# Why Franchise Marketing Agencies Hate KPIs

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We've all seen romantic comedies where two mismatched people start off hating each other, and then by the end of the film, they've fallen in love. I think my fellow franchise marketing agencies should strive for a similar relationship with key performance indicators (KPIs).

That can be hard. From what I've seen, many franchise marketing agencies hate KPIs.

But franchises' marketing teams typically adore KPIs, and it's easy to understand why. KPIs measure progress, and a franchise brand wants to know that it's getting a healthy return on its investment.

Historically, though, offering up KPIs to a client has been tough. There are ample KPIs that aren't effective indicators of growth. For instance, if you were a door-to-door salesperson in the 1950s, you might brag about knocking on 1,000 doors in a week, but if you are only getting one or two sales a week, that's a pretty pointless metric.

Fortunately, the rise of franchise marketing technology, including artificial intelligence and data analytics platforms that identify, analyze and track online behaviors of local customers and franchise candidates, has allowed more and more franchise marketers to measure program results.

So if the technology makes it easy to access mountains of marketing data, you'd think that franchise marketing agencies would love KPIs. But many still don't. After all, it's no easy task to uncover and leverage the actionable data franchise marketers need to set, manage, measure and report tangible marketing success to franchise sales teams, the franchise system and senior management.

Let's consider some other reasons why franchise marketing agencies hate KPIs.

### Three More Reasons Why Franchise Marketing Agencies Hate KPIs

It's a common beef among franchise marketing teams that franchise marketing agencies are resistant to or incapable of providing data-validated results. Still, there are a number of logical reasons for the reluctance to embrace KPIs.

## 1. Most agency people haven't worked on the client side.

Agency account managers work with a roster of accounts, and therefore are focused on keeping multiple trains running on time. Client-side marketing managers, on the other hand, are held to setting and managing yearly consumer and franchise development marketing goals for their brand only. They understandably have an "inch wide and a mile deep" mentality on everything related to their brand.

As a former executive vice president of marketing, I know the pressure that franchise marketing teams are under to report progress. To do so, you need clear, compelling metrics to set expectations and measure success. Meanwhile, many agencies — particularly PR and ad agencies — don't have the resources nor bandwidth to deploy the technology needed to provide their clients with hard, actionable data.

## 2. Old habits are hard to break.

The days of agencies validating performance solely based on media impressions, website visits and social media likes and shares are fleeting. Yet from what I've seen, many agencies really don't have the marketing chops or technical expertise needed to set and measure the KPIs that are most critical to each franchisor.

The reality is that few agency executives have a seat at the table when their clients are formulating brand marketing strategies.

## 3. New marketing KPIs are more complicated than ever.

There is no shortage of marketing technology providers. The challenge is finding the right solution that allows franchise marketers and franchise marketing agencies to quickly access the right data and making it simple to understand and use.

In my opinion, the franchisor should lead technology decisions, not agencies, given that they are likely to change agencies at some point.

### The Most Important Franchise Marketing KPIs

Despite the distaste for KPIs, I think franchise marketing agencies would be smart to turn on the charm and get to know KPIs better. By harnessing the power of competitive data and online buyer behaviors, franchise marketing KPIs help everybody. The franchise's marketing team can set tangible, numerical marketing goals and measure progress toward meeting defined goals within each marketing channel — and if you, as the franchise marketing agency, meet those goals, you have proof that what you're doing is working.

There are dozens of marketing KPIs to consider. My company has identified the top seven franchise marketing KPIs. Whichever KPIs you follow, franchise marketing KPIs should mirror the buyer journey and adhere to the "fewer, bigger, better" approach versus trying to manage too many KPIs with diminishing returns. There should be clearly set KPIs for paid and organic search, PR, paid digital, paid and organic social media, and desktop and mobile websites.

Some common website KPIs that you'd do well to monitor include:

• Website speed. Improving the speed of your website on desktop and mobile devices can have a huge impact on the user experience (time on site, bounce rate, etc.), but it also improves your website's Google ranking.

• Your domain authority. Scored from 1-100, your domain authority is impacted by site speed but also the "authority" of the content you have on your website. Do you know your score?

• Your website content and navigational strategy. It should be based on the top three topics your prospects are searching for.

• Web content conversions. Do you know which web content converts visitors into qualified leads?

• Tracking. Are you tracking leads, conversions and the sales revenue attributed to your website (both desktop and mobile users)?

That last one is especially important. Set and measure franchise marketing KPIs based on a numerical benchmark and a stretch goal statement (for example, "improve mobile website speed from 36 to 58 in six months") and identify the steps needed to achieve the goal.

Today's relationships between franchisors and marketing agencies remind me of the famous joke in a movie that's about as far away from a romantic comedy as you can get: *Pulp Fiction*. The gag is that a baby tomato starts lagging behind his parents. Papa tomato gets really angry, goes over to the baby tomato, squishes him and says, "Catch up."

You need to catch up with the KPI expectations of your franchise marketing clients, or you might get squished.