburger</b>
<b>"Meal" deals</b>	<b>Hybrid Deals</b>
<b>Beaver Cleaver, the Beatles and Potstickers</b>	<b>Low-carb lifestyle</b>
<b>Frank Belatti</b>	<b>AAHOA</b>
<b>Noodles &amp; Company</b>	<b>Sally Smith</b>
<b>Neal Aronson, Roark Capital</b>	<b>KFC</b>
	<b>Martin Sprock</b>
	<b>Deconsolidation</b>

Aronson says. "We're a great believer in the win-win (solution)."

As you might imagine, Roark has many suitors—and more than a few who want to marry off their semi-beautiful daughters. But the firm isn't resting on its capital; it's out actively looking for the "girl of its dreams" (and if this sounds sexist, blame it on the FT staff, who is just trying to personify as it pontificates).

Aronson loves franchising. And, we can only imagine what a suitor with money in these rocky economic times will mean to medium-sized, ethical management teams. If Roark has a large appetite, then we predict they'll be going out on dinner dates quite often in the new year. [FT](#)