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# Franchise Marketing at Scale

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**HOW VYA HELPS KONA ICE  
KEEP ITS COOL, SUPPORTING THE  
LOCALIZED MARKETING NEEDS  
OF A RAPIDLY GROWING, MOBILE  
FRANCHISE ORGANIZATION**



Simplified Marketing Systems

# Executive Summary

Kona Ice has re-invented the traditional ice cream truck, serving up shaved ice in hundreds of flavor combinations from its colorful Kona Ice trucks with shiny chrome wheels and tropical steel drum music. Kona is also known for giving back to the local communities it serves, donating more than \$50 million to local communities since launching in 2007, through fundraisers for schools, sports teams, playgrounds and other local causes.

Cultivating its unique brand has helped propel Kona from a startup with its first truck in 2007, to a national franchise organization with more than 1,200 trucks on the road today, operated by an ever-increasing number of franchisees in all 50 states.



## CLIENT PROFILE

**Industry:** Mobile  
Foodservice Franchise

**Company:** Kona Ice serves up shaved ice in hundreds of flavor combinations from its iconic trucks, featuring the soothing sights and sounds of the tropics.

**Challenge:** Maintain a strong franchise brand while effectively supporting the localized marketing needs of a rapidly growing franchise organization – all with a small corporate marketing staff.

**Solution:** Vya localized marketing services, including marketing resource management and print production services.

“Marketing is so critical to the success of our franchisees and our franchise business,” says Kona Ice CEO Tony Lamb. “What’s more, franchisee satisfaction is of the utmost importance to us at Kona. So, fulfilling their marketing requests as efficiently and effectively as possible is a priority, while also ensuring the consistent design that is so important to building strong brand recognition.”

This case study examines how Kona Ice has been able to successfully scale its marketing operation to serve its growing franchisee community, with the help of technology partner Vya and its localized marketing services.

# Challenges & Objectives

“In the early days, it was like steering a speedboat,” recalls Jessica Ross, Head of Branding and Digital Marketing for Kona Ice. “Now we’re in 50 states, and it’s like steering a cruise ship. We need to remember that we need to bring hundreds of franchisees along with us.”

To keep this ship on course, Kona’s marketing team identified several objectives to guide its ability to effectively sustain its franchisee-first philosophy, even in the midst of rapid growth.

- Deliver efficient support for custom creative requests
- Increase franchisee control of local marketing while ensuring brand consistency
- Gain outside perspective to complement and enhance internal resources

# Solution

As the Kona franchise organization continued to grow, and its localized marketing needs multiplied, the company understood that it needed to find a partner that could help it work more efficiently to deliver the best marketing support possible for its franchisees. That's when Kona discovered Vya, and the vision of scaling its marketing operation came into focus.

“We had been growing like crazy and we started to wonder if we were going to be able to hire enough designers to handle the mounting number of design requests and continue to provide our franchisees a high level of service while ensuring the consistency of the Kona brand,” explains Ross. “And that's when we met Vya.”

Kona tapped Vya in 2018 to bring its marketing resource management system and print production services to Kona franchisees. The system gives franchisees the ability to customize, print, fulfill and track their local marketing materials, making it easier for them to execute marketing campaigns at the local level while ensuring brand consistency.

## SCALING CREATIVE SUPPORT

With a limited number of designers on staff, Kona's marketing team was straining to handle the volume of custom requests from its growing number of franchisees.

“Our designers were spending lots of time on custom requests,” says Ross. “We’d keep doing the same flyer, only changing contact information. We knew there had to be something better. It got to a point where it didn’t make sense to spend so much energy on these one-off requests.”

With Vya's marketing resource management system, Kona has been able to significantly reduce the number of custom requests by providing franchisees access to templated and customizable marketing materials in the system.

“Now all of our custom requests are managed within the Vya system,” explains Ross. “This has significantly streamlined our process and reduced the administrative workload for our designers.”



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When a custom request is necessary, it is initiated using an in-system form which provides the Kona designers the detailed information they need to fulfill the request, eliminating the inefficient back and forth of emails.

According to Ross, “Every once in a while, our designers get a taste of what life was like before Vya, when they get a one-off request for a flyer that is not in the system. Not having to do those minimal updates and working on social and big projects makes their job more exciting for sure.”

The design process is managed and tracked within the Vya system, providing transparency and a referenceable history of requests. In addition, request activity can be analyzed, enabling Kona to identify trends. For example, if they notice many requests for the same type of marketing piece, they can proactively create a template and have it added to the system.

A great example of how the Vya system has helped free up the design team to work on more strategic initiatives, is Kona’s support for school PBIS programs. PBIS, which stands for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, is a set of ideas and tools that schools use to improve the behavior of students. PBIS is a perfect fit for Kona franchisees, who have been partnering with local communities and schools on fundraisers and local causes since Kona launched in 2007.

For this initiative, the Kona team has created resources for franchisees to support PBIS programs in their local schools. Vya has contributed to making it even easier for Kona franchisees to participate by helping Kona package its PBIS assets into a kit that franchisees can select from and easily order using the marketing resource management system. This saves franchisees the time and effort of piecing materials together on their own.

## INCREASING FRANCHISEE CONTROL OF LOCAL MARKETING

As Kona has transitioned from startup to established franchise brand, its franchisees have grown with it, mastering the basics of running their Kona businesses and looking for new ways to grow, with more control over their local marketing.

“There’s a part of us that always wants to be able to cover the marketing for franchisees so they don’t have to do it on their own,” says Ross. “We’re hearing from our established



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franchisees and they want to know what's the next step. And it's always marketing.”

Kona needed to find ways to give franchisees more control while maintaining brand fidelity and consistency. With Vya's marketing resource management system, franchisees can customize, print, fulfill and track their local marketing materials while adhering to the corporate brand standards.

“Our franchisees love the Vya system,” says Ross. “It's easy for them to find the marketing materials they need, and with a few clicks they can customize templated materials, and request additional customization if they need it. Because they are using our corporate-designed materials, our brand is being consistently represented across the country.”

Kona franchisees are also showing a growing interest in controlling their digital channels at the local level – from email, to websites and social media. As Ross explains, “They want more leeway and customization so they can track their analytics. I think we're going to start seeing our local franchisees want to dive even deeper into their local marketing.”

One popular feature of the Vya system among Kona franchisees is the ability to send their own promotional emails, giving their messages a personal and local touch, which Ross suggests can produce greater engagement

than a corporate brand communication.

“The best part about the emailing feature in Vya’s system has been that we can set up even our regular e-newsletter such that it comes directly from the franchisee’s email address and not some nebulous email that their customers have never connected with. I think this helps them make it into more inboxes and also allows for the customer to reply directly back to the franchisee. I know plenty of franchisees who have said they get a ton of responses when the emails go out. So that’s been great!”

“**THE VYA TEAM IS AS PROACTIVE AS I COULD EVER ASK FOR, AND THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT THEY PROVIDE OUR FRANCHISEES HAS BEEN OUTSTANDING.**”

## PARTNERING FOR FRESH PERSPECTIVE

“**VYA HAS BEEN A VALUABLE BRAINSTORMING PARTNER. THEY BRING NEW IDEAS TO US AND ARE ALWAYS WILLING TO COLLABORATE TO HELP US ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS.**”

Kona understands that as it has grown, it has become more important to maximize its internal marketing operation by integrating partners that increase efficiencies and bring expertise and a fresh perspective to help

germinate creative approaches and solutions to help franchisees continue to grow.

According to Ross, “The push to continue making things better for our franchisees began with Vya. It has pushed us to get out there and look at who can help us. As a small in-house team, it’s made us realize there are other people out there who bring a different set of expertise than us. It’s no coincidence that working with Vya coincided with us rolling out other new marketing initiatives. It got us looking into other areas, like programmatic advertising and influencer marketing.”

Ross adds, “The Vya team is as proactive as I could ever ask for and the level of support they provide our franchisees has been outstanding. Vya has been a valuable brainstorming partner. They bring new ideas to us and are always willing to collaborate to help us accomplish our goals.”

# Results

At the end of the day, Ross stresses Kona marketing's focus is on how they are helping the franchisees. "We always want to put them first. They are corporates' first customers – particularly in the marketing department."

Vya's impact can be measured by how Kona, with its small and nimble marketing team, has been able to efficiently support its growing number of franchisees, without losing a beat, or its cool.

"Overall, we've seen a decrease in the number of custom requests and we are much more efficient," she says. "We've been able to manage our growth with our existing marketing team, and I think our designers are happier too because they are spending more time designing and less time shuffling emails back and forth."

**“ BEST OF ALL, THE VYA TEAM MANAGES THE SYSTEM FOR US. IF WE HAD TO HIRE INTERNAL TECHNOLOGY EXPERTS, IT WOULD HAVE WIPE OUT THE PRODUCTIVITY GAINS WE WERE TRYING TO ACHIEVE.**

Ross concludes, “Best of all, the Vya team manages the system for us. If we had to hire internal technology experts, it would have wiped out the productivity gains we were trying to achieve. I’m excited to say that we are still growing at an amazing pace and, thanks to Vya, our marketing team is able to manage the additional workload, the Kona brand is consistent across the country, and our franchisees are as happy as ever.”

## LET'S DISCUSS.

I hope this Kona Ice case study provided helpful insights. As you consider your own unique marketing challenges, please call me at 513-552-0143 or email me at [sales@vyasystems.com](mailto:sales@vyasystems.com) to discuss how Vya may be able to help.

You can also request a demo [here](#).



Allan Greer

## ABOUT VYA

Leading companies partner with Vya to streamline marketing operations. We simplify multi-channel marketing execution (digital, print, mail, promotional products) through our marketing resource management system and in-house production services. With Vya, you can enable field teams to easily order branded materials, facilitate co-branded marketing, and manage multiple marketing budgets, all while ensuring regulatory compliance.



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