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A SHORT GUIDE FROM FRANCHISE CONSULTING CANADA

Five questions to ask before buying a franchise at retirement

Phil Doublet, CFC · Franchise Advisor

Buying a franchise at retirement is a different decision than buying one at forty, and it deserves different questions. These are the five I would want answered before I signed anything.

BEFORE QUESTION 1: THE FOOD MYTH

First, a correction most people need. When you hear ‘franchise,’ you picture fast food, and that picture is twenty years out of date. The franchise world today runs far wider than burgers and fries: home services, senior care, health and fitness, education and tutoring, commercial services for businesses, automotive, pet care, and plenty more. Most of the 600-plus brands I work with through IFPG have nothing to do with food. Many are manager-run or semi-absentee models, which means you oversee the business and the people in it rather than working the counter yourself. If you ruled out franchising because you have no interest in flipping burgers, you ruled out a fraction of it. The rest deserves a look.

1. Why do you actually want this?

- Your reason shapes everything: replacing income, finding purpose, building a family asset, or proving you still can. Each reason points at different kinds of brands.
- Write the reason down before you look at a single brand. It becomes the filter every opportunity has to pass through.

2. What does the money really look like?

- The franchise fee is the headline, not the total. Buildout, equipment, working capital, and your own living costs while revenue ramps are where the real number lives.
- Ask every franchisor for the full investment range in writing, then add six months of cushion you hope you never need.

3. Owner-operator or semi-absentee, honestly?

- Franchisors use these terms precisely and buyers hear them loosely. Get the weekly hour count for each model from existing owners, not from the brochure.
- Match the model to the life you want, not the life you imagine. A semi-absentee model still needs an owner.

4. How do you check the franchisor’s story?

- Call existing franchisees, especially the ones who struggled. Ask what surprised them and what support actually showed up when it mattered.
- Read the disclosure document (the FDD in the US) before you fall in love with a brand. Item 19, where financial figures live, deserves a slow read with your accountant.

5. What happens on your worst day?

- Ask about transfer and exit terms before you sign: how you sell, who approves the buyer, and what it costs to leave.
- Find out what support looks like when a location underperforms, not when it wins awards. The answer tells you who the franchisor really is.

If you want a second set of eyes on any of this, I offer a 30-minute conversation. You will find the booking link at franchiseconsulting.ca. Bring your questions; there is no pitch.

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