

# The Complete Guide to Pet Business Marketing in 2018

Second Edition



**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 2018.



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.

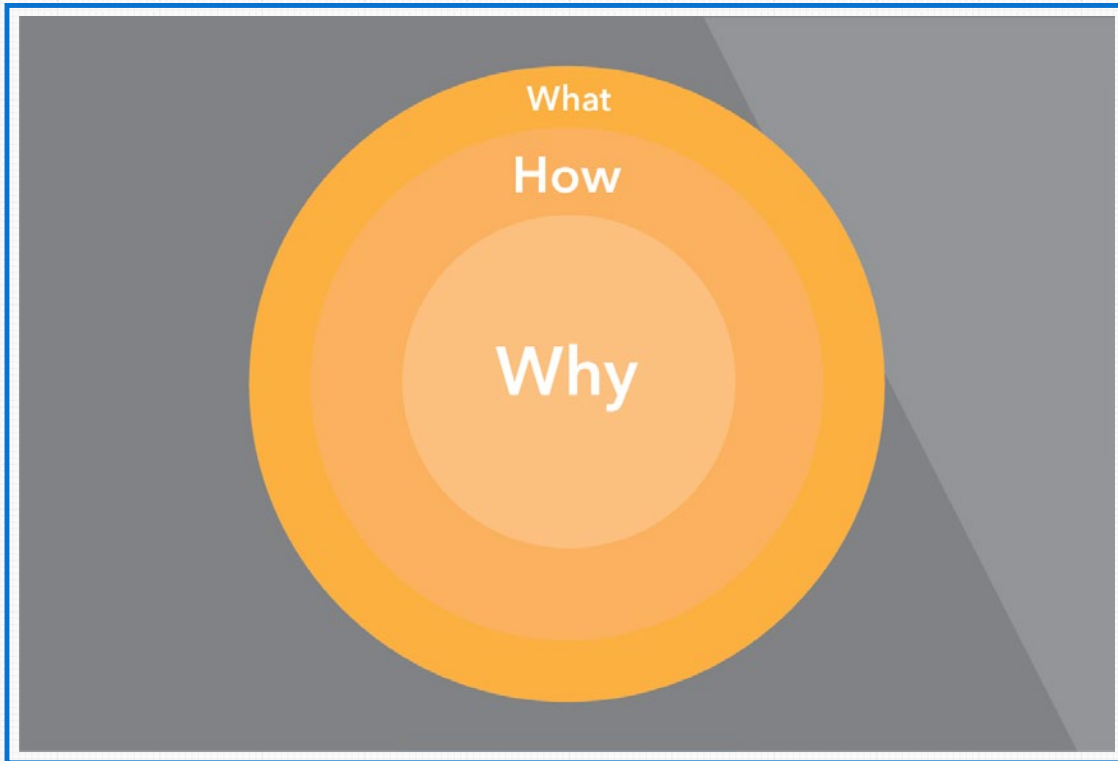
### Pro Tip

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.

Now it’s your turn. Take five minutes to think about these questions. Now, print out the next page and write your answers to them. Pin it up on your wall to be reminded of why you’re here.



# Why I'm Here



Why did I start this business?

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Why am I still in this business?

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What is my brand promise?

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# 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:

<b>Strengths</b> Being neighborhood destination for natural pet food, well-trained employees, strong merchandising strategy	<b>Weaknesses</b> Running out of stock, not much customer engagement online, high overhead and low margins
<b>Opportunities</b> Sponsoring non-profits in community, holding events, working with influencers	<b>Threats</b> 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.

Go ahead - give it a try on the next page!



# My SWOT Analysis



<p><b>Strengths</b></p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p>



# 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 threaten your business. This section can be as long or as short as you want 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?



# My Unique Value Proposition



What do I do better than my competitors?

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What can I add to my products/services to stand out?

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What is my why? (Hint: Use the "Why am I Here?" worksheet)

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Who are my top customers? Why do they come back?

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# 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

Being present on social media is crucial to maintaining an active web presence. However, this doesn't mean you need to be on all of the networks all the time.

**The key is to pick 2-3 top platforms** and focus on building an online community. The third chapter will discuss a few ways you can take advantage of social media to create loyal customers.

[Read the complete guide to using Instagram for pet businesses!](#)

# 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. It doesn't have to be a large budget and it'll go far in getting you noticed. Not sure how to get started? [Click here to read our guide to creating a Facebook ad.](#)





# 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 common to have a yearly marketing plan, which will then be reviewed and possibly altered before the start of the next year.

Identify specific goals that you want to complete 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've identified 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

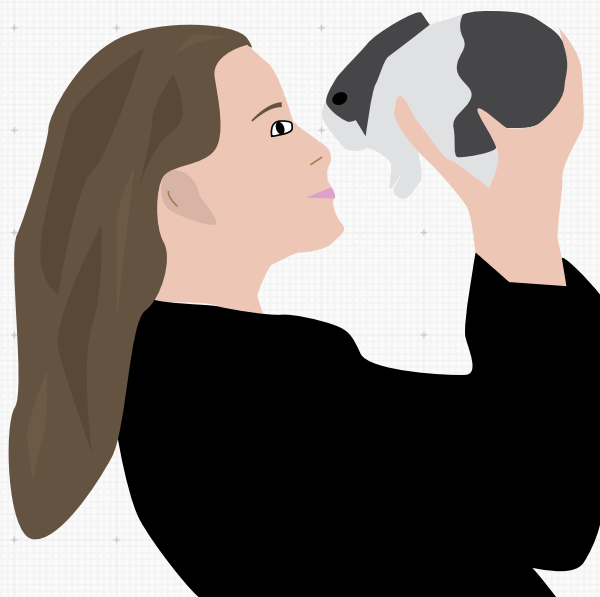
# Step Two: Managing Website Presence

# 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 they will also 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.

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 easy to incorporate a few 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. 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 included steps to being successful with SEO in our article: [competing against e-commerce as a pet store](#).

### 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. Now that you've come up with your initial keywords, you want to use those to conduct some keyword research. Basically, you 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 that you're already using, you'll want to 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. In other words, **you'll get 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 (i.e. UpWork or [here](#)) where you can find high quality freelancers in your budget. Note that this will take some of your marketing 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 a great 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 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; it's one of the most popular platforms in the world. Note that recently, 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 posts that provide engaging + educational content to encourage engagement from your audience.

## Twitter

Twitter is great for real-time conversations with your customers and brief updates (up to 280 characters). It's a great platform for real-time discussions {referred to as Twitter chats}, share pet-related news and updates, and create short & engaging messages with your audience.

## LinkedIn

This social media platform is still the best place to be present if your business is B2B. 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 participating in professional discussions, LinkedIn is where it's at.



# Instagram

Believe it or not, it's also a great place to tell your brand story and connect with your customers on a personal and visual level. Users have the power to be introduced to their new favorite pet brand (like yours!), partner with pet influencers, share pet stories, encourage product interaction, and more.

[Read the complete guide to using Instagram for pet businesses!](#)

# Google+

Believe it or not, being present on Google+ is known to be useful for increasing your website's ranking.

Keeping your page active on Google+ will allow your customers to easily find your place of business (if location-based, like a pet retailer) and may even help boost your website's rank on the search engine.



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 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](#)) - or use Google Calendars - and customize it to fit your business
2. Put together a list of content you want to promote during this time frame (including future content!)
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 to post on social media throughout 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 for relevant hashtags

Many brands make the mistake of creating a social media page, uploading their logo & mission statement, and posting once a week.

Social media doesn't quite work like that. If you're simply publishing quick posts once a week and not engaging with your followers or conducting outreach, you're missing out on many of social media's power to drive business.

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 both 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

We're always happy to offer referrals, advice, and recommendations to any tools you 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.](#)



# Learn More

Here's a few more articles you may want to check out based on your interest in this eBook.

-  [Competing Against E-Commerce as a Brick & Mortar Pet Store](#)
-  [How to Set up an E-Commerce Pet Shop as a Brick-and-Mortar Pet Store](#)
-  [How to Win Over Millennial Pet Owners in 2018](#)
-  [5 Ways to Become a Mobile-Friendly Pet Store](#)
-  [The Quick Guide to Pet Store Marketing in 2018](#)
-  [The Ultimate Guide to Using Instagram to Drive Pet Owners to Your Store](#)
-  [How to Add Customer Value When You Can't Compete on Price](#)
-  [5 Tips to Stay Motivated and Inspired by the Pet Industry](#)

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