

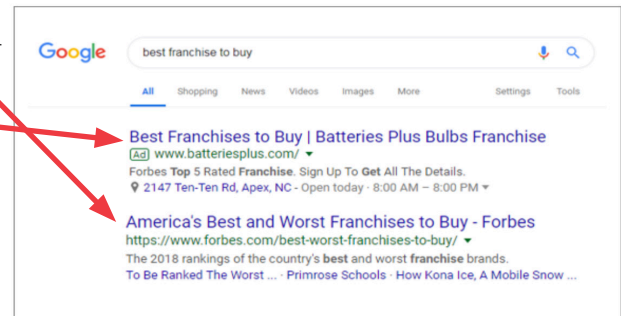
Why Most Franchise Brands Whiff at Using Organic Search to Drive Online Leads



The good news — there are only two major ways to impact your brand's online search results: organic search and paid search.

The bad news — driving real results can be tricky. Just ask the long line of franchise marketing vendors and in-house digital marketing gurus that have been vaporized by impatient franchise execs over the years.

The two primary methods for driving online leads are known as search engine marketing (SEM) and search engine optimization (SEO) respectively.



PAID SEARCH: SEM

Franchise marketers have plowed tons of money into paid search/search engine marketing (SEM) for years, and for good reason.

Paid search is when franchise brands pay to appear at the top of search results (above those that earned their page-one spots organically). And the weapon of choice is Google Ads — the most used pay-per-click (PPC) advertising program in franchising.

Franchise brands aggressively compete against each other for the most coveted paid search rankings.

Franchise development teams use a variety of tactics to drive online sales leads, from proactively securing their direct competitors' brand search terms, to competing for expensive key words phrases like "best franchises" and "hottest franchise brands."

Franchise marketing teams deploy local paid search programs to help their franchisees compete on a local level around the key terms that drive consumer traffic like "best sub shop" or "fresh Mother's Day gifts."

Paid search provides franchise marketers with quick results to show the executive team and franchisees. Consequently, industry spending on paid search has dwarfed organic search.

Why spend the time and money to play for the long haul waiting for your SEO rankings to build when you can see the brand on page one of Google almost immediately? See below.

There are several inherent challenges with paid search:

1. Consumer trust of online ads is lower than ever.
2. Paid search performance builds, plateaus and then fades.
3. The search content and position results disappear the day you stop spending money.
4. You are merely renting the search position.
5. Spending intensity and duration dictate success.
6. It's significantly more expensive than organic content.

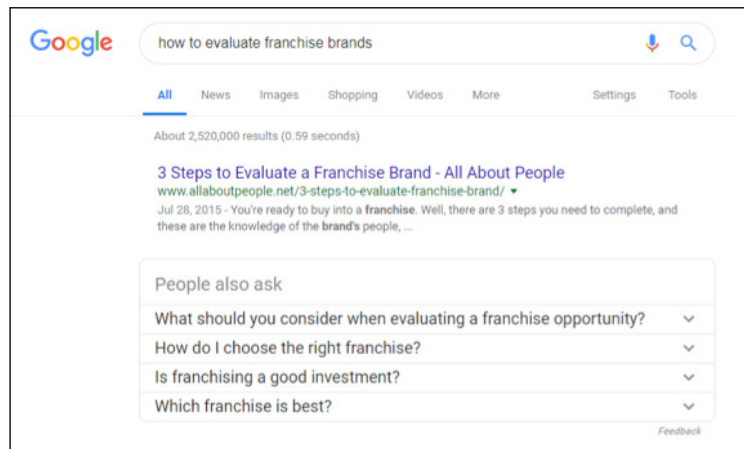
ORGANIC SEARCH: SEO

Whenever a franchisee candidate or a local consumer types a question into Google, or any other search engine, the list of links that appear below the ads are known as "organic results." These are unpaid and appear purely based on the quality and the content (article, blog, infographic, webinar, video, etc.).

Website traffic that comes from people finding your links among these results is classified as "organic search" traffic or just organic traffic.

The screen below illustrates a perfect example of how the right content can catapult even a small niche brand to the number one spot without paying to get there and stay there.

Notice the content was created in 2015, yet they still have the number one spot for the term "how to evaluate franchise brands."



Organic search programs are more effective, more sustainable and more cost-effective:

1. Performance steadily increases over time. The content resides in the search engines forever. As a consequence, you can repurpose and market the content in multiple marketing channels without the risk of the online content disappearing.



2. Organic content is viewed as more trustworthy than paid ads.
3. Organic content generates 3X the leads per dollar spent on paid search.
4. Moving up in the rankings is difficult and takes time, but once you're there you get to reap the benefits for a long time.
5. 57% of B2B marketers say SEO has the biggest impact on lead generation.
6. On average, organic search leads have a 14.6% close rate, compared to 1.7% for outbound marketing leads.
7. The highest spenders are more likely to turn to organic search for information.

So why have franchisors whiffed to date on using organic search to drive online results?

As mentioned, content marketing is a long-term strategy versus the short-term, immediate gratification of a tactical Google Ads campaign. But we are talking months, not years, to start seeing results.

In addition, while franchise content marketing has been a topic at industry conferences, franchise brands are largely in the dark about how to deploy content marketing compared to corporate America.

Lastly, unlike traditional advertising, direct mail, portals and digital ads where the brand is pushing a promotional message to an audience, content marketing is about candidates seeking your brand out to learn, evaluate and build confidence in buying a franchise versus going back to work for someone else.

This is a radically different approach for most franchise sales teams to accept and adopt. Many are more comfortable running paid campaigns to drive site traffic and then wondering why prospects quickly drop off when they arrive at the brand website or landing pages.

However, online buying behaviors are changing the game and making your brand content THE reason why your franchise brand will win or lose moving forward.

To that point, did you know that according to a recent study by HubSpot that 70% of the buying decision is made before a franchise candidate decides to contact a sales rep or fill out a form?

It's all about creating relevancy and trust. If you haven't developed your sales content from the prospect's point of view, your chance for success is shrinking by the day.

When a prospect is searching online for answers, the right organic content will score high in search and position your brand as a problem-solving resource, and your people as trusted experts and innovators.

So how can franchise brands leverage organic search?

Don't start the journey until you have the road map for success in place. Utilize available data analytics platforms to capture and analyze the actual behaviors of visitors to your website and social media visitors, along with those of your competitors.

Once you know what content is driving organic leads to your website, what content is being read on your website and social media channels, and what content or topics are actually converting into leads, you can develop a data-informed content marketing plan and 12-month content calendar. Download a free franchise content marketing plan template.

Research studies have proven that organic search is more cost-effective in the long run. However, a combination of paid and organic search can be a very cost-effective approach as well.



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