

Blogs #1-8:

Running a Dog Grooming Salon

(Links to each blog in left border)

Do you want to take the next step in dog grooming and manage your own salon? To successfully run your own business, you will need to know much more than giving your doggie clients a special look. Now, you will be working with human clients, staff, scheduling and paperwork as well as ensuring all dogs get high-quality grooming.

Our next series of blogs will provide some tips to running a successful dog grooming salon.

#1 Setting Business Hours

Most companies are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but, unfortunately, this won't work for your dog grooming business. As a service business, a lot of variables are involved in setting hours – perhaps most importantly, knowing when your customers need you open for business.

- *When do customers need you to be open?* Probably they need to drop off their dog before they go to work and pick-up after work, so 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. won't work for them.
 - *When can your full-time and part-time employees work?* Again, you may have to set up flexible schedules for groomers to meet your customers' needs.
 - *Are you allowing each employee one or two days off every week?*
 - *Are you allowing each employee times for breaks and lunch?*
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- *What is your promised “turn-around time” on each dog? Are you setting work schedules to ensure your customers get their dogs on time?*
- *Are you scheduling extra time for hard-to-groom dogs, such as Pomeranians and Maltese?*
- *Do you have certain people scheduled during and after the time dogs are being groomed to keep the salon clean?*

Most grooming salons are open on Saturdays, and sometimes Sundays, since that is when customers find it most convenient to bring their dogs in. Therefore, they schedule alternate days off, such as Mondays and Tuesdays, to serve as their “weekend.” Others schedule workers throughout the week, so they are never closed, or stay open later on certain days.

Consider all the variables above. Being open 7:30a.m. to 6:30 p.m. would be convenient for customers who work, but does it work for your employees and revenue goals?

#2 Time Management

Time management is an important element in meeting your revenue goals. You need to have the right number of dogs per groomer, but you also need to limit the number of groomers to make a profit. Therefore, each groomer must be as productive as possible. That goes for the other salon employees as well.

To manage your salon to be as productive as possible, try this exercise. Determine the optimum amount of grooming time for each breed type (such as 40 minutes to an hour for short-coated dogs and up to two to three hours for big, long-coated dogs.) You have to take into consideration what each dog needs. If an English Sheepdog needs a bath, cut, dematting, deshedding and blow out,

how long will all that take a good groomer to finish? Although this estimate never should be considered a rule, it sets a standard to work toward.

Do this same exercise for other regular tasks, such as checking a dog in and out, bathing and administrative duties.

Even good groomers can have less productive days, and new groomers can become stressed if they are held to same time limits as experienced groomers. Appropriate scheduling of your groomers according to productivity is one way to keep your salon working smoothly. Here are some other time management tips:

- *Know your employees' capacity for stress.* When they are hitting overload, they may need to take a short break to give them a "second wind."
 - *Stay organized.* Administrative employees, such as the receptionist/office manager and general manager, should take time at the end of each day to briefly organize their desks and make task lists for the next day or week.
 - *If you have a lot of down time during the day, take the opportunity to review your schedule and reevaluate your priorities to see that your employees are steadily utilized.*
 - *Eliminate time wasters:*
 - Are some employees taking a lot of personal calls?
 - Is there a delay in getting dogs bathed because of a lack of equipment?
 - Is the drop-off and pick-up for dogs as efficient as possible?
 - Are dogs assigned to the appropriate groomers based on experience?
 - Are appointments made correctly to avoid customers waiting and groomers wasting time?
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Good time management is vital to providing good customer service and high-quality grooming to your customers, thus leading to your salon's success.

#3 Drop-Offs and Pick-Ups

As has been said in previous sections, a good system for customers to drop off and pick up their dogs is essential to keeping customers happy and your salon running efficiently.

When setting your schedule, you need to consider the following:

- *When is the best time for customers to bring their dogs in? If they work, they would prefer a time before 8 a.m.*
- *When do customers plan to pick up their dogs? Some may want to pick them up by 2 p.m. and some can't pick the dog up until after work at 6 p.m.*
- *Do you have the right person(s) in place to handle the morning drop-offs? Are they there on time every day and do they know how handle the paperwork efficiently?*
- *Do you have the right person(s) in place to handle the pick-ups? Are they able to get the right dog with the right customer and quickly do any billing paperwork, so the customer isn't kept waiting?*

Another consideration in this process is making sure the dogs dropped off are immediately taken to a separate area, so you don't have dogs kept waiting in the reception area where they might start fighting or playing. Consider having a way to separate dogs when more than one or two is being dropped off at the same time. For example, have someone there to take them immediately back to a crate or provide a fenced-off area.

#4 Hiring Employees

Every business has a cycle of hiring, training, firing/losing and hiring more employees. You must have a good way to attract new employees as well as keep your good ones.

Job Description

One of the first things to do in the hiring process is compose job descriptions for each type of employee you use, so you know how to judge which applicant will work best. Here are examples of job descriptions for groomers and bathers. (Not every salon will have these work duties set as described below.)

- **Dog Groomer:** Combs, clips, trims, and shapes dogs' coats using knowledge of canine characteristics and grooming techniques and styles:
 - Reads written or receives oral instructions to determine clipping pattern desired.
 - Studies dog breeds and grooming standards to achieve desired style.
 - Clips dog's hair according to determined pattern or customer requests, using electric clippers, comb, and other grooming tools.
 - Combs and shapes dog's coat.
 - Talks to dog or uses other techniques to calm animal.

 - **Dog Bather/Grooming Assistant:** Prepares dogs for grooming:
 - Combs out heavy mats from dog's coat, using steel comb and dematting tool.
 - Brushes hair to remove dead skin, using dog brush.
 - Washes dog, using appropriate shampoo and conditioner.
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- Dries dog, using towel and electric drier.
- Trim dog's toenails, using nail clippers.

Once you know what you require of each type of employee, you may also want to list experience or education required. Many salons require a high-school diploma and some animal care experience. They may also require grooming applicants to “audition” with a dog in the salon. This information should help you set an hourly wage for your employees based on the requirements of their jobs.

Attracting Potential Employees

The next challenge is to attract good candidates to your salon for an interview. Newspaper ads, Internet job listings, word of mouth references and other methods are used to bring in potential employees.

The job ad you write for any of these alternatives should include the name of the position (dog groomer), amount of experience and education required (high school diploma), the general location of the salon (downtown) and how to contact and/or send a resume to the employer (email, fax or regular mail) – or where to come in to fill out a job application. You may also include pay/commission, hours needed or other items you think will help bring in the best-qualified people.

Interviewing Candidates

If you want to audition groomers to ensure they know proper grooming standards, be sure they are aware of this requirement before their interview. Candidates may also bring in resumes, letters of recommendation or portfolios showing “before” and “after” photos of dogs they have groomed.

A good way to start an interview is with a general question, such as “Tell me about yourself.” Other questions might include:

- *Have you worked with animals before?*
- *What do you like best about working with animals?*
- *Why did you leave your last job?*

Open-ended questions, which require more than a “yes” or “no” answers are the best way to obtain information. Be aware that some questions are not allowed in a job interview, such as “Are you married?” and “What is your nationality?” Because these questions may be used to discriminate against certain people, they are not permitted by law.

Be prepared to answer questions regarding pay and commission, hours needed, special duties, time off and general expectations. Make sure your choice for the opening knows when to come in and to whom to report.

#5 Management

Once you have hired employees, you have to manage them to keep them working efficiently and contently. Being a manager is a challenge but can be very rewarding.

As a manager, you have a multitude of responsibilities. You may:

- *Oversee the salon's employees*
- *Set work schedules*
- *Fire and hire employees*
- *Keep the budget and meet revenue goals*
- *Distribute commission and/or pay checks*
- *Provide customer service*
- *Make sure grooming and salon standards are being met*
- *Order supplies*
- *Ensure safety standards are met*
- *Groom regularly or on occasion*

Another important part of management is always looking for better ways to supervise and run the business. You may decide that by getting client appointment software you can save 50 percent of the time this usually takes. Or you may work with your groomers to find the best methods to provide high-quality grooming faster.

One of your main duties is communicating to your employees such as:

- *Providing orientation and training.* Before employees begin a new job, the manager should provide general business information, such as the salon's hours, the days off, keeping track of hours and commissions, etc. Many managers also provide on-the-job training to ensure their groomers are always improving their skills.
 - *Providing employee feedback.* Your employees want and need to know how they are doing in their jobs. If Mary is doing a great job, be sure you tell her so. If Tom isn't working well with the other groomers, meet with him to see if you can work out a solution.
 - *Communicating and enforcing policies and procedures.* The larger the business, the more policies exist on such things as
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sexual harassment, absenteeism or vacations. Procedures could include keeping your time sheet up to date, how to work with the person checking in dogs or requirements for ongoing skills improvement.

6 Tax Requirements

To ensure your business is staying within its legal requirements, you (perhaps with assistance from an accountant) must keep track of tax requirements. This includes keeping track of contract employees' time, computing cost of goods sold, keeping track of sales tax and more.

Tax filing may differ from country to country, but in most cases, you must pay income tax either as a sole proprietor (self-employed), partnership or corporation. Here is an explanation of some of the major United States tax forms you will use for federal and state tax reporting:

Federal Tax Forms

- *W-2 Form*: A wage and tax statement showing income and taxes paid during the year for each employee. You must give this to all employees at the beginning of the year so they can file taxes.
 - *W-4 Form*: This provides your employer with the number of deductions you are reporting so that the correct amount of federal income tax can be deducted from your pay.
 - *Form 1099-MISC*: This is used to report miscellaneous income such as payments to any non-employee contract employees who do not receive benefits but get an hourly fee for services.
 - *Form 1120*: If your business is incorporated, it must fill out a corporate tax form to report income and such items as charity deductions, cost of goods sold and the year-end balance sheet.
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- *Form 1065*: If you run your business as a partnership (two or more owners), you use this form to report income, losses, deductions, etc.
- *Form 1040 – Schedule C*: This form is used for sole proprietorships (one owner) to report income, cost of goods, etc.

State Tax Forms

- *State Income Tax*: Some states require income tax as well, so check this out when filing taxes.
- *Sales and Use Tax Return*: This is a state form required to report total taxable sales. Dog grooming is considered a service business, so you must file this form. The sales tax is a combination of state and local amounts.
- *Franchise Tax Form*: If you are incorporated or a partnership, you may need to fill out additional state forms on franchise tax.

Check online or call the IRS and state controller's office for the forms you need.

In the United Kingdom, call HM Revenue & Customs or check online for instructions on tax filing.

Many small businesses use accounting software (e.g., QuickBooks) and tax software (TurboTax). These programs are extremely helpful in determining income, deductions and cost of goods for tax purposes.

7 Business Forms and Records

Your love of dogs may have attracted you to the dog grooming business, but as a manager of a salon, you may need to acquire a love of paperwork as well. To keep your business running efficiently, you must use appropriate forms to keep an ongoing record

of purchases, timesheets, payroll, individual dog grooming requirements and more.

Here are some common forms you might use:

- *Accounts Payable Form*: used to maintain and track the progress of past and future bill payments.
- *Accounts Receivable Form*: Used to keep track of the money due to you and to help you identify accounts in need of further collection activities.
- *Order Form*: Used to fill out customers' grooming requirements.
- *Invoice*: Used to bill each customer for work performed.
- *Sales Receipt*: Provided to each customer upon payment of services.
- *Purchase Order*: Used to document all product purchases for such items as grooming supplies, office supplies, etc.
- *Employee Time Sheets*: Used for each employee to keep track of their time for payment purposes.
- *Commission Sheets*: Used for each employee and you to keep track of commissions owed.
- *Payroll Record*: Used to track wage payments and applicable taxes.
- Used to track your petty cash vouchers and keep a running balance of petty cash.

8 Processing the Work

Now you have the forms, so how do you use them properly and keep your business running smoothly?

Processing the work gets back to the employees you hire. If you have a very small business with just a few groomers, you may want

to handle most of the paperwork yourself. But once you have more than three groomers, you might want to consider hiring some help.

You may need assistance from a receptionist, bookkeeper and/or administrative assistant. You may also consider hiring contract help instead of keeping someone on the payroll full-time. Many businesses hire accountants just to complete their tax returns.

You need to be sure each employee understands what their duties are and the proper way to use the forms that apply to their job. For example, the receptionist should know exactly what information should be put on an order form when she takes calls or greets customers. Employees should understand what is required from them on time sheets and commission records.

Your job as manager is to make sure everyone is keeping up with these forms, so you can run the business. Paperwork, or lack thereof, can bog down an otherwise successful business.

As you may have already developed standard procedures for grooming dogs, also develop procedures to be used for each major administrative task, such as keeping payroll records, tracking commissions and greeting customers and gathering their information.

You might also look into various software programs that are now available to help with routine tasks. For example, software programs are available to handle client appointment and keep track of grooming requirements. Again, for financial records, QuickBooks or other accounting software will help you keep track of your purchases, invoices, product sales, cost of goods, accounts receivable and payable and payroll.

One of the most challenging aspects of managing a business is finding the correct balance of employees to handle incoming work. Too many groomers may cause a lot of down time; too few may make customers wait too long. With trial and error – plus constant flexi-

bility – you will find the right mix to make your dog grooming salon successful.

