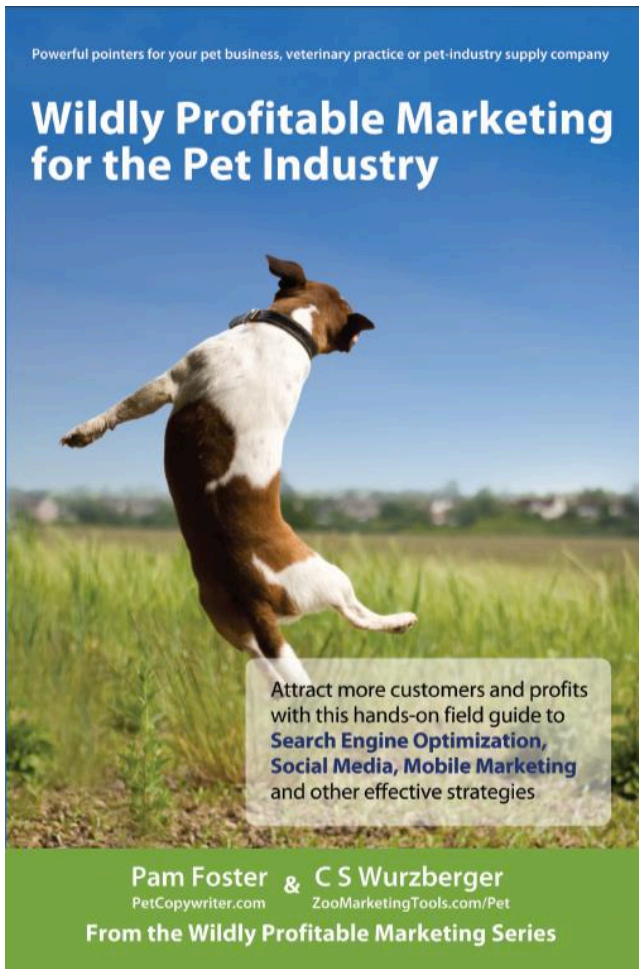


Thank you for requesting a sneak peek
of our marketing guide.

The complete guide is now available at our [online Pawzoola Publishing store](#).



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Enjoy your sneak peek!

Thank you,

Pam Foster and C S Wurzberger
Co-authors
Wildly Profitable Marketing for the Pet Industry

Contents

Foreword by Jamie Carroll, LifeLearn xx

Acknowledgements xx

Introduction xx

PART ONE XX

Start with total clarity about your organization's mission and market.

- 1. Define Your Ultimate Destination** XX
Confirm your business mission so you'll embark on a marketing journey that actually works!
- 2. Track Your Competitors** XX
Understand the other dogs in the pack so you can race ahead of them.
- 3. Know Your Target Audience** XX
Clearly define who you want to attract — and why they'll choose you over other options.

PART TWO XX

Make sure your web foundation is solid, since all marketing roads lead to it.

- 4. Wow Them with Your Website** XX
Turn your site visitors into happy customers with a high-performing site you'll be wagging about.
- 5. Enlist the Best Team to Support Your Mission** XXX
Find a reliable host and the best web team you can afford.

PART THREE XXX

Cultivate profitable relationships using today's best marketing tools.

This is the heart of your marketing... where you'll create a brilliant strategy including popular methods that work wonders today:

- 6. **Attract a Stampede with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) XXX****

Bring a herd of eager prospects to your website and physical location via Google, Bing, Yahoo! and other search engines.

- 7. **Connect with Fans through Social Media (Online Networking) XXX****

Lead fans and followers to you with a clever approach to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube/video, blogs and more.

- 8. **Generate More Opportunities with Email
and Enewsletters XXX****

Bring in more business with emails your fans WANT to receive from you.

- 9. **Lure Local Traffic with Mobile Marketing XXX****

Steer smartphone users to you through QR codes, apps and mobile-friendly website versions.

- 10. **Feed Your Growth through Online Advertising XXX****

Make an impact where your prospects are searching for pet-friendly products and services: use PPC, online ads and directories.

- 11. **Make a Splash with Media and Sponsors via
Public Relations (PR) XXX****

Make the most of online news releases and event announcements as well as local community outreach and nonprofit sponsorships.

- 12. **Turn Offline Marketing into a Flurry of Traffic, Too XXX****

Discover new ways to use traditional print media and other classic offline approaches.

PART FOUR XXX

Put it all together: launch and adjust for ongoing success.

13. Assemble Your Profit Producing Planner XXX

Each step brings you closer to finding more customers and profits.

14. Measure and Maximize Your Marketing Results XXX

Easily monitor your progress and identify intelligent ways to improve your marketing results.

Conclusion XXX

About the Authors XXX

Appendix: Your Profit Producing Planner Worksheets XXX

Marketing Resources XXX

Connect with Fans through Social Media (Online Networking)

Lead fans and followers to you with a clever approach to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube/video, blogs and more.

When you connect one-on-one with your prospects in the various social networks, you can easily turn them into loyal fans... and buying customers.

It's clear that social media is strong and growing as a place where many of your target prospects and ideal customers are congregating with like-minded people, sharing things they like (and don't like), and engaging with pet-related brands that give them strong reasons to engage.

Keep in mind that social media started as free discussion boards where people could discuss and share interests, hobbies, lifestyles, events, pop culture, news events and more. Wikipedia refers to social media as "user-generated content (UGC) or consumer-generated media (CGM)." This means the consumers rule the content, NOT the advertisers. It's very personal.

Facebook, Twitter and other popular social networking sites are gaining thousands if not millions of members each week. And, pet businesses and veterinary practices are finding these sites extremely useful for reaching out to people who love dogs, cats, horses and other animals. More on that in a moment.

First, we'd like to make it clear that when we discuss social media (the platforms) and social networking (the act of connecting) in this guide, we're mainly talking about today's big 4 social venues known to drive business from consumers: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Blogging. There are many other social networks that may benefit you — such as the emerging Google+ network and Pinterest — but

these are the big 4 at the moment when it comes to audience size, participation and potential traffic to your website.

Facebook

On February 1, 2012, Facebook reached 845 million members. And, millions upon millions of those people LOVE pets. They love talking about pets, sharing funny photos and videos, discovering new products and services, talking with pet folks and much more. Some have even set up Facebook pages for their pets — including Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg’s page for Beast, his dog.

It’s easy to maintain a fan-friendly Facebook page for your pet business or veterinary practice, as we explain in a moment.

For now, here’s a snapshot of the Facebook page for Jett and Monkey’s Dog Shoppe.

The screenshot shows the Facebook interface for the page "Jett & Monkey's Dog Shoppe". At the top, there is a search bar and the Facebook logo. The page header includes the name "Jett & Monkey's Dog Shoppe" with a "Like" button and the location "Local Business - Des Moines, Iowa". Below the header is a row of five photos showing dogs and people. The main content area features a "Wall" section with a "Write something..." text box. A post by Kara Berhow is visible, mentioning "Petzlife spray" and receiving a recommendation from the shoppe. The left sidebar contains navigation links for Wall, Info, Friend Activity, Photos, and Events, along with the page's location and a "2,344 like this" count.

Twitter

Twitter's promise is simply this: "Follow your interests, with instant updates from your friends, industry experts, favorites celebrities and what's happening around the world." In 140 characters or fewer, people tweet, share, link and drive all kinds of conversations that can end up leading to business for savvy marketers.

Recently, Twitter reached a milestone of 340 million tweets a day. And, if you look at the demographics, you'll find there's a lot of potential business for you there. The male/female ratio is split nearly evenly, the majority of users are between 26 and 44 years of age, 25% of members follow a brand, and of those... 67% will purchase that brand. Source: [http://marketingguru.com/twitter-statistics-2011-updated stats](http://marketingguru.com/twitter-statistics-2011-updated-stats)

Here's a snapshot of the Cesar Millan's Twitter page.

Whether you're a fan of him or not, you may be impressed to see that he has more than 340,000 followers as of this writing!



YouTube

Online video clips are extremely useful marketing tools when presented properly. They can bring your pet business or veterinary practice to life and be fantastic sales-drivers by giving people a glimpse of what you offer, providing a credible testimonial, showing someone how to do something or introducing yourself to customers, etc.

When you post videos on your own website, you can also post them on your organization's YouTube channel. This is an exciting way to reach thousands of people, because pet fans flock to YouTube to find great videos. Out of the millions of YouTube videos posted in 2011, the second most popular video was a funny dog video called The Ultimate Dog Tease.

Every day, people are looking for entertaining or informative pet videos to watch. Plus, they leave comments on your YouTube page and share the links, building even more and more traffic to your video, your website and your business! Check out the Manchester West Veterinary Hospital's "Pet Tips- Thanksgiving Dangers" YouTube video below to see what we mean:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDHAHs8WXZU



Blogging

As you know, blogs, or weblogs, are everywhere! They allow anyone to post frequent, sequential online essays of thoughts, tips, reviews and web links.

A pet business or veterinary practice blog may include commentary about trends in pet care, new pet products and amazing pet stories, or post questions and answers or even contest invitations. Plus, pet business blog writers and editors often invite readers to respond and post their own remarks. In Chapter 10, we show you how to capitalize on this.

If you're with a company that supplies products or services to pet-related organizations, you can offer product reviews, video demos or specific tips to help them manage their business.

Believe it or not, it IS possible to attract visitors to your business or practice via blogs. Fill your blog with interesting content, and all this new blog content is picked up by search engines to improve your organic search engine rankings. Some of your audience members may become regular blog fans and then become customers. It's that simple.

The Only Natural Pet Store blog is a fine example of how to create a visitor-attracting blog with customer-friendly posts.

Only Natural Pet Store Blog
NATURAL PET HEALTH CARE, NATURAL PET FOODS, HOLISTIC PET SUPPLIES FOR CATS & DOGS

Search this Blog

home products about us natural pet links the truth about heartworms

« Enter Our Winter Whiskers Photo Contest for Your Chance to Win a \$250 Gift Card! Let Dr. Jean Help You Discover the Powerful Benefits of Homeopathy, Chinese Herbs and Herbal Care! »

And the Winner of the Winter Whiskers Photo Contest is...
Posted January 3, 2012 by Only Natural Pet Store in [Only Natural Pet Store News](#). [Leave a Comment](#)

Wow! What a great photo contest! The results are in for our **Winter Whiskers Photo Contest** and after reviewing over 400 fantastic entries, we've chosen **the winners!** Just click on the image below to view our newsletter and take a look at the winners! Plus see all of our fantastic entries!

Winter Whiskers
Photo Contest Winners!
After much deliberation we've decided on the winners for our

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The content of this blog is presented for informational purposes only and is not intended as an endorsement of any product. The information is not intended to be a substitute for visits to your local veterinarian. Instead, these blog posts offer the reader information and opinions written by pet owners and/or veterinarians concerning animal health and products that they have used.

Recent Articles

- [Let Dr. Jean Help You Discover the Powerful Benefits of Homeopathy, Chinese Herbs and Herbal Care!](#)
- [And the Winner of the Winter Whiskers Photo Contest is...](#)
- [Enter Our Winter Whiskers Photo Contest for Your Chance to Win a](#)

The 5 top ways social media can help you grow your business:

Relationship building — This is the best part of social media! You get to write about a topic you're passionate about, and at the same time, turn visitors into raving fans. When your prospects and customers are enjoying your posts, they'll follow what you're doing to the point of becoming big fans and loyal/repeat customers. Beyond that, many of these people are likely to become evangelists for your business and influence their friends and peers to do business with you, too.

Brand building — Having a positive presence in social networks is a great way to raise brand awareness, boost recognition, enhance recall, and increase loyalty for your pet company or veterinary practice. For example, use your posts to reinforce your commitment to pet rescue and adoption, and the mission your business stands for.

Publicity — When you have something exciting or important to share, it's easy to get the word out in social media. Share special events going on at your business, post cute pictures of pet customers, announce a new product line, announce a new video series and so on. You can also use positive posts to modify or address any negative perceptions.

Promotions — Consider the coupon craze and the power of giving your fans exclusive discounts. People love deals, especially if you're giving them something that enhances their lives and supports their love of pets. In addition, exclusive "invitation-only" or "see-it-first" events can be very powerful with your social media followers. (Caution: If you decide to leap into Google+, note that Google+ does not allow contests on their business pages at this time. So far, companies are using Google+ to invite customers, fans and others to join their circle and, therefore, stay on top of what's going on there.)

Market research — Think of social media as a great place to learn about your customers and find niche audiences. For example, you can use Twitter as a search engine of sorts. Simply type in a phrase such as "dog food" and see what people are talking about. Or, see what people are saying about your business! For instance...

- **Twitter:** Use www.twinitor.com, type in your company's name, town and

state (if you rely on local customers) and any keywords you can think of that relate to your business... and voila! You'll see what people are saying.

- **Facebook:** Use Facebook's search feature www.facebook.com/srch.php to look for posts, photos, people, pages, groups and events related to your organization and your prospects' interests.
- **Google and Bing:** Sign up for Google Alerts (<http://www.google.com/alerts>), a free service that alerts you (by email or streaming news feed, your choice) when social media posts or website content includes topics that are relevant to your business. For example, if you sell veterinary software, sign up for "veterinary software" results in Google Alerts. You can also search for your product/service category in Bing News www.bing.com/news. For example, we typed "pet treats" into Bing News search and found articles about a certain brand recall that occurred just days before.

Follow the Social Media 80/20 Rule.

The first biggest mistake many marketers make in social media is talking solely about how wonderful they are or how great the company is. There's nothing more off-putting than a person who is self-absorbed, or worse, a pushy salesperson.

For instance, think about that person at a party who monopolizes the conversation about himself, doesn't ask any questions about you or how you're doing, and ends up trying to sell you life insurance.

Nobody wants to be "spammed" like this in social media. People look for entertainment value, such as fun pet images or videos, plus they like discussing news and events, discovering helpful pet care tips and connecting with others.

If you're a supplier — your prospects are looking for ways to increase profits while running a more productive business or practice. Show them ways to do that.

Therefore, be sure to balance your promotions with rich, magnetic content your fans really want to see.

Spend 80% of your efforts interacting with others and being a helpful and fun source of information and entertainment.

Spend 20% of your efforts promoting your products, services or special deals, etc.

Follow this rule no matter how much time you're spending, whether it's 1 hour a week or 5 hours a day. Check out other pet businesses of your type and see how they use social media. You'll learn a lot just by seeing the various posts and comments for each one.

Equally important: be part of the conversation. The second big mistake companies make with social media is that they slap it up and forget about it. (While researching pet-related blogs, we were amazed to see how many blogs had been created, yet no one has posted anything for over 6 months.) Take the time to comment on what your followers are saying, and thank them for commenting and for tagging your business in their photos.

7 Steps to Kick-Off a Successful Social Media Effort

NOTE: On average, it can take about 3 months for social media conversations to start flowing. Plan on posting about 4 times a week and engaging followers with questions about their favorite animals or topics.

1. Set your objectives and goals.

Identify the primary purpose of your efforts. What are you trying to do?

- Build awareness
- Generate leads and sales
- Improve loyalty and repeat sales

Determine what would be considered a success:

- More web traffic
- Friends, fans, followers
- Social mentions and goodwill

Set S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, Time-Based):

For instance:

- X number of fans in 12 months
- Grow sales by 20% in 12 months
- Increase appointments by 18% each month

2. Determine the brand “impression” you want to communicate.

- Identify the key messages you want to project consistently across all platforms.
- Always consider your USP: that Unique Solution Proposition or special something that sets you apart.
- Write company profiles that focus on the prospect: why they’ll want to engage with you.
- Be sure to clearly stand out: offer something delightful that differentiates you from everyone else.
- Always keep a short attention span in mind when you post messages.

3. Find your best audience.

Social media is a cluttered, crowded place. Identify where to put your focus — what tools will help you get in front of your ideal prospect on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and/or your Blog.

- Identify your customer groups. (Revisit Chapter 2 if you’re not sure.)
- Segment them into small sub-groups that might be congregating online. For example:
 - Pet parents looking for pet-friendly travel services.
 - Veterinary practice managers looking to increase cat wellness visits or senior pet wellness visits.
 - Dog agility clubs looking for versatile agility equipment.
- Research your marketplace to identify any sites or fan pages they’re active within:
 - Facebook

- Twitter
- YouTube
- Certain blogs, such as cat-lover blogs or horse-trainer association blogs

- Explore your current customer groups: What is their relationship with you?
 - Aware, but never purchased
 - Single purchase
 - Repeat purchases
 - Advocate of your brand

- What does the audience know about you?
 - Nothing
 - Some awareness
 - Huge fan of your brand

Important Pointer!

Searching for your ideal customers in social media and monitoring the conversations for opportunities are super-important activities that can pay you back with more visitors and sales.

Therefore, devote some time to this. Block out an afternoon to get started. As we mentioned earlier, you can use www.twinitor.com to see what people are saying in Twitter, and www.facebook.com/srch.php Facebook discoveries.

Here's what you can do with the various opportunities you find:

- A mom mentions that her family of four (one of them is furry) is planning a trip to your town, and they ask their friends and followers for suggestions on where to stay, where to eat, what to do that's fun, etc., in places that accept pets. You could chime in with recommendations and offer them a \$5 discount coupon toward a visit to your dog wash service in case the furry friend needs a bath during the trip.

- Or, you receive a Google Alert email for posts including questions about how

to choose the right organic puppy food. You can reach out and answer their questions and become the go-to resource for pet food advice, etc. The people you reached out to will appreciate your generosity and share that information. They'll buy their organic puppy food from your pet food store, of course!

4. Hunt for fresh ideas to talk about in social media.

Stay current on what's happening in your industry, and research what your ideal customers are looking for.

- Read what others are saying in your industry:
 - Websites, blogs and press releases
 - E-books and books
 - Industry periodicals (offline and online)
 - Twitter feeds by prominent people in your industry
 - Podcasts
 - Online videos from your industry

- Keep an eye on pet news and trends with these tools:
 - www.Google.com/alerts: As mentioned, sign up for Google Alerts by typing in relevant phrases such as dog, cat, horse, pet, etc., and receive streaming or batched email results from the web. Also, search Bing News for topics and trends related to your products and services.
 - Technorati: Subscribe to this leading blog search engine to stay informed of industry blog posts.
 - Trendrr: Visit this site to see how your brand or product is trending compared with others. Trendrr uses comparison graphing to show relationships and discover trends in real time.

5. Create great content. The right words matter... more than you know.

- Write in your own voice, making it personable (people follow people, not brands!).
- Use the same language and tone your target audience is comfortable with.
- Keep the content rolling (blog posts at least 1x/week, other social sites more

often).

- Be open and honest.
- Meet your target audience's expectations: reply to comments, answer questions, reach out.
- Consider this every time: What benefits do they receive after reading your content?

For example, write a post along these lines, "We're happy to announce that Sadie is recovering very nicely following her hip surgery with our new laser equipment. She was up and walking quicker than we expected, with no signs of discomfort! We'll post pictures later today after Sadie enjoys some private time."

- Be sure to include relevant keywords in your social media content whenever possible, including your page names, profiles and even status updates. For example, your blog post titles might be along the lines of, "How to trim cat claws the easy way," or "Myths and facts about dog massage." They all help with your search engine results.

Here are some fascinating facts we found for Facebook content best practices:

- **Posting 1-4 times a week produces 71% higher user engagement** than 5 or more posts for retail brands: quality trumps frequency.
- **Posts containing fewer than 80 characters produce 66% higher engagement** than longer posts (wow!).
- **Posts containing questions generate more than double the amount of comments**, even if they may get fewer "likes."
- **Top retail sales keywords that produced more user engagement:** "\$ off" and "coupon" worked best (55% higher user engagement rates); while the words "sale" and "percent off" (or % off) produced the lowest; even posts about offers less than \$10 off produce 17% higher engagement than percent-off posts.

- **The 2 most effective types of posts contain a single photo attachment or use only words.** Posts containing only words produce 94% higher engagement than average. (Again, wow!)
- **Wednesday is the best day to post**, although you obviously shouldn't post ONLY on Wednesday.

Source: Buddy Media <http://tinyurl.com/6wjkgdg>

6. Share, discuss and connect with your “peeps.”

As we mentioned in our 80/20 Rule... spend more time building relationships and communicating with your ideal peeps (your target prospects) than promoting your organization.

As you create and share more and more amazing content, your online audience will grow organically. The number of loyal followers will grow.

Here are some ways to make all of this WORTH IT.

- Post useful messages across all your social media platforms, such as your extended holiday hours (retailers) or “See you at SuperZoo (Booth 2111) or the North American Veterinary Conference (Booth 3665)!” (if you're a supplier).
- Drive people to your website for more info regarding a specific event, new product or service.
- Keep the relationship alive.
- Don't neglect your fans once the connection has been made.
- Keep them engaged by sparking conversations and sharing common interests.

Want proof that this works? Platinum Paws announced a new shipment of duck feet treats on their store's Facebook page, and sold out the treats that day. Wow.

7. Schedule your social media.

Now that you know what to post and who to post it to... the next step is to create an easy-to-follow schedule for your efforts.

If you don't schedule your efforts in a systematic way and then track them, how will you know where you want to end up, or how you're doing?

To put this into perspective, we like this Alice in Wonderland conversation when Alice is talking to the Cat:

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care..." said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

"... so long as I get SOMEWHERE," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

The key to not wandering around like a lost pup in social media is to **schedule it**:

- Chart out and manage social media time on a calendar.
- Include your posting and monitoring frequency.
- Keep track of when people re-tweet your Twitter posts and "like" or comment on your Facebook posts.

Here are some examples to show you how to do this. We assume you already have a Twitter profile, Facebook Fan Page and blog setup. If you need help setting up your social profiles, the web resources in the back of this guide may be able to help you.

Example 1: 30-minute/day social media plan

15 min.: Content creation

Write a blog post about the latest new service you offer, and include a related tip that helps your audience.

5 min.: Content sharing

Post on a short summary on Facebook and Twitter linking back to your Blog.

5 min.: Connections

Search Facebook and Twitter for more people to connect with.

5 min.: Community building

Monitor your Facebook Fan Page community, respond to comments, and start a new conversation.

“Like” other Facebook pages.

Example 2: 30-minute/day social media plan

Plan to set this up in 60 minutes per month of content and video creation. Devote 1 hour per month to write 16-20 posts at one time that you’ll use throughout the month. This will give you more time for community building each day.

5 min.: Content sharing

Create a new written blog post or one with a video of your pet customers doing something cute related to your business (such as your store’s pet Halloween costume contest). Also post it on YouTube.

10 min.: Connections

Search Facebook and Twitter for people you want to connect with.

15 min.: Community building

Join a Facebook Fan Page and have a conversation.

“Like” other Facebook pages.

This will give you a great starting point to build upon.

In Chapter 14, we show you how to measure the effectiveness of your social media efforts.

Two more important social networks for your pet business or veterinary practice.

You may be wondering why we didn’t focus on LinkedIn yet. Well, it’s a bit different

from the big 4 that we talked about.

That's because LinkedIn is more of a "colleague network" — where your pet-industry peers and other professional connections can discuss the business side of marketing, and promote each other.

Someone recently explained the difference in this way (we're paraphrasing):

Facebook and Twitter are for socializing with consumers, buddies, family members, celebrities and brands.

LinkedIn is for business networking.

LinkedIn is a great tool for connecting to your pet-related community, including peers, vendors and marketers.

- With LinkedIn, you can connect with your professional peers and discuss similar challenges with them.
- You can join pet-business or veterinary marketing groups, such as:
 - Pet Online Marketing Group (Dogs, Cats and More), and
 - VetDVM: Veterinary and Pet Businesses.
- The more you participate in group conversations in a helpful way — the more goodwill you spread for yourself!

Finally, you'll also find a lively and supportive group of professionals at PetIndustryTV.com, the Women in the Pet Industry Association and the Women's Horse Industry Association. These are great places where like-minded marketers come together to bounce marketing ideas off each other, find fresh strategies and gain support. Plus, receive valuable tips you can use immediately to find more customers and profits.

In Chapter 13, we show you how to include social media in your Profit Producing Planner.

But first, let's move on and discover some other powerful marketing methods.

CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY/ACTION ITEMS:

Connect with Fans Through Social Media (Online Networking)

- Once your website is optimized for traffic and sales, it's just as important to plan for how you'll connect with your prospects and turn them into buying customers.
- Social media is exploding as a way to reach your prospects, turn them into fans and then convert them into visitors and evangelists for your business.
- Be sure to follow the best practices of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Blogging to start engaging with prospects in a powerful way.
- A big part of social media success is finding the places where your target audience(s) are congregating; the groups and sites they flock to when discussing pet services, care, products and other topics related to the industry.
- You can get started right now by following our 7 Steps to Kick-Off Your Successful Social Media Efforts!

CHAPTER 7 Additional Notes:

The complete guide — *Wildly Profitable Marketing for the Pet Industry* — is available at our [online Pawzoola Publishing store](#).