

SCALE, SPEED, AND SUCCESS:

The New Formula for Franchise Marketing

The franchise business model makes it unique within the larger landscape of brick-and-mortar businesses. While each franchise location is a small business, the model draws its success from the power of scalable systems. The branding, products, pricing, and technology systems that ensure success are replicated across dozens, hundreds, or thousands of locations.

This uniqueness extends into the marketing approach for franchise locations.



Virtually every franchise (and franchise marketing team) faces a few familiar challenges in delivering brand-aligned messaging and driving results. Our study highlights a few key insights common to most of the marketers and franchise professionals we surveyed:

Creating hyper-local marketing at scale: Whether you own and operate a single location in Des Moines, Iowa, or you're a franchisor managing dozens of corporate locations across the Pacific Northwest, every message should feel like it comes from your neighborhood store. Franchise marketers must create at scale while maintaining local appeal.

Personalizing the message: Your local customer base varies in their needs and preferences. Marketers must go beyond localization to personalize the experience based on customer behaviors and buying habits. Segmentation is an important part of the strategy to help marketers customize their message to align with each customer group.

Delivering big results with a small team:

Many franchise marketers are part of a tight-knit marketing team, or a “department of one,” that delivers personalized and localized content across multiple locations. Our respondents predominantly operate in teams of 2 to 10 people, though nearly 20% are solo marketing professionals. About 10% of our respondents have teams of 11+ professionals working together to deliver results.

Making the most of your time: Franchise marketers are busy professionals. The time crunch common to all marketing teams is even more impactful when creating content for multiple locations and audiences. Franchise marketers are always looking for ways to be more productive and shorten the time to execute a campaign. Time-based concerns were one of the most common obstacles mentioned during our survey.

Sharing the content development journey: Franchisees often play a role in the messaging sent on their locations' behalf. Corporate marketing professionals may be the front-line content creators, but many networks include individual locations in the approval workflow. These marketers need a way to maintain brand control while including franchisees in the process.



About this study

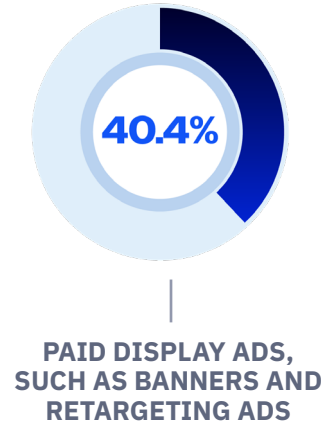
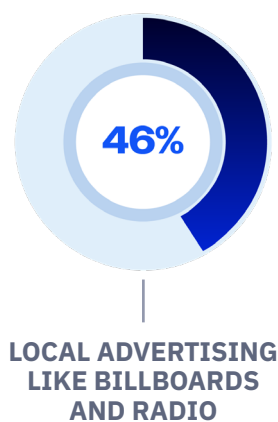
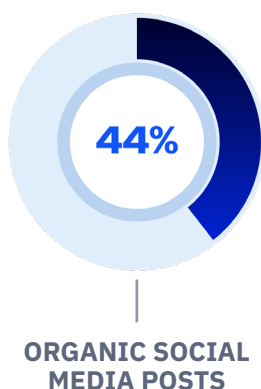
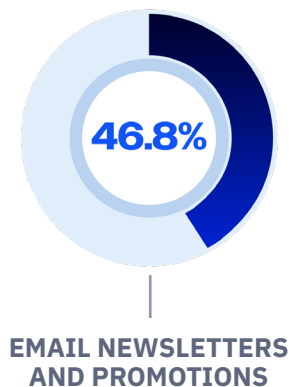
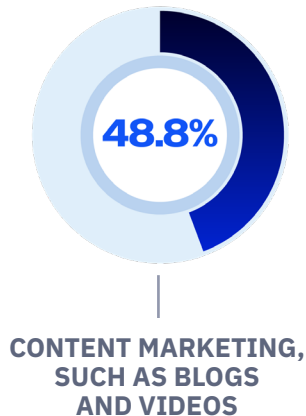
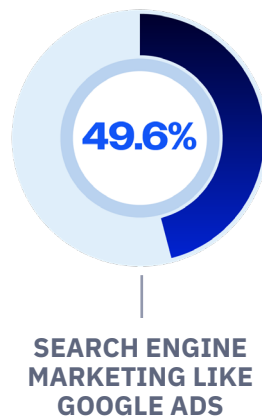
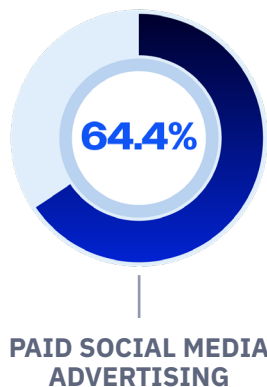
The unique challenges and opportunities of franchise marketing make this industry unlike any other in terms of marketing approach, strategies, tools, and business needs. This study collected data from more than 250 industry professionals with the purpose of highlighting the experience of franchise marketers and the methods they're using to drive success for their networks and individual locations.

The responses and insights from hundreds of franchise marketers, managers, and executives shine a much-needed light on the root challenges affecting franchise marketing success. While many of the findings highlight well-known obstacles every marketing team faces, some surprising results may help you fine-tune your marketing strategies and deliver better results with less frustration.

What marketing channels work best for franchise marketers?

Franchises take a multichannel approach to communication, driving engagement with both digital and traditional marketing channels. The local nature of franchises makes traditional marketing like print ads, radio and television, billboards, and direct mail especially effective.

Our franchise marketing professionals rely most heavily on these 7 channels to drive results for their brands:



About a third of respondents (30.3%) also incorporate other popular forms of advertising, such as SMS messaging (32.4%), influencer or affiliate marketing (31.4%), event marketing (32.8%), and loyalty programs (30.8%).

Email marketing as a franchise marketing tool

While just under half of franchise marketers use email marketing to connect with their audiences, the power of well-executed email campaigns makes email one of the most effective means of delivering customized, localized messages.

Here are some of the highlights of how our respondents use email in their marketing activities:



Those who use email do so consistently. Over 87% of our marketers send emails at least weekly. Nearly 40% send their audience something daily!



Email marketers are generally happy with the channel and its results. An impressive 90.4% find emails effective at driving desired results, such as lead generation, sales, or engagement. Of these, 37.4% consider their email marketing efforts “very effective.”



The majority of frequent senders are using data to drive their email campaign execution, with 68.4% using customer behavior to adjust their send cadence.

Senders engage their audiences with a variety of content and campaign types:

73.4%

RUN PROMOTIONAL AND DISCOUNT CAMPAIGNS THROUGH EMAIL.

These promotions are mostly product and seasonal promotions. Fewer respondents (about 37%) use email to deliver educational content.

60.8%

USE EMAIL TO PROMOTE OFFERS TO THEIR LOYALTY PROGRAM CUSTOMERS.

48%

SEND OUT AN EMAIL NEWSLETTER TO KEEP AUDIENCES UP TO DATE.



ONE INTERESTING FINDING?

Although nearly half send out newsletters, **fewer than 10% of respondents (8.4%) find newsletters deliver high ROI.** It's a surprising disconnect between action and outcome that's worth examining as part of streamlining your strategies.



Testing is an important part of making strong connections with customers. Our respondents take advantage of technology to help them fine-tune their messaging.

Over half (**53.2%**) regularly A/B test their emails. Another quarter of respondents (**25.6%**) use testing, if less frequently.

About **15%** of respondents are ready to incorporate testing into their marketing mix. While they're not currently testing, they plan to do so.

Around **7%** of respondents don't use testing in their email (and don't plan to start).

Email can offer strong competitive advantages to franchise marketers. Studies consistently show that email provides high ROI and conversion. Research from Litmus reveals that email marketing returns an average of [\\$36 for every \\$1 of marketing spend](#). Retail and consumer goods brands see even higher returns of \$46 per dollar of spend.

While sending localized emails across locations presents a few unique challenges, with the right tools, franchise marketers can fully harness the power of the inbox. Let's look at how our respondents leverage automation to achieve success at scale.



Automation: The fork in the road for email marketing success

We all know automation offers higher returns on investment and more time back in the day. While automating a multi-location email marketing campaign presents a few unique challenges, the right tools can help franchise marketers unlock powerful benefits.



Many of our respondents find the power of automation to be especially impactful on email marketing. Revisiting our 90% of respondents who find their overall email marketing efforts effective, breaking down these numbers by automation use paints a clear picture of its benefits:

OVER
75%

of respondents who don't use automation tools report their email marketing effectiveness as "somewhat ineffective" or "neutral."

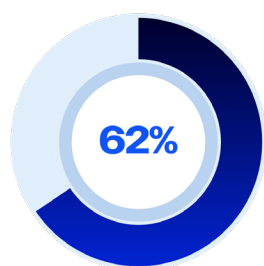
ON THE OTHER HAND, MORE THAN
50%

of respondents who use automation report their email marketing effectiveness as "somewhat effective" or "very effective."

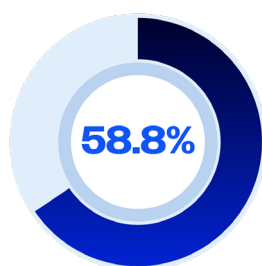
Personalizing across locations is a big challenge for multi-location marketers. Over a third of respondents (34.4%) say that difficulty with personalization is one of their biggest frustrations.

- Nearly half (47.6%) of respondents say it's difficult to send the right message to the right audience, while 34.4% say it's challenging to personalize messages across locations.
- A whopping 98% of survey respondents feel that personalization across locations is important, and 72.8% call it "very important."

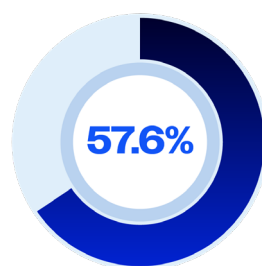
How are they personalizing these communications?



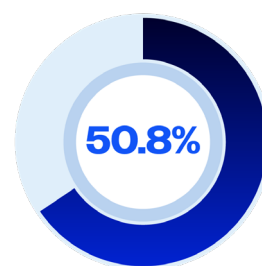
PRODUCT
RECOMMENDATIONS



FIRST NAME
PERSONALIZATION



LOCATION-BASED
OFFERS



PERSONALIZED
SUBJECT LINES

Well-designed automation is the cornerstone of personalizing content at scale. About 85% of our marketers feel their ability to automate across locations is "somewhat effective" or "very effective."

- Again, filtering the results by automation use brings things into sharper focus. Of the 40.4% of respondents who called their cross-location automation skills "very effective," they're twice as likely to use automation, making automation an unlock for consistency as well as efficiency.

What does success look like for marketers?

In general, most of our respondents have positive feelings about their marketing efforts. Only 2.4% are dissatisfied with their marketing. Good news—most are generally satisfied, and a lucky 24.4% report they're very satisfied with the results of their efforts.

How are marketers measuring that success? It varies.

- **Sales revenue reigns:** When considering general marketing campaign success, most respondents (65.6%) look to sales revenue to evaluate the effectiveness of their strategy.
- **Customer feedback provides helpful insights:** A surprising 56.8% look to the customer for confirmation, gauging their feedback as a measure of success. Those who do may be onto something: marketers who measure customer feedback as a success indicator report 10% greater satisfaction in their marketing programs than those who don't.
- **In-store visits count for a lot:** Foot traffic is important to many franchise businesses. Just under half (48.4%) use in-store traffic to measure their marketing effectiveness.
- **Email marketing data serves as a solid indicator:** Overall, email marketing is a popular measure of campaign effectiveness. Open rates, click-through rates, and conversions are key metrics for just over 41% of respondents.

Looking specifically at email marketing, the numbers look slightly different. When asked what metrics marketers prioritize for evaluating email campaign effectiveness, the most popular options (in descending order) are open rates, click-through rates, and conversions.



Marketers are pretty confident about their accuracy in measuring these metrics. Fewer than 2% (1.6%) of our respondents answered “not confident” to questions about accuracy. The majority, 62.8%, said they were “very confident” in their abilities.

What could go better for franchise marketers?

A franchise marketer's work is never done. Teams face many challenges in delivering on-brand messaging to their audiences at different locations.

When asked, the most common friction points in a franchise marketer's day were predictable: time, tech, and tailored content.

Let's look at the 3 top challenges franchise marketers are eager to overcome:

1 Time and productivity management

Lack of time and the desire for more productivity consistently rate high on the list of challenges marketers face. They're spending more time than they can afford crafting and deploying content. Most are looking for ways to make the process simpler and faster.

- **The most time-consuming task mentioned is social media management.** Over half of our respondents highlighted it as a challenge, and 14.9% of total answers referenced social media. Outside of social media management, managing and coordinating multi-location campaigns and customer data and analysis of campaigns topped the list.

How much time are franchise marketers spending on campaign management and execution? It varies by team size, network size, and other factors. Here are some highlights of how our respondents spend their time:

- **According to the data, 61.6% of our respondents spent more than 11 hours per week on marketing activities.** Very few spend less than 5 hours per week. Given that nearly 1 in 5 respondents (19.2%) handle marketing themselves, it makes sense that a quarter of respondents (24%) are spending more than 21 hours per week.
- Those with the largest (11+) and smallest (individual marketer) teams reported spending the most time creating and executing a campaign.

When it comes to executing a campaign across franchises, there were similar variations in delivery speed across locations. Time to execute hinges on factors like team size, campaign complexity, number of locations, and total channels involved in the campaign. But automation is the biggest indicator of campaign deployment speed.

- **Half of our respondents said it took 3 to 5 days to create and execute a marketing campaign across all franchises.** Interestingly, more team members does not automatically translate to faster time-to-execute:

- The data shows that 85% of teams of 6 to 10 people reported execution times in the 1- to 5-day range, with 65% of those in the 3- to 5-day range.
- For teams of 11+, only 64.3% reported a 1- to 5-day delivery. Only 35.7% of large teams felt 3 to 5 days was achievable. What's more, the largest teams were more than double as likely to report execution times of over a week over teams of all other sizes.

Email-specific campaigns take less time to create and execute, especially when marketers have automation tools available to streamline the process.



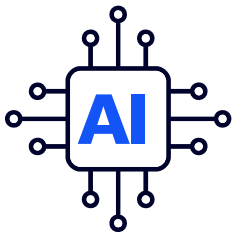
2 Tech integration and centralization

Well-structured and centralized tech stacks can pay big dividends in terms of operational efficiency and time savings. The right tools make life easier, and even more so when those tools play well together. So it's no surprise that the majority of our respondents rated tool centralization as the process that would most benefit from improvement.

- **Tool centralization ranked highest in potential impact** with a mean score of 2.8, over other factors like performance tracking (2.7), personalization (2.4), and time management (2.2).
- **Our respondents work with tech stacks of all sizes, ranging from 6 to over a dozen.** The average number of marketing programs used by a respondent was 5.5, with a right-skewed distribution and a long tail of respondents using many more.
- Of the popular tools in any stack, **social media management** (60%) and **email marketing tools** (58.4%) consistently rated highest, alongside other popular tools like **generative AI** (51.6%), **analytics and reporting tools** (48.4%), **customer relationship management** (48%), and **general marketing automation platforms** (43.2%).

When these tools all work in concert, they can provide end-to-end support for better marketing practices. However, augmenting your marketing team with a dozen or more decentralized apps and platforms can be daunting. **When asked what stands in the way of better content creation centralization, our respondents said:**

- Difficulty coordinating across locations was the most cited challenge (44.8%).
- Many marketers found it hard to achieve localization and personalization across locations (41.2%).
- Slow approval processes (37.6%) and lack of franchisee engagement (35.2%) often get in the way of centralization. This gels with the fact that over half (50.4%) of respondents have a hybrid marketing governance model.
- Only 31.6% of companies report franchisees as the sole decision-makers in content production, while 17.2% of respondents report that the corporate office retains centralized marketing control.



How does AI figure into the tech stack?

Generative AI holds a lot of promise for marketers looking to create more on-brand content in less time. While 72.8% of respondents use AI at least monthly, nearly 1 in 5 marketers (18%) use AI “rarely” or “never.”

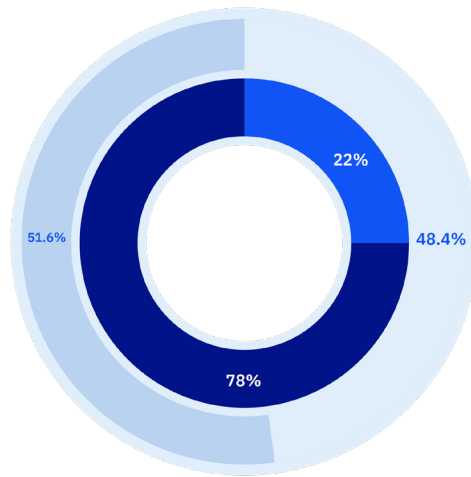
About 45% of respondents plan on introducing new tech like automation and email marketing tools, many of which incorporate AI as part of their features. This would open the door to more use of generative AI within daily marketing operations.

3 Analytics and performance tracking

Strong data utilization is the cornerstone of high-performance marketing teams. The ability to access and leverage the data within your marketing operations can unlock new opportunities and help decision-makers course-correct on strategy. Access to data becomes even more important for marketers managing strategy and performance across several locations.

It's not surprising, then, that analysis and performance management is the third big-ticket item most marketers turn to when trying to improve their marketing outcomes:

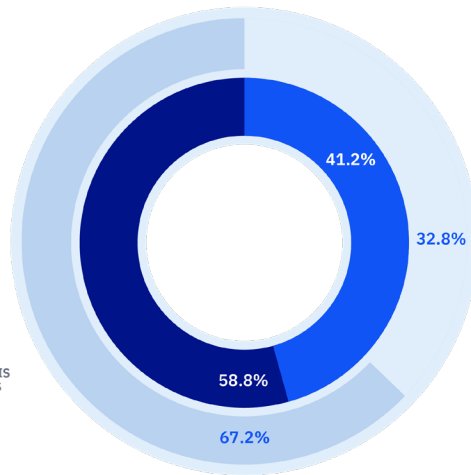
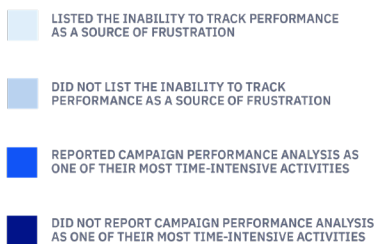
MARKETERS' USE OF ANALYTICS AND REPORTING TOOLS



- Nearly half (48.4%) of marketers use analytics and reporting tools within their current stack, and 78% do so daily or weekly.

- Almost a third (32.8%) of our respondents listed the inability to track performance as a source of frustration, and 41.2% of marketers report campaign performance analysis as one of their most time-intensive activities.

MARKETERS' CAMPAIGN PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS



- Despite the struggles, respondents recognize the importance of tracking performance. Tracking ability rates right behind centralization in potential benefit areas, with a mean score of 2.7 and 2.8, respectively.

Some of the struggles related to time and data visibility come from poor centralization, where information from multiple sources remains siloed within the reporting features of their respective platforms. Also, marketing automation and reporting tools often aren't franchise-ready or franchise-friendly.

Parsing location-specific performance data with a flexible, multi-location reporting tool can significantly cut down on the time dedicated to reports and analysis, giving franchise marketers at-a-glance access to data that drives their campaigns.

The steps to take now to create better marketing automation outcomes

The data revealed a common narrative among franchise and multi-location marketers: Like many marketers across the industry, they're up against time and technological challenges. The creativity and drive are there—franchise marketers just need the tools to create high-performing campaigns and distribute them effectively.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take right now to improve your daily marketing operations, harness valuable data within your tech stack, and save time:

1 Streamline your tech stack

Adding more tools doesn't always produce the results you want. The better path is to audit your current tech stack and consolidate tools to those that do the most work with the least sprawl.

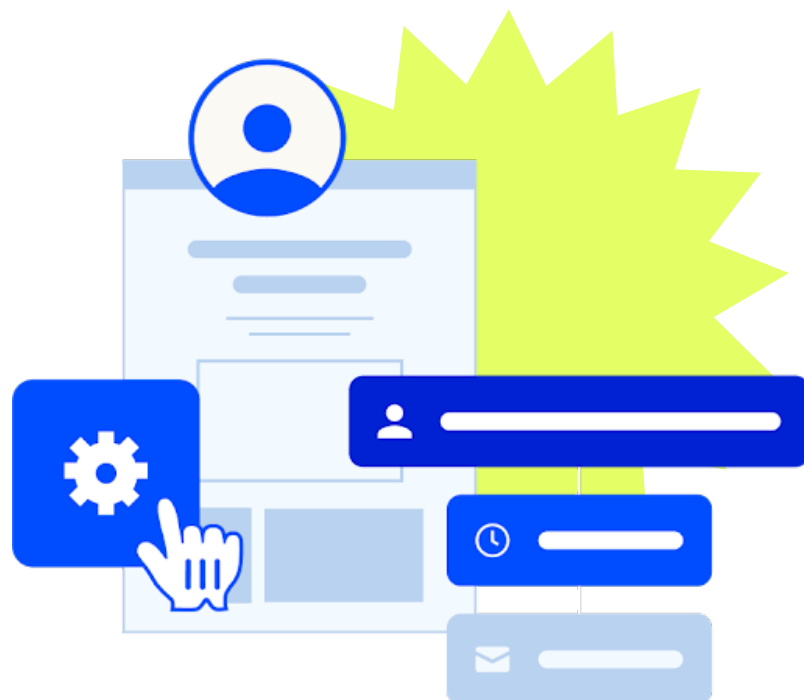
If you spot gaps in your tool kit where you can improve efficiency and performance, it might be time to choose a new tool. Look for a platform that covers many of the daily tasks of multi-location marketing—brand guideline management, content creation, multi-account distribution, and detailed performance management and reporting.

A franchise-centered solution like ActiveCampaign HQ (ACHQ) brings together an intuitive, multi-location platform with centralized campaign control and reporting features, giving you the power to create, execute, and measure the success of your multi-location campaigns—all from one powerful tool.

2 Use segmentation and personalization for greater impact

Many of our most successful survey respondents leverage marketing automation and personalization tools to great advantage.

Using a platform that offers franchise-specific automation and centralized content delivery across locations can save hundreds of hours per year for marketers. It can also save money and produce better marketing results.



3

Make tactical use of AI

While AI isn't a silver bullet for what ails marketing operations, a well-implemented AI tool can take the stress and repetition out of building campaigns. Modern, AI-enhanced tools like ACHQ can incorporate brand assets and standards seamlessly into campaign production, making execution faster and easier.



4

Harness the power of email marketing automation

Email campaigns are one of the most impactful channels for any marketing campaign. For this reason, you should prioritize them with full localization and personalization.

With the right automation tools for sending multi-location campaigns, leveraging the connection power of email is faster and more effective. When paired with performance management tools, you'll have the data to fine-tune your campaigns for even greater impact.



Methodology

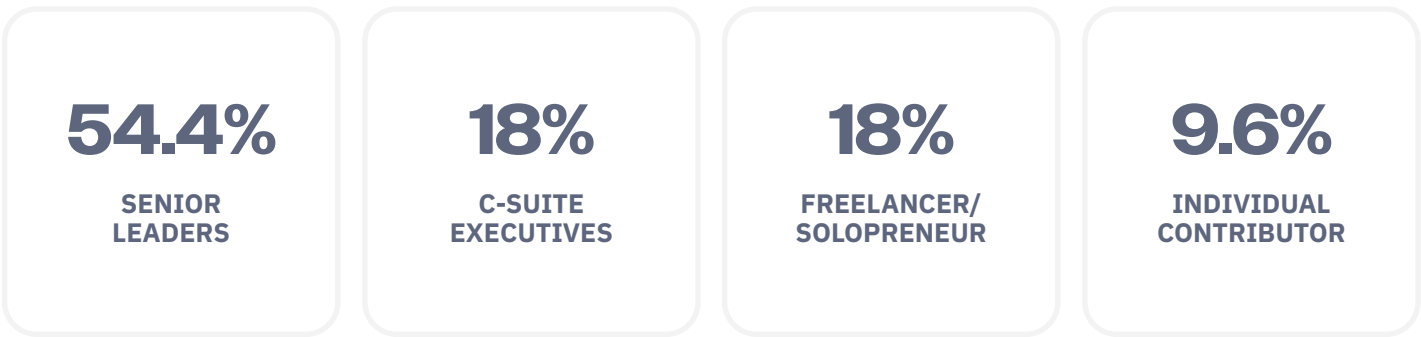
This franchise marketing survey was conducted by ActiveCampaign HQ in coordination with Omniscient Digital. Omniscient conducted the survey in November 2024, drawing from a field of 250 franchise marketers, franchise location operators, and corporate franchise executives. This study reports on the findings of franchise marketing experts and industry professionals operating franchise locations and networks across the United States.

Industry roles

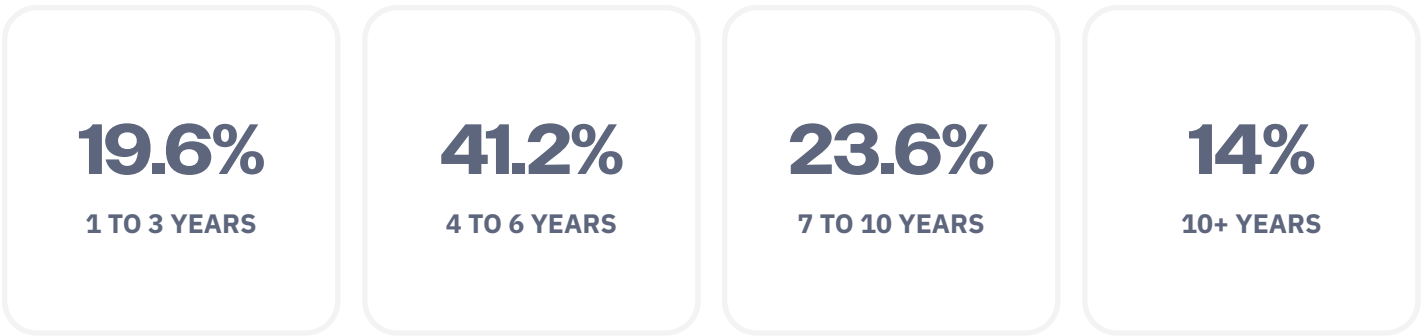
Respondents to the survey included franchise marketers (13.2%), franchise location owners (40%), and franchise business managers (46.8%).

Seniority and industry experience

Our respondents provided a wealth of information and experience from every facet of the franchise industry, from freelance marketers and independent owner-operators to mid- and C-level executives at corporate franchise businesses.

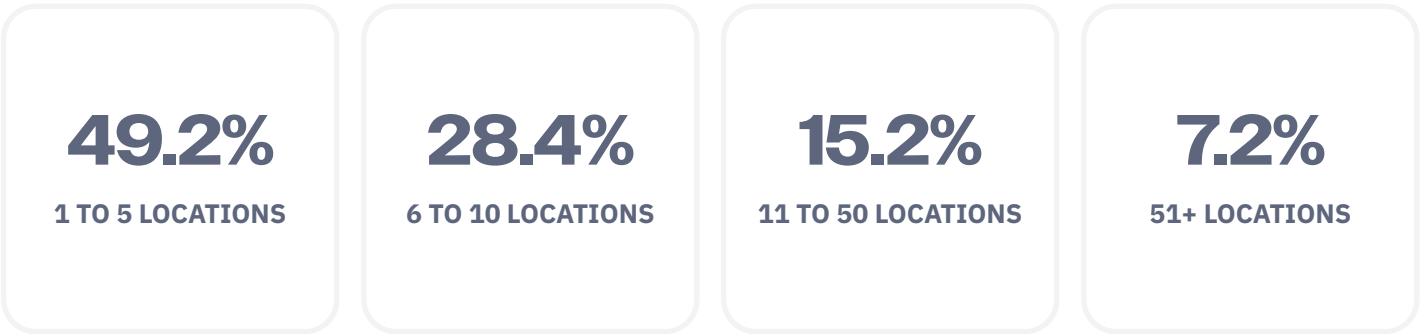


Respondents varied in industry tenure, from new-to-franchise professionals in their first year, to seasoned industry members exceeding a decade in franchise.



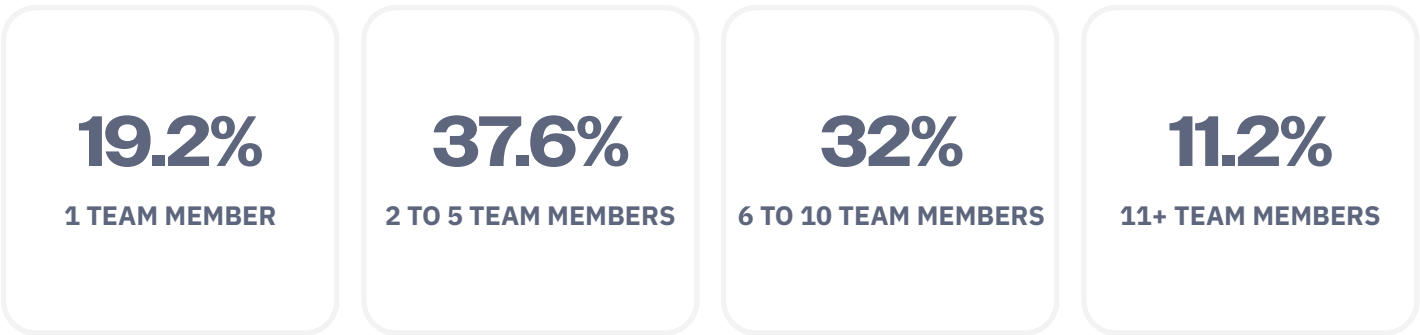
Number of franchises

Our survey participants also bring perspectives running different types of franchise businesses, from single-location small businesses to large networks with dozens of franchise locations to manage. Over 75% of respondents were responsible for up to 10 locations.



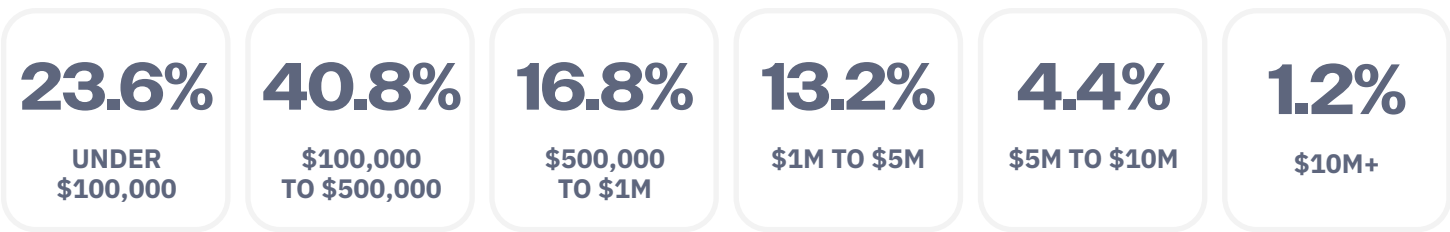
Team size

Team sizes vary greatly among our franchise respondents. While a healthy margin (nearly 20%) of respondents work in a “department of one” or work as a solopreneur in charge of marketing, many respondents work with 5, 10, or even more team members.



Marketing spend

Respondents to this survey believe in the power of franchise marketing and commit healthy budgets to creating and executing campaigns for strong ROI. Most respondents work with an annual marketing budget of \$100,000 to \$500,000. Nearly a quarter of respondents work within a budget of under \$100,000.





About ActiveCampaign HQ

ActiveCampaign HQ (ACHQ) is a franchise-focused marketing automation platform that helps franchise marketers and other multi-location business marketers create, deliver, and measure high-performing email campaigns across multiple locations. The platform was built from the ground up to serve the unique needs of franchise marketers who oversee campaigns and performance analysis across multiple channels and locations.

We'd like to extend our sincere appreciation to the 250 respondents who dedicated their time and attention to make this report a success. Their insights and perspectives help highlight the potential for success within franchise marketing and provide context for the experiences many industry professionals have in connecting with their audiences.

[Learn More About ActiveCampaign HQ](#)