



Meghan Boyer

## Learn More About PetSmart

The first two PetSmart stores opened in Phoenix, Ariz., in 1987. Now there are 900 retail outlets in the United States and Canada. According to Brent Avila, a corporate communications specialist for PetSmart, the company hopes to have 1,400 stores in the future with an increased number of boarding and veterinary services available. Here are more PetSmart facts:

- Average store size: 20,000 sq.ft.
- Employees: 30-40 full- and part-time associates per location
- Number of employees: More than 32,000 in the United States and Canada
- Number of products at each location: 12,900
- Annual revenue: \$3.8 billion in fiscal 2005
- Average number of leashed pets visiting stores each week: 90,000



There are approximately 12,900 products at each PetSmart location. Training and grooming services are also available at all locations.

# Offering Everything Customers Need

At PetSmart, business has gone to the dogs (as well as other pets) and that's a good thing. PetSmart is a 1-stop shop for all the products and services pet owners need. The company's goal is to offer customers lifetime care for their pets (and gain lifetime customers in the process).

I'll be honest about the origin of this column topic: Late last year, my husband and I got a puppy (a rambunctious puggle), and since then, we have spent more time at the nearest PetSmart than I care to admit. From food to squeaky toys to grooming services to training classes, it's our 1-stop shop when we have a puppy-related need. We have even found ourselves calling the store and asking for employee recommendations to help curb some of our puppy's less desirable habits.

In addition to carrying roughly 12,900 products for dogs, cats, birds, fish and other small pets, PetSmart provides adoption, pet training, grooming, boarding and hospital services. Having these products and services at one location is part of the company's operating philosophy and it is also what makes the company successful and popular among pet owners.

## Attracting Lifetime Customers

PetSmart's philosophy is to offer total lifetime care to its customers (a.k.a "pet parents"). "We want to have everything under one roof for our customers," explained Brent Avila, a corporate



Top: PetSmart's philosophy is to offer total lifetime care to its customers and their pets. Bottom: PetSmart offers a range of services to customers, including training classes for pets. (Photos: PetSmart)



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communications specialist for PetSmart. "That includes the services and the products and everything that they'll need."

Of course, the philosophy encompasses more than just stocking stores with the right items and

supplying the right services. "We want people to understand how much we love pets. That's the biggest thing. We understand the bond that people have with their pets and we really want to cater to that and make their bond with their pets as

strong as possible," said Avila. Part of showing consumers how much PetSmart loves pets is by addressing overpopulation through the company's charity, PetSmart Charities, Inc. (see sidebar, left).

Of course, PetSmart didn't start out as the go-to store for pet needs. "When we first opened, [the store was] really just a pet warehouse. There were boxes and crates and just products in this huge warehouse-style building. Then we realized there's a little more to it than just having products on the floor. We evolved and started offering the pet services like training and grooming," said Avila. Now the company has approximately 900 locations throughout the United States and Canada. All PetSmart stores have grooming and training services; boarding and veterinary services are available at select locations.

## Taking Action

PetSmart's philosophy of wanting the best for pets is backed by the company's actions: To help address pet overpopulation, PetSmart has never sold dogs or cats. (The company sells smaller pets, such as guinea pigs, gerbils, hamsters, mice, fish, birds and reptiles.) Any dogs or cats that consumers may see offered in PetSmart locations are available for adoption.

The company works with more than 3,300 local animal welfare partners to find homes for shelter pets through PetSmart's in-store adoption centers. Since the program's inception in 1992, more than 2.7 million pets have been saved.

PetSmart also formed PetSmart Charities, Inc., a nonprofit organization created to save the lives of homeless pets, raise awareness of companion animal welfare issues and promote healthy relationships between people and pets. For more information, visit [www.petsmartcharities.org](http://www.petsmartcharities.org).



PetSmart works with more than 3,300 local animal welfare partners to find homes for shelter pets.

## Training Employees

With so many products and services available at each location, it is imperative that PetSmart employees are trained to best serve customers. According to Avila, PetSmart employees go through specific training to be experts in their positions, whether they work in the grooming salon or on the sales floor. For instance, all PetSmart pet trainers complete an accreditation process that includes canine behavior, learning theory, problem solving and more.



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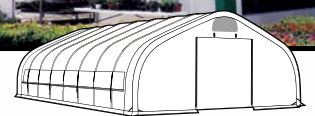
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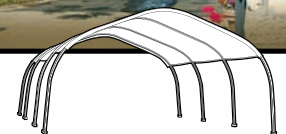
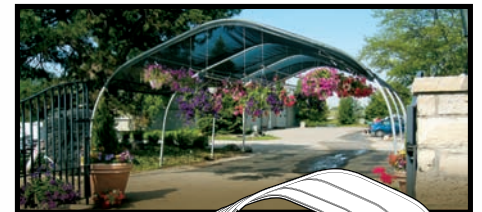
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## What About Bobo?

PetSmart stays in the public eye through radio, television and print ads. One of the company's recent television ads features a dachshund and his favorite toy, known as "Bobo." "It's been widely popular," said Brent Avila, a corporate communications specialist for PetSmart, "more popular than anybody ever expected."

Thanks to the commercial, sales of the Bobo toy have increased 400 percent. "It started with having one Bobo, and since it's been so popular, we now carry seasonal varieties," explained Avila. Consumers can purchase witch Bobos at Halloween and Santa Bobos at Christmas, all thanks to one clever commercial.



Most importantly, all employees are trained to help work with customers and determine what they are really shopping for when they may not be fully aware themselves. "For example, if someone comes in looking for a choke chain, we try to recognize that maybe this person needs some training classes because the dog is pulling or out of control. So a lot of times people will come in for one thing and our associates will help guide them in the direction that they're really looking for," explained Avila.

### Creating Lifetime Customers

For PetSmart, a benefit of offering total lifetime care to customers is gaining lifetime, loyal customers. "We find that our customers are very loyal," said Avila. "Our customers tend to care more about the products that they give their pets and more about the care that they give their pets. If we're able to have everything for them that they will need, everything from training to vet services to grooming to pet hotels, they will become loyal customers and keep coming back."

As an added benefit of earning lifetime customers, the company has found many additional pet owners start shopping at PetSmart thanks to strong word-of-mouth advertising, according to Avila.

Avila says both the products and services bring customers into PetSmart stores. "When our customers come into the store or they hear about it, there isn't really that differentiation between the product side of the business and the service side of the business. It's PetSmart and they have everything," he explained.

### What Can You Do?

It is unlikely your store can carry every garden-related product and service like PetSmart does with pet supplies, but that is all right. Consider what PetSmart is doing: The company works to be indispensable to its customers. For PetSmart, that means carrying a wide range of products and supplying a lot of services in addition to making sure employees are well versed in everything the company offers.

Now what you need to do is figure out what becoming indispensable to customers means for your business. ☘

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