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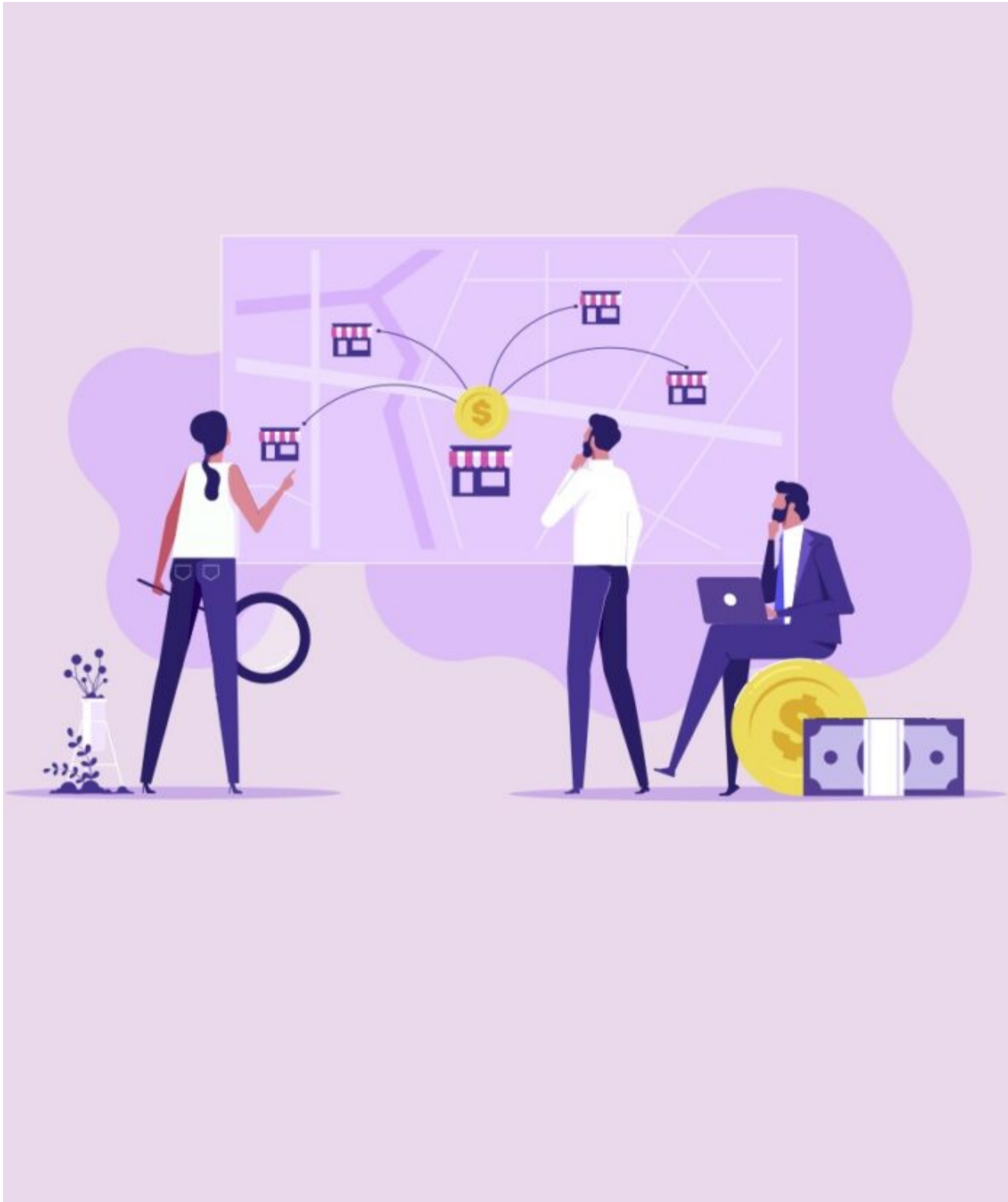
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Freedom to Own

BY MARK MADLER

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Franchises have long been viewed as a way for people to own their business for a fraction of the cost and risk of starting one from scratch.

“They get trained, they get continuing support and, depending on the size of the franchisor, they get advertising they couldn’t otherwise afford,” **Barry Kurtz**, an attorney with **Lewitt Hackman** and chair of the firm’s franchise practice group, said.

But there are some downsides as well. And now recent regulations, some experts say, are threatening to hurt franchises, especially in the food industry.

This special report looks at the industry as a whole as well as a few of the biggest franchisers in the area.