

COPPER & ASH

Before You Franchise: Read This

A practical guide for early-stage QSR
founders preparing to scale their brand
with confidence, consistency and control.

By Copper & Ash - Commercial Interior Design Studio





Scaling A QSR Brand Is Exciting - But It's Also A Big Step.

Your first site proved your idea works. Your second site proves whether the system works. Most founders we meet aren't looking for "just interiors."

They're looking for a partner who understands brand, operations, workflow, compliance and long-term scalability - someone who can help shape a concept that keeps working as the business grows.

This guide is here to give you clarity on what matters most as you move from one site to many, so you can scale with confidence rather than guesswork.

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Your brand deserves a future built on clarity and consistency

Why Franchising Too Early Is High Risk

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Franchising isn't simply opening more stores - it's handing your concept to other people and expecting it to stay consistent.

If your brand identity, layouts, workflows, documentation or build specifications aren't fully defined, every new site becomes a reinterpretation.

That's where quality slips, costs rise and consistency disappears. Franchising multiplies what works - but it multiplies what doesn't even faster.

This Section Highlights The Foundations You'll Need In Place Before Someone Else Can Deliver Your Concept Reliably.

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Franchising amplifies what works - and what doesn't





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Franchisees Invest In Clarity
- Not Ambiguity.



What Franchisees Expect From You (Whether You're Ready Or Not)

A franchisee is about to spend **£150k-£350k+** of their own money. They're not just buying a store. They're buying clarity. Your franchisees don't want freedom. **They want a formula.**

What they expect:



A clear brand Identity: Colours, finishes, signage rules, interior personality.



A repeatable store layout: A floorplan that works anywhere - not a one-off that happened to work once.



Operational flow they can trust: Prep, cookline, delivery, click & collect, staff movement.



A complete drawing pack: Drawings, elevations, signage specs, BOH layouts, MEP requirements.



A system, not a guess: Most franchise problems happen because the brand wasn't documented properly.

The 7 Essentials You MUST Have Before You Franchise

These are your non-negotiables. If these aren't ready, your blueprint isn't ready. **A blueprint is a system - not just a design.**

01 A Repeatable Layout

Circulation, BOH workflow, cookline, delivery integration, a clear customer journey from entry to exit, and a full staff journey that supports speed, safety and efficiency.

02 A Defined Front-Of-House Identity

Materials, lighting, signage, menu display, seating logic, seating types and a clear cover strategy - ensuring every site delivers a consistent and optimised guest experience.

03 A Tiered Finishes & Materials Pack

A clearly defined set of finishes with Premium / Standard / Value-Engineered tiers that stay true to the brand while supporting different budgets and locations. Durable, easy to maintain, and cost-controlled without compromising identity.

04

A Contractor-Ready Drawing Pack

A complete drawing set—GAs, elevations, sections, electrical layouts, data points, and BOH workflows—enabling fixed-price contractor bids and eliminating the usual 15–20% contingency.

05

A Site-Adaptation Playbook

Guidance on how the brand flexes in narrow units, corner plots, kiosks and high-street shells - forming a core part of your brand build guidelines so every site remains consistent, regardless of footprint.

06

Brand Standards

Tone of voice, signage rules, graphics hierarchy, do's & don'ts, plus defined placement rules for finishes, seating and key layout elements - ensuring every site feels consistent and recognisable.

07

A Sign-Off Process

- ✓ Concept
- ✓ Layout
- ✓ Technical
- ✓ Build
- ✓ Handover

Common Mistakes Founders Make When Franchising Too Early

Successful franchise brands don't just open stores.

They replicate a formula.



Letting Franchisees Influence Design Too Much

When budgets or personal preferences override brand identity, consistency disappears.



Opening Stores Before Workflows Are Tested

Fast growth without operational clarity destroys efficiency (and margins).



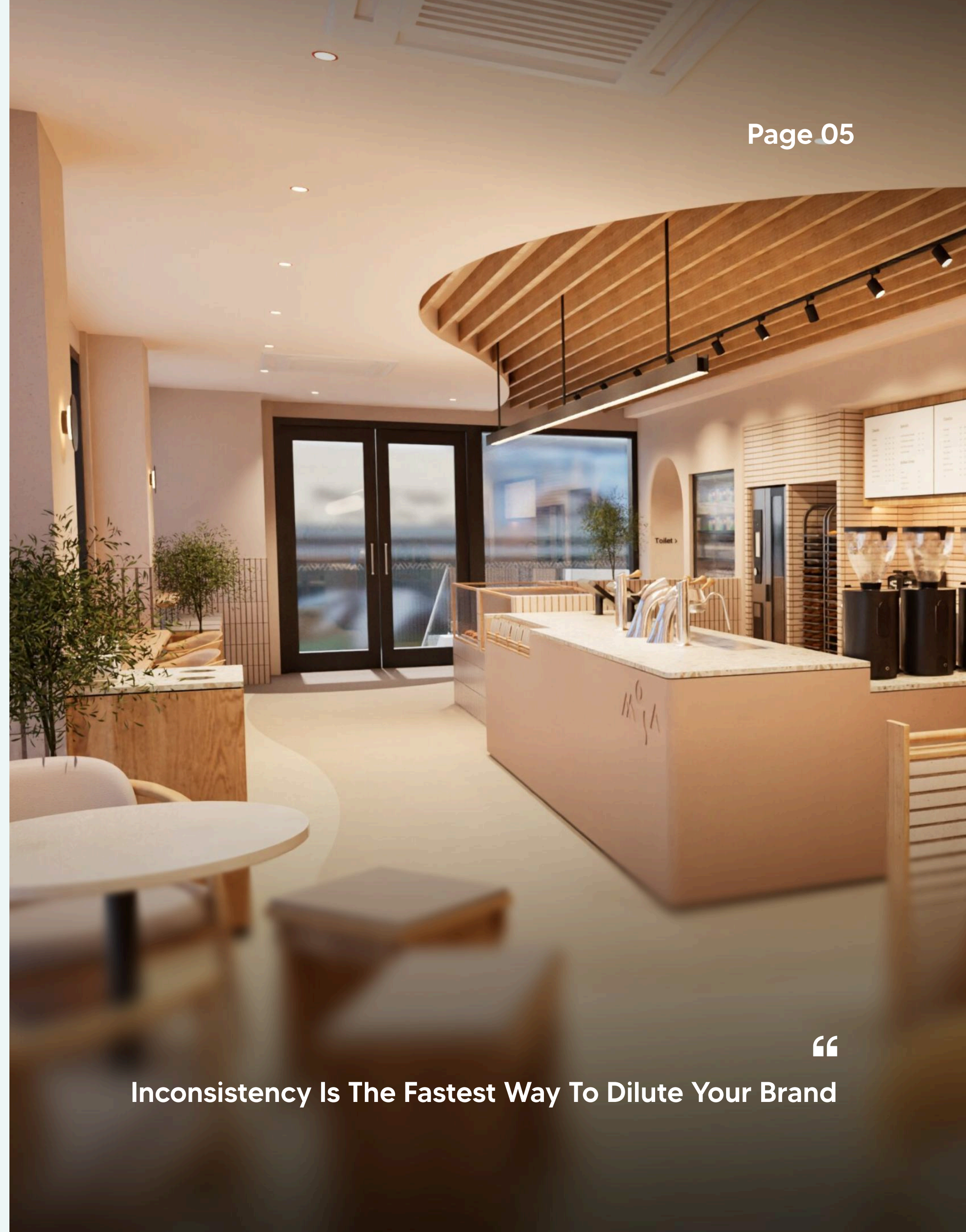
Not Documenting The Concept Properly

If it isn't documented, franchisees will guess - and every store becomes different.



Letting The Menu Grow Out Of Control

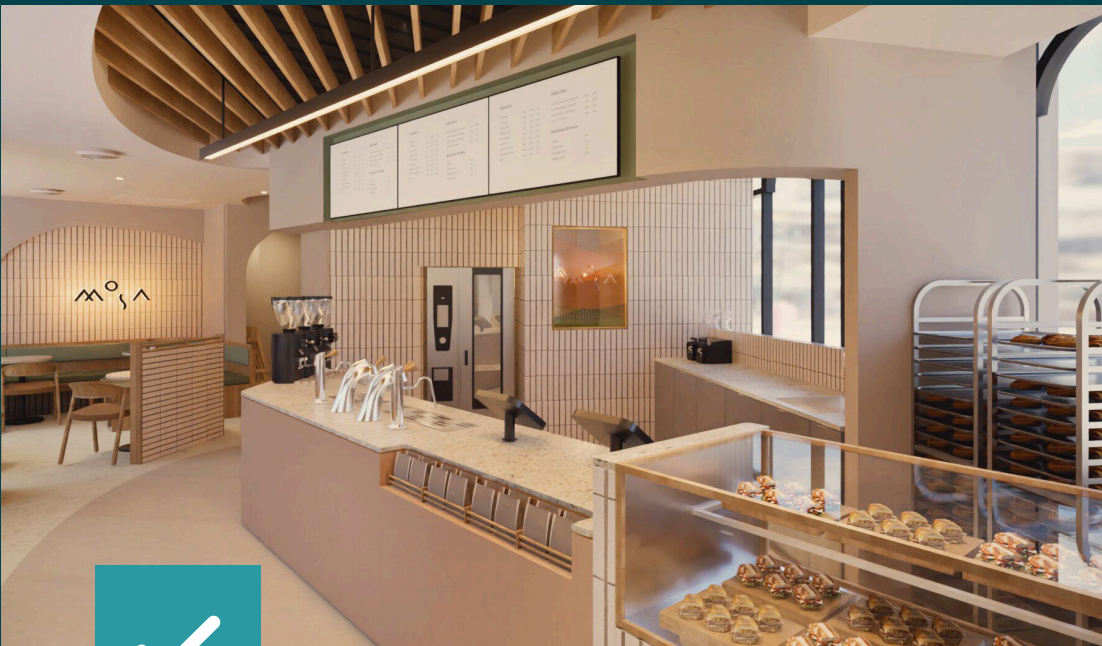
Bigger menus = slower service, higher labour, more waste and inconsistent execution.



Inconsistency Is The Fastest Way To Dilute Your Brand

What You Need In Place Beyond Design (People, Budget, Roles)

Many founders try to do everything themselves until it becomes unmanageable. The brands who scale smoothly usually have:



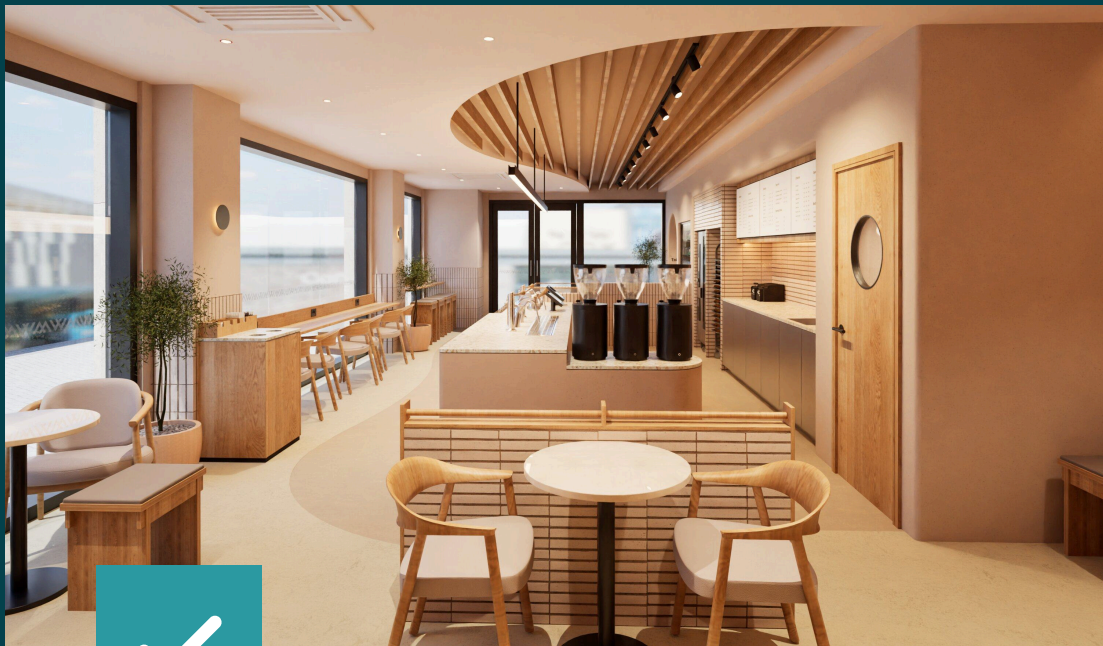
An Operations Lead

Often the first hire. Takes day-to-day decisions away from the founder and keeps stores running consistently.



A Project Manager or Store Openings Lead

Coordinates contractors, suppliers, timelines and compliance.



Principal Designer (PD) & Building Control Consultant

Essential for legal compliance, fire strategy, extraction, structural changes, and safety management. We can support with both PD duties and the building control process, helping simplify approvals and avoid delays.



Finance Support & Marketing / Social Support

A bookkeeper or CFO-level advisor to model rollout costs and operational margins. Crucial once you're opening multiple locations and need consistent messaging.

These Roles Don't All Have To Be Full-Time - But They Do Need To Exist As You Start Scaling.

What Fast-Growth QSR Brands Get Right



If you look at the most successful modern QSR brands in the UK - Slim Chickens, Chopstix, Popeyes UK - they all share one thing:

Absolute Discipline

They scale quickly because they built a system early and refused to deviate.

Their Stores Are Recognisable

Same palette, same typography, same lighting cues, same layout principles - a branded experience you can spot instantly.

Their Menus Stay Tight

Simple, replicable, efficient. They choose focus over complication.

Their Formats Adapt - But The Identity Doesn't Drift

Whether it's a high-street unit, mall location or kiosk, the concept flexes without losing its character.

They're Consistent Across Every Channel

The strongest QSR brands think beyond the store: digital ordering, social presence, packaging, uniforms and customer comms all feel aligned.

They Protect The Brand

Franchisees don't get to reinterpret it. Guardrails keep quality high and every site recognisable.

And this isn't new. The global giants - McDonald's, KFC, Subway - scaled for exactly the same reason: consistency over creativity. The fundamentals haven't changed. This is the level of clarity every early-stage QSR founder needs before franchising. Fast-growth brands don't get lucky - they get consistent.

Real Example (Anonymised): Building A Scalable Concept Under Pressure

We were appointed by a fast-growing chicken brand looking to develop a rollout-ready concept that could work across high-street locations and high-footfall transport hubs. **A modular concept creates consistency - even in complex locations.**

01

What We Delivered:

- A cohesive brand-led interior concept
- Modular FOH elements
- A consistent finishes palette
- Scalable layouts for different footprints
- Signage, lighting and digital menu strategies
- Contractor-ready documentation
- Support navigating complex landlord, planning & BC requirements in a major transport hub

02

The Outcome:

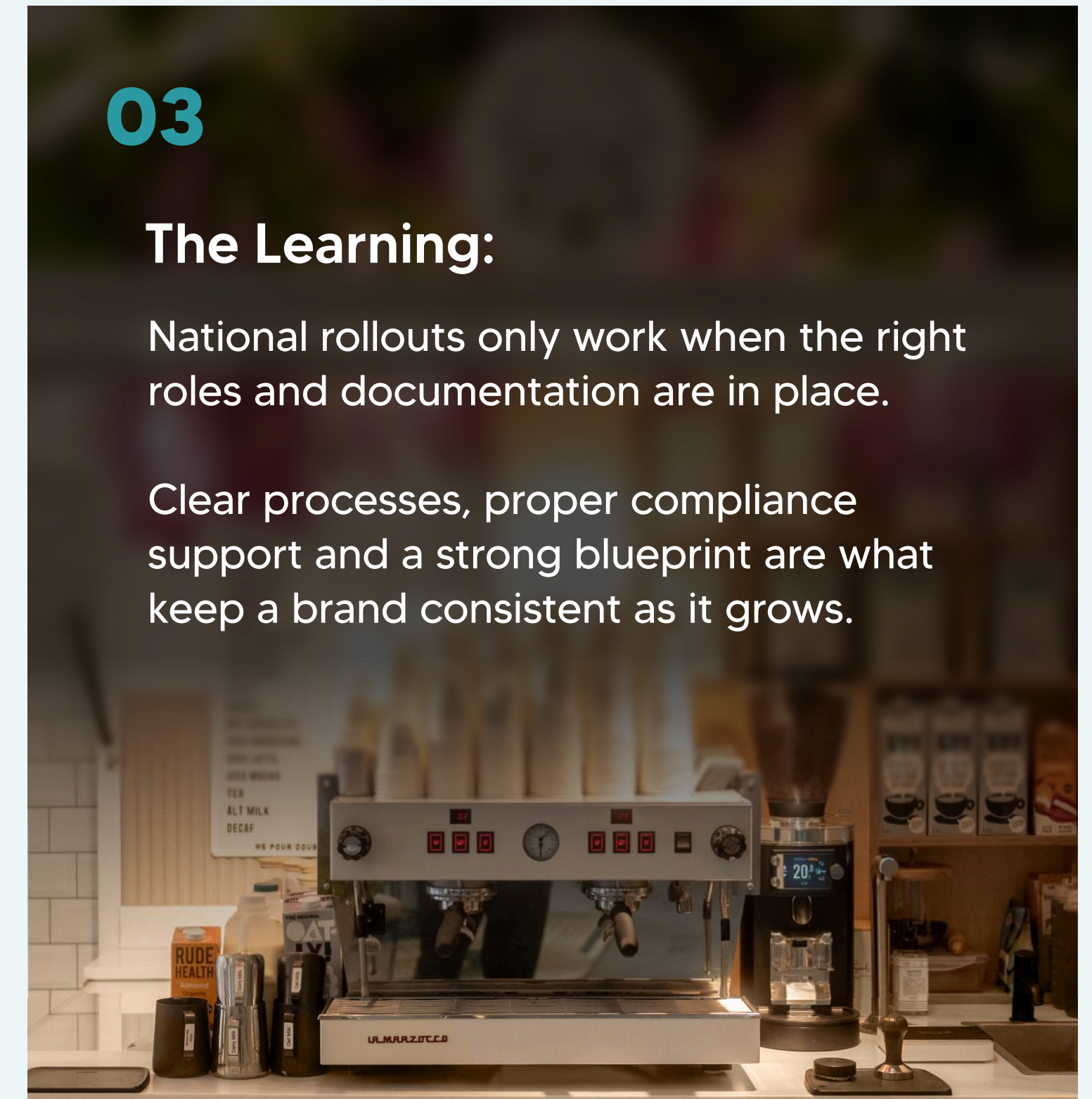
- The concept successfully rolled out across multiple sites
- The brand continues to use the design system we created
- Operational efficiency and clarity improved dramatically

03

The Learning:

National rollouts only work when the right roles and documentation are in place.

Clear processes, proper compliance support and a strong blueprint are what keep a brand consistent as it grows.



Case Snapshot: Small Format, Big Impact (Dear Coco)



Not All Franchise-Ready Designs Need A Big Footprint.

We created the world's first indoor "truck in the wall" micro-format café - just 2.8 sqm - proving how powerful a clear concept can be, even in the smallest units.

Why this matters for franchising:



Small footprints make expansion cheaper



Micro formats let you test new markets



The identity stays strong regardless of size



Great concept doesn't rely on square footage

Testimonial

Matt, Kayleigh and the team have been instrumental in bringing Dear Coco's coffee bar strategy to life. We needed an agency partner capable of lateral, innovative thinking with a can-do attitude and we found it in Copper & Ash.

The quality of creative thinking, problem-solving and final output is second to none. Their project management is amongst best-in-class. The team's work has allowed us to secure flagship coffee industry and real estate partnerships, they're a critical growth partner for us. Thank you team.

- Ant & Sam @ Dear Coco Coffee



Case Snapshot: Using Design To Build A Premium, Scalable Identity

Mosa is a perfect example of how a brand can feel crafted, warm and elevated, while still being fully adaptable for future rollouts. From day one, the client had absolute clarity: a defined brand document, a clear target market, a refined product offering, and strong expectations around the type of experience they wanted to create. This level of upfront alignment made it possible to design a concept that was not only beautiful, but built for growth.

What Makes It Scalable: A Clear Identity Brings Consistency, Even As Formats Vary.



A Distinctive Ceiling Feature That Can Be Replicated

A signature visual anchor that reinforces recognisability without being site-dependent.



A Controlled Materials Palette

Warm, tactile finishes chosen for durability, maintenance, cost control and brand coherence.



A Clearly Defined Brand Language

Every detail - from colour tone to typography to furniture profiles - aligns with the menu, dwell-time expectations and the wider customer experience.



A Simple Product Display And Customer Journey

Clear ordering touchpoints, well-considered sightlines and an intuitive flow from entry to purchase.



A Layout That Flexes To Different Shell Conditions

A format that transitions easily between larger units, smaller footprints and varied architectural constraints.



A Client Who Understood The Value Of Systemisation

Having worked within QSR rollouts before, the client knew what was needed: consistency, documentation and a design that offered long-term repeatability.

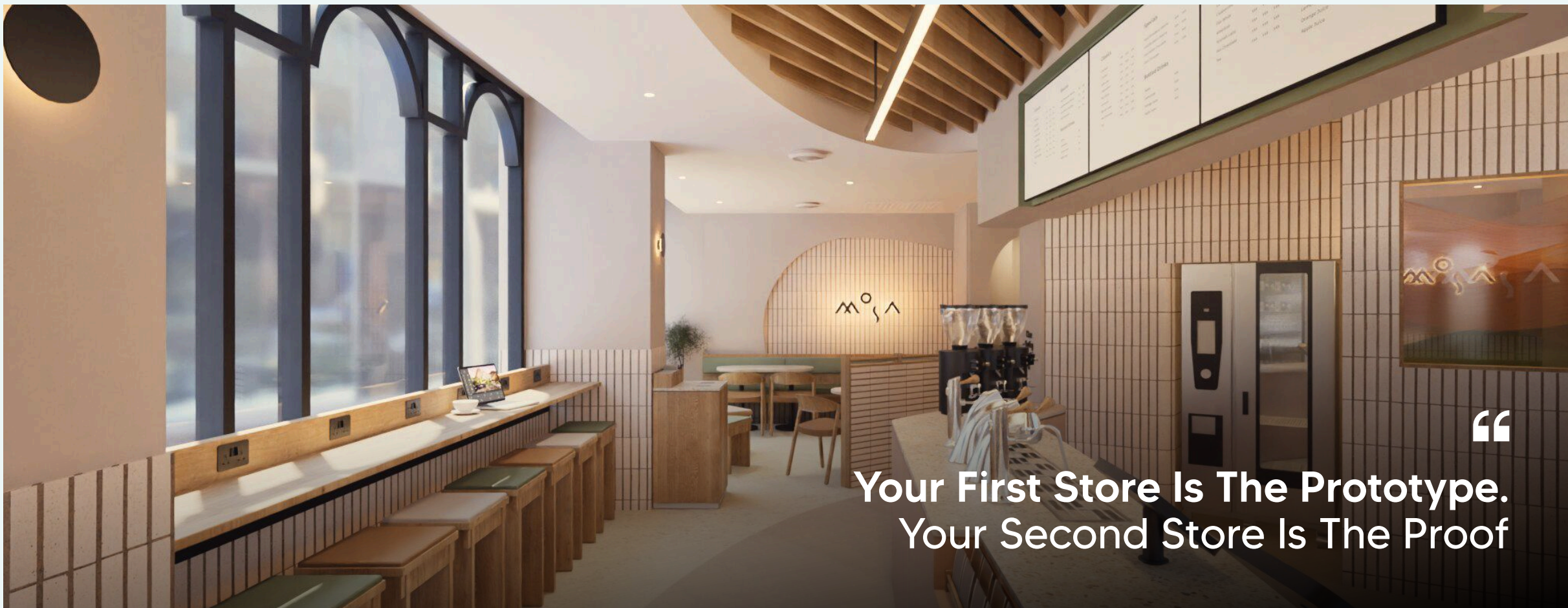
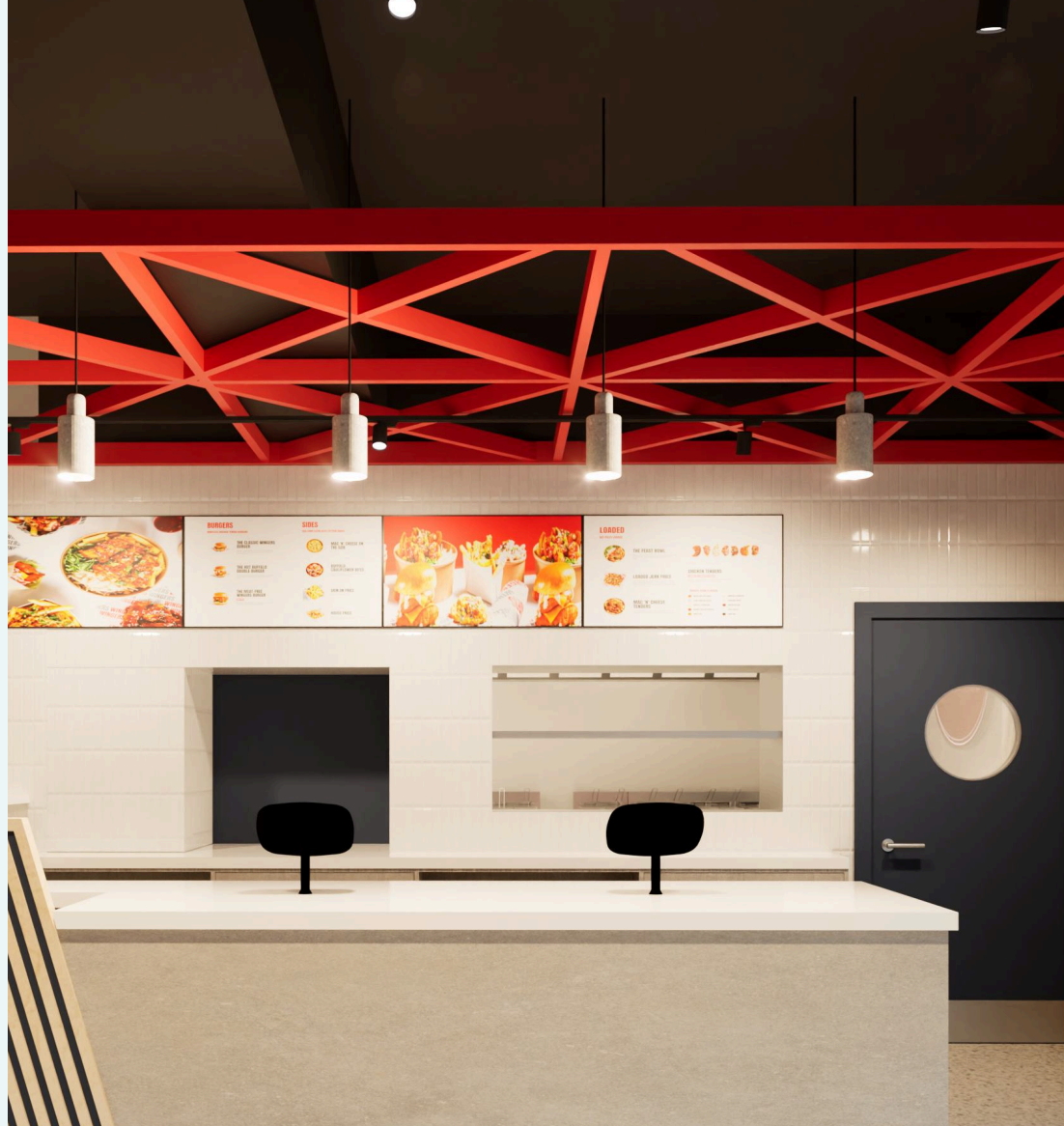
Build A Blueprint, Not A One-Off

Franchising isn't about designing one great store. It's about developing a system that protects your brand as it grows.

Your blueprint should include:

- ✓ Store Formats
- ✓ Scalable Layouts
- ✓ FOH Identity
- ✓ BOH Workflow
- ✓ Cost Tiers
- ✓ Approval Process
- ✓ Menu Hierarchy
- ✓ Signage Rules
- ✓ Digital Integrations
- ✓ Finish Palettes
- ✓ Drawing Pack
- ✓ Franchisee Onboarding Guidance

This Is What Allows You To Open Site
#3, #5 And #20 With Full Confidence.



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Your First Store Is The Prototype.
Your Second Store Is The Proof



COPPER & ASH

How Copper & Ash Support Your Franchise Journey

By Copper & Ash - Commercial Interior Design Studio



We help early-stage QSR brands:

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01

Turn their first sites into a repeatable, scalable model

A layout, workflow and identity that can be replicated – not reinvented – every time.

02

Create clear, consistent store identities

Strong brand languages that feel recognisable across every format, from flagship to kiosk.

03

Specify materials that balance durability, maintenance and cost

Finishes that look great, last longer, and support easy upkeep – without breaking budgets.

04

Design formats that work across varying footprints

From narrow high-street units to corner plots, mall sites and transport hubs – your concept adapts, but the identity stays consistent.

05

Navigate planning, landlord and building control requirements

We coordinate the details (extraction, fire, access, PD roles, signage approvals) so your rollout isn't delayed by technical surprises.

06

Comprehensive drawing packs that keep franchisees aligned

Clear drawings, BOH workflows, signage rules, cost tiers and decision pathways.

07

Protect your brand at every stage of growth

Guardrails that prevent design drift and keep franchisees from diluting what makes your concept special.

08

Avoid costly mistakes as new sites open

We bring foresight from dozens of openings, helping you sidestep operational, design and compliance pitfalls.

COPPER & ASH

Let's Talk About Your Next Site

Whether you're planning your next site or starting to explore franchising, we're always happy to help you understand the right next steps for your brand. If you're unsure how scalable your current store design is, our 1-hour Scalability Audit gives you an honest, objective snapshot of where you stand – and where the biggest opportunities lie. No pressure. No pitch. Just clarity.

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