

CASE STUDY

From Heartache to Legacy: The Story of Keyrenter Property Management



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1 Early Days at Keyrenter

2007 | Unexpected Dive into Property Management

When Aaron Marshall and Nate Tew came together in 2007, they didn't plan on property management; they fell into it.

Aaron Marshall
CEO & Co-Founder



Nate Tew
Chief Executive Officer



“

We started flipping houses, and some wouldn't sell due to market changes. So we would find tenants for those and start to do property management without really even knowing it.

Nate Tew, Keyrenter Property Management, Chief Executive Officer

“

Somebody called and asked if we were doing property management, and [Nate] looked at Aaron and said, 'Do we do property management?' And so here it was born.

Andrea Marshall, Keyrenter Property Management, Co-Owner

As referrals poured in, they realized the potential of their newfound expertise. They worked on a logo, name, and website to lend legitimacy to the new business venture they'd unlocked.

Thus, Keyrenter Property Management was formed, and Nate and Aaron went to work refining a real estate management solution for people who didn't want to, as Nate calls it, deal with the tenants, toilets, and troubles.

With years of real estate experience and the opportunity after the housing crash of 2008, Aaron and Nate grew Keyrenter quickly. In 2013, the path forward became apparent: it was time to franchise.

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In the mix, there's been many ups, many downs, many wins, many losses. And we've definitely got our battle wounds and our scars and our trophies to show along this path.



Nate Tew
Chief Executive Officer

2 Early Challenges and the ROS® Solution

The duo hired their attorney in 2014 and began their franchising journey. But by 2019, they experienced the challenge most brands do – taking your franchise to the next level. They began 2019 with 37 locations and ended with 39. The previous year, they had grown by 16.

Keyrenter hit a ceiling – a point many franchisors reach and never break through. They were selling franchises rather than recruiting the franchisees. In Nate’s words, they were running fast and hard and not measuring what they were doing. “Anybody can wing sales and process to a certain extent. But when it starts to fall apart, you don’t really know why.”

It was time to build a structure to understand where their recruitment fell flat and uncover the improvements Keyrenter needed to make. Aaron and Nate knew they needed help.

Shortly after that realization, Aaron attended a conference and met Art Coley, CEO of CGI Franchise.

After hearing Art speak on franchise recruitment, in a moment of clarity and confidence, Aaron confidently informed Nate, “We’re hiring CGI Franchise.”

Aaron and the Keyrenter team had the awareness and boldness to go to that next level. They were hungry and coachable.

They understood that doing “different” didn’t mean tearing the guts from what they had built. They were open to listening and willing to consider, which was precisely what they needed to grow.

However, just as the future seemed extraordinarily bright, they were about to receive news that would change everything.



We needed a system to process potential franchisees and generate good leads. We knew we could do more but didn’t know how to get there

Nate Tew

Chief Executive Officer



It wasn’t a minor decision, but he saw something special in CGI Franchise and the Recruitment Operating System® (ROS®).

This was the answer Keyrenter needed. After the first session with the CGI Franchise/ROS® Support Team, the entire Keyrenter staff echoed his enthusiasm and trust in moving forward.

3 “Life happens when you’re busy making plans.”

2019 | A Pivotal Year: Navigating ROS® Partnership and Cancer Challenges

Aaron was introduced to ROS® at that pivotal moment in the fall of 2019.

By November, Aaron received his cancer diagnosis.

A lot of decisions arrived with this news. Whether to sell the business was at the top of the list. As Andrea recalls, “I told him, he’s always been the one that needs something to get him out of bed in the morning and cancer treatment, that could have done it. But he lived and breathed business.”

So Aaron, Andrea, and Nate decided to continue forging ahead with Keyrenter despite the rigorous cancer battle ahead.

As Aaron continued his commitment to Keyrenter, however, he knew he couldn’t operate at full capacity.

The entire organization, including the ROS® Support Team, rallied behind Aaron and Andrea. The team took more responsibility for their roles. Aaron fought to participate when possible, showing his love for the business, the team, and the franchisees.

2020 | A New Wave of Changes

2020 brought a new wave of changes, with COVID forcing new adaptations for the company while Aaron continued to navigate his cancer treatment.

Nate remembers, “He never let it beat him emotionally, even as he fought physically. The discussion would come up, ‘Let’s talk about when you can’t work anymore.’ And Aaron would say, ‘I’m going to be working.’ He said it more out of love, passion, and purpose than anything.”

2021 | Keyrenter’s Journey Through Triumphs, Challenges, and Loss

In early 2021, Art Coley and the ROS® Support Team provided more of a leadership role to allow Aaron to fight. Nate provided Aaron with updates and news from the company.

The partnership with Art and the ROS® Support Team could not have been better timing. One might even say divine. Nate observes, “It was a lot for the ROS® Support Team to step in and help the way they did. That’s going above and beyond a customer-client relationship.”

By early 2021, Aaron was practically cancer-free, the world was learning to deal with COVID, and Keyrenter was seeing positive growth.

“We had some cancer left in his lungs, but he was doing great. We were out meeting with Art in April of 2021, and he was fine. We had taken our kids to Disney World,” recalls Andrea.

But in May of 2021, the cancer made a fierce return. Within six weeks, Aaron passed.

4 The Aftermath of Loss



Nate and Aaron were best friends and co-founders of a thriving business. They loved each other like brothers. Mourning and healing had to happen.

During such a profound and tragic loss, it's easy to forget the healing process that must happen in a company. Throughout Aaron's courageous battle, Keyrenter informed their franchisees with open communication and updates. There had been a lot of good news to share. Now, the unexpected turn would test their resilience.

While grieving their beloved CEO and co-founder, Art took on the role of interim CEO, and the ROS® Support Team continued to fill the gap of Aaron's visionary leadership and guide Nate, Andrea, and the Keyrenter staff through a year of transition, mourning, and growth.

"We were just doing what we had been taught over the years," Art said. "On the business side, we cleaned up some items and put the critical systems in place." Art embraced the role of interim CEO to put those systems in place and allow room for growth and stability in a time of grief.

Without Aaron's insistence to partner with CGI Franchise in 2019 to implement ROS®, Keyrenter's capacity to survive losing a visionary founder would be in jeopardy.

In some ways, it felt like Aaron had seen all of this coming before Nate and Andrea did.

Throughout the journey, the biggest gift was Andrea and Nate getting on their feet and finding their balance and confidence. The dream was clear to Andrea to keep pressing on with Keyrenter, "I called Nate and said, I'm in. If you are in, I'm in, but I couldn't do this without Nate."

They forged ahead together, with Nate as CEO and Andrea as the chairwoman, leading and guiding each other to the next level.

"I truly lost a brother...but I feel like I gained a partner," Nate muses, "Ego aside, we've got to remember what the vision is and what the results are, and make sure we've got the right team for that."

5 Victory and Legacy

When Keyrenter signed on with ROS®, no one could have forecast all that would come with the relationship. ROS® provided value in wisdom and systems and delivered the right people and mentors.

While building Keyrenter, Aaron continually sought out coaches and mentors. It was part of his indelible entrepreneurial spirit. His vision to form meaningful partnerships, such as that with CGI Franchise, built the foundation to sustain the business, which is now part of his legacy.

From the root of Aaron's vision and Nate and Andrea's unwavering determination in the face of significant loss, Keyrenter has blossomed.

"Now I get to watch our son open one of our franchises," Andrea beams, "and that's fun to watch."



6 What's next?

2024 is poised to be a pivotal year for Keyrenter Property Management to become the company Aaron envisioned.

"I think Aaron was always looking at 100-200 franchises. Always looking ahead," said Nate, "Our targets are 14,000 units next year and 24,000 units in 2026 with 120 franchise units. Aaron envisioned this type of growth, and we can now see it's possible."

Everything that was once Aaron's dream is now coming to fruition. There are cash flow forecasts that provide excitement and vision. Robust organizational charts make it clear that everyone has the right seat on the bus. There's no denying the maturity and strength of the team.

Debt-free and future-focused, Keyrenter demonstrates what can be achieved when vision meets dedication. The Keyrenter Property Management story is an inspiration, a tale of triumph, unity, and the transformative power of a shared dream.



I never shy away from embracing and talking about the past and what's led us to this point... there are experiences that are really, really challenging in life, and they shape us, but they lead us...we gain strength through those challenges.



Nate Tew

Chief Executive Officer

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