

# START YOUR PET SITTING AND DOG WALKING BUSINESS IN 7 DAYS

**-COURSE MATERIALS-**



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# Before You Begin

## □ Action Step #1

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Join my private Facebook group. It's called *Prosperous Pet Business*. You can find the group on Facebook by searching for "Prosperous Pet Business," or use this direct link to the private Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/prosperouspetbusiness/>

## □ Action Step #2

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Use a blank journal or notebook to complete the *Action Steps* for this course. Keeping track of what you do and the progress you make each day in a designated notebook will help you feel accomplished and keep you motivated.

Writing down your ideas, your *Action Steps*, and your goals is so much more powerful than simply thinking about them.

But don't wait to find the perfect journal or notebook! Use whatever notebook or journal you have available right now so you can begin your start-up journey today.

## □ Action Step #3

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Use a dedicated timer when you're doing these exercises, and preferably a timer that's not on your phone.

Some of the *Action Steps* in this course will require that you use a timer, and a timer will also be very helpful in the future for keeping you on track while you work on your business tasks.

I recommend using a timer other than your phone's timer so you don't get distracted by a text message or other notifications.

Instead, get a timer that is specifically for this seven-day process. You'll be glad you did because it will keep you on track, and it will help you stay focused while you are completing your *Action Steps*.

When you join the Prosperous Pet Business Facebook group, you may see pictures of fun and unusual timers there. You can post a picture of *your* new timer in the group too, if you like!

And just like I mentioned in the notebook Action Step, don't wait until you've found the perfect timer to start diving into this course!

Go to the store today to get a timer or order one online and, until you get one, use your phone or your kitchen timer until you've got your special work timer.

When you no longer need your phone timer, I recommend you keep your phone in another room while you're focusing on this course so you can give your business start-up journey your full attention.

## □ Action Step #4

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Get a business buddy to begin building a community to get and receive business support.

Do you know someone else who is starting a pet sitting or dog walking business or who might be interested in doing so? If not, you can post a request for a business buddy on the private Facebook group. That group can be a good source to find someone who is also starting or growing their pet business.

When you have a business buddy, you can support each other and hold each other accountable for completing each *Action Step*.

You can bookend challenging tasks with your business buddy by letting them know when you are starting a difficult task and when you've completed it.

You can also email your to-do lists to each other at the start of each day and connect at the end of the day to report what you've accomplished.

A business buddy will help you stay connected, accountable and on track. And you will help them too, so it will be a win-win for both of you. I've also included helpful resources in the course material section to assist you to stay on track.

## □ Action Step #5

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The last action step is a simple one, and it will also help you before you dive into Day One.

And that action is to:

Take a deep breath.

A really deep breath.

And another one.

Okay, NOW you are ready to begin Day One.

# *Welcome to Day One - Setting the Foundation*

## **Day One – Part One: Choosing What Type of Pets to Care for**

*“You don’t have to be great to start, but you do have to start to be great.”*  
-Zig Ziglar

### **□ Action Step #1**

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Think about your prior experience with pet care, including your own personal pets, or perhaps caring for friends’ or family members’ pets, and any pets you may have cared for professionally.

In your business journal, make one list of the animals you are most comfortable and excited to care for and work with right now.

Make another list of any animals you are certain you do NOT want to care for and work with right now.

### **□ Action Step #2**

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After reviewing the list of pets you created in Action Step #1, decide which kinds of animals you would like to care for in your business and write those down in your business journal.

That list will help you determine what types of services you will offer your clients, which is covered in the next segment.

## Day One – Part Two: Choosing Your Services

*“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”*

-Mahatma Gandhi

### Various Types of Services to Choose From:

#### One-on-One Dog Walking or Group Dog Walks:

**Location:** In and around the client’s neighborhood

**Time commitment:** 30, 45, or 60 minutes

**Time of day:** Usually midday (between 11am-2pm) or after client’s work time (5-7pm)

**Necessary equipment:** An extra leash and collar (in case the client didn’t provide one), treats (if it’s okay with the client), dog waste bags, fanny pack for carrying the client’s keys and dog waste bags, comfortable walking shoes, portable water bowl, bottled water (or access to clean water along the route), vet care and client key release signed by the client.

#### Dog Hikes, Dog Park Trips, and Beach Adventures:

**Location:** Local hiking trail, dog park, or a pet-friendly beach

**Time commitment:** 45-60 minutes plus travel time (2+ hours total)

**Time of day:** Usually midday (between 11am-2pm)

**Necessary equipment:** Vehicle suitable for transporting multiple dogs, mileage log or app, an extra leash and collar, treats (if it’s okay with the client), dog waste bags, fanny pack for carrying the client’s keys and dog waste bags, comfortable walking shoes, portable water bowl, bottled water (or access to clean water along the route), identification tags for off-leash dogs, written permission from owners for any dogs who will be off leash for liability protection purposes, vet care and client key release signed by the client.

## **Vacation Pet Visits:**

**Location:** Client's home

**Time commitment:** 30, 45, or 60 minutes, 2-4 times per day

**Time of day:** Generally morning (7-9am), midday (11am-2pm), and evening (7-9pm) or every 12 hours for twice-a-day visits

**Necessary equipment:** Extra leash and collar (in case the client hasn't provided them), fanny pack for keys and dog waste bags, dog waste bags, comfortable walking shoes if dog walking is needed, treats (if okay with the client), vet care and key release form signed by the client.

## **Overnight Pet Sitting in the Client's Home:**

**Location:** Client's home

**Time commitment:** Usually 12 hours overnight with midday visits (if needed)

**Time of day:** Expect to be at the house from at least 7pm-7am with a 30- or 45-minute midday visit/walk (between 11am-2pm) if needed.

**Necessary equipment:** Extra leash and collar (in case the client hasn't provided them), fanny pack for keys and dog waste bags, dog waste bags, comfortable walking shoes if dog walking is needed, treats (if it's okay with the client), vet care and key release form signed by the client.

## **Pet Boarding in Your Home:**

**Location:** Your home

**Time commitment:** Varies (depending on specific needs)

**Time of day:** Generally 24-hour care

**Necessary equipment:** Extra leash and collar (in case the client hasn't provided them), fanny pack for keys and dog waste bags, dog waste bags, comfortable walking shoes if dog walking is needed, vehicle suitable for transporting pets if you need to pick up or drop off the pet, crate or portable carrier, treats (if it's okay with the client), vet care release form signed by the client.



## What Services Will You Offer?

Now that you have a better idea of the most common pet sitting and dog walking services, it's time to decide what your business will offer.

What can you comfortably commit to right now?

Having heard what the various pet care services require, are there pet care services you are clear you would NOT want to do?

Take into account the time you have available for your business and any additional equipment you may need.

For example, if you will still be working 9am-5pm when you start your business, you will not be able to take on regular dog walking clients yet since your schedule does not work with midday walks.

Are there any services or animals you cannot take on right now that perhaps you'd like to add in the future?

Answering each of these questions in your business journal now will help you get clear.

### □ Action Step #1

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Make a list of four or fewer services you have the time, ability, and desire to offer to clients.

What can you comfortably commit to right now, given your current work or personal life schedule?

Are there pet care services you are clear now that you would NOT want to do?

Are there any services or animals you cannot take on right now that you'd perhaps like to add in the future?

Narrow down your list to no more than four services. Remember: quality over quantity.

### □ Action Step #2

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**A)** After creating your four or fewer services list, look at the list of animals you've decided to care for and the services you plan to provide.

Do you need any special equipment to care for these types of animals or provide these services?

If you plan to offer pet boarding or transport, what changes will you need to make to your home or vehicle?

Spend a few moments brainstorming what you may need to order and refer back to the “necessary equipment” lists in the Various Types of Services section above to determine your needed items.

- B)** If you plan to offer doggie adventures at a dog park, beach or hiking trail, look online for three or more places near you that are pet friendly and welcome off-leash dogs. (You’ll want to be sure to get an agreement in writing from clients if you will be walking the dog off leash and make sure you are in a protected area away from vehicles.) Find an emergency pet hospital close to each off-leash location if you will be more than 20 minutes from the pet’s regular veterinarian.

### **□ Action Step #3**

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Order what equipment you will need today and, if you order online, be willing to pay for quick shipping if that’s needed so you’ll be ready to offer your services at the end of Day Seven!

## Day One – Part Three: Choosing a Business Name

*“The name of your business has a tremendous impact on how customers view you.”*  
-Fortune.com

### Picking the Perfect Name

You’ll want to have your business journal now to jot down any potential names that come to mind while reading this or hearing me share these naming recommendations.

#### 1. Choose a name you LOVE.

You should love the name of your business as much as you love the pets you take care of. If you aren’t sure where to find name inspiration, make a list of things that make you happy. The names of pets you have or have had in the past can be a great place to start. “Low-Cost Dog Sitter” may get the point across, but it won’t inspire you or your customers.

A few of my coaching clients have named their pet sitting and dog walking businesses after their own pets. Let your business name be a source of pride and motivation by choosing a name you truly love.

#### 2. Be specific.

What would you like to be known for? If you want to have the happiest canine clients in town, or specialize in exotic reptiles, or offer pet grooming while you pet sit, say so!

“Happy Paws Pet Sitting and Dog Walking Service” or “San Francisco Pet Sitting and Dog Boarding” are much more descriptive than “Critter’s Pet Care.”

This is the time to incorporate the decisions you made in the prior two video segments.

Part of what makes your pet sitting and dog walking business unique are the services you will be providing. Make it easy for potential clients to know what you do as soon as they hear your name.

#### 3. Pick a name that is easy to remember (and spell).

If the name of your business is too complicated or obscure to remember, satisfied customers will have a hard time recommending you to their friends. When it comes time to make a website or social media page for your business, you will be glad you have a name that people can remember—and spell correctly! I’ll share more about getting a trademark and setting up your website later, but choosing a great name is an important first step for both.

#### **4. Say the name out loud.**

Just like new parents often consider nicknames or anything embarrassing associated with a potential baby name, take a step back and evaluate potential business names for potentially awkward issues.

Be sure to look at what the name of your business looks like as a URL, which is also known as a website address.

Here are some real-life examples of business names that were not well thought out by their owners:

- A pizza parlor named Sam 'n Ella's
- Passmore Gas & Propane
- Amigone Funeral Home
- Stubb's Prosthetics & Orthotics

It's tough to catch some of these issues when you are the person that came up with the name. This is how friends and family can help you.

Once you have a few names you love, enlist the help of someone you trust to tell you the honest truth about anything you might not have noticed.

### **Common Mistakes to Avoid**

Don't repeat the mistakes other companies have already made. Instead, learn from them. Here are some common mistakes new business owners make when picking a name:

#### **Choosing a name people don't understand.**

Don't use an inside joke or confusing name. If only you get the joke, you may end up laughing at the expense of future business. If you aren't sure if the name you've chosen makes sense, try asking your friends or current clients about the name. If you often find yourself explaining the name of your business, consider something more straightforward.

#### **Naming your business after your city.**

Even if you don't think you will ever expand outside of your current town, avoid putting the name of your city in your business name. (The same is true of one specific pet care niche.) "Jenny's Portland Pet Sitting Service" won't work as well if you ever move or start doing business outside of Portland. Part of picking the perfect name is choosing something that can grow with your business if you ever take on employees or expand to another location.

#### **Naming your business after yourself.**

Although it might seem like an obvious choice to name your business after yourself, you may run into problems down the road if you do.

In the video you watched for this day's section, I gave the example of "Laura's Lab Love." When Laura's business is booming and she hires additional employees, it's likely that she won't just be able to hire employees named Laura for her company.

It can be confusing for clients expecting to get Laura when they call "Laura's Lab Love." The same is true of including your last name in your business name.

Is there a chance your name could change down the road? This is most common with women who start a business and then change their last name after marriage (or divorce).

Another reason not to name your business after yourself is that it can make selling your business harder down the road. It might be difficult to imagine selling your business now, before you've even started it, but it's best to plan ahead.

If you do decide in the future to sell your pet business, you likely won't want someone else's business to have your name. Also, potential buyers will likely be turned off by a name that won't work for them.

#### **Picking a name that is similar to another business.**

Don't use a name that is too close to a competitor. Business names that are too similar to each other can lead to lost revenue. Even customers that meant to hire you will not always take the time to try again if they end up at a rival's business instead.

I've coached a few pet sitters and dog walkers over the years who had to change their business name because another company owned the trademark to that name and pursued legal recourse.

This hassle and grief can be avoided by verifying that your business name is unique to you. You also want to avoid any reason your clients might end up at another business by mistake.

Now you're ready for the action steps.

### **□ Action Step #1**

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Write a list of up to 10 potential names for your business. Next, use the suggestions I mentioned earlier to narrow your name list to your favorite three to five name options.

Be sure to check online for other pet sitting or dog walking businesses that have the names you've chosen as top possibilities and if so, delete any names on your list that are the same or other local business names that are very similar.

## □ Action Step #2

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After you've narrowed your list to the top three to five options on your own, you'll want to try out the top names on your list by asking for opinions from friends and family by creating a naming poll via email or on Facebook.

Be sure to also ask those who are participating in the poll to evaluate how easy the names are to pronounce and spell and to either email you or leave their thoughts about this in the comments section under your Facebook poll.

If you're having a lot of difficulty finding the right name, try outsourcing it as a creative project on a name generator site. Yes, there are individuals and companies that can help you name your business!

Search online for "name generator" to find a few name generator websites to choose from that you can pay to help name your business.

For a monetary reward of your choice, freelancers and brand professionals will suggest creative names for you to choose from. Hiring help for this process can make naming your business much quicker and easier than it might be otherwise.

## □ Action Step #3

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Choose your business name! Remember to decide on a name that reflects your personality and tells new customers what to expect from your business.

## Day One – Part Four: Website Name and Trademark

*“Not only is a good name catchy and memorable, it should help people understand what your business does. If your name reflects your products or services you’ll have a much better chance of being found online, so it’s important to choose wisely.”*

-Lori Greiner

You’ll find information on suggestions on how to find low cost legal aid in the Recommended Resources companion document.

### □ Action Step #1

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After you’ve decided on your business name, choose and purchase a domain URL that goes well with the business name you’ve chosen. You’ll set up the website later, but go ahead and purchase the domain now if you’re clear on your business name so you can lock it in.

You can purchase your desired URL from any website that sells domains and you’ll find a list of domain purchase websites in the Course Materials.

As I mentioned in the course segment, if the domain you want is taken, resist the urge to go with a dot biz or other domain ending since URLs ending in dot com are usually easier for clients to remember and find, unless you’re in a country other than the United States. In that case, you’ll want to use your most common website ending for your specific country.

### □ Action Step #2

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Do a trademark search to see if your business name is already trademarked on the [www.uspto.gov](http://www.uspto.gov) website, or if you live in a country other than the United States, you’ll want to contact your country’s trademark and patent office.

Keep in mind that if your business name is already trademarked but it’s not a pet sitting or dog walking service, you may still be able to use that name and trademark it!

Also, simply doing a trademark search does not ensure that you can have the trademark, it’s just the first basic step, so after you’ve done that, you definitely want to hire a trademark attorney to assist you in completing an application for that particular business name.

### □ Action Step #3

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Hire a trademark attorney by searching for “low cost legal aid” and “your city name” or contacting the nearest SCORE office as they may have low-cost referrals.

SCORE is the acronym for Service Corps of Retired Professionals.

Again, even if you’ve done a search, you’ll want an attorney to make sure you have the rights to trademark your name and to ensure that you do it properly in order to get your trademark approved. It will cost some money to hire an attorney, but you’ll find low cost legal aid options in the Recommended Resources companion document to help you find lower cost legal options.



## Day One – Part Five: Determine Your Prices and Practice Saying Rates

*"If you don't value your time, neither will others.  
Value what you know and start charging for it."*  
-Kim Garst

### Create a Pricing Spreadsheet to Help You Set Your Prices

Once you've researched up to 10 of your business' closest competitors that have rates listed on their websites, you'll want to create a simple spreadsheet. Here's a sample pricing spreadsheet:

<i>Competitor Analysis</i>												
Website Link	First Consult	Pet Sitting		Dog Walking		Over-nights		Medication Fees		Extra Pet Fee	Holiday Fee	Notes
		30 mins.	45 mins.	30 mins.	45 mins.	10 hrs.	12 hrs.	1x/day	2x/day			
		18	22	18	19							
		25										
	10	20		30								
		20										
		17	20	17	20			5	10	5	10	
	5	17						5	7	10		
		20		17		50					10	
		20						5	10	7		
		18		14	21	65						
		20		20		50		3	5	5		
												No Pricing Online
		20	25	20	25	50		5	8	4		
		18	25	20	25			3	5	3		
		18	23	20		55	65					
		21		20								
	5	20		20								

### Setting Your Prices

When you are first starting out, your prices should be right in the middle of your local competition so you can begin to get clients quickly. (After your first year of business, you may be able to raise your prices. You'll find a link to everything you need to know about raising rates in the Recommended Resources companion document.)

## Make a Price List

Once you have evaluated competitor prices in your area, it's time to make your own price list. Here's an example of a sample price list:

### Pet Services Pricing

#### Dog Walking Prices:

30-minute dog walk: \$25

45-minute dog walk: \$30

Each additional dog rate: \$10/per dog

#### Pet Sitting Prices:

30-minute pet sitting visit: \$27

45-minute pet sitting visit: \$30

(For up to 2 pets)

Each additional dog rate: \$10/per dog

Each additional cat rate: \$5/per cat

Medication rate: \$10/per dose

#### Overnight Pet Sitting Prices:

12-hour overnight (7pm – 7am): \$70

Midday visit (between 11-2pm): \$25

(For up to 2 pets)

Each additional dog rate: \$10/per dog

Each additional cat rate: \$5/per cat

Medication: \$10/per dose

## □ Action Step #1

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Research other pet sitting and dog walking businesses in your area and make a spreadsheet of the service pricing of up to 10 companies in addition to your own.

Be sure to include extra pet fees, medication administration fees, and holiday rates. List all business websites on the far left of the page and all time amounts, services, additional pet fees, and holiday rates at the very top as headings and to the right of the business names to create an organized pricing chart. (You'll find a sample pricing comparison spreadsheet in the image located in this Part Five information section.)

## □ Action Step #2

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Decide what your prices will be after you've studied the competitor pricing spreadsheet. If you are just starting out, set your prices in the middle of your local competitors pricing. If you have a year or more of experience and a few clients, it is appropriate to be just above the midpoint.

Next, make a clean, easy-to-read price list for your business and put it in a prominent location. Start memorizing your prices!

## □ Action Step #3

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And, for your last action step in this section, practice sample conversations you might have with new clients. It may seem awkward, but saying it out loud will help you get more comfortable and confident with quoting your rates to clients.

Focus on answering questions concisely and ending the conversation with a call to action of some kind: a day and time to meet or even just an email address for future contact.

After you feel ready to quote your prices to clients, but before you actually do that, have a friend call you to ask you what your pricing is for various pet care services. Get feedback from them on what their experience was like having you quote them a rate.

## □ Day One Self-Care Action

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When you've completed all of today's actions, pat yourself on the back! You've worked with intention and focus to complete Day One. Congratulations! Practicing regular self-care is crucial to business success and should be done every day during this course as well as on a regular, ongoing basis after you're done with this course.

Choose a nurturing activity and set aside some time today to replenish and restore your mind and body. Possible self-care actions include treating yourself to a foot massage or pedicure, watching a movie you've been wanting to see, having lunch with a friend, or something else that is relaxing and fun. It's time to let go of your business development self for an hour or so and focus only on your personal self!

Commit to one self-care action today. This will be a regular part of the completion of every day while doing this course so if there's a particular selfcare action you'd like that requires scheduling in advance for an upcoming day's self-care action, I recommend that you go ahead and book that right now because that self-care appointment will also keep you on track with this course. Having a self-care reward to look forward to at the end of each course day can help you stay on track!

# ***Welcome to Day Two - Making Your Business Official***

## **Day Two – Part One: Determining your Business Classification**

*“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.”*  
-Milton Berle

### **Business Structure Types**

The three most common business structures for a small business are sole proprietorships, corporations, and limited liability companies (LLC). Each entity type has its own advantages and disadvantages.

#### **Sole Proprietorship**

Sole proprietorship is the simplest business entity and the most common in the United States. There is very little paperwork to start a sole proprietorship, which is one reason that it is such a popular business structure. One major disadvantage of this business structure is that your personal and business assets and liabilities are the same. That means that you can be held personally liable for any business debts or damages. Another potential disadvantage is that it can be more difficult to obtain a business loan as a sole proprietorship.

#### **Corporation**

A corporation is a legal entity that is completely separate from its owner(s). This provides the maximum amount of liability protection, and in some cases, profits are taxed separately from your income tax. I recommend that you talk to your accountant about the pros and cons of setting up your pet business as a corporation.

#### **Limited Liability Company (LLC)**

An LLC allows a small business to have some of the same benefits as corporations, especially when it comes to liability. The major advantage of an LLC is that your personal assets (your savings, house, and car) may not be at risk if your business is sued or files for bankruptcy (be sure to consult your accountant about this).

I strongly suggest that you meet with an accountant before deciding on your business structure. Most often, the best decision for you is based on the amount of money you’re bringing into the business. It can be expensive and time consuming to create a corporation, but many pet sitters and dog walkers do form LLCs from the beginning to protect their businesses and to legally differentiate themselves from their businesses.

If you own a home or have a large amount of savings, your accountant may recommend an LLC. Operating as an LLC could remove any chance that your home or savings could be taken away if something goes wrong while running your business.

In the event that an emergency or legal situation occurs, business insurance will cover some (and perhaps all) of the damages, but an LLC can provide an additional safety net.

The liability and legal protections of an LLC are better for a small business owner than simply operating as a sole proprietorship, and you won't have the costs and paperwork of a corporation. Again, be sure to consult your accountant to determine the best entity for your particular business.

## □ Action Step #1

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If you don't already have an accountant, make a list of three accountants you think might be a good fit for your business. You can find an accountant locally or even work with a freelance accountant online.

If you have relationships with other small business owners in your area, ask them for an accountant recommendation. Remember to select an accountant that you feel you can trust and whom you can communicate with easily.

You want someone who is good with numbers and also good at explaining things to you in a clear and concise way as well as providing suggestions on how to improve your business financial records, what deductions to take, and how to increase profits.

Set up interviews with potential accountants. Be sure to give yourself a deadline to complete the interviews well before tax time. Once you identify the best fit, make the hire. Establishing yourself as a client early on will allow you to ask your accountant's advice moving forward, and your accountant will make sure you know everything you need to do now to be ready come tax time.

## □ Action Step #2

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Evaluate your personal and business risk and decide what to choose for your business structure. This is a great time to ask for an accountant's opinion.

Remember, if you own a home or have a large amount of savings, an LLC may give you more liability protection than a sole proprietorship. You can read more about the legal and tax specifics for each entity type at the Small Business Administration's website: [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov). You'll also find the link to SBA in the Recommended Resources companion document.

If you live outside of the United States, I recommend contacting an accountant and asking them where online you can find your country's information about the various business entity options to choose from in your country.

## Day Two – Part Two: Tracking Income and Expenses and Budgeting Basics

*“Stop being afraid of what could go wrong and start being excited about what could go right.”*  
-Tony Robbins

A good pet sitting and dog walking software system can help you track income and keep track of all client data as well as allow clients to log in to make reservations (if you want that feature). To get a referral from me of a great pet sitting and dog walking administration software that I recommend, email me at [thrive@SFPBacademy.com](mailto:thrive@SFPBacademy.com) and put this as the subject line **“Udemy Course Software Recommendation Needed”** and I’ll get you that information!

Financial software is different from a pet sitting administration system. Quicken and Quickbooks are two that I’ve used. You can also try Mint or simply look for financial software apps online to find one. Do demos before deciding to pick the one that works best for you. Your accountant may also have a suggestion.

### The Basics of Budgeting

When I ask my pet sitter and dog walker coaching clients how much money they earn each month, they often have no idea.

Even when they can give me a specific amount, it’s usually their gross income.

Remember that your gross income is everything your business brings in but does not account for any expenses or debts—your gross amount is not a true reflection of your earnings.

Net income, on the other hand, is what you made after you paid your bills and purchased supplies.

In my experience, both as a business owner and pet business coach, knowing exactly how much money your business generates and spends—and where that money is going each month—is an important part of building prosperity.

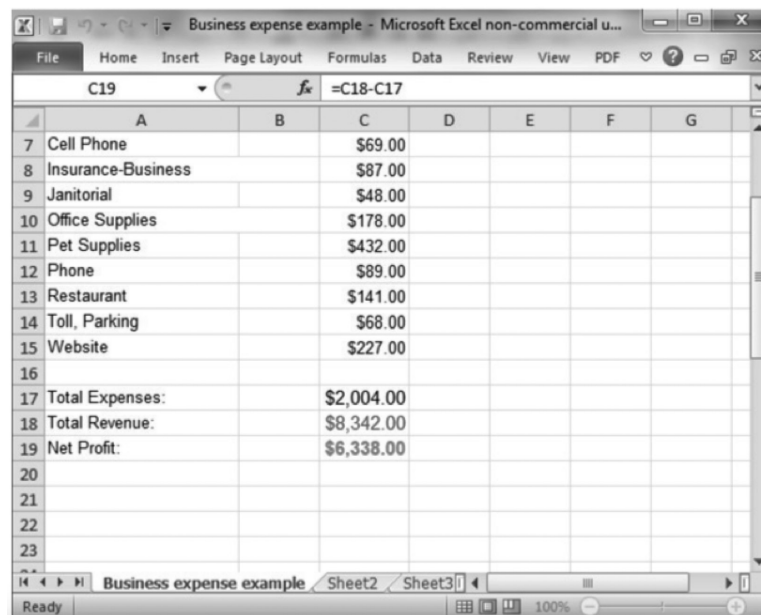
Even if you feel like you don’t have the time to spend on budgeting and tracking expenses, you owe it to yourself to learn how. It will cost more time and money in the long run to make up for disorganization now.

Here is an easy way to gain clarity in your finances that has worked for many of my pet sitter and dog walker coaching clients.

1. Download an accounting app for recording business expenses and income earned. Record every expense in your app at the time of purchase. Don’t wait for the end of the day or week;

you won't be able to remember everything. Also, dealing with receipts or even reviewing your purchases via online banking can be more time consuming than entering the amount immediately after you purchase something.

2. Using the expense categories that I've enclosed as part of the resources for Day Two as well as the pet care services you provide or will be providing, make a spreadsheet for tracking business expenses and revenue. I find it helpful to separate my revenue by category, especially when I am trying to make a decision about expanding or dropping certain pet care services. Here's an example of a business expense spreadsheet:



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
7	Cell Phone		\$69.00				
8	Insurance-Business		\$87.00				
9	Janitorial		\$48.00				
10	Office Supplies		\$178.00				
11	Pet Supplies		\$432.00				
12	Phone		\$89.00				
13	Restaurant		\$141.00				
14	Toll, Parking		\$68.00				
15	Website		\$227.00				
16							
17	Total Expenses:		\$2,004.00				
18	Total Revenue:		\$8,342.00				
19	Net Profit:		\$6,338.00				
20							
21							
22							
23							

Typical revenue streams you would want to track each month would include the following (depending on the services you offer):

- Dog walking
- Overnight pet sitting in client's home
- Pet sitting visits
- Pet boarding in your home

Your accounting app may generate this type of spreadsheet automatically. If so, much of the work is already done. If not, many of my coaching clients use Excel to create spreadsheets because it is easy to use and readily available.

I've enclosed an example of the revenue spreadsheet in addition to the expense spreadsheet in the Recommended Resources companion document.



**3.** At the end of each month, enter your expenses and revenue into your spreadsheet under the appropriate category if your accounting app or financial accounting software does not automatically categorize your expenses and revenue.

**4.** Calculate your total expenses and income. If you've set up your spreadsheet to keep a running total, this step will be done already.

**5.** Deduct the total of your expenses from your total revenue. This number is your net profit—the number you will use when evaluating growth and setting financial goals for your pet sitting and dog walking business.

You may be watching this and thinking there's a reason you want to start a pet sitting and dog walking business instead of an accounting or bookkeeping firm!

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the numbers aspect of running a business, don't worry.

Most of what you need to do for your taxes and accounting comes down to accurate record keeping, which becomes a simple habit after a while.

Basic bookkeeping is necessary for so many people and small businesses that you can find how-to guides and classes at most business associations as well as online courses.

Learning to be in control of your business finances (instead of letting the stress that comes from disorganization control you) will allow you the freedom to focus on the parts of your business that you love to do—including caring for the pets!

## □ Action Step #1

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Purchase financial accounting software and learn how to use it. Quicken, Quickbooks Online and Mint are some good ones, and you can also do a search online for "financial software." Start with the product tutorial first. Take the time to play around with different features of your software so that you are very comfortable with the ins and outs of tracking your income and expenses.

If you still have questions, look for an online help forum or hire a tutor.

If you don't yet have a pet sitting software administration system (which is different from financial software), email me at [thrive@SFPBacademy.com](mailto:thrive@SFPBacademy.com) and put this as the subject line: **"Udemy Course Software Recommendation Needed"** and I'll get you that information!

## □ Action Step #2

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Figure out if the accounting app or financial accounting software you've chosen will generate income and expense reports automatically. If so, familiarize yourself with the options so you can add or remove categories and quickly access your financial data when you need it.

If you do not have an automatic spreadsheet option or prefer to make your own, create an Excel spreadsheet for tracking business expenses and revenue by category. You'll see some expense category examples in the Recommended Resources companion document.

## Day Two – Part Three: Making Your Business Official

*“The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.”*

-Walt Disney

### Business License

The first thing you will need is a business license. What kind of business license you need may depend on whether you are filing as a sole proprietorship, corporation, or LLC.

If you still aren't sure how to structure your business, go back to the Business Classification video where I spoke about how you may go about making that decision in the earlier chapter.

If you are running your business as a corporation or LLC in the United States, you will likely need to register with the Secretary of State's office. You may also need to register with the Department of Revenue, but not yet.

It's best to do that after you get your federal tax identification number—more on that in a bit.

At the time you file for a business license, you will be asked to declare the official name of the business and pay any fees required by the state.

In general, all business entities must be licensed in the county where they operate. Even if you are not required to file with your state, you will probably need to obtain a business license in your county.

In some areas, you might also need a separate license for each city where you will do business. Keep this in mind even after you start taking clients—if you find yourself with new clients in a nearby city, you may need to apply for an additional business license.

If you aren't sure what you need for your situation, contact your local city hall. They will be able to tell you what will be needed in your area.

One thing to keep in mind when filing for a business license is that there are usually specific permits required if you will be boarding dogs in your home.

Sometimes county officials will see an application for a pet sitting business and assume you will care for the animals at your home. If you are not boarding pets in your home, be very clear that you will not be maintaining animals on your property.

You will avoid paying for permits you do not need if you clearly state what your business entails when you apply for your initial business license.

## Fictitious Business Name Certificate (DBA)

Does the name you've chosen for your pet sitting and dog walking business include your personal name? If not, you will need to get a fictitious business name certificate.

Depending on where you live, it might also be called a "doing business as" (DBA), "trade name," or "assumed business name."

This is the way a state and city legally tie a business to its owner when they don't have the same name. If your name is Mary and you will be doing business as "All About Pets Pet Sitting" for example, a DBA certificate is the way you legally claim your business even though your name is not part of the official business name.

Keep in mind that some states only require a fictitious business name certificate for sole proprietorships. If you've already licensed your LLC or corporation with the state, you may not need to register a separate assumed business name or DBA.

Again, checking with your local city hall or state small business association is the best way to find out what you will need in your area. Even if your state doesn't require it for an LLC or corporation, your bank might.

Some banks ask for a DBA statement or fictitious name certificate before you can open a separate account for your business.

## Tax Identification Number

When it comes time to file business taxes, you may need a tax identification number, known as an Employer Identification Number (EIN). All corporations and LLCs need a tax identification number to file state and local taxes each year.

If you operate your pet sitting and dog walking business as a sole proprietorship without any employees, you can use your social security number instead of a separate EIN.

There are some advantages to getting an EIN even as a sole proprietor:

- Protection from identity theft because you will not be using your personal social security number on official business documents.
- An EIN establishes you as an official business.
- You will need an EIN if you ever hire employees or convert your business to an LLC.

Although you will file state and federal taxes separately, the same EIN will work for both.

## **There are three steps to getting a tax identification number for your business:**

- 1.** Register your business in the state where you live.
- 2.** Obtain a federal EIN through the IRS. Online applications are usually validated immediately. If so, you will be issued an EIN as soon as you submit the application.
- 3.** Register your business with your state's Department of Revenue. This registration process will be very similar to obtaining a business license, but you will also include your federal EIN. In some states, businesses are given a state tax identification number. In most places, however, your federal EIN will work for both state and federal taxes.

As with everything tax-related, definitely talk to your accountant and a business attorney if you have any questions about the process. There are also online legal firms that will fill out all the paperwork and file for your business license(s) and tax identification numbers for a fee.

### **□ Action Step #1**

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Contact your local city hall or business attorney to find out what is required for business registration in your area. Be up front about what your pet sitting and dog walking business entails so that the information you are given about setting up your business will be valid for your specific situation.

### **□ Action Step #2**

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Register your business with your local city hall and pay all the necessary fees. Be sure to keep a record of all license and registration fees you pay—you can write off these fees as business deductions when you file taxes.

### **□ Action Step #3**

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Obtain a fictitious business certificate (DBA) if you need one. Do an internet search for how to obtain a DBA in your state for specific instructions for your area.

### **□ Action Step #4**

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If you are structuring your pet sitting and dog walking business as an LLC or corporation, apply for a federal tax identification number (EIN) at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

If you are operating your business as a sole proprietorship, you can file taxes for your business using your social security number.

As I mentioned earlier, you may want an EIN anyway. Talk to your accountant if you have additional questions about the reasons an EIN might be best for your business.

Once you have a federal EIN, register your business with your state Department of Revenue to get a state EIN (if your state requires a separate one). Your accountant can tell you about your state requirements if you have any questions.

Suggestions for finding a good accountant: Ask your business owner friends, post a recommendation request on Facebook or Nextdoor (or both), or search online in your city and interview some to find the right fit for you.

You're almost done with Day Two! Just a bit more to go! Keep going – you can do it!

## Day Two – Part Four: SWOT and Market Analysis

*“I think if you’re an entrepreneur, you’ve got to dream big and then dream bigger.”*

-Howard Schultz

A SWOT analysis is one easy way to organize your evaluation into four areas: your business strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T).

After you watch this segment and you are ready to do your own analysis for one of today’s *Action Steps*, start with a page in your business journal.

Create a SWOT matrix by dividing a square into four quadrants. Designate one quadrant for each of the evaluation. Fill in each section with information you can use when developing your business plan.

This is what your SWOT matrix may look like and some questions you can ask yourself when filling out each question in the Action Steps at the end of this section.

<b>Strengths</b>  This is where you list the <i>positive</i> attributes of your business.	<b>Weaknesses</b>  This is where you list the <i>negative</i> attributes of your business.
<b>Opportunities</b>  This is where you list <i>positive</i> factors that can help your business grow.	<b>Threats</b>  This is where you list <i>negative</i> factors that hurt your business.

If you haven’t already gotten your first client, you may not have the answers to some of these questions that I’m going to ask.

These questions are included in this section and you can answer them in your business journal.

If you don’t have an answer for a particular question, just leave it blank.

You may also be able to think of some additional questions to answer about your specific pet sitting and dog walking business that are not listed here; this is just a place to start your evaluation.

Keep in mind that some of these questions may not apply to those who haven't yet started a business. You can just skip over those when answering them in your journal.

**Strengths:**

- What do I do well?
- What expertise or special skills do I offer?
- What unique service do I provide?
- What do I do better than my competition?
- What area of my business is the most profitable?
- What do I enjoy most about my business?
- What do my clients or other people say I do best?

**Weaknesses:**

- What is my least efficient business activity?
- Where do I need to improve?
- What area of my business is the least profitable?
- What causes me unhappiness in my business?
- Where do I need more training or education?
- What do I avoid doing?
- Does my business have any debt? If so, how much debt?

**Opportunities:**

- Is there a niche market in my area that no one is serving?
- What opportunities exist for expanding my business?
- What services (if any) do I want to add to my business?
- Who can support me in my business?
- How can I do more for my current clients?
- How can I use new technology to expand or improve my business?

**Threats:**

- What reasons do clients give for leaving my business?
- Are there many competitors in my area? How many?
- Which company is attracting the clients I want most?
- What positive things does my competition do/offer that I don't?
- What is going on in my local economy or community that might hurt my business?

You will probably need to explore competitors' websites to answer some of these questions. After you honestly answer these questions and fill out your SWOT matrix, you should have a much better idea of the current state of your business and what you need to do to improve or implement as you start.



## Market Analysis

Taking a close look at your local market—the number and type of potential clients in your area—can give you clarity about what you want from your business as well as what your potential clients are looking for in a pet sitting and dog walking service.

I am including the following questions for you to answer about your particular market analysis before you complete your business plan.

If you aren't sure how to answer any of the questions, you may need to do some research. The average household income in your city, for example, can be found online by doing an internet search for “median income in [Your City and State].”

- What is the profile of your ideal customer?
- Do they live in an area you want to service?
- Is their income high enough to justify hiring you?
- What kind of people would want to pay for your service?
- Where are these customers located in your community?
- Do you expect the number of your ideal customers to grow or contract in your community? Why?
- Do you plan to specialize in a certain type of pet?
- Are there any pets or breeds you want to exclude due to your lack of experience or comfort level?
- What services do (or will) you offer?
- How many competitors exist in your area?
- Is there enough market need for your business?
- What do you need to do to attract those customers to your business?
- Is there a particular pet-owner client base that is not currently being served by your business or your competition?

Taking the time to complete a market analysis will strengthen your business plan because you will have a more realistic picture of your potential customers and competition. Once you know who your ideal clients are, you can spend more of your time and money attracting the right customers.

You can use these same market analysis questions every time you edit your business plan to reassess the competition and customer base in your area. This will help you invest your energy in the right places and prevent wasted time and ineffective advertising.

Trust me when I say that every minute you spend on your business plan today will save you hours of energy in the future!

## **□ Action Step #1**

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Get out your business journal and make a SWOT matrix, following the SWOT example. You will use the finished SWOT analysis when you make your short business plan in the next segment.

## **□ Action Step #2**

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Thoroughly analyze yourself and your future pet sitting and dog walking business in your business journal by answering the questions in this section, which you'll also find in the Recommended Resources.

The more completely you work through the questions now, the better your business plan will be. When you get to the next segment about creating a business plan, you'll want to refer back to these answers for details and ideas to add to your business plan in the next segment.

## Day Two – Part Five: The One-Hour Pet Business Plan

*“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”*

-Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

### What a Business Plan Is (and What It Isn't)

A business plan is a formal statement of your business goals. It works like a road map, outlining how you will get your business from where it is now to where you would like it to be.

It includes a description of your business, your background experience and business history, an analysis of your competition, a marketing plan, and your future goals. To be the most effective, your business plan should be realistic, clear, and specific.

A vague or incomplete business plan is as much use to you as a vague or incomplete GPS route.

What your business plan shouldn't be is set in stone. It should be a living document, meaning it will change as you and your business change and grow. I recommend you revisit your business plan at least once every month.

Your realistic financial projections and short-term goals will change quite a bit in the first years of your business and so should your business plan.

In the last section, I gave you questions to answer to help you figure out the current strengths and weaknesses of your business and any changes you would like to bring about.

If you didn't already answer those SWOT and market analysis questions, I recommend pausing this video now in order to complete that process and then come back to this video to create your short business plan.

Today's action step is creating a short business plan and then giving yourself some self-care after you've completed it since this the end of Day Two!

Please note: This particular business plan is very different from a comprehensive business plan that a business owner might use to get funding from a bank.

This is not that. But it will help you gain a lot of clarity and I highly recommend doing it. Plus, it will take you an hour or less!

You'll find this business plan below. That's your only action step for this segment and when you complete that, and your self-care gift to yourself, you'll be done with Day Two!

You can print out the business plan template from the section below and answer the questions that way or simply write the answers to these business plan questions in your business journal or notebook.

## **□ Action Step #1**

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Set a timer for 60 minutes and complete the one-hour business plan using the template below or by writing the answers in your business journal. Remember, the more specific you are, the more powerful this exercise will be.

### **The One-Hour Quickie Business Plan**

*Business Name:*

*Owner(s):*

*Type of Ownership:*

- ☐ Sole Ownership
- ☐ Partnership
- ☐ Corporation

*Type of Business:*

*Employees/Independent Contractors: (including owner):*

Full time: \_\_\_\_\_ Part-time: \_\_\_\_\_

### *History of Your Business:*

*(When you started and your business experience background)*

#### **Business Overview**

A. *Why do you think your pet sitting and dog walking business will be successful?*

B. *How do (or how will) you sell your services?*

C. *What is your company's advertising policy and marketing activities?*

D. *What services do you provide?*

#### **Identify Competition**

*Who is your competition and where are they located? (You'll want to use the information you gathered in prior segments to answer this question.)*

#### **Market Analysis**

*Describe your average customer. From what areas do (or will) you draw customers?*

#### **Future Plans**

*Short range goals (six to twelve months):*

*Long range goals (one to five years):*

*What do you need to do differently in order to accomplish the goals you want to achieve?*

### **□ Day Two Self-Care Action**

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If you've completed the Day Two actions, congratulations!

Choose a nurturing activity and set aside some time today to replenish and restore your mind and body.

# *Welcome to Day Three – Nuts and Bolts*

## **Day Three – Part One: Client Meet-and-Greet and Client Intake Forms**

*“One customer well taken care of could be more valuable than \$10,000 worth of advertising.”*  
-Jim Rohn

### **The Client Interview/Meet-and-Greet**

An in-person interview with potential clients is your opportunity to demonstrate what makes you a great pet sitter and dog walker.

Clients need to be comfortable with you in their home, and you need to be comfortable with them too. This is also *your* opportunity to interview potential clients and their pets.

Although you should dress nicely—this is an interview, after all—you don’t need to dress up too much.

An important part of the interview will be getting to know the pet(s), so it will make sense to wear something neat and clean that you’ll feel comfortable in when you get down on the pet’s level.

When my coaching clients ask for clothing specifics, I often suggest a company T-shirt (if they have business shirts) and a nice pair of jeans.

You want to be friendly and warm during the interview. Remember that new clients are inviting you to care for part of their family; they want to see and know that you are personable, kind, and professional.

Don’t worry if you are shy or get nervous talking to new people.

Many pet sitters and dog walkers tend to be introverts and naturally more comfortable around animals than people—and that can be a plus because it’s a quality that makes them so good with pets.

If you tend to feel shy or uncomfortable when meeting new people, bringing your computer or a note pad to take down information as you gather information from your prospective new client can provide a physical boundary.

And that boundary may be comforting if you are shy and give you something to do with your hands if you get nervous.

You will definitely want to take notes during the interview anyway, so having something you can use to take notes can serve a dual purpose.

Even if your potential client does not see a need for an in-person interview, I recommend that you insist upon it.

Here's why: if their dog is unfriendly or misbehaves, you want to know that behavior is a possibility while the owner is present.

The client interview is also your opportunity to talk in person about what care the pet needs as well as your company policies. This is also the time I recommend getting your new client to fill out a client interview form and sign a contract if you haven't done that prior to the interview. (More on that in a bit.)

## Lockboxes and Clients' Keys

Getting and storing keys is important when it comes to pet and home care.

You will usually need access to clients' homes for your pet sitting and dog walking responsibilities, which means you will also need a way to organize and secure clients' keys.

One method is to simply to get a key from clients when you meet for the first time and hold on to that key for as long as that person is a client.

However, an easier method for dealing with client keys may be to provide a key lockbox for them in order to have the key stored safely at the client's home.

You can set the lockbox code to the last four digits of your client's phone number or any four-digit sequence they choose.

If you choose to use this approach, provide each client with a lock box at the client interview in exchange for a deposit from them for the lockbox.

To determine the amount to charge for a lockbox deposit, add \$5-10 to the cost of the specific lockbox you are providing. You can find a number of places to purchase inexpensive lockboxes online.

If you decide to store client keys in your home office, rather than in a lockbox at the client's home, be sure to label the keys in a nondescript way—do not label the keys with the clients' name or address.

One option is to label the key with the pet's name and the client's last initial instead. Some pet care providers instead have a key numbering system which also works well.

Purchase a larger lockbox for storing all your keys securely, and always have your clients leave a spare key with a neighbor or nearby friend in the event of a lost or broken key.

Regardless of how you decide to hold on to the key for future use, be sure to try their spare key yourself before you leave the client's home after the initial client meeting.

Sometimes spare keys don't work well (or at all!) and it's much better to find that out at the client meet-and-greet with the client there rather than at your first pet visit or walk!

## **Client Interview Form**

If you have pet sitting or dog walking administration software and it allows clients to enter their information digitally, have them do that prior to the client interview.

If not, gather all essential information about a new client on one form they can fill out during the meet-and-greet.

Have your clients give you basic contact information as well as how best to reach them when they are away.

Be sure to get an emergency contact for the pet as well as who to contact about a plumbing or other household emergency, especially if your client will be traveling out of town.

You'll want to gather information about each pet, including the pets' names, breeds, and any special medical needs.

If your potential client is scheduling dog walks, list the times and dates for walks on the interview form. For pet sitting and vacation visit clients, gather information about garbage collection, mail delivery, any plants that need care, and additional instructions.

I also suggest providing a client satisfaction questionnaire for clients to fill out after the service is complete.

This gives them an opportunity to give you feedback about what went well and what could be better next time.

A client satisfaction questionnaire is also a great place to ask for permission to use your clients as a reference in the future so you can build up a list of happy, satisfied clients when potential clients are looking for references.



## Your Client Contract

A signed client contract is incredibly important. Your client contract should be personalized for your pet sitting and dog walking business, including your business name and specific details about the services you provide.

You can make your own client contract from the information I will share with you now or, if you want to save time, you can find more in the Course Materials about various forms available for purchase, along with some information that will help you if you decide to create your own forms.

Regardless of whether you purchase a client contract or create your own contract, you'll want to have a lawyer review the final version of your contract to check for anything you may have missed and to make sure all items in the contract are valid for your area.

Here is some of basic information that every contract should include and you'll find this information in the Course Materials as well:

- **Full names.** In order to hold up in court, both parties (you and your client) must be represented correctly. Be sure to include the complete, registered name of your business.

For example, if your business name is "Nirvana for Dogs Pet Sitting, LLC," put the entire name in the contract, even if your customers often refer to your business by a shortened version of the official name, like simply Nirvana.

- **Services provided.** This section should include what services you will be doing (dog walking, overnight pet sitting, pet visits) and how often it will be done (walks twice daily, for example). Include a separate section for each service provided where you can outline any details that only apply to that service.

Another option that some pet sitters and dog walkers choose for simplicity is to briefly list the services provided but refer clients to the website for specifics. That way, you can change your website without having to update your contracts if you end up adding or dropping a service.

- **Payment and cancellation policies.** Be sure to clearly spell out when and how payment is due. If you charge a fee for late payments or only accept a certain method of payment, put that in the contract as well. You will probably find that you have different deadlines and fees for clients canceling a scheduled dog walk versus a pet sit. If so, clearly state each cancellation policy in its own paragraph. It is also a good idea to include your late notice policy (or fees) for times when clients need to schedule your services last minute.

- **Emergency protocol.** Your contract should also explain how you handle veterinary emergencies while pets are in your care. I recommend identifying an hourly rate that you will charge if you need to take a client's pet to the vet and including that information in the contract.
- **Privacy protection.** Many of your overnight pet sitting and vacation visit clients will have home security cameras inside the house to monitor things while they are away. For everyone's protection, be sure to stipulate that clients cannot publicly share any footage of you or your employees. On a similar note, include a guarantee that you will not share pictures or videos of their pets or home without permission.
- **Liability agreements.** Include specifics about things that may arise during a pet sit, visit, or walk that the client is agreeing not to hold your business responsible for. For example, any electrical or plumbing problems out of your control, injuries caused by other animals, or damages or injuries resulting from inadequate pet proofing of the client's house or yard.

Even if you have everything clearly stated in your contract, it's always a good idea to go over the details verbally during the initial meeting. A signed contract may protect you legally, but your clients will have a better understanding if you review the contract before they sign.

Also, a reminder that a contract doesn't do you any good if a client doesn't sign it! I've coached many pet sitters and dog walkers who got into legal trouble with clients as a result of those clients never returning a signed contract.

I suggest making a habit of combining the contract signing with another action that will take place during the interview, such as setting dates for an appointment or getting the keys to the house.

There are some great options for digital contract signing programs out these days. Search online for "online contract signing" for options and there is also a referral to one in the Recommended Resources.

## Other Forms You Need

In addition to a client interview form and contract, there are a few other forms you will want your clients to review and sign prior to meeting you or during the client interview or at the latest, before starting your first walk or visit.

As with the contract, you can make your own forms or save time by purchasing them. You'll find the information I'll be sharing now in the Course Materials as well as links to various forms you may want to create or purchase.

- **A veterinary release** should contain everything you need to know about the pet's medical care and contact information for the client's preferred veterinarian. If you will be administering medication during your visit, be sure the dosage is listed as well.
- **An off-leash agreement (if applicable)** will be written permission for you to take a dog off leash in an area where off-leash dogs are allowed. This may protect you from liability if something were to happen while the dog is off leash. If you do have permission to take a dog off leash, you may want to make an identification tag for each dog with your contact information so you can be contacted as well.
- **A key release** will contain written permission for you to have access to the client's home when they are away. As I mentioned earlier, when you get a key from your client, be sure to try it in the door right then so you won't have any problems getting in the home to take care of the pet(s). Include a place to specify how many keys will be in your possession as well as any garage door openers they may give you to use. If they have a hidden key, ask them to tell you that information as well. Also find out who else has a copy of the key and permission to be in the home while your client is away, in case your key gets lost or broken.
- **A photography release (optional)** outlines what photos and videos taken as part of your pet care work can be shared online (and who can share them). Many of your pet visit, dog walking and overnight pet sitting clients will have video cameras installed in their homes for checking on their pets while they are away. You will likely be taking pictures of your clients' pets to update your clients while they are away as well. Before you begin working with a new client, it is very important to establish how those videos and photos can be used.

You do not want a video of you in their home cropping up online without your permission. They may feel the same way about their pet(s).

You may also want to include **an advertising agreement** in the photography release. Although not all clients will be willing to let you use photos of their pet(s), some will, and pictures of actual, happy clients are great to have for marketing purposes.

If you'd like, you can write up a very simple photo release as well as add information about video footage in the client contract. Just be sure to have an attorney look over the wording

## □ Action Step #1

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If your administration software or online contract signing system doesn't provide storage of signed client contracts or forms, make a digital file on your computer for each type of signed client contract and form so you will be ready to organize your contracts from the very first day.

If you are storing the clients manually, when your first contracts start coming in, scan the contracts and upload them to the appropriate folder for easy storage. You'll find information about a document signing software in the Recommended Resources companion document.

## □ Action Step #2

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Create your own forms and contracts or purchase contracts and forms.

As mentioned earlier, regardless of whether you write your own contract from scratch, modify an existing contract, or purchase a contract, be sure to have an attorney look at your contract before you start using it with clients. You'll find a list of resources on how to find a low-cost attorney who can review contracts and other legal documents in the Recommended Resources companion document.

Click to purchase pet sitting and dog walking start up forms and contracts:

<https://www.sixfigurepetsittingacademy.com/startupforms.html>

## □ Action Step #3

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Ask a friend or family member to "role play" a sample client interview. Just like you practiced client calls yesterday, use this as an opportunity to go over what you will say with a person you feel comfortable with before you start meeting your actual clients.

## □ Action Step #4

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If you don't already have a "new client packet" for your clients, create one. Include a copy of your contract, veterinary release, key release, advertising agreement, and off-leash release (if applicable) as well as any other forms that you might have or need. That way, you can simply email the documents to clients before you go to a new client interview without worrying about forgetting any necessary forms.

Many pet sitting administration systems have the option to upload your forms and then have clients download and sign the forms from your admin system. Email me for my admin software recommendation at [thrive@SFPBacademy.com](mailto:thrive@SFPBacademy.com).

***Only two more sections to go before you're done with Day Three! You can do it! I'll see you in the next section.***

## Day Three – Part Two: Banking, Online Pay and Credit Cards

*“Price is what you pay. Value is what you get.”*

-Warren Buffett

### Invoicing Basics

At its most basic, an invoice is a request for payment. Regular invoicing is an important part of staying organized in your business. If you’ve set aside Friday afternoons to catch up on paperwork, spend some of that time each week keeping current with invoices. Waiting to the end of each month to send pet sitting invoices increases the likelihood you will wait a long time for payment, which will inhibit your cash flow.

In your pet sitting and dog walking business, as in most businesses, maintaining steady cash flow is so important. I’ll share more specifics about exactly when to invoice your dog walking and pet sitting clients in a bit.

Most financial software as well as pet sitting and dog walking-specific administration software have features for creating professional invoices, or you can use a separate invoicing system if you haven’t yet signed up for financial or pet sitting and dog walking software.

If you need to create invoices outside of a software system, each invoice should include the following items:

- The name and address of your pet sitting and dog walking business.
- Contact information for your business, including your business phone number and email address.
- Your business license or registration number.
- The date the invoice was created.
- A unique invoice number.
- An itemized list of all the work that you did, including the date(s) of service.
- Your rate per visit or walk.
- A subtotal for each category.
- Any taxes or additional fees.

- The total amount due.
- Payment terms with how and when you expect your customers to make payment. This should be the same as the payment information in your contract with the exception that you will add a specific date that payment is due for this particular service instead of a general timeframe.
- Any late fees or past due payments.
- Your cancellation policy, consistent with how it is worded in your contract.

Even if you use the automatic invoicing feature of your accounting software, look for a way to personalize your invoice with your company name or logo. With most invoice programs, you can simply upload a copy of your logo (once you have one) and the software will do the rest.

Just like with your client contract, nothing on your invoice should come as a surprise to your customers. It can be stressful to bring up late fees or past due payments, but you will always have better success if you approach the issue personally first instead of simply including it on an invoice, and if you've gone over your contract with your clients before they book services, there will likely be no surprises or hidden fees for them.

## □ Action Step #1

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If you haven't already, open a separate checking and savings account for your business. A reminder that most banks will require a business license or a DBA, and sometimes both. If you've applied for these and you're waiting for them, spend today shopping around for the best bank for your business, keeping in mind that fees will eat into your profits and driving around town will take valuable time.

Ask about any maintenance and transfer fees as well as minimum balance requirements and choose the best bank for you.

## □ Action Step #2

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Order business checks and a debit and/or credit card for your business checking account.

## □ Action Step #3

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Using your pet sitting and dog walking software or financial software (or email me for my recommendation in the Recommended Resources), create a sample invoice and send it to a friend. Have your friend see if the invoice makes sense and if it is clear how and when to submit

payment. Remember, your invoices are another extension of your business, so they should be professional, clear, and easy to read and understand.

#### **Action Step #4**

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Research merchant accounts and choose one for your business. You'll find a referral for a merchant account in the Recommended Resources companion document.

## Day Three – Part Three: Business Insurance and Bonding

*“If it’s your dream and your business you need to be responsible for protecting it.”*

-Sonja Foust

Business insurance is a general phrase for a few different types of insurance, all of which could protect you from lawsuits or other losses if something goes wrong in your pet sitting and dog walking business.

I am going to provide an overview of the main types of insurance you should consider for your business so you can make the best decision for your business needs.

Just like with car insurance, exact coverage varies by plan, so you’ll want to talk to an insurance broker with any specific questions you may have, and I also recommend that you talk to a business attorney to help you determine what types of insurance will offer you and your business the best protection.

### General Liability Insurance

Like its name suggests, general liability insurance is a blanket insurance that covers a wide range of general situations. General liability insurance may pay for expenses that occur if anything is damaged by you or your company (for example, if a dog you are walking damages someone’s property or injures another animal).

Unless you are boarding dogs in your home, you probably will not need to worry about injury occurring in your business location, but general liability insurance covers medical expenses as a result of those injuries as well. Liability insurance will also cover some or all of the cost of an attorney if your business is ever sued.

I recommend all pet sitting and dog walking business owners purchase liability insurance to protect their businesses in case of a lawsuit or accident.

How much you need depends on your level of risk and the size of your business.

An insurance broker can sit down with you and give you an idea of an appropriate level of coverage for your business. Going over your specific situation with a business lawyer can give you added peace of mind that the coverage is right for your business. You’ll see information on how to find an inexpensive business lawyer in the Course Materials as well as information on low-cost pet sitting and dog walking business insurance recommendations.



## Property and Casualty Insurance

If it's not included in your general liability insurance, you may also need property and casualty insurance.

Property insurance helps cover the replacement cost of any work equipment lost or damaged as a result of theft, vandalism, or fire. Casualty insurance helps cover any income you miss out on due to injury or loss. Although property insurance and casualty insurance are two separate things, they are almost always lumped together into one policy.

Keep in mind that some homeowner's and renter's insurance policies do not cover a home-based business.

For example, if there were a fire or theft in your home, your renter's policy may cover your personal items but might not cover any damaged or stolen business equipment.

If you are boarding dogs in your home, you may also need additional property and casualty insurance to cover any incidents that occur in your home while caring for your pet clients. The fastest way to find out if your current insurance policy protects your specific business is to simply reach out to your insurance company and ask them.

## Auto Insurance

When you are just starting out with a pet sitting and dog walking business, you will probably be using your personal vehicle for all of your business travel as well. Unfortunately, some car insurance policies will not cover anything that happens when you are using your personal vehicle for business.

That means if you are in a car accident on your way to client's home or are transporting clients' pets, your regular car insurance may not pay for repairs or a rental vehicle while your car is in the shop.

Also, please note that some states require you to get commercial auto insurance if you have any kind of business signage on your vehicle. Check with your auto insurance broker to find out more about the requirements in your area.

You may be able to modify your personal insurance policy to include business use, depending on your current policy. It is also possible that you will need a separate commercial insurance policy; again, that will depend on a variety of factors including how (and how often) you use your vehicle for business, your current car insurance company, and the state in which you live.

## Care, Custody, and Control Coverage

Many insurance policies, including most auto and liability insurances, exclude coverage for anything put into your care (but does not belong to you).

This exclusion can be a huge issue for pet sitters and dog walkers because some of the pet care work you do could involve caring for someone else's pets and belongings.

If your general liability insurance does not include “care, custody, and control coverage”—and you will want to be sure to use that terminology when you check with your insurance agent—you should be able to add a separate endorsement to include the coverage you need.

## Business Owners Policies (also called BOPs)

Some insurance companies offer what is called a “Business Owners Policy”—it's basically an insurance package tailored specifically for business owners that bundles multiple insurances into one policy at a discount.

BOPs usually include property insurance, casualty insurance, and liability insurance. They do not include auto, life, or disability insurances. You can often save money on your monthly premiums with a business owner's policy, but only if you need each of the included insurance policies.

As with all other business insurance, talk to an insurance broker you trust about whether or not a business owner's policy makes sense for your business.

## Life and Disability Insurance

Although this part of Day Three is focused on business insurance, you might also want to consider getting life and disability insurance while you are shopping around for business insurance.

Both life and disability insurance are designed to replace your income for your family if you die or replace income for you and your family if you are injured and unable to keep working.

Disability insurance is incredibly important because according to the Social Security Administration (SSA), as many as 25% of adults are injured and unable to work for a short or long time period before they reach retirement age. You can learn more here:

<https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityfacts/facts.html>.

If you are supporting anyone else with your income, life and disability insurance can give you peace of mind knowing your family will have income if something happens to you.

You may also want disability coverage to help with business overhead and expenses if you can no longer work in your pet business *but* you plan to keep the business running with other staff members.

## **Surety and Fidelity Bonds**

Lastly, when you are caring for a client's pet(s), you are also responsible for their home and property. Bonds are basically anti-theft insurance that provide your business liability protection if an employee steals from a client.

I often have coaching clients ask me if they should get bonded if they do not have any employees. My answer is always yes!

Here's why: It doesn't cost very much to bond your business and the ability to tell potential customers you are "licensed, bonded, and insured" gives your business a professional edge.

You can often purchase bonds from the same insurance company that you use for your other business insurance. I can refer you to a great low-cost pet sitting and dog walking insurance company when you email me at: [thrive@SFPBacademy.com](mailto:thrive@SFPBacademy.com).

## **□ Action Step #1**

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Compare business insurance pricing and, when you've made your decision, purchase business and bonding insurance, either as separate policies or a combined business owner's policy.

Please note: If you are boarding dogs in your home, you may need additional coverage from your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy. Another option is to check with your business insurance provider about adding property and casualty insurance if an accident happens when you are boarding dogs. If you have specific questions about what insurance you need, talk to an insurance broker whom you trust about your situation.

If you would like my recommendation on which insurance company might be the best fit for your pet business needs, email me at [thrive@SFPBacademy.com](mailto:thrive@SFPBacademy.com).

## **□ Action Step #2**

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If you will be picking up dogs and transporting them in your car, contact your auto insurance provider and ask whether you need commercial insurance for animal transport.

### □ Action Step #3

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If you don't already have life and disability insurance, talk to an insurance broker about the cost and benefits in your situation. You may be able to get life and disability insurance from the same broker as your business insurance.

Although it is not technically business insurance, providing income replacement if something were to happen to you is an important part of your business planning.

### □ Day Three Self-Care Action

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You have now worked hard for three days to start your pet sitting and dog walking business. Congratulations!

Sometimes the middle of a new project is the hardest part. You might be feeling overwhelmed with the constant pace of action steps and decisions these last few days, and if so, I invite you to take a big, deep breath right now.

Choose a nurturing activity to soothe your spirit if that's needed. Set aside some time today to replenish and restore your mind and body. Just like yesterday, after you complete today's action step you'll want to take time to let go of your business self for a while and focus only on yourself.

I'll see you tomorrow for Day Four!

# Welcome to Day Four - Branding

## Day Four – Part One: Creating a Logo and Tagline

*“Your brand is the single most important investment you can make in your business.”*

-Steve Forbes

### Keep Your Logo Simple

At its most basic, a logo should include enough of your business name to be recognizable. Large companies can sometimes use logos without any part of their name (Nike’s swoosh, for example) because they are so well known.

However, for a pet sitting and dog walking business, I recommend having your business name appear along with any logo images to avoid any confusion. You have just seconds to convey your business name and your message to potential clients, so you really want to take advantage of that opportunity.

When you finalize your logo, you will be using it in various places: in print and online, large and small, in color and grayscale (when an image is printed in only black, white, and gray).

Choose a logo that is still clearly recognizable when it’s resized. You’ll want to avoid a grainy image when you make the logo larger or illegible writing when the logo is small.

### Color Matters

If you need a logo that works in grayscale, should you just have lettering that is black and white from the start? You can, but that will depend on the message you are trying to communicate.

Businesses large and small all want a logo that helps attract clients. As a result, many major advertising firms have extensively researched what logo colors convey to clients.

Here is a brief summary of what was discovered when it comes to color:

- Blue conveys a sense of honesty, trustworthiness, and calm.
- Red tells clients that your business is bold and passionate.

- Orange and yellow communicate a sense of playfulness and optimism, with orange being slightly more friendly and yellow a bit more confident.
- Green makes clients think of fresh, natural companies that care.
- Purple is an imaginative color and leaves viewers with the feeling that your company is creative and original.
- Logos with multiple colors are cheerful, bold, and imaginative, while black logos may communicate a sense of formality and sophistication.

What colors should you choose for your logo? Only you can decide, but keeping these findings in mind can help you pick a final color (or colors) that accurately describes the feeling you want clients to get from your business.

If this subject interests you, there is much more information available online about the message your logo can deliver based on its color, size, shape, and font.

## Where to Create Your Logo

Unless you're an artist or designer, I wouldn't recommend creating your logo yourself.

If you can't personally create a professional looking image, I encourage you to hire someone who can; it will be money well spent. If you want to hire outside help for designing your logo, I have included a company I recommend in the Recommended Recourses section.

When you reach out to a designer, be clear about where you plan to use the logo and the feeling you would like your logo to convey to clients. If there are certain colors, shapes, or fonts you'd like to use (or avoid), be up front about those as well.

And if you have started the creative process by drawing your logo, be sure to share that with your logo designer so they can create a professional version of your drawing.

## Choosing a Tagline

A tagline is a sentence or brief phrase that describes your business and accompanies your name or logo. If you think of your business name as the title of a book, your tagline would be the subtitle.

A tagline is your opportunity to share a little bit about your business quickly.

Follow many of the same guidelines as I outlined in the chapter on naming your business when you come up with your tagline: avoid inside jokes, taglines that are too similar to another company's tagline, or anything that will be confusing.

The best logos are short, memorable and reflect what makes your business different from your competition. Writing a tagline can be a clarifying experience when you identify the values and "personality" of your pet business.

Your tagline will often accompany your business name or logo, but not always. Any time that space is at a premium, you might decide to leave off the tagline. Easy places to include your tagline are at the end of your business emails, on your website, and on any official paperwork.

A tagline is not absolutely necessary, but I found my tagline to be very helpful in my own pet sitting and dog walking business. It immediately told clients what to expect from my services and kept me focused on what mattered most to me.

The tagline I chose for my own pet business was "Professional and loving care for pets and their humans."

## Your Business Logo and Timeline Action Steps

### □ Action Step #1

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Set your timer for five minutes and write in your business journal about the overall feelings you want your pet sitting and dog walking business to convey to potential clients.

When your timer rings, rank the items on your list in order of importance to you. If the most important emotion you want clients to feel is trust, rank "trust" as number one. If you also want your clients to feel that your services are fun and playful, but not more than they feel like you are trustworthy, rank "playful" lower on the list.

This list can give you clarity when it comes time to choose between your final logo choices as well as when it comes to creating your tagline.

### □ Action Step #2

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Look at business logos online and keep a lookout for logos when you are out and about during your day. Take note of their color, shape, and how you feel when you see the logo.

Pay special attention to any small or local business. Does the logo tell you enough about the business to figure out what service or product they provide?

Write down or sketch the two or three logos you liked best to help you design your own. If you see a logo that really doesn't work, sketch or write that down as well.

### □ Action Step #3

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Now it's time to begin the process to design your logo! This likely won't be done at the end of the day today, but you can get the ball rolling right now. Start the logo design process by drawing a logo yourself (if you're creatively inclined) or by clicking the logo resource in the Recommended Resources companion document.

Pay attention to the emotions your logo conveys as well as how the design will work in multiple colors and sizes as well as different places that your logo will appear.

A logo that is too small to read on a business card is much less valuable than one you can use in multiple formats and sizes.

Be sure to have your friends and family vote on your logo. You can create a poll on Facebook or if you use a contest-type logo designer, you can copy, paste and email the poll link with the ones you like best.

### □ Action Step #4

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Write two to three taglines for your business. Go back to your list of traits you want your logo to convey and look for any keywords you can use in your tagline.

For example, if "caring" is the first thing you want your clients to associate with your company, consider using the word (or a synonym like "loving," "compassionate," or "gentle") in your tagline.

When you're done with these actions, I'll see you in the last part of Day Four. There are only two segments today!

See you in the next course segment!



## Day Four – Part Two: Create a Simple, Effective Website

*“Good design is good business.”*

-Thomas Watson, Jr.

Now, it's time to begin the process to create an effective website.

You may have noticed that this section only has two parts to it and that's because this part will require a bit more time and effort so today is just two segments. When you're done with this section, you're done with Day Four and there will be only three more days to go!

Don't let the time and effort of this segment scare you. Some pet sitters and dog walkers have found this segment to be a lot of fun so I really encourage you to dive in and complete the actions today and then reward yourself with some good self-care when you're done!

Every business—no matter how large or small—needs a website, primarily because most potential clients will check your website before they call or email your business.

It takes only seconds for prospective clients to form an opinion about your business, and most of the time that opinion will come from your website alone.

Your website will be the primary point of contact for most customers, so getting a professional site up and running should be one of the most important parts of your marketing and administration plans.

Anyone who has ever had a website created knows that launching a website can be a large undertaking and well beyond the scope of one day of this course.

However, what I will give you today is the framework for designing your optimal website. Although it may be a bit of time before your website is completed and up and running, don't worry!

In today's segment, I will explain the basics to get you started on this very important business task that can be the greatest source of marketing for your business.

Once you have the framework in place, you'll want to continue working on your website a few minutes each day until your website is complete.

When you sit down to write your to-do lists for each day, add a website task or two to each day's to-do list based on where you are in the website creation process.

If you have experience with web design, or are willing to spend some time to learn, you can make your own website relatively easily.

Most easy-to-create websites include how-tos and tutorials to help you. You'll find some links for easy-to-use, do-it-yourself website platforms in the Recommended Resources companion document.

For some of the recommended do-it-yourself website platforms, you'll be able to get your website up and running in just one day and you could use that website as a starting point to get your business out to the masses quickly.

If you do that though, I then recommend hiring a website designer to spruce up your website in the coming days, after you've created your do-it-yourself site.

Another option is to simply start by hiring someone to design the website for you—and if you want to have a website that is polished and appealing to the most number of clients, I highly recommend that approach.

Whichever method you use, there are some important points to keep in mind when designing your website.

## Must-Haves to Include on Your Website

When your website is complete, it will need to serve three main purposes: help you attract new clients, give your clients and potential clients information about your business, and (eventually) allow you to accept reservations and payments from clients.

To accomplish these three purposes, you will want to include at least five main pages within your website.

You can add more pages later as desired, but many web designers have a five-page price option when you hire them to create your website.

Here are the five most important website pages to consider creating, in order of importance, and what should be included on each page:

- **Home Page:** Your Home page is the first page prospective clients see when they type in your website address. This is also sometimes called a “landing page” because it is where most visitors land first when they view your website. Because it is often the view website visitors will have of your business, you'll want to focus on making the home page as professional and eye-catching as possible.

In addition to your business name and logo, be sure to include your location and the cities you serve on your Home page. Putting your location on the website pages is part of what helps local customers find you when they look online for a pet sitter or dog walker.

If you are not skilled at, or comfortable with, writing and proofreading, hire someone to write or edit your Home page to make sure it is as close to typo-free as possible. I'll include information on where to find a great copywriter or editor in the Recommended Resources companion document.

- **About Us:** The About Us page is the second most important page on your website. Why? Prospective clients want to know who will be caring for their beloved pets and their cherished homes.

The About Us page (or you can call it the About Me page) is your chance to describe your prior pet care experience and your love for pets. This is the page you'll want to let your personality shine through and your chance to convey your professionalism, trustworthiness, and warmth. Be sure to include a high-quality picture of yourself, without sunglasses and preferably a picture of you with a pet—but be sure not to hide behind the pet.

Like with the Home page, I recommend you hire a skilled copywriter to help you write this page, if you don't consider yourself a writer. The Home and About Us pages are worth spending money on by hiring a professional writer.

- **Services and Pricing:** This is the page to tell prospective clients not only what you offer but also why your services are unique. What about prices? Go ahead and include them too, but remember that people looking for a pet sitter or dog walker will want to know why you are worth the cost. Really think about what makes your pet sitting or dog walking business stand out and include that in the description of your available services. (You can re-examine your responses to the SWOT you did in Day One to see how your business may differ from your competitors.)

For example, you might describe your dog walks like this:

*Private one-on-one dog walks (30 minutes).* Your dog will be walked one-on-one through your neighborhood for thirty minutes with plenty of interaction and stimulation. Longer walks are available for an additional fee.

(Remember, this is just an example. Your description will change based on what you decide to offer *your* dog walk clients.)

- **Contact:** Put all of your contact information—business phone number, address, and email address—on this page. Many websites also have an option to include a “Contact Us” form where visitors can send you a message directly from your website. If the website platform you’re using has that option, that can make gathering information from clients simple and easy, for both them and you.
- **Testimonials:** Showing potential customers what other satisfied clients have to say about your business is a great marketing tool. When you are just starting out, if you don’t have any testimonials from paying clients yet, you might include your previous pet care experience for friends and family instead. Chances are good you have cared for someone’s pet already, even if this is your first pet sitting or dog walking business. If you have ever cared for the pet of a friend or family member, ask them to write a review for your website.

Be sure to include high-quality pictures on each page. Pictures tell a story faster than words ever can. You often have only a few seconds from the time new clients find your website to then compel them to stay and learn more about your business.

Put your best foot forward with nice photos of happy pets and, as I mentioned when discussing the About Us page, a high-quality picture of yourself. You can find stock photos online or you can take your own pet pictures using a high-quality camera or phone camera. You’ll also find a list of stock photo websites where you can purchase professional photos in the Recommended Resources companion document.

If the idea of setting up a website is overwhelming for you, don’t worry!

My advice to my coaching clients is this: Do what you are good at and delegate the rest.

Website design is something you will likely want to hire someone to do unless you are technically trained or have experience with website design.

Your attention will be divided among many tasks when it comes to starting and growing your pet business; don’t make learning website design one of them.

That being said, the website platforms you’ll find in the Recommended Resources companion document are easy and simple to set up in just a few hours. You can use one of those options as a jumping off point until your professionally-designed website is created.

## Other Pages to Consider Including on Your Website

Once you have your main five pages up and running, you can then start adding additional pages that will provide value for visitors to your website and make your website easier to find on the search engines.

Here are some page ideas to get you started:

- **Blog:** A blog is where you will publish regular content, including updates about your business, pet care articles, and information pet owners will find useful.

If you have keyword-specific posts, including a keyword-rich title (for example San Francisco Pet Sitting, if you provide pet sitting in San Francisco) may help you come up higher in search engine results when people search online.

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):** Like the name suggests, use this page as a place to answer questions you get asked often by potential clients.

If you aren't sure what questions to start with, here are some ideas: what specific cities you cover, how much advanced notice you need in order to provide pet care, the earliest and latest time of day you can visit or walk pets, what type of medication you can administer, what forms of payment you accept, or any special training or pet care experience you have.

- **Pet Resources:** Another way to drive traffic to your website, especially local traffic, is to include a Pet Resources page full of local noncompetitive pet businesses and pet resources.

This will also give your website visitors a reason to keep coming back and could help your website rank higher in internet searches. A marketing strategy you may want to consider is to trade links with pet businesses in your area—you will agree to list their business on your website if they do the same for you. These link trades will only be possible if you include a spot on your website for links and recommended resources. I do suggest, however, that you not make the links clickable so you don't take your website viewers off your site and on to another site. However, if a pet business makes your link clickable on their site, you'll want to do the same for them on yours.

**Special note:** Your Pet Resources page may end up becoming one of the main drivers of traffic to your site, because pet owners who have never heard of your business may find you through the “back door” of your site when they are looking for a vet, pet groomer, dog trainer or pet store, as well as other local pet resources you have listed on this page.

- **Reservations and Payments (optional):** Allowing clients to sign contracts, make reservations, and pay fees online can cut down on your paperwork and streamline the entire intake process if you choose to spend the time and money to set this up.

Some website templates include an option to accept online payments, though sometimes this option is only available for an additional fee. Additionally, pet sitting and dog walking administration software often includes a link you can post on your website where clients can easily log in and schedule services online.

## More About Blogging and Why It's So Important

One of the best things you can do to attract new customers is to keep updating your website regularly with valuable content. Writing a regular blog with information on pet care tips is incredibly important.

Your blog will also be the place you can announce changes to your business or highlight a pet or staff member of the month. You want the content to point back to your expertise, but it is okay to hire a content writer or arrange for guest posts as well.

Make it a point to update your blog regularly—at least once a week if possible. Doing so will give you plenty of new content to share on your social media pages and drive new readers to your website.

As I mentioned earlier, updating your content regularly and using keyword-rich titles and content may also help you come up higher in search engine results.

Also, the more often people are reading and sharing your material, the more credibility and name recognition you will gain. This is very important!

If you can get pet owners in your area to read your blog, even if they do not need a pet sitter or dog walker right now, they will keep you in mind when they do need someone to care for their pets while they are at work or on vacation.

I encourage you to think of blogging as marketing for the future. Even if some of the pet owners visiting your blog are not local to your area, driving more traffic to your website will make it

easier for potential clients to find your business when they search online for a pet sitter or dog walker.

## Web Hosting

You'll want to get a web host for your website and you can find a good low-cost website hosting resource in the Recommended Resources companion document.

Some people get confused about the various components when it comes to a website. Here's a simple and effective way to understand the components:

**Website:** House

**Website Host:** Land the house sits on

**Website URL:** Address of the house and land

## Create an Effective Website Action Steps

### □ Action Step #1

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You should have already purchased the URL (or web address) you plan to use for your website as it was in a prior action step.

If you skipped that step for any reason, here it is again:

Purchase a domain that goes with the business name you've chosen. You'll set up the website later, but go ahead and purchase the domain now. You can purchase your desired URL at any website that sells and hosts domains. If you live in the United States and the dot com domain you want is taken, resist the urge to go with a dot biz or other domain ending since URLs ending in dot com are usually easier for U.S. clients to remember and find.

### □ Action Step #2

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Visit the websites of five or more pet sitting and dog walking businesses today.

Take a few minutes per site to navigate the site and see what information you find out about the business after you have visited each page.

Are you left with any questions?

Do you see anything special that stands out?

What did you like about the website design on each site and what did you not like?

Take notes in your business journal to refer back to as this information will be helpful to give to the website designer when designing your site. While you don't want to copy anything directly from another site, you can get inspiration from other websites to use in your own design.

### □ Action Step #3

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Begin your website design by deciding what pages you will put on your site. Here are the most important pages I recommend, in order of importance: Home, About Us, Services and Pricing, Contact, Testimonials, Blog, Pet Resources and FAQ.

### □ Action Step #4

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Get a web host and begin the work to create a website using one of the resources found in the Recommended Resources companion document. If you are not confident in your writing skills, also hire a freelancer to write and edit the Home and About Us pages of your website.

The ideas for the content should be yours, but a writer or editor can make sure that everything is written in an engaging tone and free of typos or grammatical errors.

You can hire a writer for the other pages on your website as well, but if you are on a very tight budget, focus on hiring a writer for the Home and About Us pages, since those are the top two most frequently viewed pages on a site.

Check the Recommendation Resources section of this book for ideas for where to get a web host, simple and easy website templates, plus where to find and hire a web designer and a copywriter /editor.

### □ Day Four Self-Care Action

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Congratulations on completing Day Four! You're now officially over halfway to the finish line for starting your pet sitting and dog walking business!

After you've completed today's action steps, it's time to choose a nurturing, relaxing or fun activity and set aside some time to replenish and restore your mind and body. It's time to let go of your business for a bit and focus on you and self-care.

I'll see you tomorrow for Day Five!



# Welcome to Day Five - Simple, Low-Cost (and Free!) Marketing

## Day Five – Part One: Getting on Social Media and Google

*“Social media is not media. The key is to listen, engage, and build relationships.”*

-David Alston

Welcome to Day Five! You have been going up, up, up the business mountain and now you're going down with just this day and then only two more days to go!

Good job that you're here with me on Day Five!

Just like with your website, your current and potential clients will turn to your business's social media pages to get information and to interact with you.

Any modern business plan should include an active social media presence. Keeping your social media active and updated shows potential clients that your business is a relevant and thriving business.

Social media gives you the opportunity to get feedback and provide customer service in a format that is easy for your clients. Whether or not you use social media regularly in your personal life, you definitely want to take advantage of what it has to offer for your business.

## Getting Started

The social media landscape is constantly changing as new apps and programs gain popularity, but at the minimum, there are a few basic social media platforms you should use for your business including: Facebook, LinkedIn, Google for Business, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest.

I will take a minute to briefly introduce each and describe how each social media platform will help you grow your new pet sitting and dog walking business.

**Facebook** is the gold standard for social media platforms because so many people have personal Facebook accounts. Through Facebook, you can create a business page, a group for clients, or stream live video straight from your account.

If someone is looking to interact with your business online, the first place they will probably check after your website is Facebook. Facebook regularly changes the way business pages appear in people's news feeds, so be aware that you may need to purchase ads on Facebook in

addition to regularly updating your page in order to see more traffic to your page. Customers can also review you on Facebook. Positive Facebook reviews can help new clients feel confident in your business.

**LinkedIn** is a social networking site specifically dedicated to connecting professionals and promoting the exchange of business ideas and information.

You probably won't interact with customers as much on LinkedIn as compared with some other social media platforms, but it can be helpful in making professional contacts. Some businesses use LinkedIn to find clients as well, but it is less common for pet sitters and dog walkers to find clients on LinkedIn than finding them on other social media sites.

**Google for Business** allow prospective customers to see your business when they look for pet sitters and dog walkers in their area using the Google search engine.

You can list your business for free and doing so will put you on the map, so to speak! It will put you on Google Maps which can help customers find your business and improve your search results if someone does an internet search for a dog walker or pet sitter in your area. Like with Facebook, your current clients can review your business on Google. Those reviews will show up next to your business information when people search for your business or happen to find it on Google. Do an internet search for "Google for Business" to add your business location, hours, website, and more. Don't forget to add pictures and videos if that option is available. This is a great opportunity to get as much information out there as you can about your business for free.

**Twitter** is another social media platform where you can share links, videos, and photos, although the things you post are limited to a small number of characters. This keeps updates brief so users can scroll through a lot of information quickly. Twitter is best for short updates or for sharing links.

**Instagram** is primarily used for sharing photos and videos. People love to see pictures of adorable pets! By linking your Instagram account to your Facebook profile, you can easily share pictures on Instagram and Facebook at the same time with a single click.

Instagram is a great place to share those pet pictures and pet videos you gather (with client's permission, of course) and start building a following.

**Pinterest** is a site where users can save pictures that link to sites and information they find interesting. Pinterest can be a great resource for both you and your clients. Through your Pinterest account, you can connect with clients, share pet care advice, and create "vision boards" for your own business planning.

## Personal vs. Business Social Media Accounts

One potential downside to how easy it is for clients to find your pet business online is that anything you post or write online will reflect back to your business.

If you haven't already, you will want to make your personal social media accounts private so that only your friends and family can see what you post. Potential customers may get turned off to a business or to a business owner because of differing political opinions, for example, so although it may be more time-consuming to have both personal and business social media accounts, it's best to keep your business information and personal opinions separate.

Even when you write something just for your business, take a minute to scrutinize what you've written before hitting "post."

Tone can be very difficult to discern online, so you want to be very clear that your followers will not misunderstand what you mean. This is especially true if you respond to any criticism or frustrated clients online. Take a deep breath and take a step back before submitting your response to verify that what you've written is positive, helpful, and clear to anyone who might be reading your update without ever having met you in person.

When it comes to setting aside time for updating your social media pages and responding to customers online, it can be easy to log in for business and then spend a lot of time looking up friends and catching up personally.

You will need to teach yourself to save the personal social media activities for after your work is done so that you don't spend any of the valuable time you've set aside for business building on reading friends' posts or following links down a "rabbit hole."

## How to Get More Friends and Followers on Social Media

Now that you've set up your social media accounts for your pet sitting and dog walking business, how do you get people to see what you post? On most platforms, you will need someone to "follow" or "like" your page before they will see your updates.

Here are six methods for getting more followers to help more people see what you write and, in turn, more people to find your business:

- 1. Invite your clients to follow you online.** Include links to your social media profiles on your website and in your email communication to clients. Tell new clients about your social media pages at the client interview. Encourage everyone you interact with professionally to follow your business online.

2. **Update your social media pages regularly.** Out-of-date information or long stretches without updates turn off potential followers, and most social media sites use algorithms that favor regularly-updated pages to decide what people see more of.
3. **Use photos.** They say a picture is worth a thousand words for good reason: people like pictures and often respond most to visual stimulus. More people will stop and read what you have to say if there is a compelling photo in the post to grab their attention. This is another spot to use the collection of pet photos you are gathering.
4. **Provide value to your followers.** Yes, your social media accounts are one way to advertise to clients, but do not limit your updates to direct sales. If you regularly provide pet care information, uplifting quotes, or links to helpful websites, your followers will view you as an expert they can trust. You can also offer specials or coupons only for your followers so they are motivated to check in regularly on your social media for exclusive deals.
5. **Respond when people comment.** Social media is unique in that it allows you to interact with your clients online in real time. Even if all you do is respond with "Thanks!" be sure to say something back every time someone comments on your posts or leaves a review. This will also help your posts come up higher on your followers' social media feeds.
6. **Follow similar brands and other relevant pages.** Build yourself a community by following some related pet businesses such as local dog trainers, pet groomers, pet stores, and veterinary hospitals. Many times, these businesses will also like or follow you back, and customers will be able to see more of what you post online if you are interacting with other similar pages. That way, the next time you are looking for someone to do a guest blog post or to trade link listings with you, you will already have a group of similar businesses ready to ask.

## Sponsored or Advertised Posts

Most social media sites will offer you the opportunity to “boost” a post for a fee. Once you pay to promote a post, more people—including those that already follow you and their friends—will see your post as a special advertisement.

Basically, you are paying to increase the number of people who will see a post you’ve made on social media. This is different from purchasing an advertisement. A “sponsored” advertisement

gives you more customization options and is a better idea when you have a very specific goal in mind for your ad campaign.

Which do I recommend? That depends! While occasionally paying for more exposure can be part of your overall marketing strategy, I would encourage you to work on building a network of followers before you even consider spending money on a boosted or a sponsored ad. Your first goal is to get followers and keep giving them information and updates they value so your online influence will spread.

As I mentioned earlier, however, some social media sites like Facebook are limiting how visible business pages are without purchased advertisements. If you are struggling to get enough followers on your social media page, a sponsored post or “boosted” advertisement will help drive traffic to your page.

When you do decide to utilize a sponsored post feature, make sure you look at all the available options so you get the best value for the price. Most social media platforms will let you specify your target audience and your goals for the post (whether you want more people to like your page, visit your website, etc.). Be clear about what you want to gain from the ad before you pay for it!

### **Bonus: Kristin’s Story**

A lot of my pet sitting and dog walking coaching clients are concerned about spending too much time on social media and are reluctant to sign up for more than one or two social media sites—and I understand where they are coming from. Social media can be a huge time waster if it’s not approached with mindfulness. Because each business owner is different, it’s important to figure out what works and what doesn’t work for you when it comes to your business and social media. I find that taking a social media break on most weekends helps me start the workweek focused and eager to dive into social media for short pieces of time starting again on Monday. Even so, I often give myself a time limit when on each site and will even set a timer to make sure that I don’t go down into the social media “rabbit hole.” You may find that scheduling social media time on certain days or hours of each day works best for you. I’ve found that one of the most important parts of creating a social media business strategy is to have structure and consciousness around social media, and to limit the amount of time that’s spent on it so you can get the most benefit from your time and effort.

## **Get on Social Media Action Steps**

### **□ Action Step #1**

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Set up business accounts or pages on the social media platforms I shared in this segment including: Facebook, LinkedIn, Google for Business, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. Be sure to include your full business name, location, logo, tagline (if you can), contact information, and a

link to your website. Go to the Recommended Resources companion document in the handout to find my social media pages and connect with me if you'd like!

## □ Action Step #2

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Set all your personal social media sites to “private” and do everything you can to keep your personal opinions to your personal accounts. Make a habit of double-checking your log-in information before you post so you can verify that you are logged in to the correct account when you get ready to post a business update or share a personal story.

## □ Action Step #3

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Schedule time in your daily or weekly calendar to respond to comments and questions online. Resist the urge to check in multiple times during the day because it is so easy to log in for a business reason and then wander around online and waste valuable time. You will want to schedule a time slot for social media updates and stay off of it the rest of the time. Check the Recommended Resources section to find a powerful tool to help you do that.

## □ Action Step #4

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On social media, follow local businesses related to pet care such as veterinary hospitals, dog trainers, pet stores, and groomers. Building a community of business pages is one way to get more followers and when you've been in business for a while you may consider reaching out to share ideas or work together on a link or blog post exchange.

## □ Action Step #5

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Have a friend look for your business on all the social media sites where you've listed your business. Can they find your social media accounts easily? Is it obvious to them what kind of business you have from your social media sites? Are your posts engaging and easy to read? Ask your friend to give you any suggestions on how to make your social media pages easier to navigate or more enjoyable to follow.

## Day Five – Part Two: Create a Diverse Marketing Strategy

*“The best marketing doesn’t feel like marketing.”*

-Tom Fishburne

Hi there! You’ve only got two more segments to go for today. Congratulations on the work you’ve done so far!

In this segment you are going to learn how to figure out what types of marketing are working for your business (if you’ve already started it) and how to diversify your advertising to reach as many new clients as possible.

### Tracking What Works When It Comes to Marketing

When you begin spending money, time and energy on marketing it will be important to discover what is working and what isn’t working well in your marketing so you can focus your efforts on an advertising strategy that is successful and beneficial to your business.

One way you can track what works is to include a section on your new client paperwork for clients to tell you how they found your business.

After a few weeks or a month of asking each new client how they found out about your business, you may notice one or two common responses from various clients.

When you hear the same marketing modalities mentioned over and over from new clients, you will know that these are your most successful marketing approaches so far.

For example, if current clients refer most of your new clients, you will know that your referral system is working well.

If most new customers say they found you through your website, you can confidently keep up with your current website plan (but you’ll want to get more information from them on how they found your website, and I’ll share more about that in a bit).

If you notice that no one mentions a particular advertisement source, especially one that has cost you money each month or year, you will want to evaluate whether that particular marketing is still worth the cost and be sure to discontinue it if it’s not generating resulting.

### **Create a spreadsheet to track each marketing stream’s effectiveness.**

Update the spreadsheet each week so you have a clear view of how many new clients are finding your business and from which marketing stream(s). Some pet sitting and dog walking

administration systems are even set up to track marketing effectiveness and create a spreadsheet for you at the end of each week, month, and year. Here's a sample spreadsheet:

THE HAPPY BARKER MARKETING LOG			
What?	How Often?	Cost?	Avg. Referrals Per Month?
Business cards	every 4-6 weeks	free	2 per month
Website SEO	every 6 months	\$395	16 per month
Pay-per-click ads	monthly	\$55/month	11 per month
Client referrals	ongoing	free	12 per month
Vinyl advertisement on car	one-time	\$150	7 per month
<b>Total:</b>		\$600*	

## The Basics of a Diverse Marketing Strategy

While your marketing strategy won't look like anyone else's, because of the differences in local areas and the type of customer you are trying to attract, it should be a mix of different advertising outlets.

Here are the basic pillars of any diverse marketing strategy:

- 1. Online advertising:** This can be as simple as your website and social media pages and as complex as running online ads or "boosted" or "sponsored" posts through Google or on Facebook. You might also consider an email newsletter or hiring someone to write blog posts for you to generate more online content. Even if you don't spend a lot of money on online advertising, make sure that what you do put online is professional. Remember that a large part of online marketing is making sure your website shows up on search engines by optimizing SEO in your website design. If your website needs help getting higher up on the search engines, check the Recommended Resources companion document for more information on SEO boosting products and services.
- 2. Print advertising:** In addition to online advertising, I recommend creating business cards, flyers or postcards, and a company T-shirt.

Other advertising options include car signs, low-tech advertising by putting flyers and business cards on bulletin boards at local pet stores and veterinarian's offices, or agreeing to help sponsor a local event can often result in brand recognition and positive exposure.



3. **Branding:** Your long-term goal should be for pet owners in your area to know about your pet sitting and dog walking business and recognize your business name and logo whenever they see it. That way, even if they aren't currently in the market for a pet sitter or dog walker, they will think of you when they do need someone to care for their pet(s). You strengthen your brand by keeping your brand congruent wherever and whenever you advertise, building an active social media following, regularly updating your website and social media pages with valuable content, and flooding your community with your logo through business cards, advertising, and freebies. I spoke yesterday about creating the right logo and tagline for your business, so head back to that section if you still need to create a logo and tagline or need to refresh your current logo or tagline.
4. **Networking:** Building a relationship with other pet care providers in your area is a great way to get new clients. It is not uncommon for people to ask their pet's vet or groomer for a recommendation when they need a pet sitter or dog walker. Get to know the other pet care providers in your area and make sure they know you. Introducing yourself and dropping off a stack of business cards with a dozen doughnuts in the morning or a pizza before lunchtime can go a long way to keeping you in the front of their minds when people ask for pet care provider recommendations!
5. **Festivals, pet fairs, and trade shows:** You may not have thought of signing up for a booth at a local festival to advertise your pet business, but it may be worth the time and money if enough people attend the event. Local festivals are often a popular place for people to socialize new puppies, so you may end up with plenty of opportunities to introduce yourself to potential clients and get name recognition around town. Face-to-face interaction is especially helpful for pet sitters and dog walkers because you are asking clients to trust you with their pets and sometimes their homes. Take every opportunity you can to present a friendly, professional face.

How much time and money you spend on each of these marketing approaches will depend on your overall marketing plan. Now that you have an idea of the basic advertising approaches, it's time to write down your plan.

## Writing Down Your Marketing Plan

Sit down with your business plan and ideal customer description. You will use these to remind you of your focus as you write your marketing plan.

If you've already started your pet business before taking this course then start by evaluating what is working to attract clients and what isn't by jotting down answers to the following questions:

- Take a look at the marketing log you'll be creating in today's *Action Step*. After you fill it out, ask yourself if there are any advertising approaches that have served you better than others?
- Is there an advertising strategy that hasn't generated any new clients at all?
- Consider your ideal client. Where should you be advertising to reach this client? What part of your client's day-to-day schedule can you tap into with your advertising? If you are targeting a particular neighborhood, for example, where can you advertise that will get the attention of potential clients in that neighborhood?
- What do you offer potential clients that they can't get from your competitors? How can you tell them about it? If you included this information in your business plan, review it now.

Now, I'd like you to write down your marketing goals. And, when it comes to goal setting of any kind you want to be specific and measurable when you write down your goals.

For example, if you want to increase pet sitting client retention by 20% or sign one new dog walk client each week, write those goals down. Be sure to write them in the present tense and to be specific. Give yourself a deadline to meet each goal.

When you write down your marketing goals, you will also want to outline any new tactics or approaches you will use to reach each goal.

Using the goal example of signing on one new dog walk client each week, then your journal page might read like this:

***I sign on one new dog walk client each week starting March 3.***

*To accomplish this, I will take these actions:*

*-Write two blog posts about dog walking (for example, a post about the benefits of regular exercise for dogs and a post about how much time makes up an ideal walk for different dog breeds).*

*-Run a special for new dog walking clients on Facebook and Instagram.*

*-Let all of my current pet sitting clients know that I have availability in my schedule for regular, ongoing dog walking should their dog need that.*

**Keep going on writing actions until you have a specific plan with many actions for each of your marketing goals.**

Completing this process will take your advertising goals and translate them into an actionable plan that works with your regular online content, advertising, and client interactions to find and retain clients.

## **Bonus: Kristin's Story**

Early on in my business, I was resistant to the idea of tracking my marketing streams. However, when I lost a few clients in a short amount of time through client moves, pet deaths, and client job loss, I knew I had to get a clear sense of what marketing was working and what was not so I could get more clients quickly to replace the ones I'd lost. When I began taking some time each day to track how new clients found my company, I was then able to put more of my time, money, and energy into what worked in order to gain new clients. As a result, I then spent less of my energy on what didn't work well (or at all). It was empowering when I was able to recreate what worked instead of putting time and attention on what didn't when it came to marketing my pet business.

## **Create a Marketing Strategy Action Steps**

### **□ Action Step #1**

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Add a question to your new client interview form where clients can describe how they found your business. This will give you important feedback on which advertisements are working and are worth continuing. If you have a pet sitting administration software system that allows you to collect marketing information, set it up and use it.

### **□ Action Step #2**

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If your administration software doesn't include a built-in marketing log, create a spreadsheet for tracking the effectiveness of individual marketing streams. Be sure to update your

marketing log regularly so you will have an accurate idea of exactly how clients are finding out about your business.

### □ Action Step #3

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If you already have some existing clients, ask your current clients how they found your business through an email, social media poll, or in person. Do their answers match what you are hearing from new clients? Is there anything you did in the past that seemed to work well?

### □ Action Step #4

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Make a list of advertising strategies you have tried in each of the five basic categories that were described in this section.

These include: online advertising (including SEO); print advertising; branding; networking; and festivals, fairs, and trade shows. If you notice that one of these areas is underrepresented, you might want to focus more time and energy on that form of advertising when you make your plan. For example, if you have robust online and print marketing in place but haven't taken the time to network with local pet care professionals, you might be missing out on a steady stream of referrals.

### □ Action Step #5

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In your business journal, list your marketing goals and how you'd like to reach them. Remember to be specific, measurable and set a date by which you'll accomplish your goals.

Outline any new tactics or approaches you will use to reach each goal. Add any necessary to-do items to your daily, weekly, and monthly to-do lists so you can get to work on your marketing plan today.

## Day Five – Part Three: Print Marketing (Including Business Cards)

*“A strong, consistent brand, built over time, is the best guarantee of future earnings.”*

-Ervin & Smith

You’re almost done with Day Five! This is the last segment for today.

At this point in the process of starting your business, the most important thing you can do is get the word out about your new business. Today, I will introduce a few of the most common forms of print marketing, including what I recommend most frequently to my pet sitter and dog walker coaching clients.

### Business Cards That Work for You

Business cards are one of my favorite print marketing mediums. I found many uses for my business cards when I ran my own pet sitting and dog walking business, and I will share these with you today.

Before you can take advantage of these tips, you will need to design and print high-quality business cards.

Fortunately, you’ve already done most of what you need for a great business card design. Your business cards should feature your business logo, business name, tagline, a short list of services you provide, and contact information.

Your contact information should include your business phone number, website, and email address.

If you have a brick-and-mortar pet business, put that address on your business card as well.

I also recommend you include the words “licensed, bonded, and insured” on your business card if you have gone through the process to become so because having this phrase written on your card shows potential clients that you have a legitimate and professional business.

Once you have business cards, always be sure to keep some on hand: at the very least, in your car and in your wallet or purse. That way, you will always have one when you meet someone interested in your services or if you visit a pet-friendly apartment building that has a bulletin board.

Leaving a stack of business cards at local businesses is a great way to get the word out about your business.

Establish a relationship with local veterinarians, groomers, and pet stores and ask for permission to leave your business cards at the counter for their customers to take if they are looking for a pet sitter or dog walker recommendation.

Don't forget to go back and replenish the business cards at least every six weeks. Doing so will give you the opportunity to leave more cards and develop name recognition with the pet providers in your area, increasing the chance that they will recommend your business when customers ask for a local pet sitter or dog walker.

Also, you'll increase the odds of them allowing you to leave your cards if you offer them something in return—a link on your Pet Resources page or a write up about their service in your email newsletter or on your blog. This will create a win-win for both of you.

## Flyers and Newsletters

Posting flyers may seem old-fashioned and low tech (and in a lot of ways it is) but guess what? It works!

However, not every town or city allows flyers to be distributed unless they are on local business windows or inside on bulletin boards.

If your community allows the posting of flyers in high traffic areas, print up a stack of eye-catching flyers with your business name and contact information and also including tear-off tabs with your contact information at the bottom of the flyers.

I especially recommend this to those of you who are dog walkers looking to add more clients in the neighborhood you live in or in specific neighborhoods where you're already walking dogs.

After you've received permission, hang up flyers around the neighborhood while you are out walking dogs to attract new clients in the same area. Flyers are fairly effective and very inexpensive to create, so I definitely recommend using them if posting flyers is not a violation of any local ordinances in your area. If you aren't sure whether or not flyers are allowed in the towns you want to advertise in, contact your local city hall and ask.

Online and print newsletters are also a great place to advertise if you can get a good rate. For a fee, you can often place an advertisement in special interest newsletters distributed by organizations and clubs in your area.

Your local humane society or animal rescue may have an online newsletter where you can advertise. Mothers' clubs, schools, and churches often have a monthly newsletter as well.

Since many pet owners also have children, it can be worth asking about advertising in family-friendly newsletters and publications in your area.

Also, local interest or mothers' club newsletters are often looking for new content for each issue, and many pet business owners have found that local publications are happy to interview local business owners.

A feature article about your pet sitting and dog walking business is another way to use local newsletters in your marketing strategy.

Creating an email newsletter for your clients is an inexpensive way to advertise as well.

You can reprint your blog posts, offer coupons for various services during a slow period, and highlight both your business services and specific pets you have cared for. Remember to focus on the quality of information offered in your newsletter. This is your chance to get creative—if your newsletter is full of interesting and helpful information, you will increase the number of people actually reading your newsletter (which makes it a much more powerful advertising tool). If you can't send out an email newsletter every month, aim for at least every other month.

## Postcards and Snail Mail Campaigns

One other advertising option is to send out postcards or flyers to target audiences in your area. The cost of postage greatly increases the costs included in this strategy, but some pet business owners have found it to be a successful option for pet sitters and dog walkers who are able to target local pet owners. Vistaprint offers a unique option to mail postcards to people in your community who meet a certain set of criteria. You can upload your own address list or purchase a list (owners of registered dog licenses, for example). The U.S. Postal Service also offers a similar service.

Because of the cost it takes to create and send out postcards, I only recommend you consider this strategy after you have utilized the free and inexpensive marketing options in this course and have access to a specific mailing list of pet owners.

Some pet business owners find a targeted mail campaign to be quite successful in gaining clients, while others see no increase in clients. If you want to try a mail campaign, start out small (300 addresses, for example) to see if this method of advertising with work in your area.

## Bonus: Kristin's Story

When I first began dropping my business cards to vets, groomers, and pet stores, I often was told that they didn't want more cards. It took a lot of courage to put myself out there and getting "rejected" was challenging. I wanted to have my cards be in pet businesses all over town. I realized I had to cultivate relationships and a relationship can often naturally occur when there is a win-win for both parties, not just when one person (me, in this case) wants

something from the other party (for them to recommend me to their clients and have a spot where I can leave my business cards).

I decided to create a “Pet Resources” page on my website and I went to the vet hospitals, pet grooming shops, and pet stores that had initially rejected my business card drop off and instead offered them a spot on my website page. Most were thrilled and then I asked if they would mind if I left my cards in their shop. This time, most said yes!

A few weeks later, I brought in my business cards to restock and also some yummy doughnuts as a thank you to them for letting me have my cards in their shop. You can bet they remembered me when someone asked them for a referral for a pet sitter or dog walker! The key here is to not do it to get something from them (though that’s what you’d ideally like) but rather to offer whatever you are giving as a gift to support a local business. When you can partner with businesses from the position of helping them, they will be more likely to help you.

## Print Marketing Action Steps

### □ Action Step #1

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Create business cards for your pet sitting or dog walking business that include your logo, business name, tagline, a short list of services, and contact information. Have a friend look over the business card design before placing your order. Ask for any suggestions or constructive criticism they can give you from the perspective of someone looking at your business card for the first time. You will find business card designer recommendations in the Recommended Resources companion document.

### □ Action Step #2

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Place your business cards in at least three local pet businesses this week. Introduce yourself briefly, offer to put their business information on your Pet Resource website page, and ask for permission to leave a stack of business cards on the counter in a plastic card holder that you’ve provided. Be sure to glue one of your cards to the front of that holder. Some businesses only have bulletin boards for business cards. In these instances, you’ll need a soft card holder that you can pin to the bulletin board. These can be found online.

Remember to be professional in your interactions with the front desk staff or business owners; you want them to remember you in a positive light when customers ask for pet sitting and dog walking recommendations.



### □ Action Step #3

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If flyers are permitted in your community, make an easy-to-read flyer advertising your pet business. Hang flyers or place flyers on windshields in areas frequented by your ideal client: in neighborhoods you'd like to find dog walking clients (including near existing dog walking clients) and local pet stores and coffee shops.

### □ Action Step #4

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Find online or print newsletters in your area where you can advertise inexpensively. Start by checking with your local humane society or animal rescue group to see if they have a regular newsletter. A quick Google search for "mothers' groups newsletters" is another way to find applicable newsletters.

### □ *Day Five Self-Care Action*

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Congrats on completing Day Five! Only two days left to complete your journey to start your pet sitting and dog walking business. Choose a nurturing, relaxing or fun activity and set aside some time to replenish and restore your mind and body. It's time to let go of your business start-up for a bit and take some special time to focus on you and self-care.

# *Welcome to Day Six - Marketing Momentum*

## **Day Six – Part One: Local Marketing**

*“Marketing without data is like driving with your eyes closed.”*

-Dan Zarrella

Between print and online advertising, you should already have a good start on being ready to market your new pet sitting and dog walking business to get clients.

In the first part of today’s Day Six segment, I will share a few more marketing methods and the best way I have found to track your advertising so you keep track of what’s working and what isn’t.

If you’ve ever wondered if car wraps or car magnets actually work to attract new clients or how you’ll know if you should pay for a particular marketing campaign, you will learn the answers to those questions by the bend of today —and much more.

### **T-Shirts and Other Wearable Advertisements**

Everyone loves a freebie, and T-shirts are one of the best because they are such a common clothing item for so many people. When you make business shirts for yourself, order extra shirts in a few common sizes to use to give to clients, and local friends and family.

Since most T-shirt printing companies will discount your per-shirt price when you buy a certain number of shirts, you will also save a little money on your own business T-shirts at the same time.

The more people who wear your shirt around town, obviously the better!

The goal is to get your business name and logo in front of any many people as possible so that potential clients will think of your business when they need a pet sitter or dog walker. T-shirts can help with that sense of familiarity and start building your “tribe.”

Windbreakers and hoodies are another great option in winter months. Baseball caps with your logo are also an option for wearable advertisement.

Other easy options for freebies to use as giveaway prizes and to hand out at pet fairs: are

Frisbees, cups, magnets, tennis balls, and key chains.

Frisbees and tennis balls are especially fun for dog owners, while obviously a catnip toy would be a more appealing gift for cat owners.

Some dog walkers have gotten many new client calls by leaving Frisbees with their logo and business information listed on them at their local dog parks.

## Using Your Car to Advertise

Just like advertising with flyers in neighborhoods where you have dog walking clients can help you fill out your dog walking schedule with other nearby clients, advertising with your car is a great way to attract clients in the areas you often work and drive.

Car wraps look great and are very eye-catching, but they can be pricey.

If you are not in a financial position to purchase a car wrap or if you'd prefer not to wrap your car, you can order vinyl lettering with your logo, business name, and contact information to go on the back and side windows of your car.

If you do this, I recommend white vinyl because it really stands out during the day and night.

Also, color vinyl tends to fade more quickly than white vinyl so your investment will likely last longer.

Whether you opt for a car wrap or vinyl lettering, make sure the font is easy to read and large enough to read clearly from far away.

Some lettering can be very difficult to read from a distance, which defeats the entire purpose of using your car to advertise.

If you are prone to aggressive driving or find you get confused or lost while driving, you may want to consider car door magnets instead of a wrap or vinyl.

That way, you can take the car magnets off anytime you might not want your driving habits to reflect poorly on your business.

Another way to let your car work for you is to purchase a "card pocket" for holding business cards. The pocket adheres to your car window or the side of your car with a temporary adhesive—so you won't have to worry about it being there permanently—and includes a waterproof pocket for business cards and a sign that says, "Please take a card."

You may be surprised how many people will take a card as they pass your car parked at the grocery store, pet store, or when you are on client visits.

Search online for “business card holders for car” and you will find an assortment of styles to choose from.

## Create a Marketing Kit

Once you have your business cards and other promotional materials ready, I recommend you assemble a mobile marketing kit to leave in your vehicle at all times. The more effortless marketing is, the easier it will be for you to incorporate it into your daily routine. You want marketing your pet business to be easy to do.

### Here are some items to include in your marketing kit:

- Plastic cardholders for leaving business cards at a veterinarian’s or groomer’s office. This will keep your cards organized and looking professional.
- Glue sticks for gluing one of your business cards to each cardholder when you take it to a new office so your information is easy to see.
- Scissors, index cards, and a stapler for making a hanging business card pocket for places that have a bulletin board for business cards.
- A stapler with staples and push pins for attaching those business card pockets to bulletin boards.
- A marketing log and pen (I’ll be talking more on these items in a moment)
- Plenty of business cards, flyers, and freebies with your logo on them.

Place all of these items in a sturdy plastic box or totebag and keep it in your car at all times. Then, when you drive by a place to advertise, you will already have everything you need without having to go back home, saving you time and energy—two things you need a lot of when starting a new business.

Please note: to make a business card pocket, start with two index cards. Cut one index card in half and staple it to the front of the full index card to form a pocket. Glue one of your business cards to the front and fill the pocket with your business cards.

## Using a Marketing Log

A marketing log is just that: a place to log your marketing activities and track their effectiveness. It can be so easy to forget where you've left business cards once you've placed them in more than a couple local businesses.

Here is an example of what your business card log might look like:

LINCOLN COUNTY PET CARE BUSINESSES			
Vet, Pet, or Feed Store	Address	Comments <i>(Declined, closed, requested references, type of card holder, etc.)</i>	Date
Brookline Vet. Hospital 823-0967	900 Redwood Hwy	Hard card holder	3/2
Animal Hospital of Brookline 823-0678	1010 Redwood Hwy	Cards kept in binder at the counter	3/2
The Barking Lot 898-0562	1098 Smith Rd.	Soft holder on bulletin board Agreed to Pet Owner Resources link trade	3/2
Pet Supply Plus	610 Hwy 150	Declined	3/4

The comments section is also where you would include any information about a referral exchange you've worked out with the business.

For example, if a local veterinarian gives you permission to list their business information on the "Pet Resources" section of your website, note that in the comments so you can add that information to your website as soon as possible.

Writing down the date in your marketing log is so important. You may think two weeks has passed since you last dropped off cards when it was really two months ago!

Seeing the date you last dropped off cards will help you stay on track with your marketing.

I also recommend keeping a more detailed log of all your marketing strategies on a separate spreadsheet so you can track the effectiveness of each. This will be a place to record any applicable information when new clients tell you how they found your business.

That way, you can accurately evaluate each marketing strategy when it comes time to renew or decide whether or not to continue to pay for a particular advertisement.

As I have mentioned in previous segments, some pet sitting and dog walking administration software programs have the capability to track this information right in the software.

You saw this in an earlier section and here is the example again of a marketing log:

THE HAPPY BARKER MARKETING LOG			
What?	How Often?	Cost?	Avg. Referrals Per Month?
Business cards	every 4-6 weeks	free	2 per month
Website SEO	every 6 months	\$395	16 per month
Pay-per-click ads	monthly	\$55/month	11 per month
Client referrals	ongoing	free	12 per month
Vinyl advertisement on car	one-time	\$150	7 per month
<b>Total:</b>		\$600*	

\*Please note that some of these costs are one-time or occasional expenses. SEO optimization, for example, may only incur as an expense once every six to twelve months, but the referrals will be ongoing throughout the year.

I can't tell you exactly which combination of marketing will work best for your particular business since every town and community is different.

In addition to differences in local clientele, there are even some types of marketing that may be more or less effective during certain years or seasons.

But, a marketing log will give you an organized method for analyzing your marketing strategy and evaluating which advertising purchases are worth the cost and which are not.

The good news is that you will probably find your marketing costs go down after the first few years. Usually by then you have enough happy customers recommending you to family, friends and neighbors that you will not have to work as hard to get your name out there and you'll also save a lot of money on advertising at that point too.

## Local Marketing Action Steps

### □ Action Step #1

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Design and order business T-shirts (if you haven't already) as well as any sweatshirts, windbreakers, or baseball caps you plan to use. You can find many low-cost options online. Many of the same places you get custom T-shirts also sell customized toys, hats, and magnets. Check the Recommended Resources for some suggested referrals.

## □ Action Step #2

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Advertise with your car, whether that means a full car wrap, vinyl lettering, magnetic signs, business card holder, or a combination. Whatever method you choose, be sure to use large, clear lettering so that potential customers can read your information from far away.

## □ Action Step #3

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Compile your mobile marketing kit. At the very minimum, including: plastic card holders, a glue stick, scissors, index cards, a stapler, push pins, your business cards and marketing log, a pen, plenty of business cards, and any custom freebies you have. For the complete list of items to consider having in your marketing kit, review the list in today's segment which is above this section.

## □ Action Step #4

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Create a business card drop off log and overall marketing log for your pet sitting and dog walking business using the suggested format I've described.

Fill in the marketing log with the information of any places you've left business cards so far and the date you last dropped off your cards. Once the log is up to date, keep your marketing kit in your car for easy marketing as you place more cards around town.

After you've completed these action steps, head on over to the next segment and I'll see you there when you're ready!

## Day Six – Part Two: The Power of Recommendations

*“92 percent of consumers trust recommendations from family and friends above all other types of advertising.”*

-According to Nielsen Ratings

Welcome back! Now we’re going to explore the power of recommendations.

No matter how much money you spend on advertising, your best method for finding new clients is likely going to be personal recommendations.

There are two reasons for this:

First, people inherently trust the recommendation of someone who is already using your pet sitting and dog walking services.

Second, great clients will probably know other great clients, so getting your ideal clients to recommend you to their friends is incredibly important.

There are some actions you can take to encourage people to recommend your business to their friends, family, and neighbors and I’ll go over those now.

### How to Find Local Referral Connections

Face-to-face marketing in your community is a great way to meet people, develop a partnership with other business owners, and find new clients.

The basic idea behind this marketing strategy is to develop positive working relationships with other business owners and professionals that interact with your potential clients.

- **Realtors** are often asked for recommendations when people move to town, so get to know the realtors in your area.

Give realtors your business cards to give out if their clients ask. Also, in the spirit of win-win relationships and collaboration, put their business information on your website’s Pet Resources page.

- **Pet-friendly apartments** are a great resource because there are often hundreds, if not thousands, of potential clients living very close together, which can cut down on your travel time between dog walks or pet visits.

The best way to start a relationship with a particular apartment complex is to schedule



an appointment with the apartment manager or leasing agent.

Introduce yourself and your business at the meeting and offer to list the apartment complex on your website in exchange for the manager giving your business card to tenants looking for a dog walker or pet sitter.

If you can get your business listed in the new tenant email or information packet, even better!

Your meeting with the building manager will be even more successful if you ask an existing client who lives in that particular building to write you a letter of recommendation or a brief, positive review.

If you do not have any current clients in a particular apartment complex, meet with the manager anyway.

- **“Yappy Parties”** – Yappy parties are a social meet-and-greet for pet owners and their pets and they can be a great way to meet new pet owners. You can do this by setting up a table near a pet-friendly apartment complex or business—with permission from the manager or store owner, of course—and offer free dog treats for pets and snacks or cold drinks for their humans. This is a great way to get to know pet owners in a fun environment.
- **Pet fairs** can be a lot of fun, but they can sometimes be expensive to join as a vendor. If you do purchase a booth at a pet fair, make the most of your advertising investment by bringing lots of business cards, snacks for humans and pets, and a few fun freebies with your logo to give away, and create a valuable pet gift basket in a drawing or raffle in exchange for contact information from potential clients.
- **Local humane societies and animal rescue groups** are another great resource for getting your name out among pet owners in your community. See if they are willing to partner with you and if so, you can offer to give a 10% discount on the first month’s bill for new pet adopters when they use your pet sitting or dog walking service.

## Client Referrals

Positive referrals from your current clients are one of the most effective types of marketing out there.

Because of that, it’s important to make sure your current clients are very happy with your service and to remind them to recommend you to their friends. This can be as simple as a quick line in your email newsletter or you can ask them for any referrals in person when you see

them next. Another option is to run a promotion by offering a discount or gift of some kind for each referral that results in a new customer.

When you do get positive feedback from customers, ask for permission to use their testimonial for marketing purposes.

You want to eventually end up with a full list of satisfied customers you can give as references to potential clients and some positive information about your company you can use on your website.

As I mentioned in a prior segment, it's also a great idea to encourage your clients to submit their positive feedback to online review sites like Yelp, Nextdoor, Facebook and Google Reviews.

## **And Speaking of Yelp, Facebook, Nextdoor and Google Reviews...**

Listing a business on the review or recommendation sites can sometimes be nerve-wracking for small business owners because they fear one negative review will drive potential customers away.

That can happen, but I am going to tell you the best way to avoid it: make sure your business listings on Yelp, Facebook, Nextdoor and Google are flooded with high-quality pictures and positive reviews.

Regularly remind your clients that a positive review on these sites is so helpful for your business.

When you have a client tell you how much they appreciate what you do, ask the client to write a short review online. Include a section in your newsletter and on your website where you can encourage clients to leave reviews.

You can further encourage your clients to post positive reviews by sending a specific email to your clients asking for reviews. This can be especially helpful when you first start your business as good reviews can give you and your business credibility and I recommend that you only ask clients to write a review on one site (you can ask them for a different site review in a few months).

Your email might look something like this (using Yelp as an example):

*"Dear Client,*

*Having more Yelp reviews would really help our business. Would you kindly take a minute to review us on Yelp?*

*Here is the link to our business page on Yelp: \_\_\_\_\_*

*If you are not currently a Yelp user, it takes under two minutes to become one.*

*Thank you very much. We really appreciate it!"*

Be sure to include the review link to the site you'd like a review right in the email so your clients do not have to search for it and always tell them how quick the process will be (writing and posting a review by a client will often take less than a couple of minutes!)

## **The Power of Recommendations Action Steps**

### **□ Action Step #1**

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Spend at least 30 minutes today reaching out by email and phone to realtors and pet-friendly apartment managers to see if you can partner with them in any way. Offer to meet them in person as in-person meetings will most often generate results.

### **□ Action Step #2**

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Using the sample review request template email that is written above in this course material, reach out to any current clients you have via email and see if they would be willing to leave a Yelp, Google, Facebook or Nextdoor review for your business.

### **□ Action Step #3**

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Research pet fairs or humane society or rescue group events that you may be able to participate in. Contact the event organizer to see the cost and, if it works for your budget and time, commit to your business by participating in this event. Create a list of items you will need including: banner, giveaways, t-shirts, dog treats, tablecloth with logo and more.

## Day Six – Part Three: Find New Clients Through Networking

*“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others.”*

–African Proverb

This is the last section of Day Six and tomorrow is the final day. I want you to know that I’m so proud of you that you’ve gotten here!

It’s a big deal to tackle these action steps and you’ve done it (or at least you’re in the process of working through it).

**Some people have issues about finishing things and if that’s you, I want you to promise yourself that you’ll continue by completing today’s tasks and tomorrow’s tasks tomorrow or whatever timeline you initially set up for yourself to complete this course.**

Even if it means watching these videos while you do another task—doing the dishes, making your bed, whatever, watching them will likely help you get motivated take action.

**If completing things has been a stumbling block for you in the past, let this course be the one thing you complete in order to change that behavior.**

The inability to complete things is only a mindset and if you can show yourself that you can do it by completing this course, you’ll be showing your mind that it’s possible too and you may find you’ve broken the “unable to complete things” spell that you’ve experienced in the past!

This final section is about networking and though it may sound like a dry and boring word (or perhaps even a scary word if you are a shy person), networking can be one of the best ways to get new clients and meet wonderful people in your community who may be willing to spread the word about your business!

And even if you’re shy, you can do social media networking or push beyond your comfort zone to meet people, like you may be pushing beyond your comfort zone to complete this course!

So, going back to networking: Even those who own businesses that are not pet related can also be a source of consistent referrals if you take advantage of the power of networking.

The suggestions in this segment will be general because your community will have specific networking opportunities perhaps not available anywhere else.

Use this last segment in Day Six as a starting point, but always be looking for new networking opportunities in your own area because once you start to look, you’ll likely find many out there!

And you may even meet some new friends as a result of connecting with like-minded local people in your community.

Also, you'll find some helpful networking and association referrals in the Course Materials.

## Pet Sitting Associations and Local Networking Groups

National and regional pet sitting and dog walking business groups and associations have a lot of benefits to offer pet sitters and dog walkers, especially when your business is just starting out.

Joining a pet sitting or dog walking association can give you access to discounts and an instant network of other pet sitters and dog walkers.

Another valuable reason to join or start a local pet sitting and dog walking business group is for the built-in network of fellow pet sitters and dog walkers you can turn to with your business and client questions and concerns.

To see if there's a local pet sitting and dog walking networking group in your area, do an internet search including your city or major metropolitan area and "pet sitting networking group" or "dog walking business networking group."

Many pet sitters and dog walkers have found a local tribe of pet business owners this way!

**I have also created a no-cost "virtual tribe" on Facebook called "*Prosperous Pet Business*" for those starting and growing a pet sitting and dog walking business.**

In the private Facebook group that I've created, you'll find like-minded pet business owners from all over the world who want to either launch their pet sitting and dog walking business or they are ready to take their pet business to the next level.

You can join the group on Facebook by clicking the link that's in the Recommended Resources or by typing this in your Facebook search bar: "Prosperous Pet Business."

**Here's the direct link to join the private *Prosperous Pet Business* Facebook group now:**

**<https://www.facebook.com/groups/prosperouspetbusiness/>**

Another valuable networking resource in your area can be connecting with other small business owners.

Business Network International (BNI) is business networking with localized groups (called chapters) and many have found BNI to be a great source of client referrals.

Each BNI chapter only allows one of each type of professional to join (for example only one pet

sitter and dog walker), and each member recommends the others' businesses to friends and colleagues looking for a particular type of business or service.

If you are able to get into a BNI group as the only pet sitter and dog walker for that chapter, you will likely receive valuable recommendations from the other chapter members any time one of their friends or neighbors is looking for a pet sitter or dog walker.

There is a fee to become a BNI member, as well as a time commitment involved, so be sure to investigate the costs and advantages before deciding whether or not you can commit to your local BNI group at this time. You may be able to check out one meeting for free as a guest, to see if it's a good fit for you and your business.

## **Pet Sitting and Dog Walking Directories**

Most national pet sitting associations have a pet sitter directory where potential clients can search for pet care professionals, and there are also independent directories you can join to get listed online.

I do not usually suggest that you pay to get listed online unless the directory site comes up very high on the search engines for your area.

For example, if a particular online directory appears high in the results when you do a search for pet sitters or dog walkers in your area, it may be worth paying a monthly or annual fee to list your business on that website.

You may not generate a lot of new clients from any one particular online directory, but every action you take to get your business name out there in the early stages of your pet sitting and dog walking business—or even after you've been in business for some time—can be very beneficial.

Even if you decide not to purchase a paid listing, take a few minutes each week to get listed on directories and websites that allow you to list your business for free.

Check the Recommended Resources companion document for a link that will allow you to download a list of websites where you can list your business online for free or a low fee.

As I mentioned in the last course section, you may also have success finding clients by posting regularly on your social media pages and getting local reviews on Yelp, Google, Nextdoor and other review sites.

Many of my coaching clients have found Nextdoor to be a very good way to get a lot of clients.

Nextdoor allows local residents and business owners in specific areas to form their own mini social networks.

Localized directories are incredibly valuable because you may be able to find nearby clients who are looking for pet care services or they may be able to find you!

Potential clients on Nextdoor can search for pet sitters and dog walkers in their own neighborhoods instead of wading through pages of online listings or they can post their need for a pet sitter or dog walker.

To get listed on Nextdoor, create your business listing to receive alerts from neighbors who are looking for pet care services.

As with most online referrals and social media platforms, eye-catching pictures, a complete profile, and positive reviews will increase your chances of being seen and chosen by new clients.

And just so you know, Nextdoor uses the term “recommendations” in place of the term “reviews.”

If you have a current client that is using Nextdoor, it can be a great boost for your business to ask them to write a brief review recommending your services. Their doing so could increase the likelihood of receiving a lot of clients from Nextdoor.

I did this for a painter I’d hired. I had a very positive experience with him and after I recommended him on Nextdoor, he contacted me a few days later saying he’d received over 10 new clients as a result of my positive post about his painting company!

## **Pros and Cons of Networks Like Wag and Rover**

Many of my pet sitter and dog walker coaching clients have asked if they should join sites like Wag or Rover to find more clients.

My answer is that it depends on why you are considering it.

Are you struggling to fill your available work hours with clients? Is your goal to get your business name out in every possible way?

Sites like Wag and Rover can sometimes be popular with potential clients because of their easy-to-use apps and name recognition.

Getting listed on these sites may help you find clients, but the sites do take a large percentage of the pet sit and dog walk fees.

If you do decide to join sites like these, I only suggest using them in the very early days of your business.

Once you get established and your other marketing outlets are generating new clients consistently, I recommend discontinuing your listings on any site or app that takes a portion of your income.

## Get Clients from Networking Action Steps

### □ Action Step #1

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Do an internet search with your city or major metropolitan area and either “pet sitting networking group” or “dog walking business networking group.” Reach out to the contact person about attending the next meeting as a guest and commit to attending. If there is no such group in your area, consider starting one in your area after your business has been established for at least a few months or a year.

### □ Action Step #2

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Ask your business owner friends for recommendations on networking groups and commit to attending at least one meeting in the next month. If one of the recommended groups is in a BNI group, see if your friend can get you in as a guest to try it out. If not, contact a BNI group in your area to see if you can attend as guest to see if BNI would be a good fit for you.

### □ Action Step #3

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Download the 100 Free Places To List Your Pet Business Online booklet that’s found in the Recommended Resources and commit to listing your business information on 3-5 sites per day until you’ve gone through the list.

You can also access the website list download by clicking this link:

<https://sixfigurepetbusiness.lpages.co/100-places-to-list-pet-business/>.

Please note that some of the links in the booklet may no longer work or may now be paid links. There are plenty of links listed, so if you experience a “dead” link, just move to the next one.

### □ Action Step #4

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If you aren’t on Nextdoor.com yet and it’s available in your area, apply to be on the site. If you are on the site and haven’t yet listed your business on Nextdoor, do that today. If you already have some clients, email them and ask if they’d be willing to write a short post about your business on Nextdoor or a recommendation about your business in the Recommendations section of the Nextdoor site.



## □ *Day Six Self-Care Action*

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The past six days have been full of incredible change and dedicated focus. I hope by now you have established a strong habit of self-care along the way.

You will need to keep up the self-care habit through the entire life of your pet sitting and dog walking business. Self-care is so important for small business owners but I think especially for pet care professionals because they spend so much time nurturing others that they need to also give some of that nurturing to themselves!

Choose a self-care activity and set aside an hour or so today to replenish and restore your body, mind and spirit.

And I'll see you tomorrow for Day 7! Yay!

# Welcome to Day Seven - The Final Day

## Day Seven – Part One: Submitting a Press Release

*“A simple hello can lead to a million things.”*

-Unknown

You’ve made it to Day Seven! The last day! I’m so happy for you and the progress you’ve made to get here. Well done!

You’ve made it this far and it is now time to write a press release.

A press release is a great way to announce your new pet sitting and dog walking business to the public.

In today’s Day Seven course lesson, I will explain why you should write a press release, what to include in it, and how to go about getting it published in your local news outlet.

### The Goals of Your Press Release

Although much of your advertising will be online and through personal networking, there are still some benefits to submitting a written press release to your local news outlet, such as the credibility that a published press release gives your business.

If done correctly, your press release should do the following:

- Introduce your pet business to the community.
- Tell potential clients what is unique about your pet sitting and dog walking business.
- Include all contact information for your business.
- Build credibility and name recognition.
- Generate a higher SEO ranking for your website by generating a one-way link to your website if links are included in the online press release.

Not every press release that you write will be published and distributed by every media outlet you think should be interested, but the better the press release is, the more outlets are likely to use it.

## How to Write a Press Release

Keep in mind, a press release is news, not a paid advertisement. If you want news sources and websites to publish your press release, it will need to be newsworthy.

Stick to facts about yourself and your pet business.

Concisely answer the “who, what, when, where, and why” of your pet sitting and dog walking business.

Most news articles include quotes, so go ahead and put some quotes about your business in the press release if you like.

And by that I mean, it’s okay to quote yourself in your press release.

Consider adding a quote about your goals for the company or why you started your business.

Write your press release in the third person, but make sure it is still engaging. Pay attention to grammar and spelling so your press release will be as professional as possible.

Keep your press release to under a page in length.

Even if the release is only published online, the editor will appreciate you writing the most important information to save space.

End your press release with three pound signs: ###

That is the industry standard for “The End” and will tell the editor where you want the press release to conclude.

In addition to the contact information in the press release itself, include your full name, business name, address, phone number, and website after the three pound signs because it is not considered part of the press release itself.

The news outlet may decide to publish that information at the end of the press release and if so, you’ve given that information to them but don’t expect them to publish it.

**Here is an example of what a sample press release looks like:**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **New Pet Sitting Service Announced**

Pet care specialist Jenny Smith has announced the opening of the Bakerville Pet Sitting Service,

serving Bakerville, Virginia by offering professional pet care service for the community.

When asked about the importance of pet sitting services, Smith explained, “Staying in a kennel is often more stressful to pets than their owners realize. With my pet sitting service, pets can be cared for in the comfort of their own homes – the surroundings they know best.”

Before relocating to Bakerville, Ms. Smith lived in Atlanta, where she volunteered for the Atlanta Animal Shelter to pursue her passion for working with animals.

Walking and feeding pets during owner absences is the primary function of her business, and she also provides dog walking during the day while owners are at work.

Her service is not limited to dogs and cats, however.

“While dogs and cats make up the majority of our clientele, we also provide care for horses, goats, chickens, rabbits, birds and pocket pets,” she added.

In addition to providing in-home care for pets, Bakerville Pet Sitting Service also offers dog walking and pet boarding in a home atmosphere.

For additional information, call 809-421-9567 or visit online at [www.bakervillepetsitting.com](http://www.bakervillepetsitting.com).

###

Contact:

Jenny Smith, Owner, Bakerville Dog Sitting,

2809 Magnolia Drive, Bakerville, VA 22901

Phone: 555-421-9567

<http://www.bakervilledogwalking.com>

[info@bakervilledogwalking.com](mailto:info@bakervilledogwalking.com)

If writing a press release is not something you feel comfortable doing yourself, consider hiring someone to write the press release for you, using information you provide.

Whether you write the press release or hire someone to do it, read it through carefully after it's been written and before submitting it to any news outlets to ensure that there are no typos or grammatical errors.

Once the press release is sent, it will be very difficult (if not impossible) to edit any mistakes.

I recommend that you hire an editor to review the press release before it goes into distribution, because if it's well written and typo free it will be much more likely to be accepted by your local media outlets. Check the Recommended Materials section for ideas on where to find an editor for your press release.

## Distributing Your Press Release

Some media outlets have specific submission guidelines on their websites. If you can find guidelines for your local news outlets, follow them exactly.

Your press release is more likely to be published if you meet the requirements. If you cannot find submission instructions for your desired publications, identify the business editor (or general editor for small publications). Send an email and print copy of your press release to the editor's attention.

If you have not heard from the editor a week after sending your press release, follow up with an email or a phone call. Ask if they received the press release and if they have any follow-up questions.

Remember they do not have to publish your press release, but you may be able to encourage it by answering any questions or politely inquiring about the status of the press release. Be very considerate and mindful of their time.

In addition to submitting your press release to local news outlets, you might also consider sending it to websites that publish press releases online.

Search online for "publish press release online for free" for a list of websites dedicated to that purpose.

## Submit a Press Release Action Steps

### □ Action Step #1

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Visit the website of news outlets in your area and find the recent press releases, which are generally found on the "local" page of the website.

Read three or more sample press releases online and identify what works and what doesn't. Which press release did you find the most compelling? Why? Keep a copy of that press release on hand when you write your own as part of an upcoming Action Step in today's chapter.

### □ Action Step #2

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Make a list of the information you plan to include in your press release. At the very least, you should have your name, business name, what services you provide, any experience you have caring for pets, your business phone number, and website address. If you plan to include any quotes, write them down as well.

### □ Action Step #3

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Using the information you wrote down in today's second Action Step, write a press release (or hire someone from a list of resources in the Course Materials to do the writing). Remember to keep the press release to one page, write it in the third person, and stick to facts that describe the "who, what, when, where, and why" of your pet sitting and dog walking business.

### □ Action Step #4

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Submit your press release to the local publications you identified in the first Action Step. After that, spend some time submitting your press release to other online news sources. Google "publish press release locally online for free" and submit your press release to at least four online databases.

I'll see you in the next video for the final segment of this course. See you over there for the completion of Day Seven!

You're almost done! Woo-hoo!

## Day Seven – Part Two: Plan a Launch Party

*“The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is to praise and celebrate.”*

—Oprah Winfrey

Congratulations, you’re on the final segment of Day Seven!

Over the past few days you have worked hard to prepare your pet sitting and dog walking business for success. Now it is finally time to launch your business!

Today is all about celebrating your hard work and spreading the word about your new business venture.

And remember: Even when you’ve had your business for a few years, you can still launch a new service and host a party to announce that service or celebrate a milestone business anniversary.

Here are just some of the ways you can launch your business to your friends, family, and local community:

### Post on Social Media

Announce your grand opening on all your professional social media accounts. These posts should be bright, engaging, and to the point.

Encourage your friends, family and those you’re connected to on social media to “like,” “subscribe,” or “follow” for more updates.

Share the same posts to your personal social media accounts and invite your friends—even those without pets or who do not live nearby—to share your grand opening posts with their friends as well. You want to flood social media with the good news of your exciting new business.

Record a 5-10 minute Facebook LIVE and/or Instagram story video introducing yourself and your business.

While you want the video to be professional, you also want it to be a bit personal too. Give your viewers a chance to see why you are the best fit for their pets.

Consider hosting a live event on Facebook where you answer questions about pets, pet care, and your business.

Many of your friends and family may have questions about what your business entails or general questions about pet sitting and dog walking.

You may be surprised how many people will have questions about how much to tip dog walkers, what's needed to prepare their home for a pet sitter, or the benefits of regular dog walking for dogs and their owners.

If you're unsure of the correct answer, don't be afraid to say, "I don't know the answer to that. But I will be happy to find the answer to that and post it in the comments later today or send you a private message!"

If you get a good response from your first live online event, you may want to consider having a similar Q&A again from time to time to generate positive buzz about your business.

At the end of any introductory videos, posts, or live chat sessions, be sure to create a "call to action" by encouraging viewers to visit your website, sign up for email updates, and spread the word about your new pet sitting and dog walking business.

## Plan a "Launch" Party

Hosting a "yappy party" can be a great way to launch your business. I shared about yappy parties in a prior segment and this would be a great time to host one!

You can throw a yappy party for pet owners and their pets at any time, but there is no better time to get your business off to a great start than when you are celebrating the launch of your new pet business.

Plan a yappy party at a pavilion at a local dog park, at a pet-friendly apartment complex, or other location popular with pet owners in your area.

As I mentioned in a prior segment, you'll want to be sure to get permission from your local parks and recreation department, the local authorities, and/or the building manager before hosting an event at a dog park or pet-friendly apartment complex.

Be sure to spread the word about your launch event online and in person.

If you are hosting the yappy party at a dog park, visit the park the weekend before and hand out flyers to invite dog owners to come back at the day and time of the event.

If your event will be at an apartment complex, create flyers inviting residents to the party and distribute them according to the apartment complex rules.

When it comes time for the event, make sure you have a sign or banner with your business



name so you will be easily recognizable right away.

You'll find information in the Recommended Resources on company recommendations to create these important launch party items.

Prepare or purchase snacks and drinks for the pet owners, and don't forget dog and cat treats for the pets as well!

Be sure to bring your promotional materials including business cards, a sign-up sheet for emails and contact information, and any freebies you plan to give or raffle away.

Wear your business T-shirt and put on your friendliest smile. This is the time to put your best foot forward for potential clients you may never have met before but may end up assisting for the life of their pets!

Even if only a handful of people end up hiring you for pet sitting or dog walking services, you will have made a positive first impression on many pet owners in your area. And you may find yourself getting new clients for years to come from your launch event!

## **Enlist the Support of Your Friends and Family**

Send an email to all your friends and family telling them about your new business. They will likely want to congratulate you, and this is a good time to remind them that you appreciate any referrals they can give you.

Include a link to your website in the email as well as any announcements about live Q&A events online or your in-person launch party.

If you have ever walked dogs or provided pet sitting for family or friends, ask them to review you online (on Yelp, Google reviews, Facebook, Nextdoor or any other place your business can be found and rated online).

Tell them how much you appreciate the honest feedback and let them know that even a short review will help new clients find you.

When you run into a friend or acquaintance at the store or around town after you've launched your business, tell them about your new business.

This may seem pushy but truly most people love to hear about a new business starting – like the birth of a new baby, it's inspiring and hopeful for many who are on the receiving end of your good news!

This is the only time you will be able to say you are so excited to tell them about your brand-new business so don't let that opportunity pass you by.

And again, if you're concerned about coming across as pushy when you talk to friends and acquaintances about your business, don't worry. They will likely sense your excitement and want to help you.

That being said, mentioning your new business once to each person you share it with is appropriate and understandable. Just be sure to only bring it up once unless you are asked another time about the business specifically.

Let neighbors know about your new business as well. They will likely be thrilled to know there is a professional pet sitter and dog walker they can hire so close to home and they may spread the word to other neighbors you don't yet know.

If you are still working at another job and if it feels right, have a similar conversation with coworkers at an appropriate time as well. Now is the time to really spread the word to everyone you interact with and meet!

Here are the action steps for your final segment of the course!

## **Plan a Launch Party Action Steps**

### **□ Action Step #1**

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Announce your new business on all your professional social media accounts. Consider making the announcement with a video to make it even more compelling.

### **□ Action Step #2**

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Share those announcements on your personal social media accounts as well. Encourage friends and family to "like" and share the announcement with their own followers. Many of your friends will be willing to support your business with a "like" or by sharing your post, even if they don't own pets or live nearby.

### **□ Action Step #3**

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Hold a live Q&A or "behind the scenes" event, on Facebook or Instagram LIVE, or both. Use this as an opportunity to share your enthusiasm and expertise.

## □ Action Step #4

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Plan a “yappy party” to celebrate the launch of your new business. Be sure to wear your business T-shirt and go to the event with plenty of business cards and something valuable to raffle away.

**CONGRATULATIONS! You’re now finished with the entire seven-day course!**

## □ Day Seven Self-Care Action

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You did it! Congratulations on completing all seven days to start your pet sitting and dog walking business. This the time that you get to reward yourself for a job well done!

Choose an extra special reward to celebrate the launch of your pet sitting and dog walking business!

I’m so excited for you and your ever-evolving business journey. Have fun and I wish you much profit and success!

Kristin Morrison



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