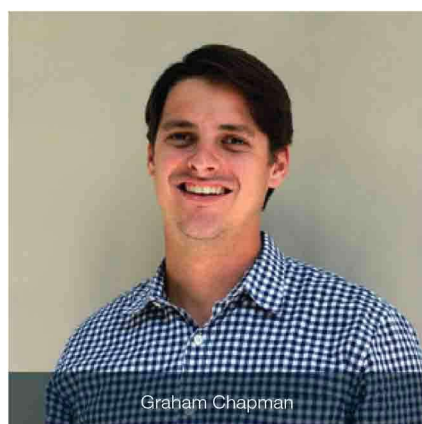


TURNING FRANCHISEES INTO BRAND AMBASSADORS:

20 TIPS TO HELP FRANCHISEES PROMOTE THEMSELVES EFFECTIVELY IN THE DIGITAL AGE



Graham Chapman

Brand ambassadors can be a powerful catalyst to propel your franchise forward, but how do you help your franchisees understand the benefits of engaging online and positioning themselves for success as ambassadors in the digital age?

A successful ambassador program should be viewed as an extension of the sales force. After all, ambassadors are enthusiastic about the brand and able to speak to it in a professional and informative manner. These are people who enjoy getting to know others and who appreciate sharing ideas and information online. They are able to drive new business by cultivating relationships and keeping the brand top-of-mind.

As our company, 919 Marketing, a leading content marketing agency specializing in executing game-changing PR campaigns and social media strategies (including brand ambassador programs!) for dozens of franchise brands, celebrates its 20th anniversary, we'd like to share 20 key tips that will help YOU turn your franchisees into effective brand ambassadors.

Here are 20 tips that will help franchisors build and lead a brand ambassador program that will help franchisees effectively promote themselves (and the brand) in the digital age:

Establish Goals

While the ultimate goal is to attract leads and make sales, doing so as a brand ambassador requires time and a systematic approach. Examine existing sales processes to determine:

- How many people in your target market do you typically connect with before making a sale?
- How many times do you typically interact with someone before they use your product or service? As a general rule, expect this number to increase a bit online.

Research

Successful brand ambassadors are those who are enthusiastic about meeting and helping others. Be sure to consider the following before launching an ambassador program:

- Who has the information people need? Will the ambassadors be able to

effectively speak to their connections' needs?

- Where are your customers online? Often, those targeting B2B connections have greater success on LinkedIn, whereas those targeting B2C connections may have more success on Facebook.
- What type of information do people need in each stage of the sales funnel? What do they need as they identify a potential problem, seek solutions and evaluate their options?

Build a Digital Toolkit

Just as the sales team needs flyers and banners to attend a tradeshow, brand ambassadors must have digital tools to facilitate the sales process online.

- Optimize digital profiles. Work with a marketing professional to ensure that the franchisee's profiles are up-to-date, professional and incorporate brand messaging.
- Establish brand guidelines and social media policies. Be sure that the ambassadors understand what is allowed and required before they begin.
- Provide training. Ambassadors may already be familiar with how Facebook or LinkedIn work on a technical level, but do they understand how to use them as a sales tool?
- Plan time/daily activity. An ambassador program is a sales effort, not advertising. As such, expect that ambassadors will need time to build online relationships.
- Offer graphics and multimedia support.



On most social forums, images, videos and other long-form content help to capture a connection's attention, yet many franchisees don't know how to create this type of content on their own. Provide a support team or program that can create this type of rich content for them.

Develop Relationships

Armed with information and a digital toolkit, encourage ambassadors to build relationships with potential vendors, customers, and prospects. Remind them to:

- Personalize invitations or connection requests. People want to feel that ambassadors are interested in them personally, not just trying to close a sale.
- Share useful information. What type of information do your clients need? What questions do they have? Create or find content that will help to address their needs.
- Comment on other people's information. This shows your interest in them and keeps you top-of-mind.
- Reply to comments that are made on your posts to extend the conversation.
- Use direct messaging capabilities to share specialized information and

thoughts that may be of value to a single contact to deepen the relationship.

- Be patient. Cultivating business relationships takes time.

Track, Measure, Adjust

As with any sales program, brand ambassador efforts must be routinely evaluated and adjusted to have the greatest impact. Once the program has begun, review:

- Who have they talked to? Are they making the right type of contacts?
- When they last reach out to each contact? It usually takes five or more touch points to make a sale, so consider recording this in your CRM system.
- Is the content that they are providing useful? Are people liking, commenting on and sharing it?
- How much time has been committed to the ambassador program?

In order for a brand ambassador program to succeed, a "top-down" shift is required. Those involved with the program, specifically those at the franchisor level who must set a strong example, must move away from thinking about social media as advertising and only sharing

comments/posts about their brand. Instead, franchisors must dedicate time and resources to arm ambassadors with the tools they need to share compelling and educational content/posts and help them develop meaningful business relationships online that convert to sales offline.

Graham Chapman is a Senior PR Catalyst for 919 Marketing, a national marketing, PR and social media agency that creates and executes hard-hitting Social Relations™ programs on behalf of emerging and established franchise companies. Chapman is a passionate, driven and energetic account executive who has helped dozens of franchise clients share national and local stories that increase franchise sales lead flow and in-store traffic for franchisees. As a member of the 919 Marketing team, Chapman is part of a powerful collection of Emmy award winning journalists, nationally recognized marketing strategists, creative content marketing gurus and savvy digital marketing analysts who have proven experience delivering powerful, revenue generating results for emerging and established franchise brands.

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