



Get Spiffy, Inc.
4506 South Miami Boulevard, Suite 150
Durham, North Carolina 27703

Franchisee Spotlight: Alina Siert and Lucille Sablan on Pursuing On-Demand Car Care in San Jose

Our team of Spiffy Franchises got bigger when the Sierts and Sablans signed on as co-owners in San Jose back in April. Since then, they've been so hard at work with fleet clients that their window to launch consumer business shifted. Now, they're finally fully operational and spreading the word with friends, family, and the local community.

We spoke with Alina and Lucille about their mission statement as entrepreneurs, how they went from opening one franchise business to learning about Spiffy, and their experiences launching a Spiffy franchise. This interview was conducted before the launch of consumer services in San Jose on August 11, 2021, and has been edited for clarity.

So, you're one of our earlier franchise groups but have been focused on growing your fleet business since April. How has the preparation for launching consumer services been?

Alina: We're just onboarding our technicians. We have two now and are looking to add two more. So we're still building our team but are so excited to launch for consumers right now.

Lucille: Our friends and family are all starting to get word that we're opening this business. In the first few months, we really just wanted to get grounded and get used to just owning two businesses and managing both. LeanFeast is our first business and Spiffy is our second, plus we've got our families growing in the process. What's funny about all this is that we're San Jose natives, so a lot of people who see us hiring and training new employees are starting to ask questions about Spiffy. What's it all about? What do we do?

The word is getting out and I think we're ready to unleash the secret. We're a lot more comfortable now letting people know that we're doing this. That was one of the things with building our team is we're very organic in growing our teams because we're kind of picky about who joins us in our mission. We noticed that on the LeanFeast side, we get a lot of referrals. But on the Spiffy side, we were having a hard time hiring. But that's because we didn't really tell anybody that we started this business. As we started to ask for those referrals, more people started asked when they can sign up for services. And now, we're as ready as we're going to be.

What led you down the road to come to Spiffy as a group of franchise owners?

Alina: We have an entrepreneur mindset, but we're very willing to say mission-driven. Lucille and I, and our husbands Matt and Eric, we've met through church. We actually helped launch a satellite campus in San Jose, one of the third campuses for our church. And we just shared the same vision of wanting to help our community and make a bigger impact, but in doing so with a bigger platform. With the stage of life that we're in, specifically with me and my career, I wanted to leave corporate tech and focus on being an entrepreneur, a social entrepreneur. Our mission has really been our social causes, which include food insecurity, homelessness, empowering women, and fighting racism. Beyond that, we've also been growing our businesses to give back and make a bigger impact in our local and global communities.



Get Spiffy, Inc.
4506 South Miami Boulevard, Suite 150
Durham, North Carolina 27703

We are majority women-owned across our LLC and we focus on consumer services with our businesses. What is going to make life convenient, specifically for moms? What's a great product or service that's going to make it really easy and convenient for the everyday mom? With LeanFeast it was convenient and healthy meals in two minutes or less. With Spiffy, it's car care. If you look at both of our cars now it's gross. I got Starbucks from two weeks ago in there, I got a dirty baby bottle in the backseat. To just make it easier for the moms and parents to have quality family time with that type of product is important to us.

Lucille: Being able to give back to the community, as Alina said, but even on the development side with women empowerment and young leaders, we've been able to use both of our businesses for people that are just getting into the work field. That's really big for us. We partner with the YWCA and a lot of other avenues to help the community in this way. So we're starting with the young group of up-and-coming leaders as well with high school kids, new college kids, and college grads. Then giving people a shot in the women empowerment and development in leadership stage. We want to be at the forefront of that as business owners and as women.

Alina: One thing to hold on to we were the second franchisee for our meal prep restaurant, and that's grown nationwide. So, to be barely second, almost first with Spiffy, we see the vision and strategy and we want to be part of it. We try to look for opportunities as our operating investor group to see what's going to be at the forefront of the future for the consumer. And Spiffy has it. No one else is doing something like this, and we're excited to be part of that. The fact that Spiffy is green, the way business is being done, it's very sustainable. Just the quality and ethics associated with Spiffy have been very encouraging.

What has the process been like to go from having one franchise business to now going in a completely different direction with your second franchise?

Lucille: What's been nice is that our "Why?" has stayed the same. So our "Why?" and our vision, our mission, the heart of why we even started being in business together as four friends have always stayed the same. If anything, it's become more refined as we started to add this new platform. That's what's been really nice.

Alina: The biggest difference for us is being in a different vertical, in a specific industry. We're not going to lie, being in two male-dominated industries as women, there are some obstacles that you overcome and learn. It's about commanding that type of presence and respect with our partners. We've actually met our fleet partners in person and that was new for us in the automotive space, just having that in-person relationship with your branch managers or specific key contacts and knowing how important that is. When they see two women in a primarily male-dominated industry, it's different for them.

It's been refreshing for us to be in a new space outside of food. We're in two very labor-intensive verticals. This week, we have put in sweat equity in both. I would say the challenging part with the two businesses has been like the macroeconomic climate of where we're at with labor across the nation with the labor shortage and the growing cost of everything. We are in the most expensive city to run businesses in general. Being a small business owner, coming out of the pandemic, and still kind of getting out of that hole, and launching a second business, I think we do feel it. But we're so resilient, we now know how tough we are looking at what we've accomplished with launching these two businesses in San Jose, specifically.



Get Spiffy, Inc.
4506 South Miami Boulevard, Suite 150
Durham, North Carolina 27703

We have learned how to divide and conquer very easily, and so we have to be very decisive when making decisions. We lean on each other a lot like our husbands are super awesome. But when Lucille and I have to make a quick decision about strategy or when to go live, we talk about it, we weigh the pros and cons, and we don't take anything personally because we don't have time for that. We just say our piece, good or bad or ugly, and then we got to go run with it. Time is of the essence and good labor is hard to find, so we focus on our people on both sides of our businesses. As owners, we feel the pain of that, because we're actually working in the store, as early as 3:45 in the morning at a restaurant, and then you'll see us at a Spiffy meeting around lunchtime. That's the type of work ethic and grit that you have to have when you run multiple businesses like we are.

What was the process of discovering Spiffy and getting to that point of signing on and starting this second business?

Alina: I discovered it because I'm connected with Garrison [Ramoso, Vice President, Sales & Business Development] from when I used to work at eBay. After he went to Spiffy, he did some LinkedIn posts and I was like, "What's Spiffy?" And it was at the time that I was looking at our next opportunity. I had no idea what it was, and then I read about it and I hit him up to learn more.

Lucille: We always knew that we were going to use our LLC as a broader platform and search for another business opportunity. We didn't know what it was going to be. You could tell we were not afraid of taking risks and taking chances. Between the four of us, as you start to meet us and our husbands, we all have different personalities. When we come together and make a decision, from different perspectives and different lanes, Alina is really great at the forefront of discovering and finding these opportunities, then doing the math behind everything to see if it makes sense.

Our husbands are very logical, so they're on the other side of the spectrum. I'm kind of in the middle, like the pros and cons type person, "If we do this, this is what we're gonna have to do. And if we do this, and this is a big risk." That combination makes us a really great team, to be honest. It's hard to have those honest conversations. We just kind of took it step by step. Then we got all the way down to signing the paperwork and I was like, "Are we really doing this?" And all four of us said yes, so we jumped right in.

Alina: Yeah, it is scary. It's like having another baby. It's absolutely like having another child, you take that leap of faith, you don't know what's gonna happen. You have all of your hard-earned money on the line. We've both worked for decades in different industries and this is our retirement money or college money for our children. This is what we're banking on, and we're banking on the future that these businesses are going to do well.

Lucille: My two kids, who are now in college, basically launched our Spiffy business for us. They were our first employees. They were a good buffer to help figure this business and they were running it for us. Meetings in the living room in the mornings before heading out and then telling them where to go. We were definitely on a curveball at the beginning with launching Spiffy after launching LeanFeast in the pandemic. Who launches a restaurant right at the start of the pandemic? If we knew that, we wouldn't have jumped right in. But we survived it and we were able to contribute back to the community and be generous.



Get Spiffy, Inc.
4506 South Miami Boulevard, Suite 150
Durham, North Carolina 27703

Alina: We contributed almost \$40,000 during the pandemic, in a year that was really hard. It was great to see because we have local and global outreach in the Philippines as well. It's so fulfilling to see what we can do here and the impact that we can have with the profits from our businesses.

What was the onboarding and training process like for you? How did you bring that training experience back for your kids?

Lucille: Eric, my husband, did the training on the east coast. When he came back, he sent out Brandon [Oxendine, Corporate Trainer, Spiffy Labs] out for a week and he trained the rest of the crew, including us and the kids. He was impressed with us being so family-owned and operated. The week he was here, he was like a member of our family.

My kids have automotive experience, which made it easy for them to lead the way. My son was working at O'Reilly Auto Parts, totally into cars, and he quit his job to come work with us. Then my daughter, Leah, was supposed to go into a fashion design program in high school, but she couldn't get into the program. The only program that she could get into with automotive, but she wanted to get into the school. And so she signed up for the automotive program and planned to switch. Well, she ended up just finishing up the auto motor program while she was in high school.

So when we open the business, it was a natural transition for both of them. They picked it up really fast. To bring all the training from Spiffy back to my kids and then everything with the work ethic even the values with Spiffy, which is in line with even our values as a family for both of us. It was just fun, we wanted to make it fun for them.

Alina: Leah showed me how to do the tire rotation in a way that a female can do it. She was like, "Because you're not super strong, use your legs as support." When we were being trained, it's a man showing you how to do it, but you need that different approach to do tire rotation as a woman.

Lucille: And she's not a big girl, so it really breaks down that barrier of "you have to be a guy, you have to be strong." She's actually pretty small and dainty, so if she can do it then we can do it too. She was supposed to be a fashion design student, after all.

When you initially launched with fleet business, what was exciting about getting that live and starting to get your feet wet with car care for a B2B focus?

Alina: I think in general, this was all new to us. It was that experience of "what does it mean to have a large national customer like Enterprise or U-Haul and get to work with these major accounts, and really understand their operations?" We've rented cars before, but we don't know the back end of how these cars get clean. This is stuff that we've learned about and it's been really cool to see the behind the scenes with these large clients, understanding their businesses, and how we can best support them. What's really cool now is we feel like we can get some scheduling and forecasting down. And with that, we can alleviate some room for consumers and really grow that space. It's been really great working with our fleet customers.



Get Spiffy, Inc.
4506 South Miami Boulevard, Suite 150
Durham, North Carolina 27703

Your group is a unique case of being interviewed after having been open for business since April. Is there anything that has stood out as something that was unexpected?

Alina: It's definitely reconfirmed how expensive San Jose is, with the labor rates or the cost of fuel, for example. The latter can be like upwards of five bucks. There's just so much more work for us to accelerate our sales in order to break a profit. I think this has been more black and white in this automotive space because with fleet partners, it's national pricing. Pricing that may be good somewhere like North Carolina, may not be as ideal here in California. As we grow and we're seeing our sales, we got to pay our tech \$25 an hour, and then we have to add 50% on that for payroll tax and benefits and EDD and all this stuff. I feel like we feel it more to have greater accelerated success with our revenue, and we have to push on the pedal harder because of that. I think there's a greater sense of urgency with our team to move faster.

Lucille: Then with building the team and getting people on board, it's a challenge to get people in the work field right now. What I thought at the beginning of what it was going to be to bring people on is not the same as how I think about it today. In the beginning, it was thinking about getting somebody with experience that you can trust and know. All of those barriers kind of got broken down as we started to learn the process and even see the system rolled through on the fleet side of it. So I think that's why we're more confident about launching the consumer side. In the beginning, we were going with the flow. Now, a few months in, we feel a lot more comfortable delivering that excellent customer service and the experience, even for our employees.

Anything else you'd like to share about your experience so far?

Alina: Everyone at Spiffy has been super supportive and such great resources for us. We can't thank the Spiffy team enough, honestly. Anytime we had a question or concern, they've been there to support us.

Lucille: Launching a second business, on top of managing another, is not easy at all. But knowing that everybody at Spiffy is on the ride with us makes it feel just that much better. It's easier to be confident moving forward with this team supporting us.

Thank you so much to Alina and Lucille for chatting with us about their unique challenges and experiences as San Jose Franchise Owners. Their enthusiasm and hard work are infectious, and we look forward to great success in their market!

If you're looking to learn more about starting your own Spiffy Franchise, [contact us](#) today!