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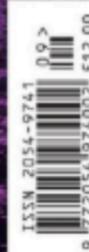
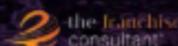
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activ Marketing

Founded originally as a web design franchise, activ Marketing has evolved into The Marketing Agency Franchise, giving self employed marketers structure, security and scale



SINCE 2008, activ has been quietly reshaping the way marketing businesses are built, and in recent years it has become one of the most progressive forces in the UK franchise landscape. Now a BFA accredited expanding member, the brand is recognised for its commitment to ethical franchising and raising standards across the sector.

The transformational moment in the company's history came in 2021, when former franchisee and corporate marketer Katie Bullon acquired the network. Drawing on her background managing million pound budgets across global markets, she rebuilt the model from the ground up, designing a franchise system that removes the instability and isolation many solo marketers face. A central part of that redesign was SoloPower™, the philosophy that underpins the activ model by giving marketers clarity, structure and the confidence to build a sustainable business. Today, that thinking defines every part of the activ experience.

The activ model operates on a simple principle. Businesses want one trusted partner to outsource their marketing to, but no solo marketer can deliver everything. The franchise bridges this gap by combining local franchisee relationships with centralised expert delivery and support. Franchisees act as the client lead with the option of activ's internal head office team to deliver creative, technical and strategic work across more than 150 services. This dual structure gives smaller businesses a consistent service while allowing franchise partners to grow without hiring staff of their own.

What sets activ apart in the sector is the depth of its operational ecosystem. Every franchise



partner launches with a complete marketing business in a box: activ Flow, the brand's CRM and back office system; the activation Station learning hub with templates and training; pricing models; proposal frameworks; contracts; a suite of deliverable services; subscription-led revenue systems; done-for-them marketing and lead generation campaigns; and the legal and operational foundations needed to trade from day one. It is a model designed to eliminate the trial and error period that costs independent start ups both time and money.

The model supports experienced marketers, career changers and early-stage talent who may have recently graduated. Every franchisee is guided through tailored onboarding and structured pathways to build confidence and capability from day one - in a way that aligns with their personal goals. This inclusivity widens access to the industry and ensures partners begin with clarity, structure and long-term support.

This structure matters because the challenges facing solo marketers are well documented. There are more than 60,000 self employed marketers in the UK,

yet many struggle with retention, income volatility, skill gaps and the pressure of fulfilling every task themselves. Over 70% of SMEs outsource marketing, yet want one reliable partner, a demand most freelancers cannot meet alone. activ solves this by increasing franchisees' capacity, helping them build recurring income and removing up to 45 hours of non-billable work each month through the full business in a box.

The franchise distinguishes itself through its investment in innovation. As marketing shifts toward automation and AI-driven systems, activ is implementing the next phase of its strategy, including enhanced automations, intelligent retainers and the arrival of 'Kora' in 2026, the network's AI employee for each franchisee. Rather than leaving franchisees to navigate these changes independently, the head office drives continuous upgrades to keep the network competitive.

Community sits at the heart of the brand. activ's culture emphasises belonging, collaboration and personal growth, supported through regular huddles, mentoring, the Accelerator Programme and the Annual

Franchise Forum. It is a network where kindness and ambition coexist and where partners are never isolated, which is a defining strength in a sector where self employed marketers often work alone. activ's latest WorkBuzz franchisee satisfaction survey reported a 85% satisfaction rate, up 3% from 2024.

As activ continues to grow, its mission remains consistent: to give marketers a safer and smarter way to build a business, and to transform the standards of outsourced marketing for businesses who want one trusted partner. The franchise has moved to cohort-based recruitment, welcoming a select number of new franchisees each quarter to strengthen support and community. With a new London office opening and its international franchisee programme launching this year in regions such as Dubai and New Zealand, activ enters its next chapter with strong foundations and clear ambition.

activ marketing
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REWRITING THE RULES OF FREELANCING

ACTIV PLACES MARKETERS EXACTLY WHERE CLIENTS WANT THEM: AS THE TRUSTED PARTNER DELIVERING IT ALL. CEO KATIE BULLON EXPLAINS HOW THE AWARD-WINNING FRANCHISE WORKS



FOR THOUSANDS of marketers across the UK, self employment has long been a tug

of war between freedom and instability. A rush of possibility followed by the grind of chasing clients, plugging skills gaps and filling the late night hours that should have been billable, but aren't. It is an industry bursting with talent but beset by burnout. For many freelancers, the promise of freedom quickly becomes the reality of juggling delivery, admin, sales and gaps in expertise. activ removes that pressure by replacing the uncertainty of working alone with clear systems, support and predictable pathways to scale.

Into that space stepped activ Marketing, known as The Marketing Agency Franchise™. Born in 2008 as a web design franchise, activ has spent the last five years reinventing itself as the model for self employment in marketing. Today, as a BFA accredited expanding member with a network of partners building supported marketing businesses, the brand positions itself as an antidote to the "feast or famine" reality familiar to freelancers everywhere. Its momentum has also been recognised across the franchise industry and beyond,

with activ receiving multiple awards for innovation, leadership and franchise growth.

A leader shaped by three worlds

At the centre of that reinvention is CEO Katie Bullon, whose career spans international corporate marketing, solo self employment and over a decade inside franchising - a combination that gives her a uniquely informed perspective on both industries. "I joined activ as a franchisee in 2014 after leaving corporate marketing, where I managed budgets of over £1 million," she explains. "In 2021 I negotiated a buy out of the entire activ network because I believed so much in what it could become." This blend of experience enabled her to pair the proven success rates of the franchise industry with a deep understanding of the challenges facing solo marketers and the businesses that rely on them. The next stage of growth is now supported by the opening of a new London office in 2026, strengthening training, induction and support across the UK and further afield.

Bullon knew those challenges first hand. "I understood the problems of going it alone, the lack of billable hours and the difficulty in retaining clients if you cannot →

fulfil all requirements yourself. I reimagined the brand to support change in an industry that had left solo marketers to struggle alone."

A franchise model built for marketers

activ's proposition is straightforward, providing structure, support, systemisation and a national delivery team. Underpinning this evolution is SoloPower™, the framework that helps solo marketers build sustainable businesses with clarity, structure and confidence. "We give people the infrastructure solo marketers never receive," says Bullon. "It turns talent into a growth business model."

Beyond the initial onboarding and launch, franchise partners continue to develop through the Activation Station, activ's training and resource hub. It brings together onboarding programmes, monthly marketing sessions, templates, knowledge pathways and practical support for every stage of growth. New modules and campaigns are added throughout the year, ensuring every partner stays ahead of industry change without needing to source training or build tools independently. It gives franchisees the ongoing development structure solo marketers rarely receive.

While many partners join from a freelance background, the model is equally suited to career changers and early-stage marketers. Some come from corporate roles, others from agency life, and some join straight from study with a marketing degree or learned experience. activ provides structured pathways, onboarding and training tailored to each starting point. It gives every partner a route into building a sustainable marketing business, from all angles.

The franchise has also become known for its pink cowboy hats – a playful but powerful reminder that solo marketers do not need to wear every hat. They wear



“WE GIVE PEOPLE THE CONFIDENCE, STRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY THEY NEED TO BUILD THE BUSINESS THEY WERE ALWAYS CAPABLE OF”

activ's, giving them freedom whilst running their own business.

The sweet spot for clients - and support for solo marketers

Clients are not dealing with a lone marketer trying to keep pace with the demands of modern marketing. activ sits in the middle ground of the industry - a sweet spot between high cost agencies and overstretched freelancers - giving businesses one trusted partner while giving solo marketers the support they have never had.

Businesses are getting a hybrid model: a local expert backed by a national head office delivery team capable of delivering the full marketing mix, including strategy, content, websites, SEO, PPC, social media, email marketing, branding,

automation, CRM solutions and subscription-based marketing support across more than 150 services. "Our client retention rate of over 90% shows the strength of the model. Clients stay for years because the delivery team are specialists in each of their disciplines."

Why freelancers hit a ceiling

Most independent marketers quickly learn that creative talent alone is not enough to run a business. activ tackles that problem with its full 'marketing business in a box' franchise, which includes activ Flow, its CRM and marketing hub, and the Activation Station, the brand's training and support platform. "With activ Flow, and our back office support, franchise

partners can sell, deliver and manage clients at scale without hiring anyone," Bullon notes. "They can achieve six figure revenue relatively quickly."

Franchise partners launch with everything they need from day one, including their own website and assets, pricing frameworks, contracts, automated systems and plug-and-play marketing campaigns. "The system grows with them. They're not stuck reinvesting in new tools or rebuilding their business every year - we evolve it for them," Bullon says.

Freelancers may be used to juggling five to ten clients, but activ partners operate far beyond that, with some having over 200. Not because they work longer hours, Bullon stresses, but because the structure lifts the ceiling. "Growth becomes predictable when you remove the chaos of working alone."

The AI powered future

Looking ahead, activ is expanding

its automation and AI ecosystem. "Stage 2 focuses on further enhanced automations, AI driven marketing systems and smart retainers designed to help partners close clients and reach more people," Bullon explains. Stage 2 of activ's AI strategy brings deeper automation, improved campaign workflows and intelligent client-facing assets designed to support consistency and scale. These innovations are tested, refined and rolled out centrally, giving partners the advantages of modern marketing technologies without the cost or complexity of developing and managing them alone. This includes the rollout of Kora, an AI enabled support 'employee' that strengthens delivery and keeps franchise partners ahead of industry change.

What's next?

Bullon says 2025 has been "huge" for the network, and the next chapter leans even further into expansion and innovation. activ

is introducing cohort-based recruitment in 2026, welcoming a limited number of partners each quarter to build deeper community and stronger long-term success. The network is also expanding internationally, with new franchise programmes launching in New Zealand and Dubai initially.

"We are rewriting the rules of the middle ground in the marketing industry, the sweet spot we operate in, and changing the way solo marketers trade," Bullon says. "This new era of franchising for marketers is one of opportunity, innovation and inclusion."

With a growing network and evolving infrastructure, activ's ambition is to reshape how marketing businesses are built and scaled.

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