



FABJOB GUIDE TO
**BECOME A
DOG DAYCARE
OWNER**



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Contents

About the Author7

1. Introduction.....8

 1.1 Why Open a Dog Daycare?.....8

 1.1.1 What Dog Daycare is Like.....8

 1.1.2 A Booming Industry.....10

 1.1.3 Benefits of the Career11

 1.2 Inside This Guide12

2. Dog Daycare Basics14

 2.1 Screening and Registration14

 2.1.1 Making Sure Dogs are Right for Daycare14

 2.1.2 Meeting and Registration15

 Sample Registration Form17

 2.2 Your Day at the Daycare.....20

 2.2.1 Play and Daily Routine.....20

 2.2.2 Understanding Canine Behavior.....21

 2.2.3 Walks and Other Excursions.....22

 2.2.4 Overnight and Extended Stays.....24

 2.3 Other Services You Can Offer26

 2.3.1 Dog Spa and Grooming26

 2.3.2 Dog Transportation29

 2.3.3 Obedience Training30

 2.3.4 Adding a Doggy Boutique31

 2.4 Get Ready to Own a Dog Daycare35

 2.4.1 Skills to Help You Succeed35

 2.4.2 Pet Industry Resources38

3. Planning Your Dog Daycare	43
3.1 Getting Ready	43
3.1.1 Writing a Business Plan	43
3.1.2 Choosing a Location.....	48
3.1.3 Getting Zoning Approval	49
3.2 Startup Costs and Financing.....	51
3.2.1 Expenses to Expect	51
3.2.2 Financing and Cutting Costs.....	54
3.3 Legal Matters.....	56
3.3.1 Licensing Requirements	56
3.3.2 Business Insurance	57
4. Running Your Dog Daycare	59
4.1 Setting up Your Space	59
4.1.1 Areas You'll Need.....	59
4.1.2 Layout and Design	60
4.1.3 Renovations and Upgrades	61
4.2 Equipment and Supplies	63
4.2.1 For the Daycare	63
4.2.2 For The Office.....	66
4.3 Setting Your Fees	68
4.3.1 Factors that Affect Your Fees.....	68
4.3.2 Ways to Charge	69
4.3.3 Policies and Payment	71
4.4 Day-to-Day Operations	74
4.4.1 Scheduling.....	74
4.4.2 Hiring and Managing Staff	75
4.4.3 Hygiene, Health and Safety	78

- 5. Getting Clients 82**
 - 5.1 Marketing Tools..... 82
 - 5.1.1 Marketing Plan..... 82
 - 5.1.2 Website 84
 - 5.1.3 Print Materials..... 87
 - 5.2 Getting “Paws”itive Publicity 91
 - 5.2.1 Write a Press Release 91
 - 5.2.2 Donations and Sponsorships 94
 - 5.2.3 Be Seen as an Expert..... 95
 - 5.3 Referrals and Word of Mouth..... 96
 - 5.3.1 From Other Businesses 96
 - 5.3.2 From Satisfied Clients 97
 - 5.4 Networking and Meeting Clients..... 99
 - 5.4.1 Finding Potential Clients 99
 - 5.4.2 Marketing to Corporate Clients 101
- 6. Conclusion 104**



1. Introduction

1.1 Why Open a Dog Daycare?

Are you an energetic and caring “dog person”? When you visit friends or family, are their dogs drawn to you when they sense your love for all creatures great and small? Perhaps you already share your home with a special someone — a noble, beautiful purebred... a four-legged bundle of fur and kisses... or simply a loyal, loving companion.

If you love dogs and interacting with them, and are looking for a fun and profitable way to make a career out of working with animals, becoming a dog daycare owner is fabulous way to make your dreams a reality.

1.1.1 What Dog Daycare is Like

When you look after a group of dogs during the day while their owners are at work, this type of business is called a dog (or doggy) daycare. If you’re not familiar with them, it may help to know that dog daycares are a lot like child daycares in many ways.

Dogs are dropped off in the morning and picked up in the evening from the daycare. During the day the dogs play in groups, in a yard (indoors or out) with other dogs, supervised by daycare staff. They may have an afternoon naptime in a crate or run as well. Your day as a dog daycare owner might include:

- Greeting two-legged and four-legged clients
- Supervising and scheduling your staff
- Speaking with dog owners who are interested in your daycare
- Conducting suitability assessments of dogs for daycare
- Doing one-on-one obedience training
- Taking dogs for a walk or to a nearby dog park
- Helping staff with feeding and naptime routines
- Supervising groups of dogs playing together
- Keeping up with trends in the industry
- Marketing your dog daycare to new and existing clients

Dog daycares are usually made up of a group play area, an office, a storage area, and a place for the dogs to rest, eat, or sleep. You may also select a “time-out” space for dogs that get a bit too rowdy and need a place to calm down. Daycares that lack an outdoor play space will need to walk the dogs a few times a day instead. Some daycares also offer pick-up and drop-off services for the convenience of the owners.

Since the vast majority of pets spend the day at home by themselves, you might wonder why dog daycare is needed at all. Daycare is best suited to dogs that are young and have lots of energy, and would otherwise channel that energy into destructive behavior, such as chewing or digging, when left alone. It also helps dogs with high energy levels burn some off, so they are calmer during the evening with their owners.

Dog daycare is a pet-service concept that is catching on quickly. After all, who wouldn't want their dog to spend the day socializing with other dogs, instead of sleeping at home in their crate, or chewing up furniture and being bored? Daycare offers an alternative to pet-sitter visits,

and a chance for dogs to engage in their instinctive social behavior in a new and fun setting. At the end of the day, your daycare's dogs will be tired and happy to come home and have a restful evening.

Amy Nichols founded Dogtopia, her dog daycare business franchise, three years ago. “[Dog] daycare is growing like crazy,” she says. “Most areas of the country are ripe for expansion and can support many more facilities,” she adds.

1.1.2 A Booming Industry

Lots of people share their lives with dogs, and where there are dogs, there is a need for dog daycare. According to the 2007-2008 National Pet Owners Survey, 44.8 million U.S. households have at least one dog, and there are approximately 74.8 million dogs owned in the U.S. The survey also shows that pet ownership on a whole is on the rise.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics offers encouraging predictions for people who want to open dog daycares. They've identified animal care as a growth industry — in fact, they expect it to grow faster than the national average for all occupations through 2014. The BLS says:

“Pet owners — including a large number of baby boomers, whose disposable income is expected to increase as they age — are expected to increasingly take advantage of daily boarding services. As many pet owners increasingly consider their pet as part of the family, their demand for luxury animal services and willingness to spend greater amounts of money on their pet will continue to grow.”

In addition to more people owning pets, it turns out we're also spending more on them annually too. The American Pet Products Manufacturers Association estimated Americans' annual spending on their pets at \$40.8 billion as of 2007. This impressive figure has more than doubled since 1994, when annual spending was estimated at \$17 billion.

“I opened the first Dogtopia in 2002, and the growth has been stellar. We definitely found a niche in people who love their dogs and want the best for them,” explains founder Amy Nichols. “The growth in the pet industry is unprecedented — I am still amazed by what people will spend on their pets! I truly feel that the sky is the limit, and we are only going to continue to see more growth in the coming years,” Nichols predicts.

“Business has been better than I ever dreamed when we opened,” confirms Bobbi Heimbaugh, owner of Paws Inn, a dog daycare and pet hotel in Iowa. “I knew when I was writing my business plan that there was a great need for it, but I had no idea how great that need actually was. We just celebrated our one-year anniversary, and now have over 600 doggy clients.”

1.1.3 Benefits of the Career

There are many great reasons why becoming a dog daycare owner is a dream career. Here’s an overview of the benefits you’ll enjoy in this booming and exciting industry.

Work with Animals

The obvious reward of working with beautiful and lovable dogs has to come first on this list. Dogs are fun, entertaining, and interesting creatures to work with. While many dog lovers are drawn to veterinary work, not all can continue when they realize how sad it can be to work with sick or injured dogs all day.

It’s not that the work of a vet or vet tech isn’t wonderful and needed, but it’s not for everyone, particularly those who are very emotional or sensitive. Opening a dog daycare is an alternative career path that still offers daily interaction with dogs, yet in an environment that you create and control.

Be Your Own Boss

When you start your own dog daycare, you’ll determine your own hours, and set your own policies. You’ll also decide when you’re going to take those well-deserved days off.

“I was in telecommunications prior to my venture into entrepreneurship,” explains Dogtopia’s Amy Nichols. “I enjoyed the challenge, but ultimately when I got where I was looking to go, the grass was not all that green. It was lucrative but not very fulfilling. I wanted to be able to be more dynamic and have more decision-making abilities. Starting your own business gives you all that and then some — often too many decisions!” she says with a smile.

Be Truly Appreciated

No more working for someone who doesn't value or reward you for your many talents. More than once in this career you'll hear clients tell you that they appreciate your work, and that they don't know what they would do without you. You will be trusted and appreciated by the dogs you care for, and you will see firsthand the difference you make in their lives. Dog "parents" are careful in who they trust, and both loyal and grateful when they find a fabulous dog daycare like yours.

Unlimited Income Potential

As you read earlier, the market for luxury pet services is booming right now, and you've got unlimited potential to grow. You can add to your client base until your daycare is full, and then add employees and square footage to your facility and increase your earning potential. In time your dog daycare could open up more locations, or establish franchises across the country or around the world.

You Can Start Right Now

No special training or experience is necessary to start a dog daycare. In this business you can start simply with a love of dogs, and then build the dog care and entrepreneurial skills from there. From there it's only a matter of time before you find yourself where you want to be: in lucrative and rewarding career at the head of a successful dog daycare.

1.2 Inside This Guide

The *FabJob Guide to Become a Dog Daycare Owner* is designed to help you launch into your new career by providing industry information, how-to guidelines, helpful hints on finding clients, and general advice on starting your dog daycare. It will teach you how to take your interest in canines and your talent for earning their affection, and turn them into a profitable business.

Throughout the guide you will find handy samples of registration forms, budget planners, marketing materials and checklists you can adapt and use for your business, as well as encouragement and ideas

from a number of dog daycare owners who have kindly shared their advice and experience with you. They are:

- Linda Zago, owner of Club Muzo, an urban luxury dog daycare where active and sociable dogs can enjoy a gym and customized entertainment programs for the day
- Stevie® Award finalist Amy Nichols, founder and CEO of Dogtopia, a dog daycare whose overwhelming success and growth took it from start-up to franchise in just over three years
- Bobbi Heimbaugh, a Certified Advanced Pet Care Technician and owner of Paws Inn, a 5,000-square-foot dog daycare and hotel located on five acres

The information, resources and advice on these pages will save you hundreds of hours of research, so that you can start earning money more quickly. You'll avoid the common pitfalls, and make business decisions like an expert. Armed with the inside knowledge this guide provides, you could be caring for your first four-legged client in just a short time from right now.