



How Annie Faulstich Found the Niche She was Searching For with Lakefront Living Realty

The Lake of the Ozarks-based franchisee had her best year once she joined the lakefront realty system—and continues to grow her reach nationally.



Emily Clouse

Staff Writer

Franchisee Spotlight

Annie Faulstich spent much of her childhood at Lake of the Ozarks, a major recreation destination in the heart of Missouri that's nicknamed "The Magic Dragon." Today, she's working her own type of magic there as a Lakefront Living Realty franchisee.

After studying and working out of state as an aesthetician for six years, Faulstich moved to Lake of the Ozarks to be with her family in 2006. Feeling like her career as an aesthetician had reached its apex, Faulstich was now drawn to the real estate industry. After all, putting people into new homes was in her blood—her family owned a custom residential construction business for 30 years. Plus, she'd built two custom homes and gone through the buying and selling process herself, so she understood the industry.

Faulstich went to work for Coldwell Banker, then RE/MAX. In addition to the devastation of the housing crisis, the big-brand companies were not quite the right fit for her. "I enjoyed being part of national franchises as far as the broad exposure and the tools they had in place," she said. "But what I was missing was that personal attention I wanted to give to clients."

So, in 2011, Faulstich and another agent opened their own independent brokerage specializing in personalized lakefront properties. “It was kind of a boutique real estate office,” she explained. “That was not the ideal time to open a new brokerage, but thankfully, we were successful.”

The business continued to grow over the course of eight years. But as the market transitioned out of its dire slump, those bigger companies began scooping up all the local brokerages around town. Her primary competition was also growing.

“Keller Williams bought out or merged with the majority of the locally-owned brokerages,” said Faulstich. “I felt that if we were going to grow, and the market was shifting nationwide, we needed both national exposure and a niche to set us apart from other agencies.”

Faulstich began exploring her options. She knew that she didn’t want to reinvent the wheel, but she also didn’t want to join a large franchise that wouldn’t focus on the niche market she’d carved out.

“Lake of the Ozarks is so huge, and it’s really one of the few lakes in the nation where you can own lake frontage,” she said. “You can build a home with your own private dock. To this day, we are the only exclusively lakefront brokerage. Out of 10 serious meetings and conversations, nobody had the niche I was looking for. I was at a major crossroads, and I was getting discouraged.”

Then, one November day in 2017, Faulstich received an email from Scott Freerksen, founder of Lakefront Living Realty. “It was one of those ‘angels-singing’ moments,” laughed Faulstich. “In that email, he touched on all the key points I was looking for. That compelled me to reach out and speak further about what they were offering.”

At that point, Lakefront Living was only two years old. Still, Faulstich knew it was exactly the specific opportunity she was looking for to grow her business. She signed on as the brand’s very first franchisee.

“It was a bit of a risk to jump in with both feet,” she said, “but I quickly and easily saw their vision, their dedication to it, and I felt potential for the growth. Lakefront Living’s offering allowed me to focus 100% on my lakefront passion, be part of a successful lake homes website and integrate proven niche marketing systems to stand out from the hundreds of other real estate agents in my area.”

When an owner converts their business into a franchise, they usually expect a bit of stalling before moving forward again. That, however, was not Faulstich’s experience with Lakefront Living. “It was a seamless transition,” she said. “Between just myself and my office administrator, we were able to get set up and start using their systems and tools immediately. I didn’t see a decline in business at all—in fact, my numbers were better my first year as a franchisee than the last year, and I had a very successful business. We’ve only moved forward.”

One of the reasons Faulstich wanted to join the Lakefront Living system was to expand her reach from the tri-state area and gain national exposure. “I think Lake of the Ozarks has been getting more attention in the media, but I had no idea how quickly transitioning to Lakefront Living would help me gain clients nationwide,” she said. “This year I’ve especially grown my reach. I have clients in California, Arizona, Texas, Colorado and Connecticut.”

Clients can easily browse lakefront real estate on the franchise's website while receiving crucially specific information about properties—and even the lake itself. “That really matters for people coming from other states,” said Faulstich. “It’s a one-stop-shop where they can read information about a lake, such as what types of recreation are available and properties’ water access.”

Going forward, Faulstich has big plans for her business through Lakefront Living. She owns the franchise rights to the state of Missouri and will add Table Rock Lake, Lake Taneycomo and Bull Shoals Lake to the Lakefront Living website by the end of the summer. “We plan to continue adding lakes in Missouri, but for my personal business growth, I’m also planning to add more states,” she said.

The relationships that Faulstich has built with clients have defined her success as a broker and franchisee. She values being able to support her own growing family, including her stepson Garrett, her 2-year-old daughter Farrah, and the baby she has on the way.

“It’s also been very special for me to be able to give my three full-time agents the opportunity to do what they love,” she said. “They are lakefront property owners themselves—that’s what drew them to the area. Everybody has their own niche on the lake. We’re big boaters. One of my agents fishes a lot—their kids are in tournaments every other week.”

Faulstich describes the Lakefront Living team as a “tight-knit family” that thinks far outside the big box real estate game and is just a phone call away. “Scott [Freerksen] and Chris [Mosier] have become more than just franchisors. They truly became, in a short time, family to us,” she said. “That’s a big deal to me.”