

## 10 Best Franchise Marketing Tactics

The marketing of a franchise has both advantages and disadvantages. One the plus side, the brand being promoted may already be well known and so the raising of awareness component of the marketing effort is somewhat aided. The downside is that the corporate HQ most often needs to approve all marketing materials, leaving the independent franchisee without much say in the marketing, even though they play the role of frontline sales to the customer.

From the franchisors perspective, their marketing needs to include two primary goals – reaching out to perspective customers and driving interest in prospective franchisees. Sometimes this creates a lack of focus, leaving the urgency of customer directed marketing to the franchisee. This article provides 10 marketing tactics the franchisee can use to promote and drive sales. They are:

1. Always Be Proactive – it is easy to become complacent and lose momentum in your marketing when operating a franchise. In many cases the marketing and lead generation is, at least in part, being driven or supplemented by the company, leaving you with a stable flow of business without doing much marketing. Your dependence on the company, and your absence in your targeted geographic area, are unhealthy business practices. You need to be proactive and discover new ways to reach out to and communicate with your market. You can always use the company's efforts and the strength of the brand to establish your base. The growth and added value needs to come from you.

2. Have a Great Website – as a franchisee you most likely have a master website from the franchisor and a website for your franchise, leaving you with a high comfort level that your presence on the Internet is strong and compelling. This could be correct, but if you have left the development of your web presence entirely up to the franchisor, you may in fact be all but invisible. Your franchise agreement most likely permits you to engage the web in way you are not doing, adding to your franchise website additional elements that will make you more meaningful to your specific market. Sometimes this will include links to additional local businesses, or a community events calendar. Whatever the added elements are, you need to make sure you are not remaining entirely in the franchise box being provided but rather are looking outside the box for additional opportunities to engage your market via your website.

3. Leverage Technology – one of the great advantages of the franchise model is that all the systems are in place and the necessary technologies are either included in the package or made available to you. This does not necessarily mean that you need to be satisfied with what you have. Perhaps your franchise does not offer a database marketing system for email based marketing. Or perhaps they do not have a system for acquiring and tracking leads. The absence of technologies you want does not mean you need to do without them. Although you may need the consent of the franchisor, in most cases they will welcome (and approve) your willingness to take additional steps and make additional investments to grow your business.

4. Create Referral Mechanisms – one of the best ways to generate new customers is by having existing customers recommend your business. While you can create incentive for customers to do this formally, you really want to establish informal channels through which your business is recommended. You can do this by asking satisfied customers to fill out a form that can be transformed into an endorsement. You can also ask happy customers to write a letter of appreciation. Another referral mechanism you can develop is trusted advisors. By working with lawyers, accountants, and other trusted

professionals to refer your services when their clients inquire establishes your company as a trusted service/product provider by virtue of the endorsement.

5. Have the Tools to Communicate – most franchises provide franchisees with some of the tools to communicate with the market, either through nationally or locally directed ad campaigns or by giving the brochures and product sheets needed to introduce the company and close a sale. These tools may be sufficient, but in many cases are too broad in nature because they were designed to speak to the entire market, and not necessarily your market. You can secure consent to develop supplemental materials that meet your narrow specific needs. Use these materials to bolster what you have been provided so that you can communicate directly with your targeted customers.

6. Focus on What You're Selling – there aren't any franchises that are selling something (product or service) that is so distinctive that there is no one else (franchise or otherwise) selling the same thing. What you have going for you as a franchisee is the strength of the brand and the system that operates it. If you seek to rest on these advantages you will find yourself out-marketed by companies that realize that it is all about the solution or benefit you provide. Make sure you are not giving these key distinctions to your competitors by focusing on your brand instead of your product/service.

7. Be the Expert – while selling you need to always keep in mind the buyer's motivation. In every case a sale is made it is closed because your product/service meets a need or satisfies a desire. People and companies are doing all they can to determine which among the competing products best meet their need or best satisfies their desire. Herein lies the opportunity for distinction by positioning yourself as a trusted advisor and recognized expert – someone who can best guide them to the conclusion that most meets their needs. To do this, you need to go beyond the marketing of the franchisor and develop relationships, engage in reputation enhancement tactics (such as publishing articles and speaking at business forums), and act in a responsible and reliable manner when called upon for advise.

8. Balance Existing and New Customers – the classic marketing dilemma is the balance between pursuing new customers (for growth) and maintaining existing customers (for stability). The new customers are more costly to acquire than existing customers are to maintain. However, without the flow of new customers, there wouldn't be any existing customers to worry about. And so goes the everlasting debate... The balancing act between the new and existing is managed through a balance that allows you to continue to meet the needs of existing customers – including the continued selling to them of products/services, and the ability to pursue new customers – including the development of incentive programs that don't alienate existing customers. If you are able to strike the balance you will find a good flow of revenue from existing customers who maintain and grow their relationship with you, as well as new customers allowing you to grow and expand your business.

9. Keep Up With Your Market – hopefully you engaged in a market overview and study prior to purchasing your franchise to verify that there is a demand for whatever it is you are selling. The better you stay on top of the market and understand the changes as they are taking place (or even better, if possible, before they take place) the better off you will be in terms of structuring and communicating your message. It is not possible to succeed if you are detached from market events and it is unwise to rely on the franchisor to recognize or grasp the significance of changes taking place – especially if those changes are unique to your region.

10. Don't Forget to Market – the primary reason someone buys a franchise is because they hope to simplify the entry into the world of independent business. The idea is that the franchise offers a company-in-a-box and all the franchisee has to do is open the box and follow the instructions (manuals) and success is ensured. While some degree of

success may in fact be extracted from the rigid adherence to the franchise formula, the degree of success is solely dependent on the extent to which the franchisee is able and willing to invest time, energy, and money. In most cases the franchisor will engage in some forms of marketing. They almost certainly will have a website and probably will do some sort of advertising and public relations. They realize that the more their name is out in the market it not only helps the franchisees, but helps them sell more franchises. This activity, however, is insufficient and too broad to serve as the only marketing you do. You need to engage in local marketing, including advertising, public relations, direct mail, email, appearances, and more.

The purchase of a franchise is often a good decision, as long as the franchise is the right match for the skills, disposition, and goals of the individual franchisee. The success of the franchise is really a function of the commitment of the franchisee and the ability of the franchisor to provide critical training and ongoing support. No matter which franchise or how engaged they are, the bottom line to franchise success is marketing. Ignore these words at your own peril.