The Importance of Brand Consistency

oneupweb

Why Consistency is Key

One of the keys to building a successful franchise — or any successful business, for that matter — is consistency.

We find it especially important for franchise businesses because of the unique three-fold nature of this business model: the corporate owner must attract new franchisees, then meet the needs of its individual franchisees and target consumer.

Inherent in franchise business is a certain degree of physical consistency. Individual franchisees are expected to abide by rules related to uniform, presentation, customer service norms and the general business processes. The consistency of each of these physical elements in turn helps the corporation meet the needs and expectations of its target consumer, no matter which franchisee they happen to be interacting with.

Consistency between uniforms, presentation, look-and-feel of the brick and mortar locations, and general business processes strengthens the franchise's ability to differentiate itself from the competition and stand as a credible, trustworthy business. In short, consistency lends weight and credibility to your franchise's brand as a whole.

But does that same level of consistency remain constant across your branded digital properties?

If the answer to any of the questions at right is yes, then consider whether your franchisees are credibly maintaining your brand across these digital properties. Is the brand voice and persona the same across each site? Is the messaging consistent?

Chances are, they're not.

Ask yourself the following: does your franchise allow franchisees to:

- operate their own websites?
- manage and execute their own digital marketing strategies?
- manage and operate their own social media profiles?

This white paper discusses the importance of brand consistency as it relates to franchises.
We cover the power of branding and how it factors into relieving some common pain points – both at the corporate and franchisee level.

The Power of a Brand

Let's first define what we mean when we talk about "brand."

"Branding" is a term often misused and misconstrued. Your logo, your trademarks and service marks – all the graphic elements and the things that differentiate your company in the marketplace and make your business recognizable – are all aspects of your brand. But "branding" is more than what people see.

Helpful Tip

When we use the term, we use it to mean the following: "The story your consumers tell their friends and family when you're not in the room."

Branding is the sum of multiple touchpoints that go beyond the first impression (which may be your franchise's logo or an ad campaign) to include how you meet customer expectations whenever and wherever consumers interact with you.

Branding is important. But how much so? Can the potential value of branding be overstated? Perhaps. Anything can. But the truth is that for franchise businesses, branding can be one the most valuable assets – perhaps even the most important asset because it lures not only potential franchisees, it attracts and retains your customer base.

Successful businesses can be launched overnight; successful brands take time. So how are brands built?

We like the way CEO and venture capitalist Jerry McLaughlin described it in **Forbes**: "Every day, we have opportunities to shape others' perceptions. That is what brand-building is about: the deliberate and skillful application of effort to create a desired perception in the mind of another person."

Deliberation and skill – applied with effort. That's how we build strong brands. In the next section, we look at common features found in almost any successful franchise business.

Branding Strategy for Franchises: 3 Principles

Franchises thrive when these **three assets** are present:[2]

1.	2.	3.
Strong brand power	A playbook for success	Support and experience

Whenever we undertake a marketing strategy for franchises, we start by digging deep into each of those three inquiries. We do it to determine how much brand recognition the franchise has and how much saturation it enjoys in the market. We review the materials and resources the corporate entity makes available to the individual franchisees. If it's all there, we seek to make it better. If a component is missing, then we work with corporate to implement and execute it.

Strong brand power

Consistency builds **strong branding**, so it's one of our primary considerations. The same graphic design elements, language and writing style should be a constant across all communication channels – from print materials, to in-store décor to digital display ads, landing pages, franchisee websites and the corporate site.

It seems like a simple matter – but it's easy to lose the forest for the trees. Consider one small example of how we helped the Invisible Fence brand, **improve their paid media efforts:**

Invisible Fence is the leading pet containment solutions provider. Its products are sold exclusively through a network of trained, locally based professionals who number in the hundreds across the country.

In taking a close look at Invisible Fence, one of the most important things we noticed was a lack of branding consistency. Individual dealers were using different colors and fonts in the logo. Sizes were off. In a nutshell, the brand didn't appear unified. And it was having a negative effect on consumer recognition and overall brand strength. By improving their level of consistency, we improved the speed with which consumers recognized and identified with the brand, which lead to higher conversions and more sales. The importanceof branding consistency is clear when customer concerns come to the forefront.

The Right Support

For certain business-minded and self-motivated individuals, there is an allure to becoming a franchisee. Partly, it's the chance to operate a business semi-independently from the corporate structure without having to endure the hardships of being an isolated startup.

With that said, there is a certain level of understanding that some aspects of the franchise must be dictated by the corporate owner, and actually – research indicates that most franchisees expect help. This isn't surprising, considering the other two behaviors of successful franchises:

1. Support from the franchisor
2. Dedicated franchisees

Here's where your marketing partner can come into play. Relatively basic resources, like creating a **style guide** and providing instructions on how to use it, can go a long way in supporting your franchisees and ensuring consistent branding presence across the country and globally. Style guides apply to all areas of marketing, but you can include sections specific to the proper transfer of your brand in the online ecosphere. Further, you can support local efforts by providing approved digital content, such as landing pages, display advertisements and more.

Consider your corporate franchise website and the websites of your local franchisees. What purpose does the corporate site serve? Does it provide easy-to-find resources for potential franchisees? Does it educate them about the opportunity – speaking to the franchise growth goals and earning potential for a franchisee? Or is it too consumer-minded?

Best practice for franchise web properties is to design and develop the **corporate site** so that its primary purpose is educational, leaving the individual, local franchisee sites to focus more on transactional aspects. Further, despite the distinct differences in the primary purposes of these sites, both must remain true to the franchise brand. They must be consistent in look, feel and tone.

Allocating Marketing Dollars

Once you've recognized the need for branding consistency, you'll determine how to allocate your marketing dollars. This is sometimes trickier than it sounds, especially with the importance of digital marketing.

Digital media consists of everything from social media marketing to email marketing and search engine optimization. There are an endless number of digital outlets for your company to advertise and thrive in the digital world.

Findings from a 2018 report show that the average company will spend **42% of their marketing budget** in online marketing, up from 29% in 2014.

If you factor in the increased interest in online presence as well as how cost-effective so many digital channels are, it's easy to understand why digital marketing is rapidly overtaking traditional media, such as newspaper ads and billboards.

With the way digital marketing is growing, it is most important for franchises to allocate money where it will be most effective. According to **Snap Agency**, "In 2017, we saw the first time in history that digital spend surpassed total TV advertising spend in the US, with $72.01 billion spent on TV and $77.37 billion spent on digital marketing." As digital marketing continues to grow, more money will need to be put towards maintaining the channels that produce the ROI you're searching for. It's important for marketers to set aside enough budget to capitalize on the digital opportunities.

Break it Down

In that same article, Snap Agency suggests using 8% of your gross revenue for marketing. On average, companies use 50% of their marketing budget on digital media.

Budget Framework

Company Revenue x **8%**
(Gross Profit)

Marketing Budget

Marketing Budget x **50%**

Digital Media

Keep in mind that 8% is an average budget and is used here simply as a benchmark. Once the overall marketing budget is set, the business can allocate the marketing dollars for certain expenditures. It's a good practice to allocate dollars between traditional marketing efforts and digital efforts within the overall marketing budget. However, larger companies that have better branding have an opportunity to use traditional channels for marketing, while small businesses benefit from the free and more cost-effective platforms of digital marketing, like social media.

Note that in an increasingly integrated marketing field, some marketing dollars earmarked for traditional advertising may overlap with the digital spend. The above formula provides a base amount, but consideration of additional factors will cause the numbers to fluctuate. Factor in these **scenarios** to best decide where your dollars should go:

Internal objectives

Goals the business hopes to make either on a quarterly, bi-quarterly or annual basis

Industry reports and the state of the market

World events, the ebb and flow of the market in general and the overall direction of an industry must be taken into consideration when setting any budget

Past results

While not wholly indicative of future performance, past results can provide helpful guidelines for justifying increases or decreases in the budget

A Partner with Experience

Building durable, successful franchises is not easy. If you find yourself in the weeds, know that branding consistency with the help of a marketing partner is important.

Because **Oneupweb** specializes in marketing for franchises and dealer networks, we know how to drive local traffic and revenue, lower cost per lead and increase unit sales. Whether managing a national brand awareness campaign or developing optimized, local content for franchisees with **PointA**, we understand that branding consistency is more than just important – it's one of your greatest assets. Not only that, we have a **record for success** in the franchise industry, particularly with service-based franchises.

Get in touch with us. Our brand architects (web designers, web developers and digital marketing professionals) are ready to blueprint, build or help restructure your franchise business. We consistently post updates on our **blog** that you might find useful as you navigate the marketing world.

About Oneupweb

We come from several walks of life. Near and far. Far and wide. Our aim with every project is to set the bar higher. From humble beginnings to a measured confidence, over the years, we've been fortunate to bring home several awards for our work including Addys, Tellys, W3s and more.

These awards aren't the reason why we're in this business, but we admit — they're nice honors, and they're even better when we bring them home for our clients. Because let's face it: without you — the collective you, businesses, brands and organizations — there's no need for us.

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