New pet sitter or veteran, we constantly think about how to grow our business. How do I get my name out there? How do I get the phone to ring? How do I get more clients? Hoping for the fairy “DOG” mother to come down and grant our wishes…and, Taa-Daa!!! Marketing. It is no magic wand, but it’ll get the job done if you spend a little time and energy putting the plan into action.

It’s wise to take the time to create a marketing strategy to ensure all your communications help you market your business. Know your business position: a one-sentence description of your business and what makes you unique, Identify your ideal prospect, why they should use your business who is your competition, and how much time and money you’re willing to spend.

**Basics:** Just to make sure we’ve covered the basics…
Be sure to have your company name logo, phone number, e-mail address, etc… on every piece of communication from your business: business cards, brochures, letterhead, envelope, e-mail. Consider using color when you have your business documents printed…it stands out.

**Cheap and Easy – Business Cards:** They don’t cost much and you can use them so many ways to promote your business.

- It may sound simple, but hand out your card to everyone; everywhere you go, whenever you can.
- Tie them to dog treats and hand out on the street to people walking dogs.
- Go to parks, beaches where people and dogs go. Set up a “free water” station and hand out your cards.
Is there a retail store that allows pets? Provide a “cookie jar” filled with treats & your cards. Refill it weekly.

If a friendly dog is outside a store, waiting for its owner leave it at the dogs’ feet. BE the Business – YOU, your vehicle, your pets can be walking billboards.

Have shirts, sweatshirts, hats printed with your logo. Wear them everywhere you go.

Make capes, like the Guide Dogs use for your own dogs, with your logo ironed on.

Create logo bandannas for your dogs and cats.

Put magnets on your vehicle. Park your vehicle on a high traffic street whenever you can. NOTE: there is controversy over the use of magnets but pet sitters while they’re on a visit to a client’s house. This is a personal decision you must make with your client.

**Walk the Beat:** Make friends with the pet professionals in your area: groomers, pet stores, vets, kennels and trainers.

- Take time to learn names and make regular visits (monthly, weekly) with inexpensive food treats, like a plate of cookies.
- Many have space for cards or brochures: ask to post yours.
- Send thank you notes or baskets of food saying “Thanks for the referral” Even if they didn’t recommend you, they’ll remember the basket and give your name & number out next time!
- Where the Wild Things Are: Whenever there’s a pet event in your area, be a part of it. This means walk-a-thons, free vacation days, dog park clean-up, adoption fairs at the local Humane Society or other animal shelters.
- Have a booth and hand out cards or other giveaways with your name & phone number.
- Donate a gift certificate as a prize (10% of first visit, one visit free) or as a gift to anyone who adoption an animal.
- Bring your dogs, all wearing your business attire.

**Head for Home:** We’ve been to all the other places people go for their pets. Now hit them where they live.

- Find apartment/condo complexes that allow dogs. Post business cards or brochures in a central area.
- Give your cards to real estate agents, condo & apartment management to hand out to new and existing tenants.
- Create welcome “pet owners” packages for the same group. Include all the pet resources in the area.
- Do a “pet census”. Knock on doors. If there are pets in the house, get names & addresses. Provide business card & logos give-away (magnets, etc.)

- Use the list you create from the above census, or purchase a list and send a brochure or other piece.

- Community involvement: General involvement in the community not only creates good will for your company, but is an excellent networking opportunity.

- Do a presentation or seminar on pet first aid, or other pet-related issue for rescue groups, breed groups, community groups (JC’s, Lions Club, etc.)

- Create flyers on different topics: (“what to do with a stray animal”, “reasons to spay/neuter”, etc.) with your logo on the back. Distribute at shelters, vets.

This list barely scratches the surface of ways to get the word out about your business and doesn’t even touch on the traditional advertising venues” TV, radio, newspaper, etc…

With a combination of imagination, elbow grease and footwork, you’ll find your phone ringing off the hook with prospective clients. Tell the fairy “DOG” mother to keep the three wishes…you’ve got it covered.