

# PROFITABLE PRACTICE

## Keys To A Successful Practice-Achieving Success By Creating Value

### Pot For Pets?

### When Should I Sell And/Or Have A Plan For Retirement?

### It All Started With Noah's Ark

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# PROFITABLE PRACTICE

SPRING 2014

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1   EDITOR'S PAGE<br><b>Lionfish, A Dog's Commandments, Robben Island, Service Dogs And Guide Dogs</b><br>JAMES RUDDY      | 14   PRACTICE MANAGEMENT<br><b>Hire The Buyer - Yes Or No?</b><br>TIMOTHY A. BROWN                                  |
| 3   PRACTICE MANAGEMENT<br><b>Keys To A Successful Practice- Achieving Success By Creating Value</b><br>DR. BERNHARD PUKAY | 16   FEATURE INTERVIEW<br><b>With Dr. Bernhard Pukay</b><br>EDITOR  |
| 6   NEWS ITEM<br><b>Pot for Pets?</b><br>KAREN HENDERSON   | 18   FEATURE INTERVIEW<br><b>With Rick Mares</b><br>EDITOR  |
| 8   PRACTICE MANAGEMENT<br><b>When Should I Sell And/Or Have A Plan For Retirement?</b><br>JON J. WALTON                   | 21   BOOK REVIEW<br><b>A Dog's Purpose: A Book For Humans By W. Bruce Cameron</b><br>AS REVIEWED BY KAREN HENDERSON |
| 10   COMMENTARY<br><b>It All Started With Noah's Ark</b><br>DICK MOODY   | 23   PRACTICE MANAGEMENT<br><b>Be A Dealmaker, Not A Dealbreaker</b><br>JACKIE RUDBERG                              |
| 11   FEATURE INTERVIEW<br><b>With Maureen Jennings</b><br>MANAGING ASSOCIATE EDITOR  | 25   SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION   |

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James Ruddy  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Karen Henderson  
MANAGING ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Natalia Decius  
PROJECT MANAGER  
FULLCONTACTMARKETING.CA

## HOW TO REACH US

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@profitablepracticemagazine.com  
1155 Indian Road,  
Mississauga, ON L5H 1R8

### SUBSCRIBER SERVICES

subscribe@profitablepracticemagazine.com  
1-888-764-4145

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editor@profitablepracticemagazine.com  
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EDITOR'S PAGE

## Lionfish, A Dog's Commandments, Robben Island, Service Dogs And Guide Dogs

by James Ruddy

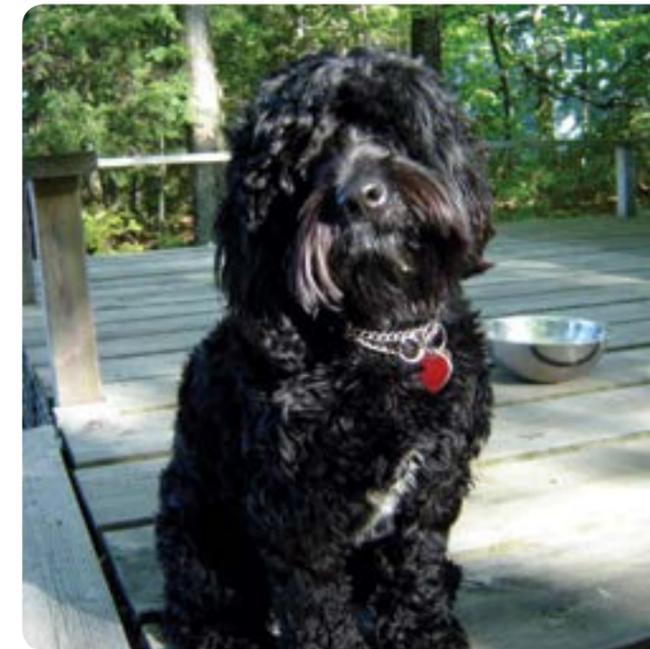
### Lionfish-venomous not poisonous

Invasive species are a problem everywhere. This is especially true of the lionfish that was mistakenly introduced (likely from someone's aquarium) to the coastal waters of the eastern and southern American states. A native of the Indo-Pacific, this voracious eater has found a new and fertile hunting ground in the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. They have few natural enemies and their venomous spines can cause considerable pain and swelling if they puncture a person's skin.

The bad news is that lionfish eat more than their fair share of the native fish population. The good news is that lionfish provide a tasty meal for human consumption. Some states now promote lionfish contests to reduce their growing numbers and are advertising that they are a very good eating catch. Contestants are instructed on how to properly handle lionfish to avoid any injury and provide recipes like lionfish sashimi (sear the fish lightly in sesame oil with garlic, salt and pepper) to their patrons.

The universal issue that presents itself is the proper care of pets and their ultimate end place whether they are cats, gerbils, snakes or aquarium fish. Pet owners have a responsibility to 'think it through' when it comes to their pet selections and what happens if they become burdensome and unwanted. Improper disposal of pets can and have had serious consequences as is the case of the lionfish.

Our Managing Associate Editor, Karen Henderson's dog (see below) has been the inspiration for many articles and book reviews including the Ten Commandments from a dog's perspective that follows.



Karen's dog Sammy Sosa

### The Ten Commandments from a dog's perspective

1. My life is likely to last 10 to 15 years; any separation from you will be painful for me. Remember that before you adopt me.
2. Give me time to understand what you want from me; don't be impatient, short-tempered, or irritable.
3. Place your trust in me and I will always trust you back. Respect is earned not given as an inalienable right.
4. Don't be angry with me for long and don't lock me up as punishment; I am not capable of understanding why. I only know I have been rejected. You have your work, entertainment, and friends, but I only have you.



5. Talk to me. Even if I don't understand your words, I do understand your voice and your tone. You only have to look at my tail.
6. Be aware that however you treat me, I'll never forget it, and if it's cruel, it may affect me forever.
7. Please don't hit me. I can't hit back, but I can bite and scratch, and I really don't ever want to do that.
8. Before you scold me for being uncooperative, obstinate, or lazy, ask yourself if something might be bothering me. Perhaps I'm not getting the right foods or I've been out in the sun too long, or my heart is getting old and weak. It may be I am just dog-tired.
9. Take care of me when I get old. You too will grow old and may also need love, care, comfort, and attention.
10. Go with me on difficult journeys. Never say, "I can't bear to watch" or "Let it happen in my absence." Everything is easier for me if you are there. Remember, regardless of what you do, I will always love you.

Author Stan Rawlinson 1993.  
Dog Behaviourist and Obedience Trainer. You can visit his website and articles at [www.doglistener.co.uk](http://www.doglistener.co.uk)

### The passing of Nelson Mandela

We were saddened to learn of the death of Nelson Mandela. In our last issue we offered a feature story about being on safari in South Africa and regret the incorrect spelling of Robben Island where Mandela had been imprisoned for many years.

### Service dogs

In our last issue we provided some information about the increasing use of service dogs. In a recent Toronto Star article, service dogs were featured as perfect companions for children with autism. These dogs are protective, supportive and have been proven to have a calming effect on the children reducing the number of emotional outbursts and their levels of cortisol (the stress hormone).

For more on this topic go to... [www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/01/04/atlas\\_walks\\_to\\_school.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2014/01/04/atlas_walks_to_school.html)

### Service Dogs Versus Guide Dogs

*Service Dogs* are trained to help people with a serious physical impairment whereas *Guide Dogs* are trained to assist the visually impaired. Rick Mares is the subject of one of our feature interviews and he explained that guide dogs are selected on the following:

- They have been family trained
- How they react on the street with traffic and noise
- How they react with other dogs

- Their medical history
- How they react in an intensive 4-month training period
- Whether or not they are super responsive

The best breeds for guide dogs are German Shepherds, Golden Retrievers and short hair Black or Yellow Labradors.

Rick pointed out that guide dogs go through at least five major emotional changes in the first 18 months of their lives. Between 6 to 8 weeks they are taken from their mother and placed in a home to be family raised. Then if they are well suited they are removed from their home family and enter a training school where they spend about four months and develop a bond with their trainer. If they pass the training school tests, they are introduced to a sight-impaired person who usually becomes the main focus of the rest of the dog's life.

For Rick's interview see pages 16-18.

### Content notes

This issue provides three in-depth interviews with three fascinating people. **Maureen Jennings** is the author of the *Murdoch Mysteries* and a long time pet owner and animal lover. **Dr. Bernhard Pukay** is a well-known veterinarian with a resume of accomplishments that is second to none. As mentioned above, our third feature interview is with **Rick Mares** who is sight-impaired and has a guide dog. **Jon J. Walton** provides retirement advice that is straightforward and meaningful. **Timothy A. Brown** outlines the pros and cons of hiring an associate as a potential buyer of your veterinary practice. **Dick Moody** provides an insightful, almost comedic look at pets and their treatment today. **Jackie Rudberg** explains the difference between deal-breakers and dealmakers when it comes to selling a veterinary practice. **Karen Henderson**, our Managing Associate Editor provides readers with an article on the use of marijuana with pets entitled *Pot For Pets?* She also provides a detailed book review of *A Dog's Purpose: A Book For Humans*.

### Things to remember

For subscriber information go to the inside back cover. As always we welcome your comments and suggestions and if you would like to write for the magazine and have a story to tell that would interest our veterinarian professional readers please contact: [editor@profitablepracticemagazine.com](mailto:editor@profitablepracticemagazine.com).



### James Ruddy

James Ruddy is the Editor of *Profitable Practice Magazine* and can be reached at [editor@profitablepracticemagazine.com](mailto:editor@profitablepracticemagazine.com).

# Keys To A Successful Practice- Achieving Success By Creating Value

by Bernhard Pukay, DVM



Meeting your customers' emotional needs not only provides unique opportunities for clear differentiation from your competitors, but research has also shown time and time again that it is emotions, not reason, that drives the majority of decisions to purchase.

According to Peter F. Drucker, the new definition of the function of any business enterprise is "the creation of value and wealth". Why is value important to your business? The relationship between veterinary health care providers and their clients should ultimately be focused on achieving client loyalty. Client loyalty, however, depends on customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction in turn depends on providing value for your clients.

### What is value?

What is value and how do we create it? There is no simple answer to this question. As the saying goes, one person's garbage is another person's treasure and what one person sees as value may not be the same for someone else. For the veterinarian, the value of Wellness Testing lies in the potential for uncovering an

undetected medical problem. However, for pet owners, its value may be quite different. The last thing they may want to do is face the unpleasant reality that their healthy-appearing pet may in fact be unwell. The true value of Wellness Testing for them may lie not in the possibility of uncovering an illness but rather in the peace of mind that a normal Wellness Test brings to them.

There are many definitions of what constitutes value. According to the dictionary:

Val-ue (noun):

- An amount, as of goods, services, or money, considered to be a fair and suitable equivalent for something else; a fair price or return
- Worth in usefulness or importance to the possessor; utility or merit
- Monetary or material worth
- A principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.

Who determines value? It is the customer who ultimately decides what is of value to them and they

come to that conclusion based on some or all of the following four considerations:

- Low price
- Quality for price paid
- What they want in a product/service
- What they get for what they give away.

According to Morris B. Holbrook there are three ways that your clients will determine the value of your services:

- Comparative (rating one option against another—e.g. is it better to do something or nothing?)
- Personal (this differs from person to person—e.g. what is important to you is not necessarily important to someone else)
- Situational (this varies with each situation—e.g. a pizza has value to a hungry person but is useless for someone drowning)

At the end of the day, it is ultimately the customer and not the veterinarian who determines what value means to them. Our challenge is to figure out what our customers value and how we can provide that value to them. This is our value proposition.

When you try to create value for your clients, there are four possible ways in which you can create value:

- In the Process itself (e.g. optimize processes)
- In People (e.g. empower your employees)
- In Product and Service Technology (e.g. provide competitive features)
- In Support (e.g. “being there” when needed)

### Five drivers of customer satisfaction

James G. Barnes is professor of marketing at Memorial University of Newfoundland and co-founder of Omnifacts Research, one of Canada’s leading marketing research companies. He is the author of several books, including the best selling textbook *Fundamentals of Marketing* (in its ninth edition) and counts among his clients Molson, CIBC, and Kraft Foods. In his book *Secrets of Customer Relationship Management*, Barnes outlines the five levels of service that must be provided to customers by any business, including veterinary practices. These “drivers” of customer satisfaction create increasing value for the client as one moves from addressing their core needs to ultimately meeting their so-called “higher needs”. (See Figure 1)

### Level one—core product or service

This is the basic product or service that your practice provides to your clients (e.g. vaccine, spay, fecal issues). Sadly, many veterinarians assume that this is what practice is all about and that all they really need to do to succeed is to provide that core service. However, at this level, there is the least opportunity to differentiate yourself from your competitor or add value. Providing this service is usually not an issue: it is the “price of entry” or the “cost of doing

business”. It is what you must do and it is assumed that it will be done and done well. On its own, providing only this level of service reduces it to a commodity (i.e. a spay is a spay, regardless of who does it!). As a commodity, price then becomes the only differentiating factor and owners start to shop around for the lowest price.

### Adding value to the core product or service

In order to add value at this level, your choices are limited; you can reduce prices, improve quality or add features. A brief look at each of these choices reveals their inherent weaknesses. Lowering price is counterproductive since it eventually leads to “price wars” and attracts “butterfly” clients (i.e. those who move from clinic to clinic seeking the best price). It also does not promote client loyalty, but instead encourages “shopping around”. At the same time, lowering price reduces profit margins and, most importantly, the opportunity to attract loyal clients.

Improving product quality and adding features, while necessary to remain competitive, are not effective long-term strategies on their own since competitors soon “catch up” (e.g. technology) by also improving quality and adding features.

### Level two—support services and systems

This level encompasses the peripheral and support services that enhance the core products or services (e.g. telephone answering, filling out invoices, appointment times). This includes such factors as availability, pricing, scheduling, communication, staffing and knowledge. You can try to add value at this level by improving on these systems.

### Adding value to support services and systems

One of the ways to add value at this level is by adding services that reduce the “energy cost” to customers i.e. you make it easy for them to do business with you. For example, reducing client wait times or pre-booking veterinarian appointments reduce both energy and time costs for your clients. By reducing the psychological/energy/time costs for your clients, you make it easy for them to deal with you. The eventual outcome should be to avoid or reduce red tape, decrease errors, minimize hassles and eliminate unnecessary rules. Value lies in reducing owner frustration and ensuring client confidence. Not surprisingly, your competitors can also easily match this level.

### Level three—technical performance

This is the level that Barnes refers to as “getting it right” with regards to Levels one and two. (e.g. the spay is uncomplicated, lab results are prompt and accurate, nails are clipped without bleeding). Here is where we perform as promised and as expected by our clients. We live up to our “promise” of being a caring and efficient practice. Adherence to standards and procedures minimizes errors at this level, yet unfortunately it still remains the most common area of failure. In fact, this level is also where we lose most of our customers!

### Adding value to technical performance

We can add immense value at this level by providing service excellence. This means superior service and performance and it requires a genuine commitment from management. That commitment may include an investment in hiring more staff, streamlining existing operations and investing in new technology and equipment. These changes allow you to reduce or eliminate delays, errors and mistakes and deliver what you promised.

### Level four—customer interaction with the organization

This is the level at which we begin to approach the reality of a truly bond-centered practice. Here is where your practice meets the customer in person. (e.g. give advice, provide pet treats, send birthday cards, provide free coffee, helpful staff). How you interact at this level speaks volumes to the customer and tells them whether you think they are important to you and whether you are easy to deal with.

The personal touch rules at this level. It is also at this point that little mistakes can have a considerable (negative) impact on customer satisfaction.

### Adding value to customer interaction with the organization

Adding value at this level means catering to the client’s “higher needs”. Owners assess your practice based on how your staff treats them and their pets; does your staff show genuine concern? Do they appear to care? Do they care more about processing you efficiently than addressing your needs? Are they concerned and empathetic or clinical and unsmiling? Sometimes, an act as simple as offering a glass of water to a visibly upset owner or a shoulder to cry on can have immense value to that owner.

This level relies totally on human resources and depends directly on your hiring decisions, training, motivations, rewards and recognition programs. It is at this level that you can also create value for your employees (e.g. personal satisfaction, improved self-esteem) with the result that they in turn will provide outstanding service.

### Level five—emotional elements

This level addresses the concept of the human-animal bond and the veterinarian’s role in keeping the bond alive and prospering. It is what makes a practice truly bond-centered. From a marketing perspective, this is called emotion management. At this level, your practice asks: How do we make the customer feel, i.e. how do we deal with feelings and emotions? At this level, while value can be easily created by you, it is much more difficult for your competitors to match your emotional advantage.

Research has shown time and time again that it is emotions, not reason, that drives the majority of decisions to purchase (note: emotions actually stimulate the mind 3000 times faster than regular thought). Research has shown that decisions influenced by emotion are deeper and longer lasting than those based on thought alone.

### Adding value to emotional elements

Value is added by creating an exceptional experience. It is easier to compete at this level by differentiating and customizing your services while meeting the emotional needs of your clients. With the human-animal bond as the heart and soul of your practice, you fulfill the “emotional” needs of your clients. Being there for your clients when they need grief counseling, or celebrating their pet’s birthday, or recognizing the owner or their pet’s important milestones all send a message that you truly care. These acts of kindness create a unique and exceptional emotional experience for your clients that becomes difficult for other practices to replicate.

### Drivers of Customer Satisfaction:

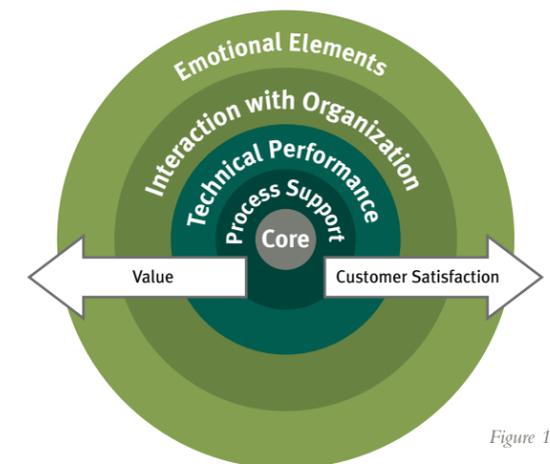
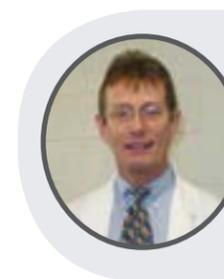


Figure 1

Adapted From James G. Barnes:  
*Secrets of Customer Relationship Management*, 2001.

*Bottom Line: Most if not all veterinary practices currently provide excellent veterinary care. The public expects nothing less. Owners expect that customer service will be effective and efficient, that medical errors (if any!) will be few and far between and that the level of veterinary competence and knowledge will meet the high standards that the public has come to expect of all veterinarians. In short, veterinary medicine risks becoming a commodity where the single differentiating factor between practices is cost. However, price is only an issue in the absence of value. By increasing the value of your services through emotional engagement, you differentiate yourself from other practices.*

*Meeting the emotional needs of your clients adds value to your services and leads to customer satisfaction and client loyalty.*



### Bernhard Pukay, DVM

Dr. Bernhard Pukay has had a long and distinguished career in all aspects of veterinary medicine and now serves as a Veterinary Consultant and chairman of the Petsecure Advisory Board.

He can be reached at bpukay@sympatico.

# Pot For Pets?

by Karen Henderson



In December of last year the CBC featured an interview with Dr. Kathy Kramer, a veterinarian at the Vancouver Animal Wellness Hospital. She said she has clients who are—or would like to be—using medical marijuana on their cats and dogs. She has noticed an increasing demand for information in the past few years; in fact she receives questions weekly from clients about the use of marijuana for medical purposes.

Perhaps one reason why: Vancouver has the dubious reputation as being the number one city in North America for accidental marijuana toxicity.

She first saw the effect of marijuana on pets in the U.S. where she was practicing in emergency. Dogs and cats would come in exhibiting the effects of toxicity – stumbling around dazed and confused, increasingly sleepy and, for lack of a better word, “dopey”; more severe symptoms included vomiting, tremors, urinary incontinence and seizures. Death is infrequent but has happened.

When asked how these pets accessed the drug, Dr. Kramer offered three explanations:

1. A very few owners feed it to their pets because they think it’s funny to see.
2. A pet gets into improperly stored food (usually brownies) laced with marijuana.
3. Owners give it to their pets to ease their suffering but due to lack of knowledge too often accidentally overdose the pet.

Her first encounter in Vancouver was with a client whose dog fell off a ten-story deck. The dog was in pain and the owner could not get her to the emergency room fast enough. She had some marijuana; she took a hit herself and then blew the smoke into the dog’s mouth to give her some comfort. It worked quite well.

Dr. Kramer says that a lot more research is needed; blowing smoke into a pet’s face offers no dosage control. Dispensaries are looking at using a tincture or mixing it with butter and cooking it into dog biscuits. Another option is creating marijuana capsules, which makes it easier to pill the pet with a known dosage.

At this point Dr. Kramer hesitates to openly support the use of medical marijuana for pets; she notes the

line between toxicity and therapeutic benefit is very fine. Research in humans has shown that marijuana has huge potential to ease pain, fight cancer and even offer some anti-microbial benefits. Why not then in pets?

When asked to describe a case where there has been a medically positive effect on a pet, she talks about one of her favourite patients, a 19 year old tabby cat fighting multiple diseases—arthritis, hypertension, hyperthyroidism, chronic pancreatitis and chronic kidney disease. Any one of these could cause considerable pain and reduce appetite. The cat is on a tincture three times a day. He is comfortable, eating like a champ and all of his lab values have remained remarkably stable over the past year. The owner had access to the drug and it was her choice to approach Dr. Kramer about it. Dr. Kramer had the same reservations mentioned above but went ahead. She admits it was trial and error getting to the right dosage so the cat was not knocked out for 24 hours at a time.

Is pot for pets legal? Dr. Kramer says it’s an extremely gray area; in BC the College of Veterinarians has no official position on the drug. In the U.S. marijuana is still a Class One drug and not something veterinarians can prescribe. She would like to see more research on how it affects dogs and cats on a daily basis and in the long run. She says that nobody is doing these studies right now.

She knows that people will use marijuana regardless and she would prefer that they come to her and ask for help so she can manage the drug and its side effects.

Her advice to pet owners: Talk to your veterinarian; there lots of potential but we have to be careful.

Two Seattle veterinarians are pioneering the use of medical marijuana to treat pets. Dr. Sarah Brandon, co-founder of Canna-Pet, says medical cannabis can be used for many ailments plaguing your dog or cat. “Cannabinoids control inflammation to reduce pain from arthritis,” she says. “They can help reduce anxiety.”

Brandon and her colleague Dr. Greg Copas launched Canna-Pet several months ago, citing that traditional pet medicines can have undesirable side effects. For example, Brandon says, “Anti-inflammatories can cause vomiting and opioids can cause decreased appetite.” These are reportedly common arguments to support the use of medical marijuana for humans. However, Brandon says, her treatment will not intoxicate your dog or cat. In fact, unlike medical pot, Canna-Pet is 100 per cent legal because it is made from hemp, not marijuana. It’s considered a supplement, and is available without a prescription. The cost is about a dollar a day.

“We focus on the non-THC portions of the plant that seem to really have the best benefit without giving animals the high that recreational users seek.” And what’s more, pets don’t like to get high; according to Brandon, “Canna-Pet doesn’t have enough THC in it to cause that high.”

The Canna-Pet website ([www.canna-pet.com](http://www.canna-pet.com)) boasts that medical marijuana can help with aggression disorders, noise phobias, anxiety, self-trauma, cognitive disorders and dementia (canine), marking and spraying (feline), sleep disorders, OCD, excessive vocalization and inappropriate urination.

And yes, they do ship to Canada.



## Signs of marijuana toxicity

A study authored by Dr. Stacy Meolo of Wheatridge Veterinary Specialists in Denver and published in “JVECC” analyzed 125 cases of marijuana toxicity seen at Wheatridge and Colorado State University between 2005–2010.

Of those cases...

- 95 per cent survived
- 88 per cent showed ataxia, or stumbling and struggle with muscle coordination
- 53 per cent showed a changing mental state
- 48 per cent showed mydriasis, or dilated pupils
- 47 per cent experienced urinary incontinence
- 47 per cent experienced hyperesthesia, or heightened sensitivity
- 30 per cent had tremors or twitching
- 27 per cent vomited
- 21 per cent ingested chocolate at the same time.

*Bottom Line: This article outlines the pros and cons of the medical use of marijuana in the care of pets.*



**Karen Henderson**

Karen Henderson is the Managing Associate Editor of *Profitable Practice* and can be reached at [Karen@profitablepracticemagazine.com](mailto:Karen@profitablepracticemagazine.com)

# When Should I Sell And/Or Have A Plan For Retirement?

by Jon J. Walton



Making a major change in life is never easy. The transition from middle school to high school, moving away to university or divorce are all trying times that have to be dealt with. Understanding that change is never easy, would it not be wise to plan a known and monumental life alteration well in advance? A major change like retirement affects not only the retiree but also all those around him/her.

People are generally creatures of habit and change runs counter to the need for security and routine.

Retirement means building new habits, new routines and typically a new lifestyle. It means a fixed income will be in place and that days are no longer segmented into 30-minute appointment intervals. It means major deviations from things done for more or less thirty years, i.e. the majority of an adult life!

**So how does a veterinarian make the decision to retire?**

**How much money is enough?**

**Is there a magic number of years to work, or a “top secret” formula to follow to have the perfect amount saved?**

The answer to all these questions is never easy. Many variables exist that can alter the course of a life and consequently any plan to retire. For most veterinarians, Freedom 55 no longer means retirement and freedom from one's career, but rather when one's eldest child moves out of the house!

Many veterinarians adopt a reactionary approach when the going gets tough; they keep their head down and push forward, focusing on the now, hoping that all their hard work will one day pay off. With this mindset, a veterinarian falls back into a routine and before he/she knows it, the day to retire has arrived... in one way or another.

As a company that aids and advises in retirement, planning, and optimizing practice value on a daily basis, we have categorized three major reasons that lead to a veterinarian's retirement:

1. Being sick
2. Being sick and tired
3. Being financially stable

### Being sick

Health issues are a growing concern for everyone as we age. Although veterinarians advise on the health of our furry family members on a daily basis, they frequently ignore their own health needs. This can culminate in a forced retirement whether it is for a period of time as they address their medical needs or worse, resulting in complete retirement from veterinary practice forever. In the extreme case of an untimely death when there is no plan in place, the estate is left to react. The longer it takes for the estate to react, the less the practice could and typically will be worth, and the less salable it becomes.

Plan ahead! Veterinarians should not leave important decisions to others at a time when their family members are emotionally drained and have other major concerns to deal with.

### Being sick and tired

Too often our company receives calls from veterinarians who are experiencing high levels of compassion fatigue and have hit what seems like an insurmountable wall. When asked how we can help, the veterinarian typically replies he/she would like to sell his/her practice but have not had the practice valuated to understand its true value; they do not know what could have improved the practice value or heightened the ability to transition the practice to a new veterinarian. However, he/she wanted the practice sold yesterday, and declares that every day is a struggle to continue to work. Often simple processes and changes can be made to a practice to have the value more in line with what the retiring veterinarian would like or needs to receive.



We recommend having a practice valuated every three to five years before the end of a career is in sight, or the first feelings of above average compassion fatigue begin.

### Being financially stable

This is the stage all veterinarians work toward. It is important to recall that those who plan properly typically realize financial stability sooner. All veterinarians should ask themselves: **How much is enough?** They should know their practice's value and know where they would like to be financially in order to work towards and achieve their goals.

With proper goals in place our company has witnessed revitalized veterinarians who remain in practice ownership years after they have met their financial goal and retire happily and profitably. Know when enough is enough!

No matter where you are in your career, it is important to have a plan. Just as you set personal goals for each New Year, set business goals for your career, both short and long term. These long-term goals could include how much you would like to have saved, and by what age you would like to retire. Plan ahead and remember, you are not alone! There are many professional advisors who can help you to achieve the goals you have put in place.

*Bottom Line: Veterinarians should plan for their retirement in order to maximize the value of the hard work they have put into their practice over the years.*



**Jon J. Walton**

Jon J. Walton is a national sales representative at ROI Corporation Brokerage and one of the directors of the Hamilton Academy of Veterinary Medicine.

He can be reached at 519.829.5953 or [jon@roicorp.com](mailto:jon@roicorp.com).

# IT ALL STARTED WITH NOAH'S ARK

by Dick Moody



It all started with Noah. When he loaded his ark with two of all the beasties then known to the world, he was to create a myriad of flourishing pet industries that are forever grateful to him thousands of years later.

Our world would be a totally different place if there had been a thoughtful gatekeeper at the foot of Noah's loading gangplank who had firmly refused a boarding pass to Mr. and Mrs. Wolverine, Mr. and Mrs. Cockroach and Mr. and Mrs. Rat – not to mention many married insect couples like the Flies and the Fleas.

But all of these creatures—some exotic, some not—found their way on to Noah's ark and many of them are living with us today in stylish comfort that includes personalized housing, regular medical check-ups, a balanced diet, a wardrobe and squeaky toys of every description to keep them entertained all day long—and sometimes all through the night!

Don't get me wrong. I love pets but I grew up in a time when you opened the door and let the dog or cat out to roam around in all weathers. In those days you didn't control your dog with a leash and gallop after him with a poop-and-scoop kit. He had a collar and a license tag and if he misbehaved, after paying a \$2.00 fine you collected him from the city dog pound. In those times, if I wanted to add to my pet collection, I wandered in a field and caught something cuddly like a tiny chipmunk or a baby sparrow fallen from its nest.

It's a different world today. Nearly every pet store in our town will happily sell me a python or a baby alligator along with a family of mice that will comprise their lunch. And if I need other special foods for my exotic pets, I can always buy canned insects and live meal worms for my pet pantry.

Exotic pet owners and those who have conventional pets like cats, dogs, rabbits, and gerbils adore their pets and they want you to share that love for these creatures

that are, after all, pampered members of their family. Snake owners want you to enjoy a close cuddle by wrapping a baby boa constrictor around your neck. Or at lunch time you may be invited to drop a live mouse into the gaping jaws of an alligator that is now twice as big as the last time you saw it.

If you are a non-pet owner who is allergic to animals, when you visit a friend with a house full of pets you can be sure an exuberant dog will knock you down in an affectionate and slobbering welcome at the door. And before you are comfortable in your chair, a cat or two will be jockeying for a position on your lap.

Every day, my e-mail box receives pictures of pets and their cute antics—and make no mistake they are winsome. A chimpanzee is pictured cuddling a snoozing cat; the family dog is shown with a budgie bird perched on its nose; and there is always a special picture of a dog welcoming a new born baby boy or girl to the family by energetically licking the baby's face. (In one such picture I could see a bottle of antibacterial soap on the kitchen counter. Hopefully baby got a thorough face wash with it after that doggy kiss!)

I'm sure Noah could not have foreseen the lavish treatment the passengers on his ark would receive in the distant years to come. And if the beasties of the world had known about the love and comfort they would one day enjoy as family pets, they might have demanded a second ark be built to handle the passenger overload.

*Bottom Line: Dick Moody presents an interesting and humorous look at the pets of today.*



**Dick Moody**

Dick Moody is a retired broadcast advertising salesman who now writes for his local newspaper as well as *Profitable Practice*. He can be reached through the editor of this magazine.

# Feature Interview: Maureen Jennings

with Managing Associate Editor



Maureen's garden critters

I spent time with acclaimed writer Maureen Jennings and her two dogs Murdoch and Varley in her whimsical garden in Toronto. She is the author of the Detective William Murdoch book and television series set in Victorian Toronto; she has also created the WW11 *Bomb Girls* series, praised as the No. 1 new drama on Canadian television. As famous as she is, she graciously welcomed me and my dog Sammy and was very generous with her time.

## Maureen, where were you born?

I was born in Birmingham, England shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. My father was killed in battle. When I was 17 my mother decided to emigrate to Canada in 1956. We lived in Windsor where I went to what was then Assumption University. I

acquired a BA in Psychology and Philosophy. After that, not sure what I wanted to do, I went to teacher's college and taught high school for two years. That wasn't it either so I went back to get my MA in English Literature at the University of Toronto. After that I got a job teaching English at Ryerson Polytechnic Institute in Toronto. I left there after six years to pursue a career in psychotherapy which I did for more than thirty years.

## When did you know you wanted to become a writer?

I was one of those kids who read voraciously and learned to read very early. I never said to myself I wanted to be a writer... nobody talked like that in those days. But I was completely in love with books, words and stories. I stumbled around a bit but writing was always at the back of my mind and one day much, much later I said to myself, maybe

I should concentrate on writing. So I did. I wrote two plays, some poems, short stories, then settled into detective fiction set in Victorian Toronto. My first book was published in 1997 and a few years later the books were optioned for television by Shaftesbury films. They became the *Murdoch Mysteries*, now filming its seventh season.

### Do you have a typical day?

Well, I spend the mornings with the dogs, visit the dog park and so on. Then I get to do some writing. The *Murdoch* television series is a huge commitment; I read the scripts and comment on them, I sometimes go to auditions and what is called the read through of the script. When that is going on there really is no typical day but I admit I enjoy unstructured days when I can concentrate on my books.

### You do a tremendous amount of research to ensure your characters are authentic; tell us about this.

Research is the easiest part! I get very involved... when I was working on *Does Your Mother Know*, I went to the Outer Hebrides to get a better sense of this world. I took some Gaelic classes so I could say a few words... another book in this series was about the world of the deaf so I took sign language lessons. It's interesting and fun and research takes me places I never dreamed I would go. I try to find out as much as I can about where the characters live.

### What are you working on now?

I am finishing book three in the WW2 series, *Season of Darkness*, which takes place in Ludlow, England where we go every year. It's our second home now... I absolutely love it... you know in England you just fall over a castle every three feet...

### What three words describe you?

Ohhh, I don't know... I am persistent I guess; I think I am kind, I want to be kind... maybe I'm shy... that's very hard to answer!

### What are the major challenges writers face today?

That's hard to answer because things are changing so fast. People say that books are dying but e-books are thriving. Being a writer is tough, especially in Canada. Without television I would not have

made it; very few people can survive on income generated solely by writing.

### What has changed the most for you over your career?

Television, absolutely... getting into the world of TV, the show is doing better and better to my surprise and delight. Wherever I go to do a talk I always have to say I am sorry I am not Yannick (he plays Murdoch and is extremely attractive), he sends his best wishes but he's not coming! And I am finally being published in Britain by Titan Books which is thrilling as it is my homeland.



Maureen's dog Farley

### You have two dogs and a cat. Tell us about your love of animals.

English people tend to always have dogs; everybody had a dog when I was growing up. Dogs were always an adored part of the family but nobody went in for systematic training as we do now and which I love. When we came to Canada we had to leave our dog behind; that was so hard, so terrible. I only got a cat because where I was living initially in Toronto I could not have a dog, so I got a cat. But I am a dog person... don't tell Willie the cat.

### How do animals figure in your books?

I try and put them in whenever I can. But it doesn't always work. In one book, Murdoch's father had a dog and I wanted Murdoch to take over the dog... but that's not possible for a busy detective focused on his work. In the Scottish story, *Does Your Mother Know*, I brought in a Border Collie that was great fun because by then I had a Border Collie... I was so into them. He was so brilliant but also high maintenance. We did agility for years and he was very good at it. He died in September 2012 and I still miss him.

### Do you have any time for hobbies?

I host a writing group once a month. All women and all old friends. We pick a topic and write for 20 minutes, then read the results. There are six of us, no writers other than myself. It's fabulous; it's a way of connecting that really is supportive.

I consider Murdoch my dog a hobby because I really believe in training. I cannot understand people who don't train their dogs. It's like having a child and not teaching him or her how to walk. With my Border Collie we did agility training for hours; I think Murdoch will be a therapy dog because he is so friendly.

### What are three things on your bucket list?

I would love to see the three books in the WW2 detective series *Season of Darkness* televised, not just for me but because I think the war is such an important part of our history. I don't want to travel... I am terrible, too anxious... I like to know where I am, have a routine. Oh, I would like to have Murdoch (dog) in the movies; I think it would be fun. I feel so blessed because I am doing all things I always wanted to do.

### What advice do you have for writers just starting out?

I think I would say even now study the craft. So many people have said to me, I want to write a mystery. I ask: Do you read mysteries and the answer is no. Everyone wants to be the next Stephen King without the work. My advice is if you want to write, choose a genre, learn everything you can about it and write the best possible book you can. I used to read mysteries like Sherlock Holmes so there was no doubt for me that I wanted to write them. It's so important to feel the genre. I could never write a straight novel.

*Bottom Line: An interview with the writer who inspired the popular TV program Murdoch Mysteries and who is also a long time animal lover.*



Maureen's dog Murdoch



#### Maureen Jennings

Maureen Jennings: After a long career as a psychotherapist, Maureen Jennings took the plunge and is now writing full time; she has published one novella, eleven novels of crime fiction and one book of non-fiction relating to creativity, as well as two professionally produced plays. She was awarded a Certificate of Commendation from Heritage Toronto, the Grant Allen award for on-going contribution to the genre in 2011, and has received a total of seven nominations from Crime Writers of Canada for best novel and short story of the year. Her books have been translated into other languages, including Polish, Korean, French, German, Italian and Czech. You can contact Maureen at [jenford@sympatico.ca](mailto:jenford@sympatico.ca).

# Hire The Buyer - Yes Or No?

by Timothy A. Brown



One question that many veterinarian practice owners will ask (usually at mid-career when they want to slow down a little) is:

“Should I hire an associate?”

Many then ponder these additional questions:

**“If I hire an associate, what effect will it have on the practice (pros and cons) and will an associate impact the fair market value and/or the salability of my practice?”**

There are many ways to look at associates. Our company retains 16 associates and we must in order to service the nation, coast to coast. Small animal veterinarians are fortunate in that their clients come to their offices so the addition of veterinary man/woman power is not dependent on geography – it depends on client/patient flow, client/patient preferences and most importantly, lifestyle choices of the owner.

Most business owners want to hire a young, ambitious veterinarian and to see him/her grow in his/her skills and career. After all, we all had to start somewhere and most of us had a mentor to guide us through the early stages of our career—the years when we make the most mistakes!

Our informal research of owners who have hired associates (and many have also fired a few!) reveals that the large majority only sees the potential benefits of the associate, yet not much consideration is given to the possible detriments. Here are some pros and cons.

## Pros of hiring an associate:

- Relieves you of extra client/patient load, allowing for shorter days (leaving at 3 or 4 p.m.!) and for longer vacations or more time for hobbies & family.
- Allows the practice to offer extended hours or to open the schedule for the owner to perform more complex treatments that are normally referred out.
- Generate higher gross income for the practice and some economies of scale can be realized with supplies, lab costs, wages, etc..
- Increased utilization of the existing facility, equipment or staff capabilities.
- Provides for clinical companionship and the sharing of ideas with regard to complicated cases.
- If the relationship is successful, the associate may be a future purchaser.

## Cons of hiring an associate:

### A} As to the day to day operations:

- Additional management duties (direct supervision and liability).
- Cost of integration into practice (signs, printing, training, legal fees for preparation of agreement).
- Loss of income in the initial phase as most owners “give up” some clients to get the associate started.
- Extra patient management time (non-income hours) is required of you to introduce the new dentist and encourage patients to see them.
- “High-Touch” patients may demand your attention to address their concerns or complaints if there are any personality conflicts.
- Staff often have trouble adapting to new personnel and sometimes they don’t know whose instructions to follow (especially when the owner is away).

### B} As to the value of a practice:

- Associates intimidate buyers due the fear of incompatibility and price is often a very contentious issue due to the many “what-ifs”.
- Although associates usually increase total gross income, they rarely increase your net income. Our firm believes that most owners actually subsidize their associates. Even when all cylinders are firing—typical profits are about 5–7 per cent of the associate’s gross. One may ponder, “All that extra work for the owner and so little profit?” When you factor in the integration costs it can take one to two years to recover your investment and by then, the associate may resign: our firm’s surveys suggest that the average length that associates today stay at the same practice is less than three years because they often want to be an owner just like you!
- Increased gross usually means increased practice value, but the associates’ presence intimidates a buyer and the buyer will offer a lower price in most cases. In the end, you may sell for the same price as you would without an associate.

## Conclusion

Hiring an associate should be based primarily on client/patient load and schedule demands. Lifestyle also needs to be considered. If you are hiring your buyer, be prepared, it may work out or it may not—and in the alternative, it could be detrimental to your practice if the former associate(s) remain in the service area.

*Bottom Line: This article outlines the pros and cons of a veterinarian hiring an associate with the potential result of having the associate buy his/her practice.*



### Timothy A. Brown

Timothy A. Brown is the Broker of Record and CEO of ROI Corporation Brokerage, a company that specializes in professional practice appraisals, brokerage, consulting, locum placements, associateships, and practice financing across Canada. Timothy can be reached at 905.278.4145 or [timothy@roicorp.com](mailto:timothy@roicorp.com) - [www.roicorp.com](http://www.roicorp.com).

# Feature Interview: Dr. Bernhard Pukay

With Editor



PROFITABLE PRACTICE

When it comes to finding a Renaissance man of veterinary medicine look no further than Dr. Bernhard Pukay. His resume and list of accomplishments as a veterinarian go off the charts. He is known both nationally and internationally and is a member of too many professional organizations to mention. He has been an author and columnist, an editor, a cartoonist, a TV co-producer, writer and host and pet food consultant to name a few of the talents he has and the tasks he has performed.

### Dr. Pukay agreed to answer the following:

#### Describe the path that led to your career as a veterinarian.

As far back as I can remember, I was always interested in medicine and originally had intended on becoming a physician. To that end, I worked in a “human” hospital as an orderly for five summers while completing my pre-med pre-dental university degree. During that time, I came to realize that veterinary medicine offered me greater career opportunities and allowed me to combine my love of medicine with my passion for animals.

#### Currently, what are your areas of special interest?

My two areas of special interest have always been dermatology and the human-animal bond. However, I have recently started focusing on the importance of pet insurance and its increasing relevance to our profession. Pet insurance, I feel, will be the ultimate saviour of our profession, just as dental insurance was to the dental profession. Not only will it make veterinary care accessible to more pet owners, but it also advocates for the pet and removes cost from the health care conversation.

#### What gives you satisfaction both personally and professionally?

##### Personally

I really get a great deal of personal satisfaction from helping people and their animals. I also like bringing a smile to someone’s face or getting a laugh out of him or her.

##### Professionally

I have always tried to explore new avenues and uncharted territories, stretching the envelopes and promoting new ideas and concepts, whether in clinical research, publishing, lecturing or treatment modalities. At the end of the day, I want to feel that I made a difference in my life and in my profession.

#### What has surprised you with regard to your career choice as a veterinarian?

I always knew that veterinary medicine would provide me with an incredible variety of career opportunities—I just never knew how many! What other profession would have allowed me to be a dermatologist, a surgeon, an educator, a researcher, a grief counselor, TV/radio/newspaper personality, business owner and even a psychologist!?

#### If you had a choice, would you become a veterinarian again? Why or why not?

Absolutely. It has provided me with rich and challenging



experiences, incredible life-long friendships and patients who are so appreciative, they lick my face. I’d like to see a doctor or lawyer say that!

#### What do you do to unwind and get away from the day-to-day routines?

I enjoy jogging and working out on a regular basis. I especially enjoy jogging in various exotic locales wherever I travel for my lecture tours. I also love alpine skiing and scuba diving. A few years ago, I managed to obtain my certification as NAUI Divemaster.

#### You are an accomplished cartoonist/artist. How did that come about?

Actually, I always doodled whenever I could (especially during lectures in university). When I started writing a weekly *Pet Care* column for the *Ottawa Citizen*, the editor noticed some of my doodles and suggested I draw a weekly cartoon to go along with my column. I also received some valuable lessons from my mentor and teacher, the late Jim Unger, creator of the popular “Herman” cartoons.

#### What would be the major theme or message you would offer a class of veterinarians about to graduate at your alma mater in Guelph, Ontario?

Become involved!

First: Find something that you are passionate about and then pursue it! I was passionate about dermatology and it opened up doors for me that I could never have imagined.

Second: Become involved in your profession. Join an association and find out what a truly fantastic group of individuals veterinarians are.

Finally, remember that you only get out of life what you put in.

#### Where do you see yourself in five years?

So far, it’s been one heck of a ride. I hope to hang on and see where else life will take me.

*Bottom Line: This interview features a multi-talented veterinarian who offers insights for young veterinarians.*



#### Bernhard Pukay, DVM

Dr. Bernhard Pukay has had a long and distinguished career in all aspects of veterinary medicine. Currently he serves as a Veterinary Consultant and Chairman of the Petsecure Advisory Board.

He can be reached at [bpukay@sympatico.ca](mailto:bpukay@sympatico.ca).

# Feature Interview: Rick Mares

With Editor



While vacationing in Alabama I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with Rick Mares. Rick is sight-impaired with about 5-10 per cent vision capability. He can distinguish between light and dark and has some peripheral vision. He was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), the most common of a group of hereditary progressive retinal degenerations or dystrophies. There are many variations of RP and about 75,000 Americans have this sight impairment. People like Rick often qualify to receive a guide dog to assist them.

Rick explained that there is a difference between guide dogs and service dogs. Guide dogs are selected and trained for use by the visually impaired whereas service dogs aid people with some form of physical impairment. They can be used to help children with autism (see earlier Toronto Star reference), the hearing impaired and any other major physical disorder. Rick's dogs are classified as "leader-dogs" because of where they are trained in Rochester, Michigan.

## Please tell us a little about your sight loss.

I first noticed something was wrong in my teenage years. At 16 when I started to drive I experienced a form of night blindness. Over many years and several different diagnoses, my sight became worse and I accepted that I had a heredity form of RP. Other males in my family have similar disorders that are passed on to them by female family carriers.

## For many years you were a teacher—when did it become necessary to stop teaching?

In 1989, my sight impairment had progressed to a point where I had to stop. I was blessed to have had so many years of sight, was able to teach and obtain a masters degree in education. Those sighted years help me daily because I know what things look like such as a bright blue sky; those who are blind at birth do not have these experiences and it makes it more difficult for them.

## What happened next?

I was determined that I would not let my sight loss stop me in any way. I worked as a salesman for Coleman Pop-Up Trailers from 1989 until 2004. My boss Pat Trainer only hired customers because he believed they made the best sales people since they knew the product so well. I was so good at assembling the Pop-Up Trailers that I demonstrated how easy it was at sales shows and other events. Today I teach Catechism at my local church and I speak in high schools in a Blindness Awareness Program. I teach kids how blind people manage things like how they fold their bills to know what denominations they are and how to recognize various coins and other basics that blind people use.

Also I am active in my local Lion's Club, I promote Leader-dogs for the Blind in Rochester, Michigan where some dogs are trained and fund raise by speaking at events like Dinner in the Dark that raises money for people who need a leader-dog and have travel expenses to get to the training schools.

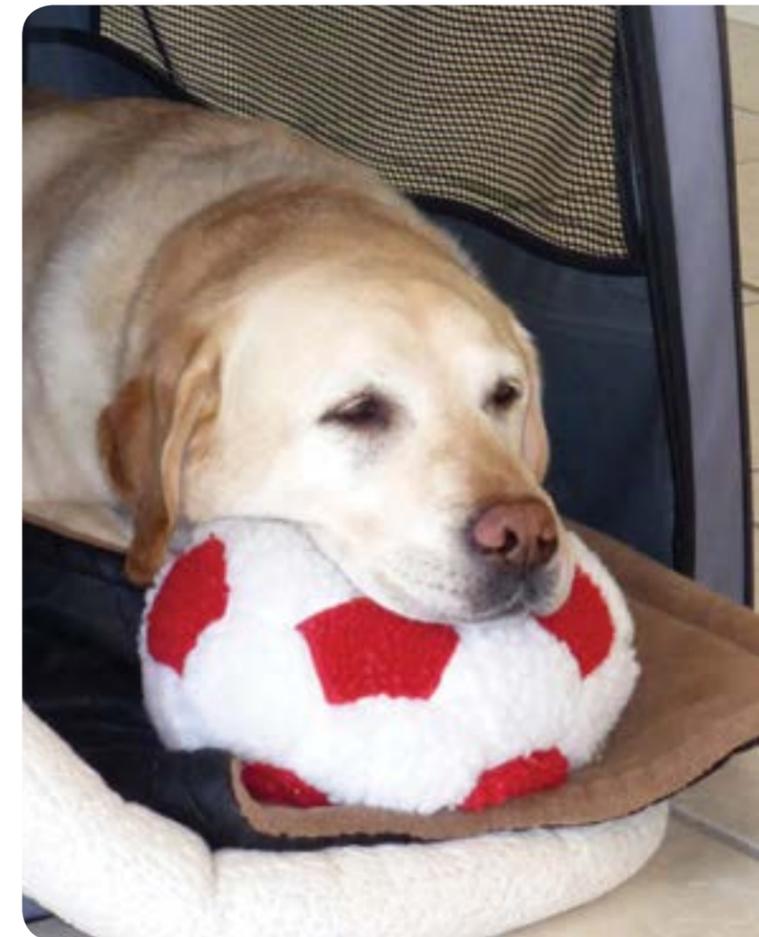
## You have had three leader-dogs. Please tell us a little about each of them.

My first one, Bear, was a donated yellow lab and he was trained in Rochester. We were together for 5½ years and he died of a blood clot. The second one was a yellow lab named Tug who I had for 10 years and I had to put him down because of severe arthritis. My present dog, Gizmo, is also a yellow lab and we have been together for almost 8 years.

Gizmo has quite a few food allergies. He is now on a diet of venison and sweet potato and as you can see he is quite sturdy, active and healthy. All of them underwent extensive training and were very well suited for the task of guide dog. All my dogs are and were special in their own way.

## What relationship have you developed with veterinarians?

I have a strong tie with Patterson Veterinary Hospital back home in Clinton, Michigan. They have been good to the dogs and me. Besides regular care and checkups, Gizmo has had two surgeries. The last to remove a small growth on his right paw that proved to be cancerous.



Gizmo

## What is the cost of obtaining a leader-dog?

It is about \$40,000 in the U.S. to get a properly trained dog. My three dogs did not cost me a cent. Funds raised by the Lion's Clubs and with many private donation sources have paid for them all. This is the case for most people who qualify for leader-dogs. I am proud to be a member of the Lion's Club and I am thankful that they took up the challenge of

author-activist Helen Keller to be The Knights of the Blind.

### What advice would you offer to sighted people in their treatment of sight-impaired people?

It is wrong to assume that sight-impaired people are not capable. They can be highly educated and skilled in many ways that are not obvious. I hate it when my wife, Marci and I go to a restaurant and the waitress asks Marci what I want to eat. I am visually impaired not deaf! The last thing blind people want is pity. Blind people can do almost anything if they set their mind to do it.

### Do you have any final words for our readers that you didn't have a chance to say already?

Being blind is a physical challenge... not an impossibility. I refer to it as a 'hiccup' in my life. I refuse to let it get me down. I have many aids, things like talking books and talking calculators. I belong to a blind bowling club. I can use a computer and I have a dog that enhances my ability to be independent.

*Bottom Line: This interview outlines how Rick Mares who has Retinitis Pigmentosa lives a full life with the help of his wife Marci and his dog, Gizmo.*

## Helen Keller



Born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, USA, in 1880, Helen Keller developed a fever at 18-months of age that left her blind and deaf. With the help of an exceptional teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan of the Perkins School for the Blind, Helen Keller learned sign language and braille. A few years later, she learned to speak. As an adult she became a tireless advocate for people with disabilities. And in 1925, she attended the Lions Clubs International Convention and challenged Lions to become “knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness.” The Lions accepted her challenge and their work ever since has included sight programs aimed at preventable blindness.

### Helen Keller Day

In 1971, the Board of Directors of Lions Clubs International declared that June 1 would be remembered as Helen Keller Day. Lions around the world implement sight-related service projects on Helen Keller Day.

#### Editor's Note:

**This is the conclusion to Helen Keller's speech that she delivered in June of 1925 to Lion's Club members in Cedar Point, Ohio, USA.**

*The opportunity I bring to you, Lions, is this:*

*To foster and sponsor the work of the American Foundation for the Blind. Will you not help me hasten the day when there shall be no preventable blindness; no little deaf, blind child untaught; no blind man or woman unaided? I appeal to you Lions, you who have your sight, your hearing, you who are strong and brave and kind. Will you not constitute yourselves Knights of the Blind in this crusade against darkness?*

*I thank you.*

## A Dog's Purpose: A Book For Humans By W. Bruce Cameron

As Reviewed by Karen Henderson



*All dogs go to heaven... unless they have unfinished business here on earth.*

If you need an immediate purpose, read this absolutely wonderful book. It is the story of one dog—told from the dog's point of view—who spends several lifetimes looking for his real purpose.

The story starts with feral dog named Toby by those who pick him up. Along with his mother and siblings he is taken to the “Yard” where he is neutered and learns to love humans, especially Senora. Unfortunately for him, he also learns how to open a fence, escapes and is shortly recaptured and put to sleep because he is deemed unadoptable due to a severely injured leg.

**What humans learn from Toby reflecting on his sibling Sister who remained in the wild and was recaptured too late—thin, wounded and sick:**

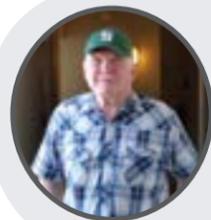
*This was what happened to dogs who tried to live in the world without people—they become beaten down, defeated, starved. Sister was what we all would have become if we'd stayed in the culvert.*

**What Toby learned about his purpose as he is put to sleep:**

*Unbidden, the sadness I'd felt from Senora washed through me, and I wanted to squirm up to her and lick her palms and make her happy again. Of all the things I'd ever done, making Senora laugh seemed the most important. It was, I reflected, the only thing that gave my life any purpose.*

The story continues. Toby is amazed to find himself re-born a puppy once again, this time a Golden Retriever. He was plagued with the question: Why am I a puppy again? Is there something I am supposed to do?

He was born in a puppy mill and using his prior experience, he once again manages to escape and is captured by one person and rescued from a hot car by another who takes him home to her son Ethan. He became Bailey and he and Ethan were inseparable. We follow their lives together as Ethan grows up, Bailey saves his life and then life separates them as Ethan goes off to college. As the years pass Bailey ages and becomes too ill to live; once again he is put to sleep.



### Rick Mares

Rick Mares is a retired schoolteacher and salesman. His volunteer work allows him to educate the sighted and the sight impaired alike.

He can be reached at rickandmarci@yahoo.com or at 586.465.6365.

**What humans learn from Bailey:**

We learn how dogs can follow their human's scent as it floats through the air, how they can so strongly sense delight and sadness and respond with unquestionable loyalty and love. As Bailey is being euthanized, Cameron writes: *The boy buried his face in my neck and sobbed. It took everything I had to lift my head up and lick him, to let him know it was all right. I wasn't afraid. His breath was warm and delightful. I closed my eyes at the pleasure of it, the sheer pleasure of love from the boy, love by the boy.*

**What Bailey learns about his purpose:**

*Living in the Yard had taught me how to escape through a gate. It had led me straight to the boy, and loving and living with the boy was my whole purpose in life.*

Bailey is reborn a puppy yet again; her name is Ellie and she is a German Shephard. She has clear memories of what life was like as both Toby and Bailey. She becomes a working dog for a police officer named Jakob; her job is to not only find but also to save people. She ends up working with several handlers over her career; near the end of it she makes a final save of a boy drowning in a sewer who reminds her of Ethan and how they used to play "save" in the pond near Ethan's home. At the end of her life she lays in the sun, reflecting on all her owners and experiences and concludes that her sole purpose was always to save people. She had done her job and was at peace as she was put to sleep yet again.

**What humans learn from Ellie (once again):**

That dogs will do anything to save us, even give up their own lives and ask for nothing in return except for a kind voice and a loving touch.

**What Ellie learns about purpose in others:**

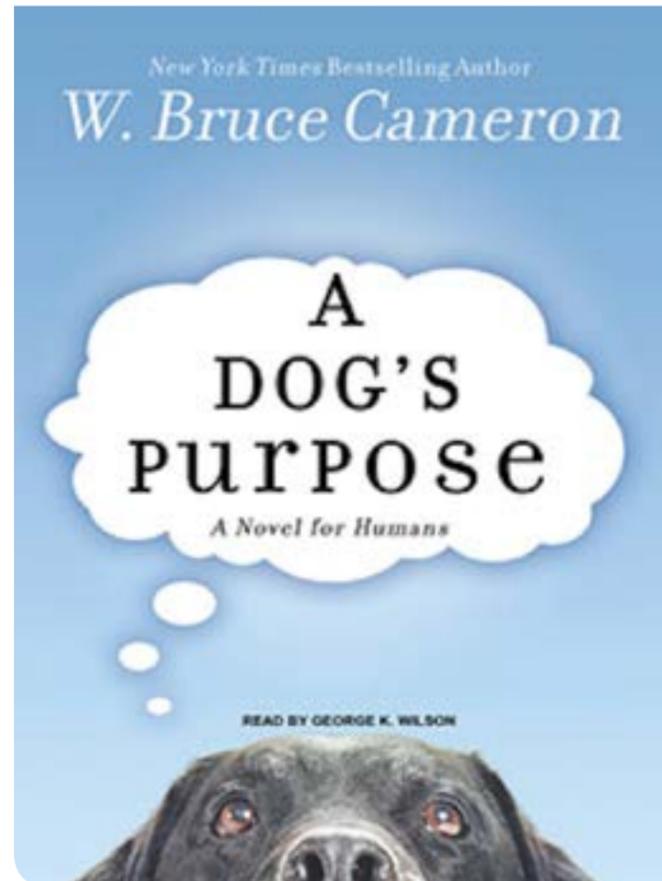
I wondered briefly if cats also came back after death, then dismissed the thought because as far as I had ever been able to tell, cats do not have a purpose.

Logically, Ellie's life should have been the end of the story but not so; a puppy is born again one last time. However this black lab puppy does not display much energy and is the last of the litter to be adopted. He cannot figure out why he has returned after he felt he had served his purpose; he has no interest in going through all the training again. His new owner is Wendi and she names him Bear. He is unhappy with Wendi but fate stepped in yet again and Bear ends up with Wendi's mother; this home is filled with tension and hate for dogs and Bear is driven to the country by Victor where he is abandoned. He wanders to find food and ends up finding Ethan, now an old man.

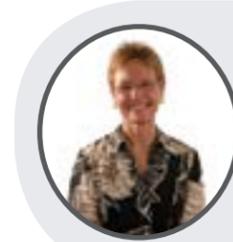
I will finish my review here; you must read the book to find out how the story ends. You'll shed a few more tears but you won't be disappointed. Life works out as it should.

I have been a dog owner for 14 years; in this time I have only been privileged to own two dogs but I have learned that they are as different from each other as are humans and the relationships we have with them reflect these differences.

I now try and look at my cockapoo Sammy Sosa with different eyes; I try and put myself inside his mind and heart to better understand what he is feeling and why he reacts as he does. *A Dog's Purpose* will make you laugh and cry; it will also make you angry. In my opinion this book will make us all better dog owners... advocates who must continue to abolish puppy mills, stop animal abuse and help people truly appreciate the wonder that dogs bring to our lives.



*Bottom Line: This is a review of a book that all dog lovers would learn from and enjoy.*

**Karen Henderson**

Karen Henderson is the Managing Associate Editor of *Profitable Practice* and can be reached at [Karen@profitablepracticemagazine.com](mailto:Karen@profitablepracticemagazine.com)

# Be A Dealmaker, Not A Dealbreaker

by Jackie Rudberg



Congratulations! You've decided to sell your professional practice, motivated by trading in your stethoscope for a tennis racquet, golf clubs or a new knife set for your inner Iron Chef. But before you jump into your life of leisure, slinging back those Caribbean-coloured frothy drinks with floating umbrellas and pineapple on a tropical island, there are a few obstacles to overcome during the sale process.

Every sale has its own unique challenges, complete with twists and turns and the odd rollercoaster ride, taking a toll on all involved: the aging vendor, aspiring buyer, lawyers, and the bankers financing the transaction. We tend to underestimate the overriding role emotions and personalities play, resulting in often unpredictable consequences. Minds waver, details change and emotions rule, threatening common ground and jeopardizing the sale's completion. Nevertheless, when the sale of professional practices close successfully, there are three principles that are always present:

**Trust**

Building trust between the parties is really about forging a relationship. As a practice owner, your veterinary clinic is an extension of your being; it's a place where you spend 75 per cent of your physical time and 1000 per cent of your mental time worrying about Fluffy and Fido. Therefore, you want to ensure that the prospective purchaser of this piece of you life is likely to carry on your goodwill as a viable successor for the business that took a lifetime to build. On the flipside, as a purchaser, you want to know that the vendor's price is fair, accurately reflects the value of the existing business, and that you would be a good fit to succeed in the former owner's place.

The due diligence process is instrumental in forming the basis for building trust during the sale process. The disclosure of documents in a timely and transparent way is just as important as the purchaser's response on completion of review. While an abundance of questions is normal and should be welcome, this is the period where the purchaser may identify a number of areas that could change the deal structure to mitigate perceived risks. How the parties respond to these challenges is critical to building the requisite trust necessary to move the process forward.

Conversely, lack of trust will significantly increase costs and delay the time it takes to close the deal. If this is the case, it may not be the right deal with the right people; sometimes the best deal you make is the one you don't make at all!

### Communication

Understand that every sale of a business has dealbreakers – issues that are critical to the vendor and purchaser. The chances of the deal closing successfully increase exponentially when these bones of contention are identified very early on in the process. Identifying common ground and initiating solutions is easier when the key players, including the parties in question, are assembled together. Experienced professional advisors often rely on their breadth of knowledge to determine what is fair or unfair and can often persuade their clients to adopt a different perspective.

### Mitigating risk

As a vendor, the objective is to sell your professional practice – selling your business for the highest price the market will bear – while taking on a tolerable amount of risk. Successfully completed sales include vendors and purchasers who recognize that both sides of the transaction must accept a certain amount of risk.

For purchasers, this risk often involves standard entrepreneurial concerns: clients leaving after the sale is complete, a competitor undermining the business, or departure of key employees.

On the other hand, vendors are not necessarily and immediately absolved from all risks and liabilities associated with the professional practice going forward. The large sum of money earned when handing off the business is exchanged for a promise that it will generate a certain level of future cash-flows. Therefore, recognize that it may not be unreasonable for prospective purchasers to request certain mechanisms like a non-compete, earn-outs, representations and warranties or vendor financing to mitigate the risk of future cash-flows being different from previous representations.

While the perspectives and risks differ for each party, finding and building on that common ground to bridge these obstacles will increase satisfaction with the purchase and sale of your practice and lead to a successful transition.

Focusing on building trust, effective communication tactics, and mitigating risk may not eliminate the roller-coaster ride, but it may get you to the tennis court on the tropical island in your new kitchen sooner than you think.

*Bottom Line: This article outlines three major principles or selling your veterinarian practice before entering retirement.*

## Who'd Have Known??



A Czech study claims that dogs have a special sensitivity to earth's magnetic field and prefer to defecate aligned along the north-south magnetic axis. The findings may help scientists better understand how that strange sense called magnetoreception manifests in mammals.

The scientists studied 70 dogs of 37 different breeds as they defecated (1893 dumps, to be precise) and urinated (a whopping 5582 times) — data collected over two years. The researchers found that dogs prefer to point along the north-south axis when they do their business — as long as the magnetic field is stable. When the magnetic field shifts — say, because of an oncoming solar storm — it becomes more difficult to see the pattern, Begall said.

Both male and female dogs took this north-south stance when defecating, the study authors said. But male dogs took slightly different positions when urinating — probably a result of their leg-lifting behaviour. How that leg-lifting — right or left? — affects a dog's alignment is “currently under study” the authors wrote.

The authors caution that more research is needed — in part because ‘normal’ magnetic conditions occurred only in 30 per cent of the cases studied for this work.

If they do indeed sense magnetic fields, why do dogs feel the need to point north-south when they do their business? The authors don't know yet but it could be that the dogs somehow calibrate their compass or read their ‘mental map’ during the walks. Said one of the authors: “Imagine that you read a compass during a hike. If the compass needle is shaky, you might dismiss reading the compass at all. That could be the reason why the dogs have no preference when the (magnetic field) is unstable.”

Source: [phys.org](http://phys.org)

## There's An App For That...



A few years ago a black lab came into The Urban Puppy Shop in Vancouver...

“He was beautiful and had obviously been well cared for — his coat was shiny, he was well fed, and he had a great temperament. During the process of signing the dog in for daycare, it became known that his owners had adopted him from an animal shelter several days earlier. This dog had been at the shelter for less than 48 hours when these new owners were able to adopt him into their family. It struck me that this dog was grieving, that he was missing ‘his true owners’ — and I knew that somewhere out there his true owners were also grieving. The unfairness of this situation struck a chord with me and I knew there had to be a better way to re-unite lost pets with their rightful owners. It was at this moment that the idea for PiP was born.”

- Philip Rooyakkers, Founder & CEO

You've lost your dog; you spend the night searching to no avail. What good was that microchip or tattoo you spent money on? Or the tags that actually got lost last week?

**iTunes to the rescue! Or maybe crowd searching.** 🐾

The co-founder of this Vancouver dog shop has developed an app which he hopes will help bewildered owners reunite with their pets. He figured if we could use the Cloud to find lost phones, we should be able to use it to find lost pets.

**Here's how PiP or Positive Identification of Pet works.**

Just like you and I, dog's faces are all individual in spite of all that hair on some breeds. So it occurred to Mr. Rooyakkers to develop an app that uses facial recognition to put together a pet database.

A pet owner completes the PiP registration, identifying contact information and their pet's breed, age, size and gender, takes a few photos of their pet's face, and uploads these to the cloud-based PiP platform.

PiP will allow registered owners to send an alert when a pet goes missing; this alert is immediately distributed to other users, veterinarians and animal control and rescue agencies. It also appears on social media.

Then, if the animal is found by someone else, that person can take a picture of the dog and match it up with its owner. When a PiP is determined, the pet owner will be notified immediately that their lost pet has been found!! Should the pet owner be unavailable, secondary contacts will be notified.

Pet owners subscribe to the service; a 12 month paid registration of a single pet provides pet owners with immediate access to the PiP “Amber Alert” system, should their pet go missing. The PiP app is a free download for all Smartphone users but pet owners who wish to register their pet will pay an annual fee of \$1.49 per month for a PiP subscription.

PiP became available on iTunes in January 2014; the PiP app will be available to Android subscribers in the near future.

The developer claims it works and has applied for two patents — one involving the process and the other involving algorithms.

To download the app: [www.pipmypet.com](http://www.pipmypet.com)

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### Jackie Rudberg

Jackie Rudberg is the Director of Business and Legal Affairs for ROI Corporation where she provides a combination of legal and financial advisory services to instill and sustain success.

She can be reached at [jackie@roicorp.com](mailto:jackie@roicorp.com).