

THE FRANCHISE KING®
PRESENTS

The Franchise Discovery Day Survival Guide

*Including Questions Franchise Headquarters Doesn't
Want You to Ask*

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How to Buy and How to Research Franchises

Introduction: The \$50,000 Mistake You're About to Make

Let me tell you about the most expensive lunch you'll ever eat.

It's catered. The presentations at franchise headquarters are polished. Everyone's smiling. The franchisor's executive team is charismatic and confident. Current franchisees share success stories that make it all seem so achievable. By the time dessert arrives, you're already imagining the grand opening of your own location.

That's Franchise Discovery Day. And if you're not careful, it's where you'll make a six-figure decision based on emotion instead of deep analysis. Hey-I made a video about Franchise Discovery Day. [Watch it.](#)

Here's what nobody tells you:

A Franchise Discovery Day isn't designed to inform you. It's designed to close you.

I've spent 25 years in the franchise industry. I've worked with thousands of aspiring franchise owners. And I can tell you this with absolute certainty: *The difference between franchise success and franchise failure often comes down to what happens on Discovery Day.*

The franchisees who thrive? They showed up prepared. They asked hard questions. They took notes. They resisted pressure. *They went home and did more work before signing anything.*

The ones who struggled or failed? They got swept up in the ether. In the excitement. They trusted the presentations instead of doing the research. They signed because they were tired of looking, or because the territory might go to someone else, or because the existing franchisees who were at Discovery Day seemed so successful.

The Discovery Day Paradox

Here's the paradox: Franchise Discovery Day is both essential and dangerous.

It's essential because it gives you access to people and information you can't get any other way. You need to meet the leadership team face-to-face. You need to see their facilities. You need to observe their culture. You need to ask questions that can't be answered over email. Keep reading.

But it's dangerous because the entire event is choreographed to trigger commitment bias. By the time you arrive, you've already invested weeks or months researching this franchise. You've submitted financial documents. You've had multiple calls with their development team. You've started imagining yourself as an owner.

Walking away after all that investment feels like failure. The franchisor knows this. That's why Discovery Day happens when it does in their sales process.

Now don't tell anyone this...

If you agree to travel to franchise headquarters for a Franchise Discovery Day, Franchise Development Reps (*salespeople*) and Franchise Brokers/Consultants get extremely excited. Why?

Because past history shows them that **you** are more likely than not to buy the franchise that generates a large commission for **them**.

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What This Guide Will Do For You

This isn't a guide about how to be cynical or combative. It's about how to be strategic.

You'll learn:

- The exact questions to ask that reveal truth instead of talking points
- What to observe beyond the polished presentations
- How to resist signature pressure without burning bridges
- The decision framework that prevents emotional buying
- What to do in the 48 hours after Discovery Day to make a sound decision
- When to walk away from a deal—even if you've invested months in the process

I've organized this guide to match the Discovery Day timeline. First, you'll learn how to prepare in the 30 days before the event. Then, you'll get the specific questions to ask during Discovery Day, organized by category. Finally, you'll learn the decision pause protocol that prevents you from making a hasty choice.

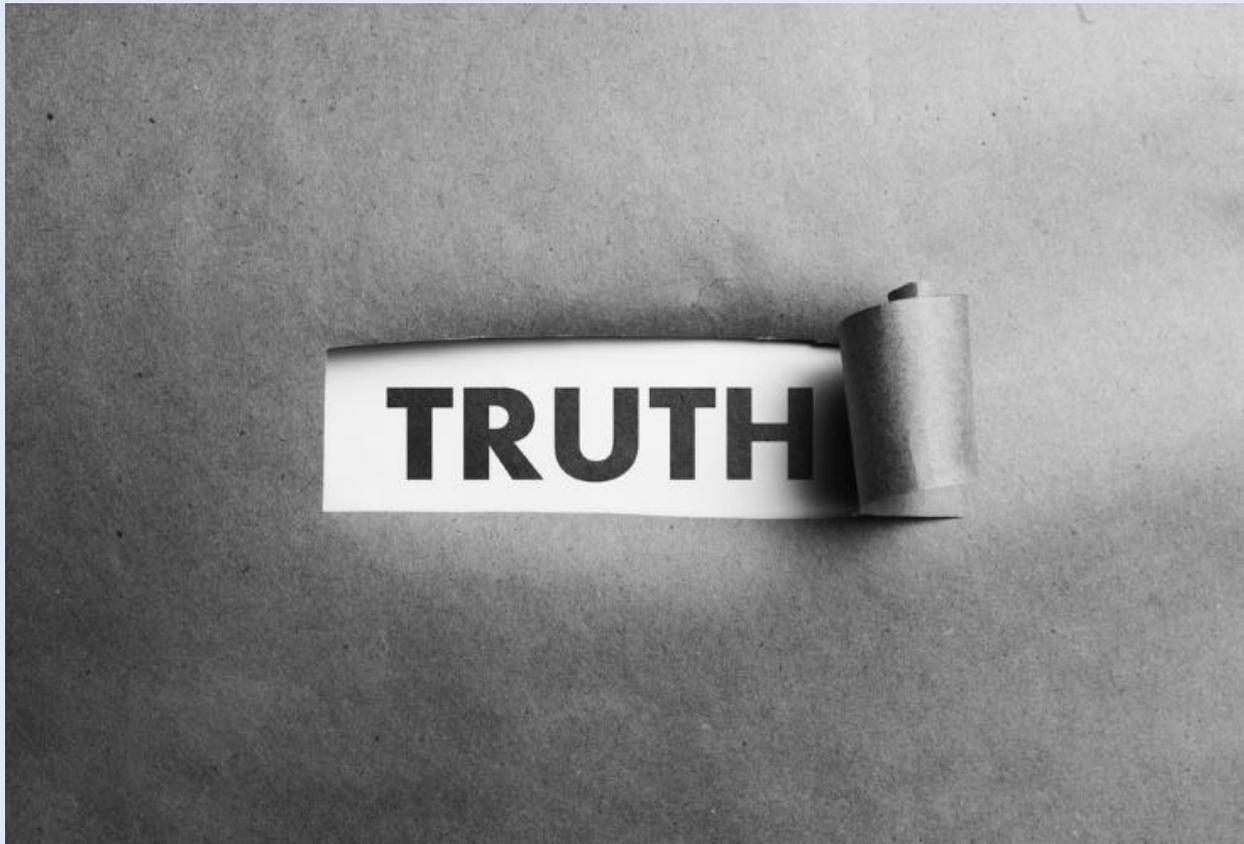
Why I Created This Guide

I don't earn brokerage commissions from franchisors. I don't get paid a brokerage commission when you sign a franchise agreement. My business model is commission-free consulting—I work exclusively for franchise buyers, not sellers.

That gives me a perspective that most people in the franchise industry won't share with you.

Franchise brokers/consultants make money when you sign. They'll show you opportunities, answer questions, and guide you through the process. But their economic incentive is for you to say yes. Not to help you find the right franchise. Not to protect you from bad deals. **Just to get you to sign.**

Franchisors, obviously, want to sell you a franchise. Their Discovery Day presentations are marketing, with some education. The franchisees they put in front of you are handpicked success stories, not representative samples.



I created this guide *because someone needs to tell you the truth*. Someone needs to give you the questions that make franchisors uncomfortable. Someone needs to show you what to watch for when everyone else is trying to sell you.

Right?

How Successful Franchise Owners Approach Discovery Day

I've identified a pattern among franchisees who built successful, profitable businesses.

They treat Discovery Day as research, not romance.

They don't go in hoping to fall in love with the franchise. They go in testing their hypothesis. Hopefully, they've already done most of their research. They've interviewed franchisees. They've analyzed the FDD. They've built financial models.

Meaning...Franchise Discovery Day is their final validation—a chance to confirm what they've learned or to discover red flags that change everything.

In addition, they ask questions that make the franchise development team pause. They take detailed notes. They observe body language. **They talk to other franchisee candidates** when they're there. They get their contact information, so they can call them later when they get back home.

And here's the critical part: **They never make decisions on-site.**

No matter how good it feels. No matter how exciting the opportunity seems. No matter how much pressure they face about losing their proposed territory by other interested candidates. They go home. They debrief with their spouse or partner. They call their franchise attorney. They review their notes. They sleep on it. And later, they make their decision.

Tip: Don't attend a Franchise Discovery Day until you're 80-90% convinced that this is the franchise you're going to buy.

What You're About to Learn

This guide is organized into eight parts:

Part 1: Understanding What Discovery Day Really Is

The psychology behind the event, why timing matters, and what both sides actually want from the day.

Part 2: Pre-Discovery Day Preparation

Your 30-day countdown checklist. What to research, who to interview, and how to organize your questions before you arrive.

Part 3: The Questions They Don't Want You to Ask

The hard questions, organized by category: Operations, Financial Performance, Territory, Franchisor Relationship, Growth, and Exit Strategy. Each section starts with softball questions and progresses to the ones that make people uncomfortable.

Part 4: Observation Skills During Discovery Day

What to watch beyond the presentations. Corporate culture signals, franchisee panel analysis, and the intelligence you can gather from fellow candidates.

Part 5: The Decision Pause Protocol

How to resist signature pressure, the 48-hour reflection process, and the decision framework that prevents emotional buying.

Part 6: Post-Discovery Day Action Steps

What to do if you're moving forward, how to walk away professionally, and why waiting is sometimes the smartest choice.

Part 7: Special Situations

Guidance for attending with a partner, considering multiple territories, and navigating veteran or minority candidate dynamics.

Part 8: Your Discovery Day Checklist

A complete timeline from 30 days before through 48 hours after, in checkbox format so you can track your progress.

A Final Word Before We Begin

This guide is long. It's detailed. It's comprehensive.

That's intentional.

You're about to make one of the biggest financial decisions of your life. You're considering investing your savings, possibly your retirement funds, and definitely years of your working life into a franchise business.

This deserves more than a quick skim and a gut feeling.

Read this guide completely. Use the checklists. Prepare the questions. Do the work. Because here's the truth that 25 years in this industry has taught me:

Franchise fortune favors the informed, not the impulsive.

Let's make sure you're in the first category.

— Joel Libava
The Franchise King®



From Dr. Seuss:



Part 1: Understanding What Discovery Day Really Is

The Psychology of the Event

Discovery Day is theater. That doesn't mean it's dishonest, but it's carefully orchestrated to create a specific emotional outcome.

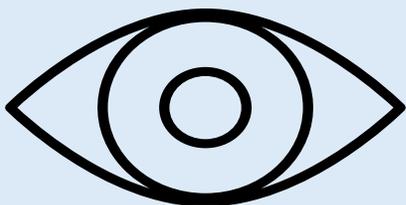
What you'll normally experience:

- Impressive facilities that showcase the brand's success
- Carefully selected franchisees who share glowing testimonials
- Executive presentations emphasizing opportunity and momentum
- A sense of urgency about limited territories
- Social proof emphasizing successful owners just like you

What you won't see:

- Struggling franchisees who are barely breaking even
- Territories that failed and were quietly closed
- The franchise development director's commission structure
- Financial projections that didn't materialize
- The legal complaints filed in the past 18 months

Your job isn't to be cynical. It's to be clear-eyed.



The Timing Dynamic

Here's something most people don't realize: Franchise Discovery Day usually happens at a specific point in the sales funnel by design.

You've already:

- Submitted your financial information
- Completed initial interviews
- Reviewed the FDD (*hopefully*)
- Invested weeks or months in the process
- Started imagining yourself as an owner

This timing creates what psychologists call commitment bias. You've invested so much already that walking away feels like failure. The franchisor and the salesperson know this.

Your countermeasure: Remind yourself that Discovery Day is research, not commitment. Walking away isn't failure—it's due diligence. It's part of the buying process.

Note: Speaking of franchise due diligence, I've worked with thousands of aspiring franchise owners over the years. And I've told all of them the same thing...

You need to hire a Franchise Attorney. Period. It's not negotiable.

And you can find one on [The Franchise Attorney Directory](#).



Part 2: Pre-Discovery Day Preparation

The 30-Day Countdown Checklist

Franchise Discovery Day shouldn't be your first deep dive into the franchise. It should be your final validation.

Two-Four weeks before:

- Complete your full FDD analysis (*all 23 items*)
- Interview at least 10-15 current franchisees
- Interview at least 2-3 *former* franchisees (*Item 20 shows who left*)
- Conduct preliminary territory analysis for your market
- Review all litigation history (*Item 3*) in detail
- Research executive team backgrounds on LinkedIn/Google

Two weeks before:

- Compile your list of unanswered questions
- Identify specific concerns from franchisee interviews
- Research recent brand news
- Prepare financial scenarios
- Schedule prep call with your franchise attorney

One week before:

- Finalize your question list (*organized by topic*)
- Share questions with spouse/partner
- Book attorney debrief for after Discovery Day
- Set decision criteria in writing
- Remind yourself: collecting data, not making decisions on-site

Part 3: The Questions They Don't Want You to Ask

Operations & Support Questions

Start with softballs:

Walk me through a typical week of support for a new franchisee in their first 90 days.

- Listen for specifics: scheduled calls, field visits, response times
- Vague answers are red flags

How many franchisees does each field support person manage?

- Industry standard: 15-25 franchisees per field consultant
- If ratio is 40-50 to 1, support may be thin

Now the harder ones:

What percentage of new franchisees request additional training beyond the initial program?

- High percentage suggests training is inadequate
- Ask what that costs

Can I see your operations manual before I sign?

- Many franchisors say no, but asking shows you're serious
- At minimum, ask about page count and update frequency

The question that makes them uncomfortable:

Can you connect me with three franchisees who called support last week with a problem? I'd like to ask them how it went.

- This is brilliant because it's reasonable but rarely done
- Their reaction tells you **a lot**

Financial Performance Questions

Start here:

Why doesn't your FDD include an Item 19 earnings claim?

- If they don't provide financial data, ask why not
- Listen to how they justify this, even though it's okay with me that they don't show earnings

What percentage of franchisees are hitting the revenue projections you've shown me?

- If they showed projections but won't answer this, it's a major red flag
- Press for specifics

Then go deeper from Item 19:

What's the median revenue for franchisees open 2-3 years?

- Median is more honest than average
- Top performers skew averages, median shows middle reality

What percentage of your franchisees are profitable in Year 1? Year 2? Year 3?

- Revenue isn't profit
- This is the question that matters most



Territory & Competition Questions



How do you determine territory boundaries—population, geography, or revenue potential?

- Understand their methodology
- See if it matches your market reality

Do my territory rights include a percentage of e-commerce sales revenue from customers in my area?

- If corporate captures online sales in your territory, you're losing revenue
- This is increasingly common and problematic

Can I buy another territory if things go well?

- Find out before you sign-and see how it would work
- Get it in writing

Part 4: Observation Skills During Discovery Day

What to Watch Beyond the Presentations

Corporate Culture Signals:

- How do employees interact when they think you're not watching?
- Do they seem energized or under lots of stress?
- How do executives treat support staff?
- Is there genuine camaraderie or performative professionalism?

The Franchisee Panel

Most Discovery Days include current franchisees sharing their experiences.

Remember:

- These are handpicked success stories
- They might get perks for participating
- Their experience might not be typical

Key question to ask them:

What would you tell your brother if he asked whether he should buy this franchise?

- More honest than “*Would you do it again?*”
- This question makes it personal
- They may open up to you a lot

Part 5: The Decision Pause Protocol

Resist the Signature Pressure

Here's what will happen near the end of Discovery Day:

You'll feel excited. The opportunity will seem real. The franchise development director will sense your enthusiasm and suggest taking the next step.

They might say:

- We have limited territories available
- Other candidates are interested in your market
- We can get you started this quarter if you sign soon
- What questions do you still have that would prevent you from moving forward?

Your response:

I've learned a lot today and I appreciate the opportunity. I need to review everything with my attorney and financial advisor before making a decision. What's the timeline for me to get back to you?

Then actually follow that timeline.



The Decision Framework

Use this scoring system for clarity:

Rate each category 1-10:

- **Operations & Support Quality**
- **Financial Viability**
- **Territory Protection**
- **Franchisor Relationship Philosophy**
- **Growth Trajectory & Innovation**
- **Exit Strategy Strength**
- **Cultural Fit**
- **Competitive Positioning**

Scoring Guide:

- 72-80: Strong opportunity, proceed with contract review
- 64-71: Proceed cautiously, address concerns before signing
- 56-63: Significant concerns, likely not the right fit
- Below 56: Walk away



Critical rule: If any single category scores below 6, that needs to be looked at as a potential deal-breaker requiring deep investigation before proceeding.



Note: Buying a franchise isn't just a career move. It's a life-altering event. You're about to sign a 10-year contract and write a check for hundreds of thousands of dollars. This is serious business. Most people spend more time researching a new car than they do a \$300,000 franchise opportunity. Don't be that person. You need to know *exactly* what you're walking into before you commit. And for the right person, who has enough money, will follow the rules and work hard, owning a franchise can be a great thing.

Conclusion: Your Discovery Day Is Just One Data Point

Here's what I want you to remember:

Franchise Discovery Day is important, but it's not decisive.

It's one day in what should be a months-long research process. It gives you access to people and information you can't get elsewhere, but it shouldn't override everything you've learned before and after.

The franchisees you interviewed matter more than the executives you met.

The FDD you analyzed matters more than the presentations you saw.

Your financial modeling matters more than their projected success stories.

Franchise Discovery Day should confirm your research or raise red flags that need investigation. *It shouldn't be the moment you fall in love and abandon critical thinking.*

The best franchise owners I know treated Franchise Discovery Day as research, not romance.

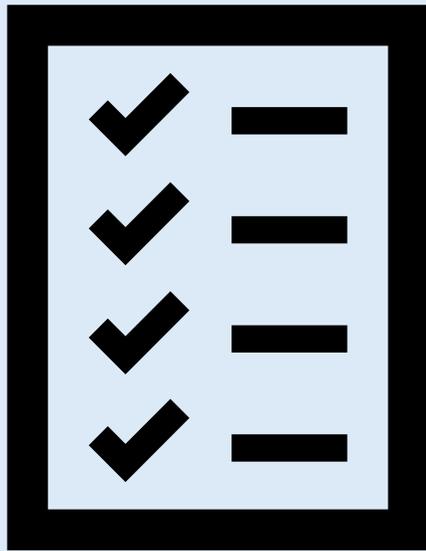
They asked hard questions. They took detailed notes. They resisted pressure. They went home and did more work. And when they finally signed, they did so with confidence, clarity, and realistic expectations.

That's the goal.

Not excitement. Not urgency. Not even certainty.

Its grounded confidence built on preparation, hard questions, and decisive action with the best information available.

And if that decision is no, that's just as valid as yes.



Bonus: Your Discovery Day Checklist

30 Days Before:

- Complete full FDD review
- Interview 10-15 current franchisees
- Interview 3-5 former franchisees
- Research executive team backgrounds
- Review all litigation history
- Analyze territory demographics

14 Days Before:

- Compile question list organized by category
- Identify unresolved concerns from franchisee interviews
- Research recent brand news and media coverage
- Prepare financial scenarios and required metrics
- Schedule attorney prep call

7 Days Before:

- Finalize and organize question list
- Review questions with spouse/partner
- Book post-Discovery Day attorney debrief
- Write down your decision criteria
- Pack materials (notebook, FDD, questions, business cards)

Day Of:

- Arrive early, observe before official start
- Take detailed notes on everything
- Ask your full question list (don't skip the hard ones)
- Network with other candidates
- Get contact info from franchisee panel
- Observe corporate culture and employee interactions
- Resist any same-day signing pressure

48 Hours After:

- Debrief with spouse/partner
- Call franchise attorney with observations
- Review notes systematically
- Compare Discovery Day to previous research
- Complete decision framework scoring
- Follow up with franchisee panel privately

Bottom line: Discovery Day is a tool. Use it strategically, not emotionally. Ask the questions that matter. Observe what they show and what they hide. And remember—you're not there to get sold. You're there to gather the final pieces of information you need to make a smart decision.

The rest is up to you.

Ready to Take the Next Step?

If you're serious about franchise ownership and want unbiased, high-level guidance through the entire process, or want a one-time consultation and/or a franchise evaluation, let me know.

I can help you a lot!

Visit: <https://www.thefranchiseking.com>

Email: Joel@thefranchiseking.com

Call: 216-831-2610

Because you don't have to do this alone.