



A Franchisor's Guide: How to Make the Most of Your Franchise Conference



An impactful event

A conference is, *by far*, the best way to build your franchise's community and talk to franchisees.

There's nothing quite like face-to-face time with franchisees to:

- Energize
- Educate
- Share exciting announcements
- Foster a network

Most importantly, conferences help you fire up your whole company for the year ahead—while having fun.

This guide outlines how to take full advantage of hosting your next franchise conference. **So, let's get planning.**



Plan with franchisees in mind

Your conference should serve your franchisees. After all, their success is your success, too.

Give franchisees ample time to plan for your event. Most importantly, keep their needs at the forefront.

Create a planning committee with previous conference attendees to help. Ask them to share feedback related to:

- **Timing:** Keep seasonality in mind. Choose dates that work best for your franchisees and their typical business cycle (i.e., if you're in the fitness industry, avoid the first few months of the year). Also, consider the days of the week you're holding your conference. If the busiest days for your franchisees are Friday through Sunday, mid-week is your best bet.
- **Duration:** The event should be long enough to be impactful but short enough to prevent information overload (we've all been there). Franchisees might be hesitant to step away from their businesses, so a shorter event will help ease scheduling concerns, too. Two or three days is best.
- **Location:** If your franchises are spread out, rotate the geographic location yearly. Regardless of the specific location, it should be accessible for all (i.e., near a major airport).



Develop a powerful agenda

Your conference should offer equal opportunities to both learn and network.

About half of your agenda should include inspiration and education from keynotes and outside experts, training on new products or systems, and/or updates from corporate. The other half should let franchisees network with each other and the corporate team.

Content

Content-wise, start by addressing industry trends and common issues within your franchise.

Then, use a pre-event survey to find out what other topics your franchisees are interested in—and develop additional educational tracks from there.

Allow personalized agendas so franchisees can take away what's most valuable for their businesses.

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 6:30 AM - 9:30 AM | Registration |
| 7:00 AM - 7:45 AM | Wellness Classes |
| 8:10 AM - 8:30 AM | Conference Kickoff |
| 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM | Keynote: Q&A with Roberta Hill |
| 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM | Expo Hall Open |
| 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM | Industry Presentation: 2020 Trends |
| 11:15 AM - 1:00 PM | Break and Expo Hall |
| 10:30 AM - 11:15 AM | What's Next: Product Updates |
| 11:30 AM - 12:15 PM | Wellness Classes |
| 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM | Breakout Sessions |
| 2:15 PM - 3:15 PM | Breakout Sessions |
| 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM | Breakout Sessions |

Keynote speaker

A keynote speaker can transform your conference. Their speech will set the tone and help establish your event's theme. Choosing the right person is key.

When recruiting a keynote speaker, consider:

- **Your franchisee's recommendations.** Survey who they're interested in hearing from, both inside and outside your industry.
- **Your event timing.** Most speakers' calendars are scheduled out months or years in advance. This is yet another reason to plan early.
- **Your budget.** Speaker fees range widely and can be lofty. Remember, an exceptional keynote helps create an exceptional event. So, consider your keynote speaker an investment.
- **Your goals for the event.** It's easy to get distracted by big names and celebrity status. Instead, focus on finding the right speaker for the event. Your keynote's experience, brand, and content should align with your event's theme. Above all, they should provide unique value to your franchisees with a customized message, and deliver it authentically.
- **Your franchise's brand.** You want to make sure you have speakers who share core values with your brand. Keynote speakers are connected to your brand the moment you announce them, and you need to be comfortable—if not thrilled—about that.

The ideal speaker will deeply inspire and leave a lasting impression on your franchisees. That's why you'll want to kick off and, if possible, end your conference with a powerful keynote. This gives attendees another compelling reason to stay until the end of the event.



Networking

Outside of keynotes and educational sessions, prioritize community and collaboration among franchisees.

Do so with networking breaks between sessions, meals together, and even speed networking sessions. If you're a smaller franchise (less than 100), consider team-building sessions too.

For franchisees, having a network of people who are in their exact shoes is invaluable. The more opportunities you give them to form genuine relationships with one another, the better.

Support

Give franchisees access to your corporate team for Q&A and support. Consider offering one-on-one or small-group appointments to ensure their concerns are heard.

This is also an opportunity to build stronger connections between corporate and franchisees.

For questions related to software, equipment, retail etc., invite franchise-wide vendors/partners for their assistance and expertise. This might include booths in an exhibit hall, educational breakout sessions, and/or one-on-one appointments to share best practices and address specific needs.



Have fun (and good food)

While conferences are meant to be educational and inspirational, they're also meant to be fun.

Give attendees ample time to recharge, relax, and have fun. This might include:

- Designated free time
- Live performances
- Hikes
- Cocktail parties
- Wellness services or classes

Build in surprises throughout the event, too. Whether that's guests/speakers, entertainment, or gifts, everyone loves a surprise—your franchisees included.

And like any social gathering or event, food is high on the list of what people remember.

Offer healthy snacks and beverages between sessions to keep attendees energized during long days of sessions. Facilitate networking and collaboration over catered meals. Encourage attendees to sit together with a designated dining area.



Incentivize attendance

You can measure your event's success largely by how many franchisees attend. That's why it's so critical to talk about the value of your conference regularly.

As you recruit and onboard franchisees, set the expectation that your conference is a must-attend event (even if it's technically not required).

Discuss the benefits of both the community and educational opportunities. If possible, highlight results from those who attend versus those who don't.

Build excitement with pre-event teaser emails ("Here's a sneak peek of our next conference"). Send emails throughout the event itself (creating fear of missing out, or FOMO, for those who aren't there). Offer discounts at the event for the next one.

A well-attended event this year builds momentum, unifies your franchisees, and leads to even higher attendance next year.



Prepare your leadership team

Your conference is a great opportunity for corporate executives to meet with franchisees.

It gives them a platform to dive deep into corporate strategies that impact each location in the coming year.

More importantly, it gives your corporate all-stars a chance to get face-to-face time with franchisees and get a much better understanding of their individual needs.

To make every presentation as impactful as possible, get your leadership team ready. Schedule rehearsals to run through timing and logistics and to test presentations and technology.

Off-stage, encourage leaders to chat with franchisees one-on-one or in groups. Prepare them to discuss strategy, answer questions, and work through issues with franchisees as they arise. This is especially important if you host interactive panels or Q&A sessions—both of which are fantastic ways to engage attendees.

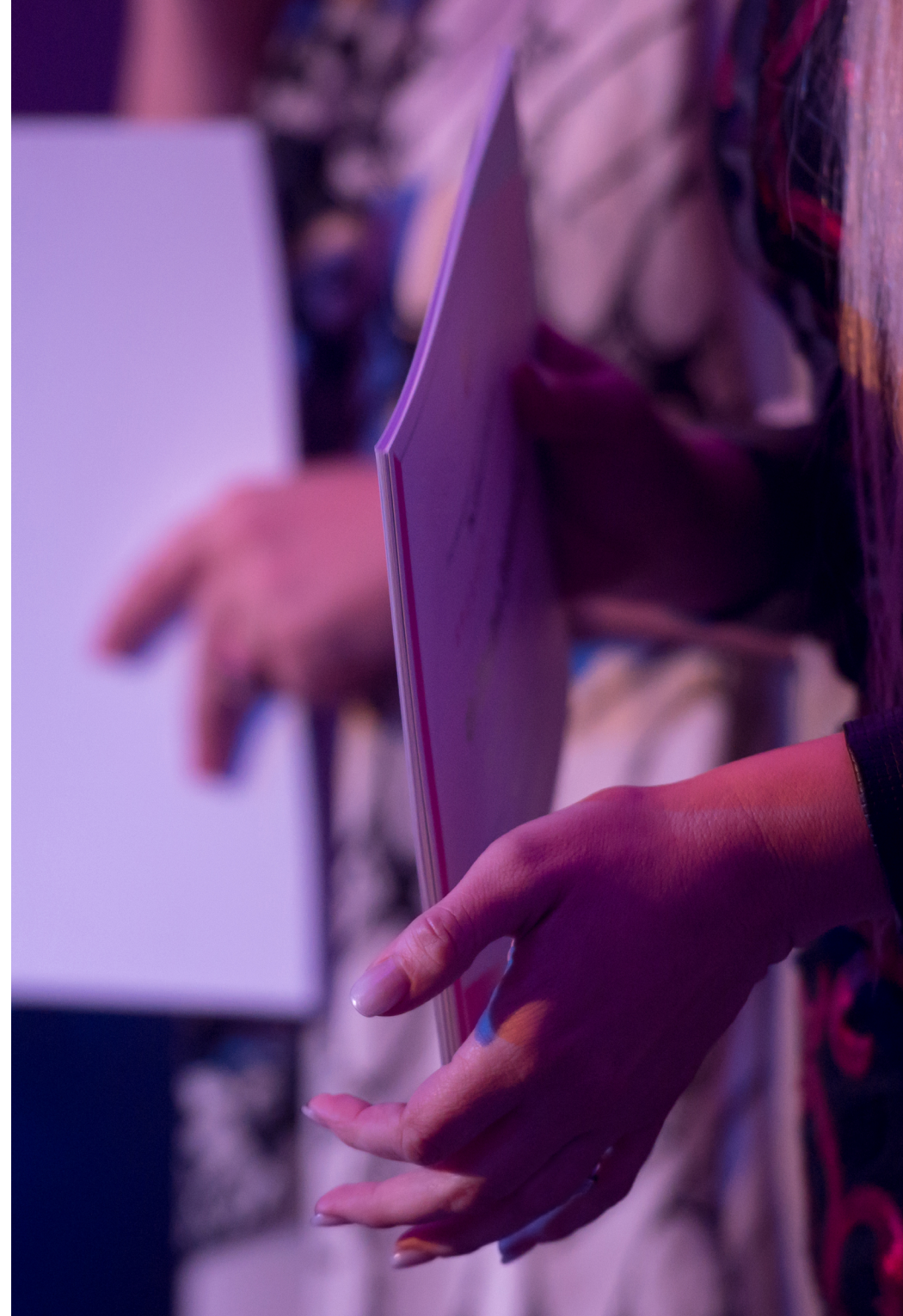


Recognize your franchisees

Never underestimate the power of recognition, especially at a conference.

It boosts morale, sparks friendly competition between locations, and increases the sense of loyalty to your organization.

Hand out awards throughout your event or with a designated award ceremony. The awards don't need to be elaborate—a certificate, medal, or plaque will suffice—but should be aesthetically-pleasing so franchisees want to show them off at their businesses.



Conclusion

A lot goes into pulling off a successful franchise conference. But, the time and financial investments are well worth it.

While the location, agenda, and extra events are important considerations, focus on how you want franchisees to feel. An annual conference should invigorate franchisees and fuel their love for the brand and what they do. Do it right, and enjoy returns on this annual event throughout the year.





To learn first-hand how Mindbody can position your business for success, [schedule a guided tour today.](#)