

# Franchise Development via Social Media

By Paul Segreto, CEO & President, **franchisEssentials**

In the article, Enter the Fourth Horsemen, published in the April 2009 issue of Franchise Times, Mark Siebert, Chief Executive Officer of the iFranchise Group identified Social Media as the next internet [franchise] lead generation site. In the article, Mark wrote, “The problem is that far too many franchisors view social media like guerilla marketing on steroids – easy opportunities for free publicity that can drive leads. But marketing on social media is neither free nor easy – and the sheer number of people using the social media will not dictate the size of the opportunity.”

Let’s see what else has been written about Social Media and Franchising. Actually, in the same issue of Franchise Times, where Mark’s article was published, Nancy Weingartner, Franchise Times Editor wrote about it in her article, Citizen Marketing. At the end of the article, was a text block with the title, “The Top Five Social Media Mistakes” from Nick Powills of No Limit Media Consulting. The mistakes, clearly with franchising in mind, but applicable to other business segments as well, were identified as follows:

1. Not changing your franchise agreement to cover social media. Just like franchisors took control of their Web sites a decade or so ago, now they need to control what’s being said about the brand in social networking sites. In addition, start now to secure your company’s name in conjunction with YouTube, etc., just like you did URLs just a few years ago.
2. Not maintaining and updating your Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or blogs. Once you train the public to visit your sites for updates or to post a comment, you’re obligated to follow through. Nothing is worse than ticking off the new citizen journalists.
3. Thinking you can do social marketing on your own. While you may have a marketing team in-house, they’re also charged with traditional advertising, PR and marketing. “You need someone to do it daily,” contends Nick Powills. And you also want someone who knows what they’re doing. Social media is not just PR in a trendy wrapper. You need someone who knows franchising and the “social” lingo.
4. Overpaying to outsource this service. Since it’s still fairly new, it’s hard to quantify how much a lead from social media actually is worth. Are you looking for franchisees or long-term customers? Do your due diligence – sound familiar?
5. Thinking Facebook, etc., are just for kids. Facebook may have started as networking for younger people, but take a look at who’s on it now. Some of the original kids’ grandparents are living their lives on their Facebook pages. Powills describes it as “LinkedIn on speed.”

So, does all this have your head spinning yet? Well, it should unless you take the journey of Franchise Development via Social Media one step at a time. You see, the real beauty of social media is the ability to start slow and progress at your own pace. And, there’s opportunity to learn each step of the way. Unlike developing website content, where a mistake glares at you and is difficult to correct, a mistake or error in social media is relatively easy to correct, and usually provides enough time to make the correction. Okay, enough of that but I just wanted to put your minds at ease in case you’re phobic about new technology, and new methods and processes. As

for the top five social media mistakes listed above, please keep those in mind and use it as a reference as you progress on the journey of Franchise Development via Social Media.

### **Establishing the “Virtual Party Room”**

Most people believe the first step in social media is to start networking right away. That is not the case but is a mistake made by most individuals and companies attempting to use social media as a way to grow a business. The first step is developing the strategy to begin social media marketing of which networking eventually becomes an essential element of the same.

So, the first step is to establish objectives in what you’re attempting to achieve by venturing into social media. The common reason I hear from franchisors is their desire to generate leads so they have candidates in the franchise sales pipeline. Actually, the main goal is to increase franchise sales so let’s call it what it is. Let’s take it a step further and identify the primary goal and objective as “generating qualified franchise leads that ultimately will lead to franchise sales and at a level that makes the social media effort worthwhile.”

Step two then, would be to identify your concept’s ideal franchise candidate profile. Who would be most likely to succeed as a franchisee in your system? If your system already has a relative number of franchisees, a profile of the most successful franchisees would help in this regard. Once, it is fully understood what type of individual you’re looking for as a franchise candidate, we’ll need to explore where to locate these individuals online. Do not shortcut this step as identifying your ideal franchise candidate is critical to the process.

The next step, will find you exploring various social networks and establishing company pages and profiles. Remember, you’re not networking yet. You’re just working on developing your social media infrastructure. Establishing company pages and profiles are key elements to the overall strategy because one of these sites will ultimately be your concept’s “virtual party room.” This party room, or “meeting place” or “landing page”, as I’ve referred to it in the past (“meeting place” is not exciting and “landing page” is too technical), is the place where all your social media efforts will culminate and help turn an interested party into a franchise candidate.

It’s in this virtual party room that you’ll encourage attendance and participation by interested parties, franchisees, franchisee personnel, franchise customers, franchise company executives and personnel, and the concept’s vendors and suppliers. The goal is to establish a party where conversations about the concept, and its products and services, are happening all over the place. For instance, a discussion is started by a franchise candidate and is addressed by corporate personnel. A question is posted by a franchisee and several answers are submitted by various individuals. A video by the CEO is posted and is viewed and commented on by various individuals with different interests in the group and concept providing distinct perspectives. Positive comments (testimonials) are posted by customers. There are a hundred, two hundred, four hundred or more members of the group. There’s an information section listing the concept’s website, blogsite and other pertinent links. There may even be a media section with recent press releases or news stories about the concept and the franchisees.

Imagine now, directing your qualified franchise candidates, one at a time, to this party room. Picture it in-person as opposed to virtual and think about the conversations, the buzz in the room, and the excitement generated. The same is true in this virtual party room. Except, the virtual party continues to grow and grow over time and franchise candidates can visit over and over again, interacting with group members, developing key relationships and sharing information; all key components towards making an informed decision about your franchise concept. Mind you,

we've jumped ahead and explored what the party would look like down the road a bit. But for now, we're just establishing the place to hold the party.

The next step is to locate where the ideal franchise candidates are congregating online. For example purposes, let's identify your ideal franchise candidate as female, with mid to upper level management experience within the financial services industry, and with school-age children. Now, let's assume a few things. Individuals meeting these criteria may be re-entering the workforce after five or six years as a stay-at-home Mom. She may be exploring entrepreneurship as opposed to working in Corporate America once again. By virtue of her mid to upper level management experience it's most likely safe to assume this individual is well-educated and may have an advanced degree. Using these assumptions and criteria let's find your ideal franchise candidates.

Using LinkedIn or Facebook, you can explore various groups consisting of executives and relating to the financial services industry. You can also explore groups that pertain to startups, entrepreneurship and small business ownership. Now, you will join a few of these groups and monitor the discussion groups. Again, you're not networking yet but you are starting to participate in discussions, answering general questions, getting a feel for the "land" and exposing the group to small business ownership, entrepreneurship and finally, to your concept. Once, members in the group start to request to connect, that's when the actual networking begins. This is key. The networking only starts when individuals request to connect with you or your company, not the other way around by you asking them.

As you connect with individuals, you have access to their profile which includes work experience, level of expertise, recommendations, education, hobbies, etc. This host of information will provide you with the missing pieces to the ideal franchise candidate profile. It will also provide you a snapshot of other groups they're involved in and may even include other social networks. If not, a Google search provides a wealth of additional information that can be explored. (When you have an opportunity, perform a Google search of "Paul Segreto" and you'll see 10-12 pages of search results with 8-10 results on each page – you'll be able to determine how I spend my time, who I'm working with and where I'm involved)

Over a short period of time, you'll start referring individuals to your virtual party, asking them to invite their connections and so on. Simultaneously, you'll introduce these individuals to your website and ask them to follow you on Twitter because you'll already have established a Twitter ID. They'll see how you promote other people on Twitter interact with you and will be exposed to how you promote yourself and your concept in that social network. At some point, you'll have established a blog and will be referring individuals to your blogsite, and be able to track their interest and activity.

You've now built this multi-level web of social media activity that connects from one point to the other, backtracks to other relevant points and eventually winds up at the party. While en route to the party, you're learning a great deal about these people individually and they're learning a great deal about your concept. As all this is occurring, you're also increasing your concept's search engine optimization but that is another story for another day. But it is an added benefit.

In continuing your journey of Franchise Development via Social Media, it's important I point out that social media for typical business to business (B2B) or business to consumer (B2C) purposes is much different than social media for franchise development purposes. In a typical B2B or B2C scenario, social media efforts would be directed to the entity or individual you're attempting to do business with. Your business with them may be a single transaction, or as with restaurants, it may include repeat business where you're seeking customer loyalty. Regardless, your position is

strictly focused on attracting and keeping your customer, and the transactions are usually relative to a specific, tangible product or service. They buy. You sell. And the cycle continues the same or it abruptly ends.

In the franchise development arena, your social media efforts will be considerably different as your objective is different. The franchise sales transaction consists of a substantial upfront fee for an intangible item, franchise rights. The transaction is only the beginning of the additional cash outlay or credit commitment, that's triggered by the initial fee and signing of the franchise documents. Yet, the relationship is not one that's just based upon that one single transactional experience. Instead, it's only a small step in an ongoing relationship where the new franchisee becomes dependent upon the franchisor and the concept. Buyer's remorse is not an option. The social media efforts must progress and build upon each other with the objectives gradually changing and progressing "as" the relationship builds, and not just "because" the relationship builds.

### **Transitioning Interested Parties to Franchise Candidates**

When the interested party enters the Virtual Party Room, he or she is basically just tire-kicking. Oh, they may have expressed significant interest in your concept, or maybe they're just inquisitive. It really doesn't matter at this point. Your objective was to introduce the individual to the party. That's it. It wasn't to push them immediately towards the franchise sale. It wasn't about discussing the fine points of the franchise concept. It certainly wasn't about closing the deal. Your only objective at this point was to introduce the individual to the party so he or she could learn more, interact with others in the party and gather enough information to make an informed decision at their own pace. Remember, social media is not about selling!

As with any popular party, it's important to have a host or hostess. In your party room, this person is essentially in charge of accepting member requests, posting new information, updating various features and keeping the "conversations" flowing. I think you now fully understand the party analogy so let's transition to reality and make reference to specifics with respect to your franchise concept.

The host or hostess is the person you install as being in charge of your social media efforts. This person is key to making your social media efforts a success or failure as this individual must be on their "A" game. They must pay attention to detail and exhibit a sense of urgency when necessary. Starting at the very beginning, this individual will set up the company page in a specific social network. I highly recommend utilizing Facebook, but it can work in other social networks as well.

In Facebook there are general, basic information sections that need to be completed. Once completed, you'll need to start building your site with information about your franchise concept. Videos, a strong Web 2.0 tool, work extremely well in conveying messages to individuals interested in your concept. The founder's statement about vision and passion for the concept goes a long way towards generating excitement. A few video testimonials from franchisees, placed strategically within the site, provide a balance between the concept as a franchise opportunity and the concept as a consumer experience.

Photos, placed throughout the site along with comments, are a great visual affect as well. These photos may be of franchise locations, the equipment used in daily operations, the original locations from which the concept was derived, the founder, personnel, the product or service sold at the franchise locations, etc. All should include comments with each post explaining the photo. Additional comments from other group members will enhance the experience behind the photos.

A media section should be established to include press releases, audios and videos of important speeches, photos of company spokespersons, online and print news and feature stories, highlights of community events, etc. Comments about each must accompany the posts. Again, additional comments will further enhance the experience.

All individuals having anything at all to do with the franchise concept should be invited to join and participate in the group. These should include company executives, managers and personnel at all levels, franchisees and their personnel, franchise customers, company vendors and suppliers, and all interested parties in the franchise concept. In place, and participating, this group creates the buzz and excitement of the group.

Now, when individuals that have expressed interest in your franchise concept join the group, they may interact with group members, asking questions and seeking information. They'll start to "experience" the concept from all angles as if they were at the franchise locations or within the corporate office. At any time they can jump into the conversations and add their own comments, sometimes in the forms of questions and as they get more comfortable within the group, as their own personal comments and views.

Over a short period of time, and through monitoring the group's activities, it's relatively easy to "see" which individuals are interested in becoming franchisees of the system. Their questions and comments will dictate their interest. This is where the individual in charge of the social media efforts increases their interaction with the interested parties and provides even more information that moves them along in the process. This is usually done through site messages, or responses or comments to their comments. Ideally, the best way is a timely instant message as provided on the Facebook page.

The system basically moves itself up to a point. From there it needs to be guided and ultimately directed towards the latter stages of the franchise sale. Now, don't get me wrong, an email or phone call throughout the process helps, but only as a guide or reference to a real person. Another Web 2.0 tool that works great in this regard is a video email (vidmail) program that brings a real person right to their desktop. It's both a professional and effective use of Web 2.0 technology.

Okay, the site is up and running, you have interested parties joining the group, they're interacting within the group and all is going according to plan. What next? Certainly there's more to this social media thing, isn't there? Yes there is. Ever hear about Twitter? Do blogs sound familiar? How about You Tube and Flickr? Ah, now we're getting somewhere.

On Twitter you'll post frequent bits and pieces of information about franchising and entrepreneurship in general and along with a few "personal" tweets, yes they call them tweets, you'll post links to various parts of your concept including the Facebook group page, your website which will have a link to your Facebook page and to your blog, which will also have links back to your Facebook page. So you see, all activity will ultimately be directed back to your concept's Facebook page because that's where you can monitor and control the flow of information and interest because it's interactive. There, that answers the question of why shouldn't everything be directed to the website? Let me clarify. Facebook is interactive. Websites are not.

Remember the videos you developed for the Facebook page and the photos you posted to the Facebook page? Well, you're now going to post the videos on You Tube and the photos on Flickr. Each post will have a description, and guess what, a link back to your Facebook page! This way, you'll be able to direct individuals from your Twitter and Blog to these sites as a

redirection to your group page or you may be able to generate interest in your concept by individuals exploring these other Web 2.0 sites. Keep in mind, I'm only scratching the surface on the different Web 2.0 sites as there are hundreds. Using as many as possible in cross-referencing and click-thrus will enhance your efforts many times over. By the way, it won't hurt your search engine optimization either.

Additionally, you will take your Facebook group identity and join other Facebook groups where individuals with interests in franchising, entrepreneurship, specific business type and that may have the criteria of your ideal franchise candidate, congregate and share information. During the course of discussion and sharing of information, it's relatively easy to guide these individuals to your Facebook group page and the cycle begins on your "turf" with them. The same holds true with LinkedIn groups, Twitter groups and other social network groups.

As you can see, the limits of social media are endless and are only limited by discouraging imagination, holding back creativity and not dedicating ample time to administer, execute and monitor the process. The potential benefits are far reaching throughout the organization including creating brand awareness with franchise candidates and consumers alike, generating qualified franchise leads and subsequent franchise sales, and establishing an interactive environment of communications and information sharing at all levels of a franchise organization.

### **Integrating Social Media with Traditional Franchise Marketing**

The first segment of Franchise Development via Social Media described how to establish the "Virtual Meeting Room" as the online site to enable interested parties to gather and share information about your franchise concept. The second segment explored the path of guiding an interested party through the virtual meeting room, enhancing the experience with videos, photos and a multitude of Web 2.0 tools, until the individual transitions from general to specific interest and evolves into a franchise candidate. At this point, the franchise candidate is primed to move through the franchise sales process and make an informed decision about his or her entrepreneurial future. Interacting with the candidate throughout the time spent in the virtual meeting room enables your executive committee to make an informed decision as to whether or not the candidate should be awarded a franchise in your system.

Not convinced that a social media strategy will help you achieve your franchise development objectives? That's understandable as it is certainly new, and as such, is difficult to measure for complete efficiency and effectiveness. Basically, there really isn't anything to measure it against. So, if it doesn't work, for whatever reason, you need to be prepared and have a back up plan. Is that your thinking? If it is, you're partially correct in thinking this way. I say, partially, because you should transition into any new marketing approach, and the best way to do so, is to integrate the old with new, the traditional with the innovative.

I also say, partially, because a backup plan, running simultaneously, is a double expenditure and as such may cause you to shortcut the new strategy justifying your decision as you being more comfortable with the old strategy anyway. But keep in mind, the old has been losing its effectiveness over the past few years and today's franchise candidates are trending away from old methods of exploring business opportunities so change is necessary. Fortunately, you can move into social media at your own pace and slowly transition away from traditional strategies while maintaining the total marketing efforts necessary to achieve your objectives.

Now, let's look at some of the traditional marketing you might have used in past franchise development efforts and see how you can integrate the same with social media. Over time, you may transition completely out of the traditional methods or may opt to keep some in place, at

reduced levels than in the past, and as dictated by the franchise development results achieved by the total efforts.

**Traditional strategy:** Tapping your current franchise network for customers that may be interested in your franchise concept. Various costly marketing tools include newsletters, post cards, in-store signage and printed materials. Approaching customers should be effective as they're basically the low-hanging fruit that should be easily picked. Customers know the concept and are generally satisfied with the product or services. They've seen how busy the franchise unit is and have experienced the growth of the brand in the market.

**Social media strategy:** Invite franchise customers to the company's social networking site and encourage them to participate. On the site, they'll see videos and photos as we've described in parts one and two of this series. The effectiveness of this interaction is far stronger than introducing customers to the possibility of owning their own franchise through cumbersome print materials that get left in the back of the car or get discarded. Certainly the interactivity of the social network site blows away the message being told in print.

**Traditional strategy:** Advertising in local and national media for individuals interested in small business ownership, franchising and hopefully, your franchise concept. This is an expensive proposition as print advertising is very specific to a local market and multiple markets may be necessary to grow effectively. Or, the national publication costs are cost prohibitive for the size of your concept.

**Social media strategy:** Blogs are today's media. Blog writers are today's journalists. Through tags and various Web 2.0 tools (widgets), content is spread across the internet to multitudes of bloggers that ultimately wind up discussing and promoting your concept. As discussed in previous parts to this series, social network groups can be targeted to attract franchise candidates according to the ideal franchise profile you've created. This makes your actual sales efforts more concentrated to actual qualified candidates as opposed to dealing with the swarm of tire-kickers from print media.

**Traditional strategy:** Portal websites became very popular as the internet gained steam in both popularity and daily usage. Unfortunately, now there are so many portals that regurgitate leads across the internet that many portal leads have been contacted by 10-20-30 different "franchise experts." This has created a "used car salesman" effect that has actually turned people that may have been interested in franchising, totally against the industry.

**Social media strategy:** Similar to the strategy identified above as the alternative to advertising in local and national media. And, instead of an interested party being directed to specific information, the social media effort gradually presents the facts and information about the franchise while encouraging interaction with the entire franchise family. This goes a long way towards building trust, an essential component to the franchise sale.

**Traditional strategy:** Personally, I believe franchise expos and tradeshow are quickly becoming a thing of the past. First, it's just too expensive to send a team of representatives to man a trade booth in some city outside the city where the corporate headquarters is located. Further, people are intimidated by salespeople and prefer instead to search for opportunities online in a non-intimidating environment, and at their own pace.

**Social media strategy:** With the wealth and breadth of information available online, an individual's computer is in essence, a virtual tradeshow or franchise expo. Why should an individual interested in franchising go anywhere else? However, it's not good enough to just

have a website. A website is static and two-dimensional. Instead, a blog and social network page, again as we've previously described, is essential to stand out from the crowd and create an interactive forum where the franchise candidate can learn and share information towards making an informed decision, again, at his or her own pace, and without feeling intimidated.

Non-traditional strategies: There's a multitude of fairly new strategies that have been utilized in franchise development efforts. One, email marketing, is effective to an extent. Email blasts have become very common and have had a relative level of success. Except, it's starting to become stagnant as more and more companies have launched extensive email campaigns, with the excitement of yesterday is gone today. Most people now look at email marketing as spam and actually block it whenever and however they can.

Social media strategies: Welcome to video email marketing, or, as is commonly referred to as vidmail marketing. Actually, let's call it email on steroids! Videos, an essential Web 2.0 tool, can be transferred to blogs and social networks to enhance the experience and more importantly, convey a consistent message in a dynamic form. People remember 10% of what they read. 20% of what they hear. And 30% of what they see. But, remember 50% of what they see AND hear together. So, which is it, email or vidmail?

A recent blog post on The Buzz Bin, defined some basic "musts" for fluid integration of social media. They include:

- Ensuring overarching value proposition and related communications are available in social web when dialogue naturally permits
- Cross-promotion of URLs and calls-to-action through web, mobile and print media for giving, tell-a-friend, webinars, etc.
- Spotlight third party coverage from blogs in the press room
- Advertising: Word of mouth is buoyed by advertising, so social media efforts should be tied to ad campaigns for print, online and keyword marketing. "Connect on Facebook" and other similar calls-to-action should start becoming common aspects of your ad campaigns.
- Public relations: Integrating willing online influencers as part of your outreach is essential.
- Emails: Any email sent from an organizational property should also include a call-to-action for the social web. Think about this: People reading email are already online.
- Website: Prominent first screenview promotion of social media properties needs to be developed for the 1.0 site. We recommend a clean badge or clearly delineated text.
- Cross promotion of social web activities. Badges should link to a portal site that unites all of your social media properties (once you develop them). Then use the portal as the home page and calls-to-action site for all online activity

Certainly, this list is far more technical than the explanations provided in this series but they correspond very well and should be used as a guide when executing your plan to integrate social media with traditional strategies.

### **Social Media to Franchise Sales: Fantasy or Reality**

Let's assume you've followed the advice and guidelines in the first three segments of the series on Franchise Development via Social Media. You've established your "Virtual Meeting Room" as a Facebook group page and requests to join are submitted everyday. Customers of your franchisees are joining and posting comments about how much they enjoy the experience at the franchise locations. Franchisees have posted some testimonials that really do complement the Founder's video about his passion and vision for the business. You're even surprised at how many corporate and franchisee employees have participated and posted comments and photos.



All-in-all, you're proud of the Facebook page and proud of the effort put into developing and maintaining the page.

You're now looking at your social media strategy and you preview the company blog. You feel the content may be all over the board, touching on franchise development, expansion into the Southeast, a new franchisee in Santa Fe, community activity at the franchise location in Seattle and even an article submitted by one of your franchisees about one of his long-time customers, but then you stop and realize how much this menagerie of topics, text, graphics and photos portrays the true face of the franchise concept. You make a note to have your social media administrator issue a press release on just that thought.

A quick review of Twitter puts a smile on your face as you see the number of people following the concept increasing every day. Then you recall the blog stats revealed a sharp increase in visits from Twitter. Wow, there's a positive trend here we need to watch. Come to think of it, you've noticed an increase in franchise inquiries and wonder if there's a correlation here. You then look closely at the new people following on Twitter and you backtrack to the company's recent posts and discussions in several LinkedIn and Facebook groups that just so happen to consist of educators, and realize many of the new franchise inquiries have educational backgrounds. Hmmm, you decide to cross-check the names against LinkedIn profiles and smile again as you notice they're members of LinkedIn, are in the specific groups you've targeted, and many have actually participated in the group discussions where the social media administrator posted some very interesting discussions about careers after teaching and about moms returning to the workforce or exploring career alternatives. It sure is coming together.

You note there are some qualified candidates frequently visiting your Facebook group page, checking out the same information repeatedly and posting specific questions about your franchise opportunity. You've even noticed some candidates posting comments about the customer testimonials and some personal messages about the Founder's video. Now what? Certainly this social media thing isn't magical that it'll actually close a few franchise deals, right?

Just like you've integrated traditional marketing strategies with social media strategies, you need to be integrating personal interaction as well. However, instead of an aggressive, focused sales approach, the interaction should be subtle and guiding. Use the social media tools to make your points and make the experience enjoyable and interesting. Your candidates will most likely marvel at the new technology and feel comfortable learning about the technology AND the franchise concept. And yes, they'll be more comfortable with you and be fully at ease working through disclosure and the finer points of the concept itself.

The rest comes down to guiding your candidates towards making a decision as it will now fully be an informed decision that has been validated by the social media experience AND the franchisees the candidates have contacted. Hmmm, your franchisees actually feel more part of the franchise sales process than ever before. You smile again as you realize it did make the process easier than in the past. Yes, it'll be very nice to achieve your franchise development goals once again. Maybe next year, you'll actually exceed them!

Fantasy or Reality? Achievable or Not? Easy or Hard? That's up to you and your team. It comes down to personal accountability, diligent execution of your strategy and plan, professional handling of franchise candidates at all times and above all, **NO SHORTCUTS!**

Personal accountability is necessary in monitoring your social media activity, updating blog content and keeping things fresh. Nobody will stay at a dull party, right? Putting off things for

tomorrow that should be done today is just not acceptable. It becomes a reflection of how you handle even the simplest things and the lack of urgency and poor attention to detail will translate into how you'll handle the franchise sale and ultimately, your franchisees.

Diligent execution of your strategy and plan is essential. Certainly, you'll make adjustments along the way. But your plan is your roadmap. Follow it as closely as possible. Allow extra time and resources as necessary for roadblocks and detours, but stay on course. Monitor your progress. How fast did you get from point A to point B? How fast did a candidate get from point A to Point B? Is the process slowing down or speeding up? Why? Do you need to do some system maintenance to the social media vehicle? Maybe your videos aren't playing correctly? Maybe the photos aren't loading fast enough? Maybe it's time to bring in a technician so you can get back on the road as quickly as possible?

Professional handling of candidates mean working with each candidate as you would want to be worked with and treated if you were the one on the verge of making a substantial investment, maybe putting your life savings on the line! It means conveying a sense of urgency when asked for information. It means paying attention to detail in something as simple as pronouncing their name correctly all the way to something complex such as full disclosure of the franchise concept. And, it means having the right attitude and conveying the same at every moment of working with the candidate at every point of "contact" including by email, on the phone, in-person, and yes, in the virtual world. Keep in mind, at all points of contact, your attitude will shine through so make sure it shines bright and your franchise future will shine bright as well!

Thank you for traveling with me on this exciting, eye-opening journey. It will be an experience you should be able to relive every time an individual expresses interest in your concept. At that point, it's time to smile, focus on the resources you've invested, the time you've dedicated, and the vision and passion you had when you first started in franchising, and share it with your candidate just as you would share your life with a new addition to your family.

### **About the author**

Paul Segreto, President, CEO and Founder of franchisEssentials, a Division of 21st Century CEO, brings unique perspective, entrepreneurial spirit and extensive industry experience to franchise marketing and development. For over twenty years he has exclusively served the franchise industry as consultant and coach, senior-level corporate executive, activist, multi-unit franchisee and area developer.

Understanding the franchise sales process from lead generation through franchise award, and the importance of forming an interdependent relationship between franchisee and franchisor, Paul has successfully developed and executed marketing and development strategies for franchisors across a variety of franchise segments. As franchise candidates and consumers have become more sophisticated and technologically advanced, Paul has embraced Web 2.0 technology and social media marketing, and has identified both as essential to future franchise growth at all levels.

In addition, Paul continues his dedication to franchise success at all levels through coaching and consulting efforts with current franchisees experiencing difficult challenges in their daily operations, with franchise candidates exploring franchising as a career alternative, and with independent small business owners discovering franchising as a business expansion strategy or income diversification plan.

A recognized franchise and small business expert,, Paul frequently serves as a guest speaker / topic leader for focus groups, strategy and sales planning meetings, training sessions and industry panels. He is frequently called upon to utilize his expertise in the development of articles for industry newsletters and blogs, and training programs for companies and organizations within the industry.

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