

# How Franchisors Can Build Their Own Lead Development Channel.

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**The herd mentality is pervasive in the franchising industry, and particularly when it comes to franchise development marketing programs.**

Franchise brands are chasing franchise prospects through the same portals and list houses, social media, digital advertising, AdWords and PPC, broker networks and more.

It's the classic too many dogs, not enough dog food where prospects are being chased by multiple brands at the same time.

Even worse, all those lead generation sources are "pay to play" channels, where your leads are flowing only as long as you are spending money, and your precious marketing dollars are going towards making their channel stronger.

In this article, I will outline some new, exciting tools and strategies that will help you break away from the pack.

**Your current "rent but never own" approach to franchise lead generation is risky and becoming more expensive and less effective every day.**

Facebook advertising is all the rage in franchise development nowadays, but there is an opportunity cost associated with Facebook that most franchise marketers don't consider. Your audience of likes and shares doesn't belong to you, and even the content you are crafting and sharing is owned by Facebook.

It's not so far-fetched to imagine that sometime in the future Facebook or Google starts charging franchise brands more money for actual sales conversions. Don't believe it? Facebook is already making brands pay for access to their own followers. Consider the fact that when you post something to your Facebook page less than 5% of your brand's followers even see it unless you "boost" the post. You are paying just to reach the people who are already following you. How long do you think the impact of franchise development PPC campaigns last after you spend your last dollar with Google?

Closer to home, what if a few powerful franchise brands or broker networks came together and pooled their collective marketing spend to buy a controlling interest in the major portals and list companies? They suddenly start monopolizing the lead generation landscape, leaving you with fewer channels to reach prospects.

The point is this — smart franchise brands are increasingly realizing what most consumers realize — it makes a lot more sense to build and own your house, versus renting.

## **What if you created your own franchise development lead channel?**

The short-term and long-term benefits are off the charts. Now you own the audience — no longer sharing contacts with others, investing and depending less on rented channels and funding the other lead channels previously outlined.

You control the message, and the timing, of the brand messages sent. You can even assign monetary value to the contacts in your database and lead channel based on the amount of information you have on them.

In fact, you have the tools and resources right in front of you in your franchise marketing toolbox including your prospects contact data, a CRM database, PR, social media, website, content analytics, email marketing, newsletters, blogs, ebooks, branded magazines, and webinars. You just have to use the tools to build your channel in the most cost-effective way to deliver results.

## **The tools you need to build your franchise development lead channel.**

### **1. Your Database**

The first step to building a robust franchise development lead channel is to build your audience. Like most franchise brands, you have a database of hot, cold and warm leads. Based on my agency experience working with franchise brands big and small, I estimate the average marketing cost per name in your database is at \$50. So if you have 10,000 names, that would equate to a marketing asset valued somewhere in the half-million-dollar range.

You are actively working hot leads and have the warm candidates on a drip campaign. The cold or unqualified leads are basically collecting digital dust.

The majority of these leads aren't going to become franchisees, however, think about the value you can extract from your database. Think about how they can help build your channel.

You can use the database to conduct surveys, asking their opinions on your franchise sales messaging, take their profiles and use them to find “like” candidates on social media channels, help you raise your social media numbers and build your audience, and even rent your list to complementary brands to monetize it.

## **The value is the audience you have created, not just the hot leads you are working today.**

### **2. Franchise Public Relations**

Public relations also helps you grow your own franchise development marketing channel. Media coverage accelerates national brand awareness, interest and engagement and provides critical third-party validation and rich content for your marketing channel. Once the media coverage enlightens prospects, then you have them in your database to guide them through the buying journey, answering their questions along the way. Media coverage gives you robust content for your channel because you will use media hits on your website, e-marketing, social media and digital marketing activities.

### **3. Franchise Social Media and Online Marketing**

Social media and online marketing also help grow your own franchise development channel, however, you need to totally change your approach. It’s not about collecting “likes” and followers. It’s about using CTA (Call to Action) messaging to move these prospects from your Facebook or LinkedIn pages to your franchise development channel. Your content on social media channels must address their pain and answer their questions so they are moved to take action to learn more about your business opportunity and how it can change and improve their lives.

### **4. Data Analytics**

And finally, the secret weapon to a powerful franchise development sales channel is content data analytics.

According to HubSpot, a leading inbound marketing and sales platform, 70% of the buying decision is made before a franchise sales rep is contacted. That means the content you generate on your channel can either lead to more prospects contacting you or none at all. The days of soft measurements like clicks and likes are numbered. The content that really counts are the articles prospects are reading or the videos they’re watching to drive conversions. Without data analytics you are basing your content decisions on what you think versus what you know.

Data analytics can help you identify the content that truly resonates with your prospect personas, the different profiles of people who buy your franchise. Data can tell you what branded content on your website and social media channels is the most compelling and converts into leads. Even better, with some new technology tools, you can snoop around on your competitors’ websites and social media channels and emulate their tactics to develop better content on your channel.

Once you have conducted your data analytics, content knowledge powers your brand messaging and directs the strategy behind all branded content — videos, PR, website content, social media, e-marketing, direct mail, developing personas, etc.

So, my call to action for you is to stop depending on lead sources that don’t have your best interests at heart and continue to charge more and more.



Create your own franchise sales marketing channel and fully leverage it for more than just driving short-term leads. Continue to utilize rented channels like Facebook and LinkedIn to amplify and scale your own channel.

Recalibrate your current rented marketing channel strategies to drive all future conversions to your owned channel. Use data analytics to understand what kinds of content are driving engagement and conversion – not only on your website but on the websites of your competitors.



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