



## Taking Convenience to the Next Level Co-branding Your Business

November 1, 2017 by [Jim Baumer](#)

People are busy, maybe busier than ever before. Multitasking is the new norm. Forcing them to focus on simply one thing while getting work done on their car — like an oil change or repair — is running the risk of inconveniencing them in a major way.

Not only are we busy, but we're on screens, seeking a wi-fi hotspot when we lay-up and come to a stop. In light of that, considering value-added options for your customers is no longer an unrealistic expectation if you own and operate an auto service shop.

“Service-based industries are hot,” said Dallas-Fort Worth-based franchise consultant, Sara Waskow. “People are so busy, and they're seeking ways that make their lives easier.”

Younger customers aren't content to sit in what passed for a waiting area in the past — dirty, dingy, with coffee that looked like warmed-over crankcase sludge. If your attitude is, “tough” when it comes to providing something more comfortable and appealing to millennials and the younger demographic, they'll simply go somewhere more appealing. Recognizing that people's time matters isn't simply a marketing ploy to attract younger customers — everyone is seeking to maximize their time these days.

According to Forrester Research, 77 percent of respondents indicate that valuing their time is a key to delivering superior service. Simply banging out an oil change in 15 minutes is no longer enough to ensure undying allegiance to your shop. Neither is bargain-basement pricing.

Dustin Olde and his wife, Ellis, realized no one in their area was clued into this when these Denver natives left college and moved back home. Unimpressed with car care options in their area, they decided to become pioneers when they merged coffee and car repair and service. Lube & Latte was born in 2006.



Dustin said both he and Ellis had worked their way through college as coffee baristas. They wanted to find a way to connect with customers in the same manner that he found appealing in the coffee business.

Dustin went back to school to learn the automotive side. Afterward, he went “undercover,” working for some of the large chain service shops to fill-in his experience and gain a better understanding in terms of running the vehicle side of things.



The couple located an available repair shop just west of Denver, in Lakewood. The 1,800-square-foot building sat on a good sized lot. They retrofitted the former lobby into a coffee shop, painted the walls teal and installed a pastry case where the front counter used to be, while hanging paired menus — one for coffee and the other auto service.

“I think if you own a repair facility, you need to understand that customers won’t tolerate a plain waiting area with nothing for them to do,” Dustin said. “Given that customers of all kinds have a certain expectation for service — you simply can’t take for granted that you can offer someone a chair in a side room or an empty space and call it a ‘waiting area.’”

For Dustin, who approached this as an industry interloper, his outside-the-fray approach helped him recognize that something different was in order. He expressed that he still gets “subtle eye rolls” from colleagues at meetings and industry events.

“There are industry veterans that just don’t get it, and the thought of co-branding isn’t on their radar,” he said.



Lube & Latte partners with Novo Coffee, a brand served in a number of high-end restaurants in the greater-Denver area, as well as local coffee shops.

“We really wanted to work with a local coffee brand,” Dustin said.

Other shop owners might want to consider going the franchise route. This gets into, what is the “right” franchise for me? There are a host of questions you need to ask before picking a franchise.

An interesting potential partnership model for service shop owners might be similar to the one offered by Fabulous Freddy’s Car Washes and Express Lubes. In 2015, they signed a licensing agreement with Dippin’ Dots and Doc Popcorn bringing these co-branded franchises into eight Fabulous Freddy’s locations in Utah and Las Vegas. Dippin’ Dots and Doc Popcorn have been marketing these co-branded arrangements in high-traffic venues. The agreement with Fabulous Freddy’s is part of a national plan by Dippin’ Dots and Doc Popcorn to co-brand their franchises in high-traffic venues that attract families.



[Photo courtesy: [www.facebook.com/fabulousfreddys](http://www.facebook.com/fabulousfreddys)]

Coffee, popcorn or flash-frozen ice cream — what is the best product for your shop to co-brand with? Many franchise seekers have turned to a consultant to help them through the search and decision-making process. The best consultants will ask the questions and help owners get to the crux of what they’re looking to get out of partnering, or co-branding, a service and repair business with something that customers want.

“It always amazes me how often people simply think about the name and nothing else,” said Mike Chiodo, an Illinois-based independent franchise consultant.

Chiodo said that people see lines outside of a Subway or a Chick-fil-A and assume that this will automatically translate into success for them.

“I ask clients, ‘what do you want to get out of this?’” Chiodo said. “Beyond the cost of buying into the franchise, they are making a life and lifetime decision that will affect

everything else — you need to do your due diligence. It's so much more than just how much income is involved in doing this.”

Chiodo counsels caution in doing your franchise research online, by Googling something like, “the top 10 franchises to buy,” or something similar.

“Doing your franchise research on the internet is like walking into the ocean — the first few steps are okay, but eventually, you're in over your head,” he said.

Before looking out beyond what you know and what you've been doing, servicing and repairing cars, it's clear from those who've done it — like the Oldes and a chain like Fabulous Freddy's — and those working on the consulting side, like Chiodo, there are no easy or quick fixes, or instant roads to riches.

Co-branding might mean starting with carving out some space to sell coffee and pastries, or it might mean opening something more substantial next door, if you have the space available. Either way, doing your homework is essential.