

Define, Build, Unlock, Scale: The Shark Licensing Process Guide

Legacy Starts with Licensing.

Introduction to Shark Licensing

Shark Licensing is a full-service brand licensing agency co-founded by **Daymond John** – the entrepreneur who turned streetwear label FUBU into a global enterprise – and led by branding expert **Bernt Ullmann**. After building FUBU into a multi-billion dollar fashion business and spending 17 years as a star of TV's *Shark Tank*, Daymond John brings unparalleled insight and a powerful network to the table. Bernt Ullmann, often called “the man behind the brands,” has steered celebrity brand launches for icons like Jennifer Lopez, Adam Levine, and Nicki Minaj, generating over \$6 billion in retail sales berntullmann.com. Together, their mission is to **build brand empires** for clients through strategic licensing.

Shark Licensing leverages decades of experience and high-level connections to unlock licensing opportunities that most brands can't access alone. The team has worked with household names such as **Crayola, Marvel, Disney, Hasbro, FUBU**, and even the Kardashians and music artists like **Travis Scott** and **Carlos Santana**. By connecting brands with world-class manufacturers, retailers, and influencers, Shark Licensing opens new revenue streams, expands brand reach, and creates lasting cultural impact. This guide outlines the **Shark Licensing process** – a proven, step-by-step system to scale a brand via licensing, from the initial strategy to the flow of royalty income.

Why Licensing Matters

Licensing is a powerful growth strategy for brands and creators. Instead of shouldering all the risk and effort to enter new markets or product categories, a brand (the **licensor**) can partner with specialized companies (the **licensees**) who will manufacture, promote, and sell products under the brand's name. The licensee handles production, marketing, and distribution, while the licensor earns royalties (typically 5–15% of sales) daymondjohn.com. Done right, this creates a win-win: the brand extends into areas it couldn't reach alone, generating new revenue, and the partner gains the cachet of a proven brand to boost their own sales daymondjohn.com.

In short, licensing can dramatically accelerate a brand's growth:

- **Access to Top Networks:** The right licensing partner provides entrée to major retailers, manufacturers, and even celebrity endorsements that can move the needle for your brand. Shark Licensing, for example, leverages Daymond John's unparalleled network of

industry contacts to forge deals that would be out of reach otherwise.

- **Strategic Growth with Control:** Licensing lets you expand into new product categories or markets (toys, apparel, home goods, etc.) without starting from scratch, **all while keeping creative control** over your brand's image. You approve how your name is used, ensuring growth *aligns* with your vision.
- **Turnkey Scaling:** A full-service licensing team does the heavy lifting – from market research to contract negotiation to retail placement – so you can scale efficiently. This means you tap into new revenue streams and audiences without straining your core business operations.

Ultimately, a strategic licensing program can **drive significant revenue, boost brand awareness, and even create cultural impact** by putting your brand in front of new audiences. It's a strategy used by many top companies (from Disney's vast merchandise empire to niche brands collaborating with big-box stores) to grow sustainably and fast.

Who the Process Is For

Not every brand is ready for licensing. Shark Licensing focuses on partners that have established value and are poised to scale. **Our process is ideal for:**

- **Established Brands & Products Ready to Scale:** Companies or products with a loyal customer base and strong identity that want to reach new markets or categories. If you have a following and traction, we can help amplify it.
- **Celebrities, Influencers & Creators:** Individuals with an audience – from celebrities and athletes to YouTubers and influencers – who want to monetize their personal brand through products. For example, a fitness influencer might launch a workout gear line, or a musician might license their brand for a fashion or beverage line. Shark Licensing excels at these talent-driven partnerships.
- **IP Owners & Inventors:** Owners of unique intellectual property (patents, characters, inventions) who need a pathway to market. Licensing can turn a patented idea or a creative asset into consumer products by teaming up with manufacturers that have distribution know-how. We ensure your IP finds the right licensee that shares your quality standards.
- **Manufacturers & Retailers Seeking Brand Partnerships:** Established manufacturers or product companies looking to enhance their offerings with recognized brands. By pairing a production expert with a famous brand name, both parties can profit. (For instance, a specialty food manufacturer could license a popular cartoon character brand

to launch a new kids' snack line – gaining instant brand recognition.)

If you see yourself in the above, the Shark Licensing process could be a fit. We work best with those ready for **rapid yet strategic growth**, who value guidance and a hands-on partnership.

The Shark Licensing Process Overview

Shark Licensing's approach is structured into four key phases: **Define**, **Build**, **Unlock**, and **Scale**. This end-to-end journey typically spans about 18–24 months from kickoff to seeing the first royalty dollars, as it takes time to secure deals and bring products to market. Each phase has specific objectives and deliverables to ensure nothing is left to chance. Below is a visual overview of how a brand moves through our licensing process:

*Figure: The four phases of the Shark Licensing process – from initial brand immersion to deal-making, product launch, and royalty collection. It all starts with deeply **defining** the brand's DNA, then **building** a strategic plan and assets. Next comes **unlocking** partnerships through outreach and negotiation, and finally **scaling** up as products launch and royalties flow in. This flowchart illustrates the journey from start to finish.*

We'll break down each phase in detail:

Phase 1: Define (Brand Immersion & Strategy Foundation)

The process begins with an in-depth **immersion into your brand**. In the Define phase, our team works closely with you to **uncover your brand's DNA** – your story, core values, target audience, visual identity, and market positioning. We want to capture what makes your brand unique and what “north star” will guide all licensing decisions. This foundational work typically takes about **1 month** of research and collaboration (workshops, interviews, market analysis).

By the end of **Define**, we have a clear, documented understanding of your brand's essence and growth goals. This includes articulating your brand narrative, identifying the product categories that make the most sense for expansion, and setting key guidelines (e.g. non-negotiables for how your brand can and cannot be used). In short, we **define** what a successful licensing program will look like for you. *This solid foundation ensures every subsequent step is aligned with your brand and vision.*

Phase 2: Build (Strategic Plan & Asset Development)

With the brand's DNA defined, we move into planning and asset creation. In the Build phase, Shark Licensing **crafts a comprehensive Brand Book and strategic licensing plan**. The Brand Book is a detailed blueprint for your licensing program – it covers your brand guidelines (logos, imagery, tone of voice), target product categories, ideal retail channels, and the overall

value proposition we'll present to potential licensees. Essentially, it's the playbook that will **guide all licensing, product development, sales, and marketing decisions** going forward.

This phase also involves heavy **market research and outreach preparation**, often lasting around **4 months**. During this time, our team analyzes market data to pinpoint the best opportunities: Which product categories are a natural extension for your brand? What price points and retailers make sense? Who are the top manufacturers or licensee candidates in those categories? We may create mockup product concepts or sales sheets as part of your pitch package. By the end of **Build**, you'll have a robust licensing strategy and toolkit in hand, including the Brand Book and a list of target partners. We ensure you are **pitch-ready** – with the story, visuals, and strategy to excite licensee partners.

Phase 3: Unlock (Partner Outreach & Deal Making)

Now it's time to open doors and secure deals. In the Unlock phase, Shark Licensing takes your Brand Book and **goes to market** on your behalf. We leverage Daymond John's and our team's extensive network to get your brand **face-to-face with top decision-makers** in relevant industries. This stage is all about **identifying, vetting, and signing the right licensee partners**.

Key steps in Unlock include:

- **Licensee Outreach:** We approach pre-qualified manufacturers, distributors, or retailers in the target categories (identified in the Build phase). Because of our network and credibility, we can often secure meetings and put your brand in front of industry leaders quickly.
- **Initial Screening & Pitches:** Not every interested partner will be a good fit. We vet potential licensees through due diligence – examining their product quality, market reach, and alignment with your brand standards. Initial discussions (often aided by the Brand Book and concept visuals) gauge interest and capability.
- **Deal Memos & Negotiation:** For those partners that are a fit, we move into negotiating deal terms. This includes outlining the product lines, defining territories and exclusivity, setting royalty rates and upfront guarantees, and more. We prepare **deal memos** and term sheets that capture the key points. Our expertise in deal-making and contract structuring ensures you get optimal terms (e.g. securing a strong minimum guarantee or favorable royalty percentage) while establishing a win-win partnership.
- **Licensing Agreement Signing:** Once terms are agreed, we coordinate with legal teams to finalize the licensing agreements. All contracts are reviewed to protect your IP and ensure compliance with your creative control requirements. After signing, the new licensees are officially onboard!

Unlock is a dynamic phase and can take **several months** (often **3–6+ months** depending on the number of deals and complexity of negotiations). By the end of **Unlock**, you will have one or more licensed partnerships secured – for example, you might have signed deals with a apparel manufacturer for a new clothing line and a home goods producer for a line of branded decor. This sets the stage for your brand’s expansion to actually hit the consumer market.

Real-World Example: A recent licensing partnership in the industry saw **True Religion** (a popular denim fashion brand) expand into childrenswear by partnering with two specialist companies. True Religion announced new licensing deals with Star Ride Kids and Mad Engine Global to produce a **kids’ clothing line**, allowing the brand to reach a younger demographic without building a kids’ division from scratch licenseglobal.com. This illustrates how the Unlock phase connects brands to category experts – in this case, pairing a famous jeans label with top kids’ apparel manufacturers – creating a win-win for both sides.

Phase 4: Scale (Product Launch, Management & Royalty Growth)

With deals signed, the focus shifts to bringing products to market and maximizing their success. In the Scale phase, **you as the brand owner retain creative approval** while Shark Licensing oversees execution and growth. This phase is about **managing the licensed partnerships, supporting launches, and ensuring revenue flows as products sell.**

Key activities in Scale include:

- **Product Development Oversight:** Licensees will design and manufacture products per the agreements. Our team stays closely involved in this process – reviewing product designs, packaging, and marketing materials to ensure they meet your brand standards (part of the “**creative control framework**”). We make sure your brand’s DNA (defined back in Phase 1) shines through in every SKU.
- **Retail & Sales Support:** As products near launch, we assist with getting them into the right sales channels. Thanks to our retail contacts, we can arrange key **introductions to national retailers and boutiques** to carry your new licensed line. We also advise on **direct-to-consumer (DTC) strategies, Amazon marketplace launch, live shopping events, and influencer promotions** to drive sales. If needed, we help create sell sheets, planograms, or pitch decks for retail buyers. Essentially, we act as an extension of your sales team to give these products the best chance in the market.
- **Launch Monitoring & Marketing:** When the products hit shelves (physical or online), Shark Licensing monitors their performance. We coordinate marketing initiatives (often in partnership with the licensee’s marketing team) to boost visibility – this could include PR efforts, social media campaigns, or leveraging Daymond John’s and our broader network for endorsements. The goal is to generate strong sell-through so that everyone profits.
- **Royalties & Financial Management:** Once sales begin, we track royalty reports and ensure you receive the royalties due per the contracts. Our **Finance & Royalties** service

covers ongoing royalty reporting, auditing sales numbers, and analyzing the revenue trends. We provide you with transparent reports each quarter, so you see the fruits of the program. Many deals include minimum guarantees, so we track those targets too. It usually takes around **18–24 months from the project start to see the first royalty payments** from actual product sales (often it aligns with products being on the market for a few months). Once the royalty flow starts, it can become a steady stream of income as products continue to sell.

- **Ongoing Brand Management:** Scaling through licensing is an ongoing effort. We continue to **manage the relationships** with your licensees – holding regular check-ins, ensuring compliance with the agreements, and fostering innovation (e.g. encouraging new product designs or additional categories as success builds). If any issues arise (quality concerns, IP infringements, etc.), we address them swiftly – protecting your brand is paramount. We also look for **expansion opportunities**: for instance, if the first product line does well, we might extend the license or add more product categories, or use that success story to attract additional licensees in other areas. In essence, Scale is about **long-term growth**: maximizing the impact of current deals and strategically adding new ones to build a thriving licensed product ecosystem around your brand.

By the end of the Scale phase (and continuously thereafter), your brand is generating royalty revenue and reaching consumers in ways it never did before. You've effectively **scaled up** with the help of partners who do the day-to-day product work, under your guidance. Shark Licensing remains by your side to ensure this growth is sustainable, brand-enhancing, and profitable.

Timeline: From Kickoff to Royalty Flow

Every licensing journey is unique, but here's a general timeline of how the Shark Licensing process plays out with estimated durations for each step:

1. **Brand Immersion & Definition – ~1 month:** Deep dive into your brand (meetings, research, strategy sessions) to capture your DNA and set goals. *(Phase 1: Define)*
2. **Market Research & Strategy Build – ~3–4 months:** Analyze market opportunities, craft the Brand Book, identify target product categories and ideal licensee partners. *(Phase 2: Build)*
3. **Partner Outreach & Deal Negotiation – ~3–6 months:** Proactive pitching to potential licensees, vetting partners, and negotiating deal terms (which may overlap with ongoing outreach). This culminates in signing licensing agreements. *(Phase 3: Unlock)*
4. **Product Development & Launch Prep – ~6–12 months:** Licensees develop the actual products and prepare for launch. During this time, packaging is designed, samples are approved, retailers are lined up, and marketing plans are made. Shark Licensing

oversees milestones and approvals. *(Phase 4: Scale begins)*

5. **Product Launch & Royalty Flow – ~18–24 months from start:** Licensed products hit the market. You'll typically see the **first royalties** from sales around the 18–24 month mark after the initial kickoff, given production lead times and sales cycles. From here, royalties are usually paid quarterly, and the focus shifts to maximizing sales and considering new licensing opportunities as the partnership grows. *(Phase 4: Scale ongoing)*

Note: These timeframes are approximate. Some deals might move faster (e.g. signing a straightforward licensing deal in just a couple months), while others (especially product development for complex items or negotiating with large corporate partners) can take longer. Shark Licensing maintains momentum throughout, keeping all parties accountable so that the process stays on track as much as possible.

Comprehensive Services to Support Every Phase

One of the advantages of working with Shark Licensing is our **full-service approach**. Licensing involves many moving parts – legal, financial, creative, and more – and we bring expertise in all these areas so you don't have to piecemeal a team together. Here are some of the key services and support we provide across the licensing journey:

- **Licensing Strategy:** We handle strategic planning for your licensing program from day one. This includes mapping out which product categories and brand extensions make sense, creating a **customized licensing roadmap** aligned with your brand DNA, and planning go-to-market strategies (e.g. deciding on exclusivity, territorial rights, and rollout timing). Essentially, we plot the course that will maximize your brand's licensing potential while avoiding pitfalls. *(This strategy work happens heavily in Phase 1 and 2, but we continually refine it as the market evolves.)*
- **Finance & Royalties Management:** Our team structures deals to ensure healthy financials for you – negotiating the best royalty rates, upfront advances or guarantees, and performance milestones. We also build financial models to forecast potential revenues. Once deals are active, we manage the **royalty reporting** process: tracking sales, auditing statements from licensees, and ensuring you get paid accurately and on time. This financial oversight means you always have a clear picture of the program's ROI.
- **Brand & Legal Management:** We safeguard your brand's intellectual property and integrity throughout the licensing program. This covers everything from trademark filings and usage guidelines, to rigorously reviewing all licensing agreements and legal terms. We establish a **creative approval process** so that you sign off on how your brand is used in products and marketing. Additionally, we monitor the market for any

unauthorized use of your brand and enforce compliance. Our legal and brand management ensures that every licensing deal enhances (and never dilutes) your brand equity.

- **Retail & Sales Support:** Simply signing a licensing deal isn't enough – products need to sell. Shark Licensing provides hands-on support to get your licensed products into sales channels. We tap into our retail relationships to make **introductions to major retailers, e-commerce platforms, and boutique outlets** that fit your brand. We also advise on sales collateral (like creating persuasive sell sheets or lookbooks) and even assist with live selling events or aligning influencers to promote the product. This sales support can significantly improve the reach and sell-through of your licensed products, benefiting both you and the licensee.
- **Licensee Vetting & Oversight:** Not all partners are created equal. We conduct thorough **due diligence on potential licensees** – evaluating their manufacturing quality, financial stability, ethical standards, and track record. This vetting happens during partner selection to ensure we only bring you solid candidates. Furthermore, after deals are signed, we help manage onboarding the licensee to your brand's processes and keep an eye on their compliance with contract terms (e.g. quality tests, safety standards, reporting deadlines). This proactive management prevents problems and keeps the partnership running smoothly.

In summary, Shark Licensing is **not just a matchmaker** between brands and licensees – we are an active partner in execution. From strategic planning to negotiating the fine print, from designing brand books to pitching retailers, our full-service approach means you have experts handling every facet of the licensing program. This comprehensive support lets you focus on your core business, while we focus on turning your brand into a licensing success story.

Partner Success Stories: Examples of Deals in Action

To paint a clearer picture of what's possible, here are a couple of scenarios inspired by real partnerships that illustrate how licensing deals can succeed:

- **Extending a Fashion Brand into New Categories:** We mentioned **True Religion** expanding into children's apparel earlier – a classic example of brand extension via licensing. By signing licensees with expertise in kids' clothing, True Religion was able to quickly launch a kids' line carried by its own stores and other retailers, all while the licensee handled production and distribution licenseglobal.com. The result: True Religion's brand now "dresses every member of the family," generating new revenue from a category they previously weren't in, and the licensee benefits from having a famous brand to drive its sales. Shark Licensing seeks out these win-win opportunities for our clients – whether it's a luxury fashion label moving into affordable accessories, or a well-known toy brand licensing its name for children's apparel, *the goal*

is to create synergistic extensions that grow the pie for everyone.


- **Building a Celebrity Lifestyle Brand:** Many celebrities and influencers have transformed their personal brands into product empires through licensing. For instance, Shark Licensing's CEO Bernt Ullmann helped superstar **Jennifer Lopez** launch her branded merchandise and fragrance lines, and guided **Nicki Minaj** in creating her own product brand – each becoming a multi-million dollar business and household name at retail berntullmann.com. In these cases, the celebrity (as licensor) lent her name, style, and vision, while trusted licensee companies developed the actual products (such as perfumes, fashion accessories, or clothing) and handled distribution. The success of J.Lo's fragrances or Nicki Minaj's merchandise illustrates how a well-managed licensing program can convert a celebrity's influence into a robust consumer brand. Similarly, we've seen entrepreneurs like Daymond John's fellow Shark Tank alumni leverage licensing deals to expand their product lines nationwide. The key is aligning the talent with credible partners and carefully managing the brand image – which is exactly what Shark Licensing specializes in.

These examples scratch the surface of what's possible. Whether it's a heritage brand reinvigorated through new licensed products, a media property (TV show, comic, game) spawning a merchandise line, or a digital influencer's catchphrase becoming a best-selling apparel line – **licensing opens up creative, lucrative possibilities**. Our role is to navigate and execute these deals so that our partners experience the same kind of success as the stories above.

Ready to Scale Your Brand? – Next Steps & How to Apply

Shark Licensing engages with new brand partners selectively – we **vett** each opportunity to ensure quality, strong story alignment, and a real market opportunity. This vetting process is as much for your benefit as ours: it ensures that if we work together, we're confident about making your licensing program a success. If you're reading this guide and believe your brand has the potential to grow through licensing, we would love to hear from you.

Take the next step by reaching out to discuss your brand. We typically start with an initial consultation or application to understand your business and vision. From there, our team can assess fit and potentially invite you into the Shark Licensing network. Once approved as a client, we work closely with you to define the partnership structure and rollout plan tailored to your needs.

 **Contact Us:** The fastest way to start is to **email our team** (you can reach Bernt Ullmann directly at BerntUllmann@gmail.com) to introduce yourself and your brand. You can also **apply via our website** by filling out a short form with your details – we review every submission carefully.

Call-to-Action: *Scale with purpose. Partner with power.* If you're ready to unlock your brand's full potential through licensing, **apply to Shark Licensing** today. Let's discuss how we can **drive your brand to the next level** and create the next big success story together. Your legacy could very well start with licensing – and we're here to make it happen.