

Jumpstarting Franchise Sales

How Technology can help!

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Adding new franchisees is never easy. It requires hard work and a focused effort to convert thousands of inquiries and leads into new franchisees that will help grow your system for the next decade and more. And while technology provides several solutions for generating leads, identifying and targeting the hot-prospects, building a powerful one-to-one relationship with your prospects and saving thousands of dollars in low-return marketing, very few franchisors actually take advantage of it.

Consider these simple ideas:

- **Contact Management is not Franchise Sales Management!**

Having a powerful sales management system is critical for effectively managing the entire franchise sales process. Yet most organizations use standard contact management tools such as Act or Goldmine for managing their sales. In most cases, these tools:

 - Require manual entry of leads that come in from the web or through email
 - Are difficult to work with when synchronization with multiple users is required
 - Cannot automatically distribute leads to different sales people or regional developers
 - Do not provide a mechanism for guiding users through the franchise sales process: New Lead -> Application Package Processing -> Discovery Day -> UFOC Management -> Contract Management
 - Have no features for running automated email campaigns

The proper franchise sales management system not only provides all of the above but can also significantly reduce the manual effort required in managing hundreds of leads.

- **How do you pre-qualify your leads? How much time and energy do you spend following up on inquiries? Are you able to build a relationship with your prospects?**

Pre-qualifying your leads can allow you to separate the wheat from the chaff and focus more of your time on the more productive leads. Phone calls to leads are often left unanswered and do not yield a complete picture of the prospect. Personalized one-to-one emails are a powerful and low-cost approach to building a strong relationship with your prospects without overloading them with information. Similarly, allowing them to fill up simple profile applications on your website can make the process easy while providing you with valuable information.

- **How well are your marketing and sales dollars being spent? How effective are your lead sources?**

Sending out marketing packages to most prospective inquiries can be a tremendous waste of valuable marketing dollars. Not only can your package get lost among the 50 other packages the prospect might be getting, but your prospect may also end up having information overload. Presenting information electronically in rich audio and video format can create a very powerful impact while saving precious marketing dollars. Analyzing lead sources with reports that give you spend analysis can allow you to better channelize your resources.
- **Do you have a well defined branding and sales strategy for your website? Is it exciting enough for prospects to find out more about you?**

A majority of the individual franchise prospects conduct their research on the web today. Yet, for most organizations, the franchise opportunity section on their website is only an afterthought. Having an unstructured website that does not create a powerful impact on your prospects is worse than not having it. In addition, an interactive website can help you better pre-qualify your prospects and allow them to become more knowledgeable about you.
- **Cut down on the paper and save the trees!**

Sending out thick marketing packages and UFOC materials are not only expensive but also increase the response time to process a hot lead. Moving marketing material online or sending them by email can provide significant cost savings. With the e-sign law, franchise applications can be received online and UFOC's delivered electronically. And the best part is that all this really easy to set-up providing significant savings.
- **Are you leveraging mapping and demographics tools for selling quality franchises ?**

Use of mapping tools can allow you to quickly identify the best locations or markets and then seek prospective franchisees that are interested in those markets. Effective use of this information can also allow you to vary your franchise fees based on the location and allow you to generate more revenues with fewer sales.
- **Managing the Post-Sales process?**

A lot of things need to happen once the sale closes and the new franchisee starts his business. Yet most organizations manage this process on an ad-hoc basis with the use of thick paper folders to keep track of the activities and ensuring compliance. An electronic checklist or process manager can alert different people in the organization (such as the training manager, field manager, site manager, operations manager, etc) about their tasks and ensure that the opening process is completely smooth.

Change Management and Costs

Change is always difficult and when it gives the perception of having costs associated with it, most franchise organizations find it difficult to introduce new systems or processes. Yet, most franchise sales systems cost less than a few hundred dollars a month and when you equate that to the savings in manual processing and higher conversion rates (ration of new franchisees signed up to the leads received), these systems actually become a profit center.