



Why Marketing Fails For Franchisees and How To Turn It Around

By Jen DeTracey

Over the past twenty years of my career in marketing strategy, planning and implementation, I would like to share some of the golden nuggets I have picked up along the way. Most marketing initiatives your franchisees implement will fail if one or more of the three following factors are not in place:

- Their staff knows exactly what is happening and when
- Their staff buys into the excitement of what has been planned
- Their staff is trained to handle customer enquiries and challenges that may arise once the promotion is in place

In all the years I have worked in retail marketing either as an employee or consultant, I have often witnessed poor communication and training in outreach to existing customers and prospects.

During my time as the West Coast Marketing Manager for the Virgin Megastore at the corner of Robson and Burrard in Vancouver, I worked diligently to put systems in place to ensure management and staff knew exactly what was happening and when. Each week, a "Tip Sheet" was posted in the lunch room with all of the marketing initiatives for that week. Ads were also posted on the bulletin board right next to the time clock. Management was debriefed and managers followed up with staff.

We also had the benefit of a DJ booth in the store. DJs were given a weekly script with all the promotions that were happening. They would announce each promotion. This benefited both the customer and the staff.

When a large promotion would take place, more training was required, particularly for in-store promotions where we would partner with other organizations or retailers. Some examples of this would be giving out Virgin Bucks at the cash register or getting staff to commit to putting bag stuffers in all shopping bags at the beginning of the day.

Although this was a large operation with many managers and more than 100 staff members during peak times, similar systems still need to be implemented even in smaller retail operations with few staff members. It is important that employees feel they are included in whatever promotions are planned before the customer learns about them. This can be as simple as staff getting a copy of an email blast that is going out to the customer database at least a day or two before it hits people's inboxes.

Over time, a franchisee's team may become complacent to each new promotion they launch. It is your responsibility to ensure the franchisees remain excited and passionate about marketing their business and communicating to their staff. It can be deflating when a customer enters the store holding on to an ad you ran and is greeted by a less-than-excited salesperson. This customer most likely has not visited your franchisee's location before and they may expect that, once they discover they need what your franchisee has, they will get their undivided attention. This is a crucial moment in successful sales and marketing.

Most of my clients have monthly, if not weekly staff meetings. This is a great time to provide their team with marketing updates.

Not only do your franchisees want to inform them, they want to ignite a feeling of excitement about the next promotional campaign. Your franchisees want to equip them with the information and tools they need to do the best job they can do.

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This means having a discussion around any concerns they have as your franchisee's front-line team. Once these concerns are aired, solutions can be implemented.

Last fall, I worked with two Pharmasaves on Vancouver Island. Both spent time on a daily basis educating incoming staff on their marketing focus. The Comox Pharmasave had a white board in their lunch room that could not be missed. It had a Monday-to-Friday calendar with important information on it. So, in between sharing the information with the team verbally every day, management provided staff with a reference point during breaks and mealtimes.

During Serena Pahal's five years in franchise development with Boston Pizza (BP), the company launched a new program in order to improve communication channels between the West Coast corporate office and franchise partner employees.

BP encouraged franchise partners with multiple units to hire a community relations

coordinator. The person in this role would be responsible for communicating the various promotions to management and staff at each BP location in a specific cachement. This included working with employees to make sure they understood how to manage an up-and-coming promotion. This person also would become the key liaison between their community and the BP brand.

For those franchisees with only one location, the corporate office facilitated the process for several owners within a close proximity, jointly sharing in the cost and benefits of one community relations coordinator for that region. Since its inception, this initiative has proven to be hugely successful and is still in place today.

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When I worked with Cobs Bread last year, marketing manager Michelle Duck shared with me one of the tools they created to help franchise owners educate staff about how to handle customers who redeem coupons at one of their bakeries. The educational video shows employees how to deal with receiving coupons in a passionate and welcoming manner even if they have no idea where the coupon came from. This is a great way for Cobs to set the standard for their franchises, keep the Cobs Bread brand strong, and keep its customer service model in check.

I believe that employee training is the weak link when it comes to customer service and marketing. It starts with how the staff answers the phone to following up with customers after a purchase has been made. Right from the moment someone makes a phone call or sends an email, they have an interest in what you are promoting. This customer can either have a very positive initial experience or a very bad one.

I was at Essence last week purchasing essential oils. The salesperson was alone in the store. She didn't know the answer to my question so I asked her to call another store to confirm if I could get a discount on my purchase because I was returning bottles.

She was happy to oblige. While ringing in my transaction, the phone rang. I was asked if I could hold on for a moment while she took the call. During the call the person was told the employee was the only one in the store and asked if she could take down the person's phone number and call them right back. I was impressed with her ability to treat me and the person on the phone as important customers without compromising either relationship.

As you plan your next marketing campaign, encourage your franchisees to include involving, educating and training their staff. Once they do this, their staff are 100 times more likely to actively promote and endorse the campaign.

A true veteran of UNIGLOBE Travel International with more than 30 years in the business, and currently UNIGLOBE's South Asia Specialist, Michelle Desreux explained the strategies the company uses to engage front-line employees.

UNIGLOBE understands that many of its front-line staff are younger so it used the communication tools of “today” to reach out to them. Prior to the start of a coupon promotion, employees would receive a text notifying them to go to their email and view the new campaign. When employees go to their email all they will see is a composite of the coupon and the coupon's start date. UNIGLOBE knows providing a graphic or visuals and minimal written information is the key to getting and retaining its young staff's attention for the short time needed to get the message across.

UNIGLOBE also recognizes the benefits of keeping promotions as automated as possible, to simplify the steps required to effectively implement the promotion.

Taking this a step further, Michelle explained how it's important to view the process from the staff's perspective, helping them become personally engaged in the promotion. There are two approaches to this.

The first is to simply include staff responsibilities in their job description from day one so they know what is expected of them. Secondly, if the responsibilities of the front-line people require additional involvement over and beyond the normal job description, recognition and rewards can be doled out. For instance, agents who sell 10 tickets of a specific type within 48 hours can be entered into a draw for a prize. Depending on the promotion, this prize may be fun or fabulous.

Small franchisors are not likely to have the capital or resources to invest in huge promotions as seen in UNIGLOBE's \$5-billion-plus operation, however, a creative mixture of technology and rewards have also shown to be effective in generating better results.

In summary, here are some key takeaway points to put in place or refine to ensure your franchisees and their staff have a well-oiled marketing machine:

1. Make time for regular staff meetings or communications, making them aware of marketing campaigns in advance
2. Train staff from day one on what is expected of them regarding their involvement in promotions
3. Find ways to make campaigns as easy as possible for staff to implement
4. Allow them to be part of the solution process should issues arise
5. Walk them through the campaign prior to its launch date
6. Check in with them once it starts to see how it's going 🌟

About the Author:

Jen DeTracey is a strategic alchemist and one of Canada's Top Marketing Experts. Jen is the author of the new book “Lift Strategies: Quick Tips to Engage Customers and Elevate Profits” www.liftstrategies.com. She helps franchises accelerate their growth and manage this growth through her proven 5-Step Strategic Marketing Process, the LIFFT® Process. Jen does this through consulting, training programs and keynote speaking at conferences and conventions. You can reach Jen at 1-877-255-2098 or at jen@liftstrategies.com.



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