

The Complete Guide to Pet Business Marketing in 2017



ALLPOINTS
Pet Industry Sales Solutions

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“Your marketing plan will help you become a successful business.”



As a pet business, we understand how difficult it can be coming up with a marketing strategy that's effective. Because the pet industry is always changing, we want to make sure we stay flexible with the moving trends and business practices. The marketing plan will help ensure you always stay on track to being a successful business.

We understand how daunting it can be to tackle marketing in the pet industry. Marketing trends change just as much, if not more, than pet industry trends, and it can be difficult to keep up with.

Whether you're a pet store or a pet product manufacturer, it's crucial to have a strong sense of how to market your pet business to your customers. That's why we've put together a complete guide on pet business marketing in 2017.



Chapter 1

Step One: Creating a Marketing Plan

Drafting up a marketing plan, if you don't already have one, is the first step toward being successful in marketing your business.

If just reading "marketing plan" makes you want to groan, don't worry - it's not as hard as it sounds! We'll help you break it up into baby steps.

1 Company Background

Start with the background of your business. This is the easy part; all you need to do is write your company's story.

If you have an "About" page on your website, you can use that. Plus, you can take this opportunity to make any alterations you deem necessary to make your company seem like the top dog in your space of the pet industry.

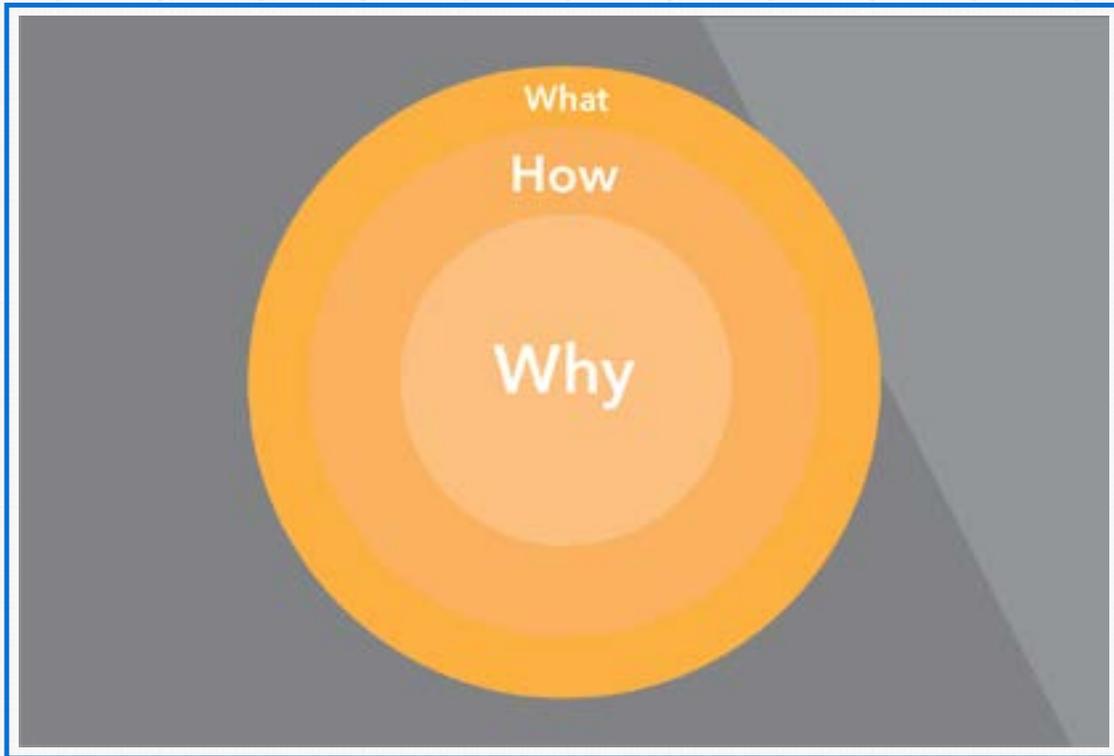
Pro Tip

For the "About Us" page: rather than focusing on you, tell your customers (and leads) what you can do for them. Say things like "We'll provide you..." and include customer testimonials, industry awards, and any stats & figures to help you sell yourself. The company background will be a small portion telling the story of where you've come from.



2

Identify why and brand promise



Once your background is defined, the next step is **determining why you do what you do**. Too many businesses start with the what they do, move on to the how they do it, and either never get to the why or save it for last.

What do we mean by the *why*? Well, it's simple. Ask yourself, "*why am I selling only all-natural pet food in my store?*" If your answer is "*to make money,*" well, you'll need to re-evaluate your business.

Customers are emotional because *humans are emotional*. We buy the **why**, not the **what**.



“ We buy the **why**, not the **what**. ”



For this step, ask yourself, *“why did I start this business? Why am I still in this business?”*

Your answer to these questions will then define everything you do moving forward. Otherwise, customers will see through the all natural brands of food and super-fluffy dog beds and move on to the next best option.

Take this moment to also **identify your brand promise**. In other words, what do you want your customers to always get out of their purchase from you?

Using the all-natural pet store as an example, it could be something like, *“Always stocking the most natural, high quality brands in the pet industry.”* Pick a brand promise and stick to it.

Your customers will thank you for it with loyalty and repeat business.



3

Create a SWOT analysis

The next step is to create a diagram of your company's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). When completed successfully, you'll have a pretty good idea of what your business is good at, not so good at, and some opportunities you should pursue, while being mindful of potential threats.

Let's say you're a natural pet store. Here's an example SWOT analysis:

Strengths Being neighborhood destination for natural pet food, well-trained employees, strong merchandising strategy	Weaknesses Running out of stock, not much customer engagement online, high overhead and low margins
Opportunities Sponsoring non-profits in community, holding events, working with influencers	Threats E-Commerce lowering prices, big-box stores entering natural pet food market

This is just one example of what your SWOT analysis could look like. You'll want to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that are relevant to your business.



4

Map out target market

In other words, **who is your customer?** If you're properly engaged with your business, this should be fairly easy as you probably see this person every day.

Some things to keep in mind when you're mapping out your target customers are:

Demographics

Includes age, gender, ethnicity, education, household income, and employment status

Psychographics

Includes lifestyle, personality, beliefs, and interests

You might also want to include pet industry statistics such as # of pets owned, types of pets owned, and popular breeds.

To go the extra mile (*recommended*), you can also put together a sample target customer profile. This would be a fictitious person, based on your research and answers from the target market, who would resemble your daily and/or ideal customer.





Who's your customer?

For example, a very short target customer profile would sound like:

"Maria is a 32 year old mother of one child, two dogs, and one cat. She is very active in her community and works full-time as an advertising executive. Her husband, Fred, works as an account manager at a sales firm. Together, their household income is \$80K per year."

Retailer Tip

Identifying these characteristics will help you understand what types of products you should stock in your store and what types of add-on services you can offer. For example, if you have a lot of customers with long-hair cats, you will know to keep brushes, hairball remedies, and cat food should always be stocked.



5

Complete competitive analysis

This is essentially a list of your competitors and how they potentially threat your business. This section can be as long or as short as you would like to make it.

If you want to keep it short and sweet, you can just go with the names and a few basic threats of your competitors. If you'd like to add a little more detail, you can include possible tactics, opportunities, and key differences. This will largely play into your unique value proposition.

6

Identify unique value proposition (UVP)

Your unique value proposition is a statement that explains **what sets your company apart from other pet businesses**. Every successful business plan will already have this. If you do not yet have a UVP, it's time to come up with one. To come up with a unique value proposition, ask yourself the following questions:

-  What do you do better than your competitors?
-  What can you realistically add to your products/services to stand out?
-  What is your why?
-  Who are your top customers, and why do they keep coming back for more?



7

Decide on marketing & communication mix

Now that you know what you want to market, who you want to market to, and what your message is, you have to decide where you want to share it.

There are a variety of effective ways you can spread your marketing message, no matter what kind of pet business you are.

Word of mouth

This is the oldest tool in the shed. Word of mouth is still one of the most effective ways potential customers hear about your business. However, it's also one of the most difficult to control and monitor the ROI for, as it basically boils down to people talking about your brand.

The best way to make sure it's happening for your brand is to

- a) Make sure you have a fantastic product or service
- b) Monitor keywords surrounding your brand on social media and relevant pet forums to see what people are saying.



Social media

Everyone's saying it because everyone's on it. Having a social media presence these days is crucial to maintaining a web presence. However, this doesn't mean you need to be on all of them.

Pick 2-3 top platforms that work best for your offerings. Then, be very active building a community and creating loyal customers. The third chapter will discuss specific ways you can take advantage of social media to create an army of loyal customers.

Events

Whether you host, sponsor, or participate in community events, it's one way to get your name out in the "real world" outside of the web space. Many pet stores opt for hosting adoption events, but there are so many other creative ways to get people to come into your store.

As an example for a pet retailer, on Valentine's Day you can set out a shoebox with your branding and stuffed with "Valentine's Coupons" that will give your customer a surprise discount off specific items. This will get them excited to come in and get a surprise coupon, and remember you for doing something different.

Advertising

Setting aside a budget for advertising is crucial, especially if you want to be present on Facebook and Google (unless you invest more in highly engaging content marketing, in Google's case). While it doesn't have to be a large budget, this will go far in helping you establish a web presence.



SMART Goals

Specific

Measurable

Agreed-upon

Realistic

Time-based



Once you've identified these seven crucial elements to a business plan, pat yourself on the back (or your dog on the head) because you now have a marketing plan! It's generally best practice to have a yearly marketing plan, which will then be reviewed and possibly altered before the start of the next year.

Be sure to identify specific goals that you want to accomplish each year. The key is to identify SMART (specific, measurable, agreed-upon, realistic, and time-based) goals that are easily trackable (i.e. 15% increase in social media following by end of year).

Once you have identified your goals, track them on a monthly, quarterly, and yearly basis to ensure you're accomplishing them. If not, you may need to alter your strategy and/or your goals.



Chapter 2

Step Two: Managing Website Presence

Managing your website presence is a crucial part of pet business marketing.

Not only will your leads and customers be able to find you online with ease, but it will also allow them to discover resources and learn more about your company. It's this online engagement that will get them to remember your business in the long run.

Unfortunately, we've noticed a lot of pet businesses aren't up to date on the latest trends in managing a website presence. Although the upkeep of a modern website may seem daunting at first, it's actually become much easier than in the past to stay up to date and incorporate key elements of a successful site.

In this section of the pet business marketing guide, we'll walk you through some of the key things you'll need in a successful website. Then, we'll show you how easy it is to implement them for your own company.



1

Mobile-friendly website

According to [a recent article](#), 83% of consumers in the United States will use the Internet to research before they make a purchase. Plus, if you even want customers to be able to find your store when they search “pet store near me” your website needs to be mobile-friendly.

As of a recent update, Google punishes websites that don't show up well on smartphones and tablets by not allowing them to show up in search results.

How to make a mobile-friendly website

Now that you've identified the need to switch, how do you do so? This will vary based on the platform that your website is hosted on.

However, a great place to start is by searching your domain (website URL) on [Google's PageSpeed Tool](#). The software will give you suggestions you can use to decide how you want to take your next step, whether it's working with your IT department (if you're lucky/big enough to have one) or by hiring a contractor to fix your website.

Another, easy to use tool by Google is the [Mobile-Friendly Test](#). Just type in your domain again and it will tell you whether it's optimized for mobile, and give you tips and resources on making it so.

[Click here](#) to learn more about setting up mobile optimized website with guides from Google.



2

Search engine optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimization is what allows your website to be ranked on Google. It also lets customers, and potential customers, find you when they search relevant keywords. We also wrote an article about [competing against e-commerce as a pet store](#), and in it we included steps to being successful with SEO.

How to optimize your website

1. Come up with some primary topics that your website will cover and write them down. If you own a pet shop, you'll want to write down words such as "pet store" or "pet supplies."
 - *Hint: Think of topics that are differentiating for your store...do you only sell cat and dog supplies? Are you specialized in organic foods? Include words such as these in your list (i.e. "Pet store selling organic food").*
2. Then, write down more that include your location. If you're a pet supply store in Seattle, write down "pet store in Seattle" or "pet store in Western Washington."
3. Congratulations, you have now come up with your initial keywords. Now, you'll want to use those to conduct some keyword research. Basically, you'll want to find out whether your words are things that your consumers are actually searching for online. Use tools such as Google Trends, Google Keywords Planner, Moz, and SEOBook to figure out which keywords will give you the highest ranking possibilities.



To find out more and get a little more in-depth about doing keyword research, visit [this beginner's guide by HubSpot](#).

Once your keywords are ready to go, you'll want to start optimizing your website with them. In order to start optimizing your website for

Next Steps

1. **Start with an audit of your website.** If you already have a website, and content on it, that you're already using, you'll want to go through and make sure your content is already optimized to be ranked on search engines. Follow the steps under [step one here](#) to complete your audit.
2. **Input your keywords** to five critical places on your website. These places include:
 - Titles
 - Descriptions
 - Headings & content
 - Image titles and [alt text](#)
 - URLs
3. **Avoid search penalties.** There are ways to actually ruin your SEO ranking by doing things differently than Google, or another search engine such as Bing, would like for you to do. Don't hide your keywords, stuff them into every other sentence, or force your keywords where they don't belong. Believe it or not, Google's algorithms are smarter than that.

[Find out more about optimizing your website here.](#)



3

Consistently publishing content

Publishing content on a consistent basis keeps your website, and overall web presence, up to date and ranking high on Google. When combined with a strong SEO strategy, posting content on a regular basis can do wonders for your search rankings. What does this mean in English? You'll get more traffic, and more qualified traffic (people looking for your product/services), than ever before.

Of course, publishing new content takes a lot of time and resources. If everyone could easily do it, then more people would be. However, there's a few ways you can get new content on your site all the time.

Use a freelancer

There are lots of websites (UpWork, Writer's Access, BlogMutt, etc.) where you can find high quality freelancers in your budget. Note that this will take a budget, but the results will be well-worth it.

Post consistently, not all the time

You don't need to keep a daily blog on your site in order to rank well. When you're running a successful pet business, there's not much time for that. We recommend publishing weekly, or at least monthly, in order to keep your website updated.

The key here is to pick a time frame and stick to it. Consistency is key when it comes to keeping up your online presence.



Work with a marketing agency

Marketing agencies have been around the block and know the best tricks and tips to keeping up a web presence on a small time budget. They can be costly, but it can be well-worth investment to make sure your customers can find you online.



Now that you have a structure for creating and publishing content, the next step is coming up with ideas that will educate and entertain your leads and customers. Some may find this easier than others. Either way, there are plenty of resources to help with inspiration.

BuzzSumo

This [paid service](#) will allow you to find top and trending content for any topic in the pet industry (or any industry). It's a valuable tool that will inspire you and let you know what's trending in your space.

Pet Industry Trade Magazines

These include [Pet Age](#), [Pet Business](#), [Pets +](#), [Pet Product News](#), and [Pet Food Industry](#). You can search these for inspiration, and identify which keywords they are targeting by looking at top trending topics.

Pet Industry Newsfeeds

Subscribing to newsfeeds and newsletters will keep you automatically up to date on popular industry topics. The [World Pet Association](#) has a great newsfeed, and we send out a [monthly newsletter](#) with current market trends for the industry.



Content ideas can come from everywhere - not just pet industry news. As long as you're out in the world, engaging with your customers, and taking in content all the time, you'll become accustomed to picking up great topics to discuss on your website.

Be sure to write any ideas down as they come to you - otherwise you're sure to forget them by the time you sit down to write (or send an email to your contracted writer with content ideas).



As you can see, there's a lot more to a successful online presence than an old website with just an "About us" page. Staying on top of your website will ensure your success in pet business marketing.

Although it may seem like a lot of work, it's easy once you get started. Plus, much of the work can be completed by third-party freelancers and contractors.

Just remember to keep up on your content strategy, and refer back to your marketing plan (created in part one of this pet business marketing guide) if you get lost.



Chapter 3

Step Three: Engaging on Social Media

Here's some of the top social networks and their key benefits

Facebook

Almost everyone is on it, so it's one of the most popular platforms in the world. Keep in mind that because everyone's on it, Facebook has made it nearly impossible to reach anyone without a budget.

Nevertheless, it's a smart idea to have a Facebook page and keep it updated with the on-goings of your business so your customers can easily interact with you on the most-used platform. *Recommended for pet retailers, manufacturers, and distributors.*

Twitter

This platform is great for quick, real-time messages and chats you may want to have with your customers. If you're looking to have a discussion with your customers, this would be a great place to do so. Additionally, if you have lots of little tidbits of news to share throughout the day (i.e. updates on what the company's pet is up to), Twitter is the best place to share those. *Recommended for pet retailers, manufacturers, and distributors.*

LinkedIn

This social media platform is still the best place to be present if your business is B2B. Not just for job searchers, LinkedIn can actually be a powerful platform for pet professionals looking to keep up on market trends and learn what's new in the industry. If you're keen on publishing about these topics and starting long, professional discussions, LinkedIn is where it's at. *Recommended for pet manufacturers and distributors.*



Instagram

This highly-visual platform has become a key player in the B2C category, and it very much applies to the pet industry as well. Instagram is a great place to share your brand in a visual way - introduce new brands, partner with pet influencers, share pet stories, show product interaction (with people & pets), and more. It's currently the place to be online, especially if you've got a visual story to tell. *Recommended for pet retailers and manufacturers.*

Google+

Thought of as a somewhat "failed" social media network by Google, this platform is actually useful for increasing your website's ranking. Being present on Google+ will allow your customers to more easily find your place of business (if location-based, like a pet specialty retailer) and may help boost your website's rank on the search engine. *Recommended for pet retailers.*



Other social media platforms to consider include Pinterest, Medium, YouTube, and Flickr. Each network comes with its own pros and cons and may not relate to your business.

Once you decide upon 2-3 networks to focus on, remember to set SMART goals and refer to them on a monthly, quarterly, and yearly basis to justify ROI. You'll find that some networks will do better for your business than others, so be prepared to make changes accordingly.



2

Create a social media calendar

The key to staying organized and on track with social media is by keeping a calendar of posts. The length of your social media calendar may vary based on what you're comfortable with, but the most popular options tend to be monthly and quarterly calendars.

Here's how to create an effective calendar:

1. Start with a free template ([we recommend this one from HubSpot](#)) and customize it to fit your business
2. Put together a list of content you want to promote during this time frame (future content is OK to plan for)
3. Research any relevant holidays (including silly ones like National Pancake Day and, more importantly, National Dog Day) to keep in mind during this time frame
4. Put together a list of relevant events (including Global Pet Expo and/or any store events you may be holding)
5. Put everything on the calendar and plan for posts that are relevant to the events & "holidays" you identified are relevant to your business

Now you have a full scope of what you'll be posting on social media during this time frame! This will not only help you stay more organized, but will also alleviate stress when it comes to figuring out what to post at any given time.



3

Search relevant hashtags

Many brands make the mistake of creating a social media page, uploading their logo & mission statement, and posting once a week (maybe). Unfortunately for them, social media doesn't quite work like that. If you're only publishing your posts once a week and not engaging with your followers or conducting outreach, you're missing out on many of the benefits social media provides.

Think about it this way, if you had a group of people gathered in a room for a period of time, you wouldn't just walk in and say *"Look how awesome I am, talk about me!"* and then leave, would you?

Imagine social media as that room full of people. You can find those who are interested in you by searching relevant hashtags such as #petfood and #catsofinstagram to find customers who fit in your target audience. If you want to drill down even further, you can even get more local and search things like #dogsofseattle to find customers near you.

Once you find these customers, engage with them. Like their photos, comment helpful messages (more than just "great photo!"), and even follow the ones you really like. **Do this a couple times a day for just a few minutes and you'll see your followers and engagement steadily increase.**



4

Monitor social media to keep up on trends

Staying engaged with your customers starts with finding them, starting conversation, and publishing posts they care about. However, you can also monitor social media to keep up on the latest trends.

Spread the word about these trends and participate in discussions to gain a relevant audience of people who trust you, and therefore want to buy from you!

Twitter lists trending topics on both the app and desktop versions. Monitoring and participating in trending discussions relevant to your business will ensure you're a part of the discussion and help people find your page.

If #nationaldogday is trending, you're probably going to participate so that others celebrating that day can find you.

You can apply these methods to other social media platforms as well. Do some research on what's trending in your category, and make sure to post and engage with others on these trending topics. This is just another great way of establishing your presence online and ensuring you get the most ROI out of your pet business marketing strategies.



All Points Marketing's goal is to streamline communication between pet retailers & manufacturers.

We want you to succeed

While All Points Marketing doesn't currently offer marketing services, we're happy to offer advice and any tools you may need to become a successful pet business.

Pet retailers

We offer multiple employee training programs, sample kits, and merchandising assistance for [pet specialty retailers](#). We also represent some of the top pet product manufacturers in the industry.

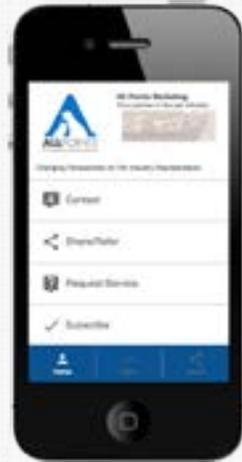
[Take a look to see whether any fit your current needs.](#)

Pet product manufacturers

All Points offers strategies and organization of sales data for product manufacturers. Our clients can rest easy knowing that distributors, sales reps, and retailers are all on the same page.

[Find out more about our services for manufacturers here.](#)

Keep in contact with us.
We'd love to hear from you.



We have a new All Points Marketing app which is free to download (and doesn't take up any memory!). There's many benefits to this app including:

-  Quickly call, text, or email us directly from the app
-  Request service feature (samples, promotions, ect.)
-  Direct access to a list of our brands
-  Promotions, product information, and other useful documents
-  ...and much more!

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