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Franchise Owners Can Win Every Market

But Only When They Can Use Custom Online Marketing Techniques

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Franchises have a good thing going. Name recognition, brand awareness, customer trust. But without today's individualized digital marketing, can your franchise owners fully capitalize on your good name in their markets?

We love franchises. The very idea of a franchise exemplifies the virtues of capitalism writ large: A business, founded on an *original concept* - be it home repair expertise, niche travel planners, pizza delivery or fast burgers, - catches on so wildly, other entrepreneurs pay a lot of money for the opportunity to market the *exact same concept* elsewhere. A successful franchise is truly Adam Smith's invisible hand at work.

But is your franchise's good name able to work to the fullest? Can your franchisees take your wildly successful original concept, and dominate their market today?

Without deploying the full arsenal of modern digital marketing strategies to enhance online visibility, capturing and retaining market share, the answer is No.

Successful franchises persist and grow because they have earned reputations for quality and associated that quality with their name brand - so, ultimately, their name, their brand, their reputation, is everything. When investors fork over tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars for the right to hang your shingle outside their door, you owe it to those investors to give them the rein to **succeed to the max**.

So - marketing directors and investment consultants for popular household-name franchises all over America are asking themselves - how? How does a franchise help (or at least not harm) its owners so they make

the most of their investment in your good name? Their success makes your brand name even better!

Franchisors could be hurting their franchisees against their local competitors by artificially limiting the scope and breadth of their individualized marketing capacity - particularly when it comes to **digital marketing online**, where so much business is found and conducted nowadays. In instances where a franchise utilizes a one-size-fits-all digital marketing strategy - throwing all their franchise operators across myriad different markets under the same blanket for all kinds of customer-facing outreach, from websites and social media to online reviews and the keyword research so vital for that all-important local SEO - those franchisees (investors, entrepreneurs, small businesspeople) who are so essential to growing your global identity might get lost in the local shuffle.

In short, franchise grantors place their franchisees at a major disadvantage when **digital marketing strategies customized to each local market** are not able to be deployed. Digital marketing is a multi-layered endeavor that requires regular if not constant monitoring - which ad copy gets more clickthroughs? which NAP corrections do we need to make? which geographic keywords best optimize the site (and which to avoid)? - so it makes total business sense to ensure that marketing dollars (including digital marketing dollars) get put to the most effective use.

Since all business, like all politics, is ultimately local, letting the local entrepreneurs who believe in (and have invested a lot of money in) your franchise's good name maximize their success with unfettered digital marketing capacity is **the best way for them to dominate their market, and for your franchise brand to rise in value**.

Here we go over the most salient dos and do-not-dos of digital marketing, for the perspective of marketers of successful business franchises:

Website: **Don't just provide a subdomain or a slash off the main franchise website. Do let them take advantage of having a proprietary URL.**

Often parent corporations of franchises will provide uniform-templates website to its individual owners, which might be a single webpage or collection of pages off the main site, with no localization and no assets for positive SEO results - just another directory in the old UNIX box, to use some computer lingo.

The results of this generic, overly standardized approach:

- The websites of individual franchisees can't separate themselves from local competitors, who are free to employ specific and ongoing website marketing and SEM tools to rank higher and win more business
- Individual franchisees can't differentiate themselves from fellow franchise owners, nearby or far away, using the same template
- The best, most unique selling proposition that would most connect with in a franchisee's local market cannot be communicated
- Search engines like Google rank your franchisee's page too low to attract traffic and business

The advantages a franchisor grants each and every one of its franchisees, when the full impact of local SEO is allowed, are many. Let's take, for example, a fast-food pizza franchisor who shall remain nameless. In every town in America, competition for the pizza dollar is fierce. Some of the specific advantages of local SEO strategies for our unnamed pizza franchisor and its franchisees when hungry people search Google for "pizza near me":

Local SEO Strategy:

Custom research into and on-site implementation of keywords most relevant to the individual franchise (e.g., pizza pie, pizza restaurant, Italian food, pizza delivery near me, best pizza near me, pizza deals, etc.)

and to the local market our pizza franchise is serving (fairfax, vienna, mclean va, tysons corner va pizza, fairfax county pizza delivery, best pizza in nova, etc.).

Advantage To the Franchise:

Results in higher SERP rankings for our pizza franchise's local outlet, which results in greater online visibility and brand awareness in the local market.

Local SEO Strategy:

Ensure correct NAP (name, address, phone number) info across all searchable directory listings for our individual pizza franchise, as well as the individual franchise's website.

Advantage To the Franchise:

Results in consistent, reliable contact info, so customers can call, visit or place their pizza order online with confidence.

Consistency in brand messaging can be universally maintained across all franchisees - *and at the same time* those franchises can still make use of and benefit from using custom digital marketing to reach their local markets with that message.

Social media: **Don't prohibit your franchise from interacting directly with customers. Do permit the top-of-mind awareness and loyalty that a targeted, engaging social media strategy can create.**

For some businesses more than others, perhaps, but certainly all businesses have a need to interact with their customers on some sort of social level, even if superficially. In fact, many businesses - restaurants, caterers, event planners, travel agents, insurance agents, dentists and doctors and medical pros and on and on - are intrinsically social. They're in the "people business."

Parameters may need to be set, of course, within the bounds of a franchise's specific brand, but nevertheless the uniqueness of your franchisee as a local business can best be brought out by the community engendered through effective, attractive social media.

An individual franchise is the same as a local business. Local business succeeds when neighbors talk, and nowadays neighbors talk on social media. The advantages gained when an individual franchise can speak directly to – and hear directly from – its customers/neighbors through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest are many. Consider, for example, a well-known carpet-cleaning franchise (which, again, we shall hold nameless) that does not permit its local franchises to utilize social media. They're missing out on golden relationship-building opportunities:

Social Media Strategy:

Post a variety of photos and videos that succinctly depict the carpet cleaning crew in action, emphasizing the franchise's personalized service and unique selling propositions.

Advantage To the Franchise:

Educate customers in the local market as to why our carpet-cleaning franchise is the right choice for their home's carpets and floors.

Social Media Strategy:

Demonstrate commitment to the local community (charity events, donations, youth sports sponsorships, etc.).

Advantage To the Franchise:

Build goodwill within our carpet-cleaning franchise's local community, and truly localize a big-name carpet-cleaning company within a neighborhood or small town.

Reviews: **Don't restrict your franchise owners from asking for online reviews from their customers. Do level the playing field by encouraging positive feedback in the form of those crucial reviews.**

In recent years the landscape of digital marketing has grown to cover many surfaces, and one of them is *C2C interaction*. When your customers speak directly to your prospective customers, their words could win you business or cost you business. Reviews matter, and online reviews are read and counted upon.

It's a natural tendency for people to be more motivated to complain than to praise. An angry customer after one experience is more likely to make a negative post than a happy customer after many experiences is to make a positive one. Let your franchisees do exactly what their locally owned competition is doing: Encourage satisfied customers to make a short review. It combines the technology of modernity with old-fashioned word-of-mouth marketing.

Local SEO: **Don't pigeonhole your franchisees into a turnkey SEO strategy that applies the same keywords and metadata for a franchise in California as for one in Maine. Do let your investors work directly with on-site SEO professionals who know their business and their market.**

As you know, not all vendors are equal. This is especially true in the relatively novel (but rapidly evolving) industry of SEO - search-engine optimization. Frankly, the nature of SEO means that the client may not be entirely aware of deficiencies or inconsistencies that their SEO company is allowing, but shouldn't.

Give your owners the flexibility to run their business as efficiency and profitably as possible. Give them the opportunity to work with a qualified local SEO professional - and, if need be, to fire them and hire another.

Your total marketing investment: **Don't wonder whether money spent on digital marketing is worth it. Do see positive results from individualized, customized digital marketing strategies that help your owners and, therefore, help you.**

Pretty much all businesses, from mom-and-pop small companies to mega-corporate franchises and conglomerates, invest in marketing themselves online with the goal of spreading their message, enhancing their brand, winning and keeping customers, boosting profits and maximizing value. It'd be nice to know those dollars aren't going to waste.

Here's how: Franchisors and franchisees work cooperatively to dominate a franchisee's local market by applying basic tools and techniques of digital marketing, website content marketing, local SEO and search engine marketing.

Working together to implement a set of customized, locally targeted digital marketing strategies, both franchisee and franchisor can **realize the fullest potential of your brand's good name**.