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Layne's Chicken Fingers, the Texas "Born and Breaded" chicken-finger franchise, is closing another year of rapid growth. In 2025, the brand had multiple six-figure openings, opened in new states and signed a monumental 44-unit development deal. In support of its continued growth,Â Layne'sÂ has appointedÂ Cuyler EspositoÂ as vice president of culture operations.

With extensive experience as a multi-unit franchisee, Esposito is acutely aware of the value of a strong franchise support structure. In his new role, he will prioritise culture throughout Layne's franchise system while serving as a voice for franchisees to ensure Layne's unique culture remains the foundation of its operational excellence as it scales.

"We are building a team that doesn't just understand the restaurant business but understands the human side of it, too," said CEO Garrett Reed. "Cuyler has been following our story for years, and as a former food service franchisee, he's uniquely qualified to support our teams and ensure our values remain a priority as we scale our footprint."

While Cuyler will focus on strong operations, a hallmark of the Layne's business model, that is not his only guiding principle.

"In this industry, it's easy to get lost in the numbers, but Layne's is special because everyone here is aligned on the brand's core pillars," Esposito said. "My philosophy is 'culture first, operations very close behind.' My job is to ensure our franchisees and their teams are operating with that high level of hospitality that separates us from the competition."

As he gets integrated into the system, Esposito says his primary focus will be supporting multi-unit franchisees in building their own internal "benches," helping them develop teams to support long-term success without friction.

"It's important to me to help franchisees build an operations team so that, as we open up more units, we aren't scrambling. Much of that will be driven by a focus on a culture of growth and opportunity," he said. "It's about identifying people within the organisation and helping them grow. I've learned that, if you provide a path of growth for an individual, they're much more

motivated for you compared to when you just look at everyone as a number."