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Q&A with Ray Titus, CEO of United Franchise Group on new Experimac brand

The latest brand from United Franchise Group is a retail sales and service outfit specializing in repairing, upgrading and selling pre-owned electronics.

BY TOM KAISER

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In February, West Palm Beach, Florida-based United Franchise Group announced it was adding Experimac to its stable of brands, which includes Signarama, EmbroidMe, IZON Global Media, SuperGreen Solutions, Transworld Business Advisors and Plan Ahead Events. Experimac is a retail technology sales and service outfit specializing on repairing, upgrading, selling and installing pre-owned electronics.

The first Experimac franchise is opening this month, March 2015, in Sandy Springs, Georgia, tapping into a market that the company values at more than \$400 billion by providing pre-owned laptops, computers, tablets and phones at prices far less than new, in addition to repair and trade-in services.

Traveling to two recent franchise events, I've seen a couple of similar businesses— electronics

repair and reselling—so we spoke with United Franchise Group CEO Ray Titus about the new brand, its unique positioning and future in the franchise world.

Franchise Times: What type of franchisees are you looking to get this brand up and running?

Ray Titus: We want franchisees that will not only run the business, but also have an interest in growth down the road. Multiple locations will be available. Experimac is an especially good fit for business people, but don't have to have technology skills as we will hire people for handling that part of the business. It's more important to find potential franchisees that have experience in management, negotiation and customer service.

FT: Are your ideal franchisees tech people themselves, or business people first and foremost?

RT: We are looking for prospects that have a foundation in business first. The tech side is something that we will provide extensive education on during our training process and something that will actually be handled in the stores by employees who will be hired.

FT: What percentage of revenue do you expect to come from the repair side, versus selling equipment?

RT: The core of this business is selling pre-owned computers, MacBooks, iPads, and iPhones. There is a large demand for these items from very loyal customers and our pricing structure really appeals to customers. The repair side should be around 20 percent.



FT: Who are Experimac's biggest competitors?

RT: I have seen similar concepts at recent franchise expos, however, they were largely limited to cell phone repair. No one else specializes in selling pre-owned Apple products, taking trade-ins, providing software and system updates, and selling accessories along with the repair side. Keep in mind United Franchise Group has been franchising for 29 years, and this business has been successful for five years, as well. So, we have a vast amount of experience behind this brand.

FT: What are some risks or challenges this business model might face at it scales up?

RT: The biggest challenge for this business is just getting enough used product for franchisees to sell that is why we are starting our own supply company that will buy in bulk, and offer all the products to the franchisees only. We have already set up an intranet site, a 30,000-square-foot warehouse, and have 12 acres to build when we need more space. Our owners will still get the bulk of their products locally from trade-ins, and even Craigslist, but we will have a large backlog of products should they need more to sell.

FT: Is the company focused solely on Apple products or others as well?

RT: We have added Samsung and Beats headsets are coming, but we love the Apple products and they do keep a much higher value. We will add other products as we see opportunities in the future.



FT: What makes this concept a good fit for potential franchisees?

RT: First, the financial rewards can be incredible. Our store went from \$600K to \$1.1 million to \$1.8 million in its first three years in a retail location. Second is the quality of life in this business. There is nothing heavy to lift, no manufacturing equipment used. The employees love working in technology, so it is a fun atmosphere. Our store is closed on holidays, and all Sundays. Getting in on the ground floor will make this investment great. You get the best of both worlds, the new franchise concept with the best areas available, with a franchise company that has built seven other brands over the last 29 years!

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