

GREG PREITE

Building an Online Dog Boutique

Your Blueprint For Profits



After receiving his Master's Degree from the University of Southern California, Greg began his professional career as a Physical Therapist before moving on to the mortgage industry. Being a true entrepreneur, he transitioned to the internet and today has an industry leading online dog boutique, DoggieDesigner (www.doggiedesigner.net). With customers all over the world, he now educates and mentors others on how to create business success online. He is an accomplished freelance copywriter, specializing in sales and marketing, and is an influential and entertaining public speaker. A native of Montana, Greg has two children and currently resides in Southern California with his wife, Kimberly who is an award-winning high school English teacher.

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Introduction

Just about everyone loves dogs, am I right? After all, who can resist the “smile” of a wrinkled-faced Pug or happy go lucky demeanor of a playful Maltese? Our love for our furry friends has caused us all to do some crazy things along the way- Elvis costumes on Halloween, a Christmas stocking with “Fido’s” name on the fireplace (probably filled with more toys than anyone else’s), Vet bills that we pay even when we can not afford them, and even specialty diets. Yes, the dog is the only one in the family that actually gets a specialty diet! Go figure. And here’s the one that I really love... somehow, you planned on only one or maybe two canines in the household and all of the sudden you are finding yourself outnumbered. Your spouse looks at you as if to say “How did this happen?” but they know better not to say anything because some battles just must be conceded.

So now your crazy canine compulsion has culminated in a quest for cash. In other words, you are so in love with your doggie that you decided that the best thing for you to do was start an online dog boutique. After all, the only thing that stinks more than a day-old poop bag is today’s job market! Everyone will tell you that to really succeed in business you have to find your passion and develop it. Since an online business sounds easy enough, why not combine your enthusiasm for pups with the power of the internet and start creating your fortune from home? Is that how this all got started? If so, you are not alone. Welcome to the club!

Before I go any further, I feel that it is necessary to give you a little background on myself. If you are going to proceed to the next page, you might as well know something about the guy writing it.

I can’t really take credit for my existence in the online dog boutique world. That honor is bestowed upon my wife, Kimberly. She’s a high school English teacher who just happens to be one of those insanely obsessive dog people. You know the type. If we are driving and come across a dog happily playing outside without its human, she is compelled to make me stop so that we can make sure that the dog is safe, has plenty of food and water, and can navigate itself back home. I’m relatively positive that a child playing alone wouldn’t gather near as much attention. (Funny, I think I just heard a few of you laugh as you can recall doing the same thing at least once or twice.) Anyway, Kim’s love for dogs is what caused me to take a hard look into this industry years ago when we stumbled upon Jack, a wonderful

gentleman who was looking to retire and sell his wholesale dog clothing business. In the ten years prior to meeting Jack, I had built a successful career in the mortgage industry and had worked for large financial institutions. I really thought I had found my calling back then, but that was before the credit collapse and mortgage meltdown hit the entire country. The bank I worked for at the time literally was swallowed up in a sea of foreclosures and loss, and I was forced to look for something new. Enter Jack!

Now, my years in the mortgage industry taught me how to market myself, how to develop and cultivate business relationships, how to speak in front of hundreds of people, and how to close a sale. I figured that if I could sell a million dollar mortgage, how tough could it be to sell dog clothes, collars, and leashes? I had a professor my senior year in college who used to say “Sometimes you can be perfectly logical *and dead wrong!*” There is another saying, which I am sure you have heard, that simply points out that sometimes “*You don’t know what you don’t know.*” I was right about a few things, namely that my sales experience would indeed help me to develop some critical business relationships in the dog industry, but the thing that I really “didn’t know that I didn’t know” was the intricacy of building a business **online**. Being able to capture the attention of a web surfer that I have never met (and probably never will) and actually get that person to pull out their credit card and spend money at my website was a concept that sounded so basic and simple to me, yet turned out to be incredibly complex. Luckily for me, rather than finding this complexity to be demoralizing and overwhelming, I found it to be fascinating. If you want your online boutique to really flourish and thrive, then you must have this same fascination and fervor.

So there I was, proud owner of an online store and pretty much clueless when it came to websites and the internet. Actually, defining my level of incompetence as *pretty much* clueless is giving myself far more credit than I deserved at that time. In reality, I was *completely* clueless. I remember one day during the summer of 2008 when someone told me I should start “blogging.” Oh good grief, not only did this sound far too involved and difficult, but the only thing I knew about blogging was how to spell it, and that was a stretch! That idea went in one ear and right out the other.

Given the fact that my company, Doggie Designer, sells wholesale and also dropships for hundreds of websites worldwide, I had this huge database of account holders. Being the *marketing genius* (LOL) that I thought I was back then, I decided that it would be smart to contact all of my account holders, see how they were doing, and offer any assistance that I could. Therefore, during the later part of 2009 I set out to do just that. I started making phone calls, sending emails, and attempting to contact this list of nearly 2000 people who had all opened an online dog boutique within the past year and registered for an account with Doggie Designer. The result of this campaign was so shocking that it stopped me dead in my tracks. Roughly 80% were already out of business before they could make it to their one year anniversary! These were people who had spent thousands of dollars from their savings and retirement accounts to get started. They invested hours and hours of work into their websites. Some were even planning on this internet venture to generate supplemental income because they had been laid off or retired. A reality check for me? You bet it was! Here’s what I realized in that instant...

Having an online dog boutique only guarantees that you will spend money, not make money!

People like to tell you we are in a “recession-proof” industry. **They are wrong.** People assume that if you have a website with a good product and a good price you will get tons of sales. **They are wrong.** And some people will think that all you need to succeed is a fancy site combined with a passion for dogs. **They are wrong too.**

Here’s the truth...

Having a website is meaningless. Anyone can do it and, in fact, millions of people have. The key, and believe me this is 99% of the game, is being able to market your website effectively so that people can find you. If you can’t do that, it’s like having a lemonade stand in your backyard- no matter how good the lemonade is, the only ones that will buy it are a few friends and family members. When they aren’t thirsty any more, you are out of business. The number one reason my ex-account holders would give me for shutting down was that they were not getting visitors to their site and they were not getting orders.

And so, my friends, this leads me to the purpose of writing this book. I have spent the last year and a half of my life learning how to effectively market online. I have talked with dozens and dozens of frustrated boutique owners and discovered their challenges. I have developed my skills in ways that I never thought I would. Yes, I can now even spell B-L-O-G. I have watched way too many people waste way too much money only to disappear way too quickly- sometimes before they even get started. This book offers you the truth. It’s not some fancy piece of propaganda designed to convince you of how easy it is to start an online business. It’s not a “fluff” piece intended to sugar coat reality or tell you that I can “Get you to page one of Google.” It is a reference manual that will take you from ground zero with your online dog boutique and give you a strategic, proven plan for success. My goal is that you keep next to your computer and learn something new every time you pick it up. Yes, some of the concepts may be more difficult than others, but unlike most reference books, I promise to keep you entertained, keep it interesting, and keep it simple.

Hey, I’ve “been there, done that” and now it is my turn to share my knowledge, my experiences, my successes, and my failures with you, in hopes that your path to your dreams and goals might be just a little bit shorter.

To your success,

Greg

Getting Started

Who Should Read This Book

There are literally thousands of people (if not more) holding on to the dream of building a giant business online, running it from home, and attaining freedom from the everyday grind of a job. If you find yourself in this boat, realize that the strong dream is a must, but equally important is a blueprint. Any viable project or venture starts with a plan, a roadmap, something to guide you into the unknown. That is exactly the purpose of this book, to provide you with a place to start and target at which to shoot. There is a Confucius saying, *“Man who aim at nothing is sure to hit it!”* I’m looking to put it all into perspective for you and supply a little direction.

- If you have not yet started to build your online store, this is the absolute perfect time for you to be reading this book. It will prevent you from making mistakes that could cost you hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars. You will know more about what lies ahead before you take the leap and start building your site.
- If your online boutique is less than a year old, this book will tell you how to improve it. You’ll learn more about marketing tactics and how to increase both traffic and sales. Year one is the “get your feet wet” period. Akin to a college freshman, the first 12 months is usually spent figuring out what to do, how to do it, making some mistakes, and hoping to not wake up with a colossal hangover. But never fear, if you have already developed the headache, I’m here to provide some much-needed aspirin and a big glass of water!
- If you have been online for a year or more, I’ll take you back to the basics and introduce some ideas that will make sense for you now. Often, when we first begin, there are many meaningful projects that we know would benefit our business, we just don’t have time to do them as the energy is focused on the launch more than the long-term development. Now might be the perfect time to fine-tune, refocus, and implement strategies that can take you to the next level and improve profits.

Whether you already have an online dog boutique, are in the process of building one, or are simply curious about getting started, I promise that you will benefit from reading what I have to say. I don’t hold anything back here and it is simple enough for even the complete internet rookie. So read on...

Why is This Book Different?

A legitimate question indeed- one that I would be more than happy to answer.

If you are looking for a book that will explain how to build an online store from A to Z, there are dozens of literary options. You could easily fill a bookcase with books published on the topic in the last 2-3 years. I've read many of them, some good and some bad, and here's a short list of things that I wanted to improve upon:

- *Too technical*- Most online dog boutique owners are pursuing their initial internet venture. I know from experience that it can be overwhelming, confusing, frustrating, etc... You need a book that tempers those feelings rather than fosters them.
- *Too General*- The typical author is writing his/her book with no knowledge of the dog industry and does not know the struggles and needs of the niche. My background and experience working with dog boutique owners, combined with the fact that I *am* a dog boutique owner gives me more insight into your needs.
- *Too Sneaky*- I was surprised and shocked when I realized that so many of these "how to" books really should have been titled, "*How to Read My Book and Then Buy More of My Stuff!*" The primary focus of seemed to be pushing additional products and services. Yes, I will give my company a few shameless plugs throughout this publication, but my focus is to help your website become more profitable. Tools and companies that I recommend to you here are a result of my positive experiences, not my income.
- *Not Enough Marketing Help*- A book that explains how to build an eCommerce site but fails to provide adequate instruction on marketing trains you to spend money rather than make money. In my opinion, the marketing section needs to be bigger than the technical section. You want your website to be a profit center, not a money pit!
- *Too Outdated*- With many industries, reading content or advice that was written 18-24 months ago would be no big deal as things tend not to change too much in a short period of time. Unfortunately, the internet doesn't work that way. In a brief year or two, light-years of transition can occur online. Search engines change their rules, advertising techniques are upgraded and improved, new innovations appear which make last year's stuff obsolete. 2009 may not seem that long ago, but if you are getting marketing advice from a book published back then, you'll be missing out on too much information.

Eventually I will look to publish a more in-depth version of my "*Blueprint for Building an Online Dog Boutique*" but for now, this is what you really need to know fashioned in a way as to not add more confusion and overload.