

A graphic featuring a blue silhouette of a cat and a green silhouette of a dog. An orange bone-shaped graphic is positioned diagonally across the scene, containing the text 'SOCIAL MEDIA'.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE **PET** **INDUSTRY** **REPORT**

Brought to you by:



BLACK DOG STUDIOS

WHY THE REPORT?

Here at Black Dog Studios, we are fortunate enough to have some wonderful clients in the pet industry. After building websites for them, more and more clients were looking to us for the next logical step: marketing plans tailored to drive existing and new customers back to their shiny new sites. Websites are great, but are useless without traffic.

Like many businesses, our savvy clients wanted social media to be an integral part of their marketing plans. In our efforts to provide them with the most comprehensive, effective and current social media strategies, we started doing some research on what was going on in the industry. A LOT of research. We found ourselves poring over thousands of pet industry social media accounts.

What we discovered was surprising. As a member of the industry, we're sure you've seen the staggering statistics that show that the pet industry did over \$50 billion in business in 2011. Despite terrible economic times, devoted pet parents ensured that the industry saw steady growth over the past few years. However, many of the companies that are no doubt contributing to those fiscally fantastic numbers, aren't seeing the same great results in their social media campaigns. What gives?

Don't get us wrong—there are some pet companies that are knocking it out of the park. A few are even highlighted in the following sections. We found that the gap between the handful of companies really doing a great job and the rest of the pack was huge. We can't imagine what the industry profit statistics would look like if pet manufacturers were mastering the art of social media marketing across the board.

← What started as looking at a few competitors websites evolved into a full-on, 1,600+ company social media report!

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WORDS OF WISDOM

We love social media, and we're not the only ones. Currently, one out of every seven people on the planet has a Facebook account. We're past the point of saying this is a fad.

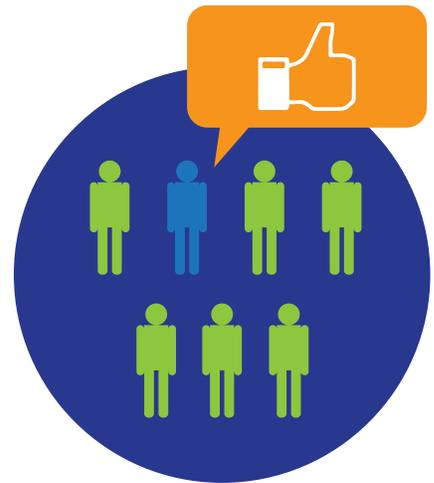
Social media is the way many people communicate today and millions more are joining the conversation every day. As a business, why not communicate where your customers congregate? KISSmetrics, a web analytics company, even reported that 50% of small business owners find new customers through social media.

In traditional marketing channels, bigger is better. Larger companies have more revenue and can afford to blanket their message to the masses on billboards, TV and radio. However, this "outbound," interruption-based marketing is on the way out. Consumers have infinitely more alternatives for researching products and services on their own thanks to the Internet.

Consumers are now in control of their content.

This is great news for small and medium-sized businesses. The Internet has leveled the playing field among businesses by opening up free lines of communication with consumers. The winners in the new economy aren't going to be those with the largest budgets. The winners will be those that understand that consumers are now in control of what they see and how they see it.

Consumers are looking for value and engagement and the businesses that can provide this will win a space in the consumer's heart, and wallet.



FACEBOOK



FACEBOOK: MAN'S BEST "FRIEND"

The largest of the social networks, Facebook has taken the world by storm through connecting friends and family and allowing users to load and share pictures, stories and videos. From a business perspective, the overabundant volume of personal data stored in Facebook's user profiles allows businesses to target their market with pinpoint accuracy.

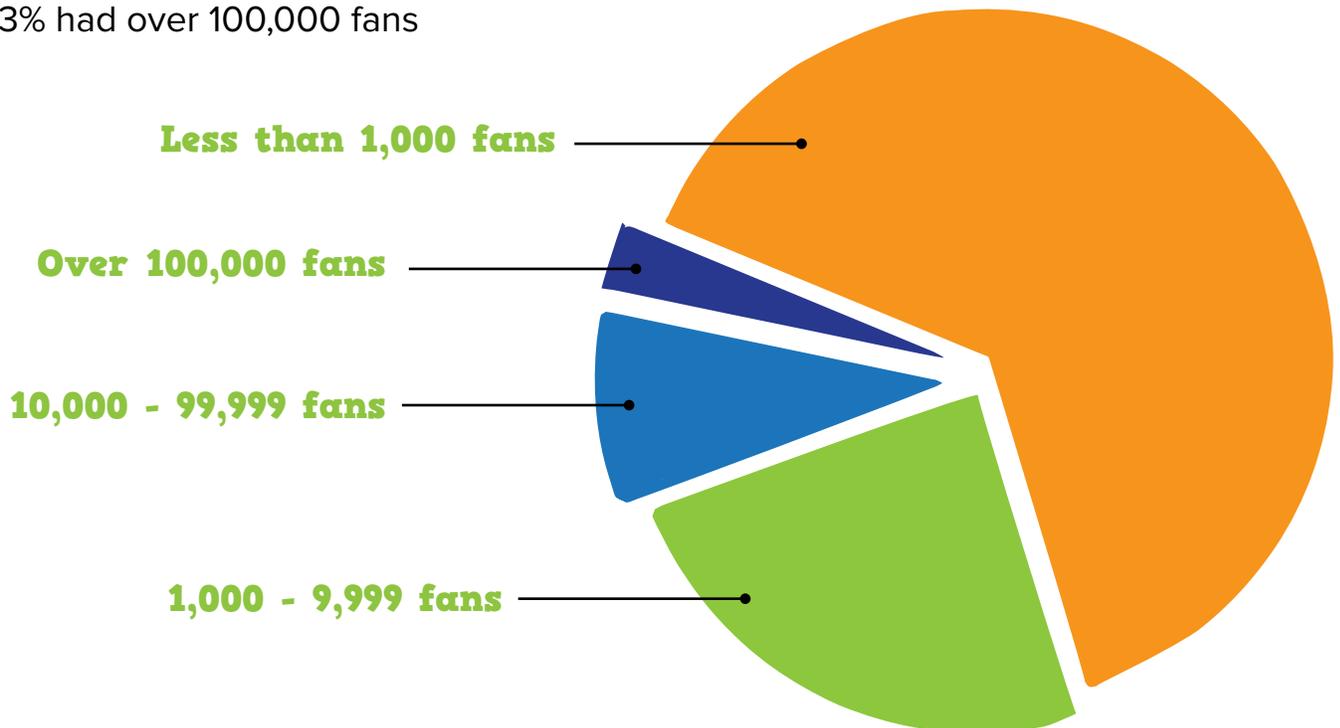
This makes targeting Facebook Ads and promoted posts super easy and effective.

FACEBOOK STATISTICS

- Facebook has over one billion users
- The average user has 229 friends
- With only two degrees of separation, the average user is connected to 150,000 other users
- 58% of users login daily
- 51% of people are more likely to purchase from a brand they are a fan of on Facebook

PET INDUSTRY STATISTICS

- 62% of companies researched were on Facebook
- The majority (64%) had between 0 - 999 fans
- 24% had between 1,000 - 9,999 fans
- 9% had between 10,000 - 99,999 fans
- 3% had over 100,000 fans



Facebook can be an amazing marketing tool for just about any kind or sized business. It's particularly well suited to the pet industry. Here are a few reasons why:

- **It's social.** Pet parents love connecting with other pet parents.
- **It's advocacy-friendly.** Give your existing fans content to share with their friends. Coupon codes, blog articles, contests and fun photos all encourage likes and shares.
- **It's visual.** Proud pet parents love nothing more than sharing snapshots of their dogs, cats, birds, fish and more. In our research, we noticed that images of animals (from cute puppies to LOL cats) went viral more often than links or status updates. Visual content can also take the form of well-designed advertisements and coupons.
- **It's huge.** There are potentially 102,000,000 American pet owners on Facebook!

Who is doing a great job on Facebook in the pet industry?



THE HONEST KITCHEN 116K+ fans

An all-natural pet food company, the Honest Kitchen has great interaction with their fans. In addition they're using the following to engage: "Request a Free Sample" tab, newsletter sign-up, Events, and Facebook Offers.



WELLNESS PET FOOD 212K+ fans

Wellness Pet food communicates with fans of their natural pet food products through consistent posting with educational articles, using Facebook's "Milestone" feature, and a "Pet of the Month" contest.



PETHUB 13.5K+ fans

PetHub is a tech-savvy company by nature. The company sells pet tags that have QR tags on them to help electronically find your lost dog or cat. They regularly host photo contests, post surveys and polls, have a Pinterest tab, plus lots of LOL pics, and product giveaways.

Lorien Clemens, PetHub's Manager of Customer Service and Outreach says "betting social media to work for you means you must be willing to work the social media... constantly." From the looks of it, they certainly are working it!

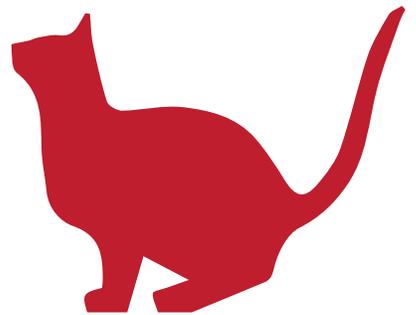
Why does the average pet company have less than 500 fans on their Facebook page?

The top four reasons are:

- **Lack of awareness:** How are they telling their existing customers that they're social? If we web nerds can't find your social sites easily, neither can your customers.
- **Lack of content:** Posts lack "sharable" content like educational information, fun images, contests or coupons. Images are a large part of the new Timeline layout—take advantage of it by posting large, high quality photos often!
- **Lack of consistency:** updates are few and far between.
- **Lack of engagement:** Companies aren't taking advantage of the fans they already have. They are not engaging with them or responding to posting on pages.

← remember:
it's social media

TWITTER



What's Happening?

On Twitter users send out tweets, 140 character messages that answer the simple question: What's Happening? That one single question is answered more than 340,000,000 times a day.

Twitter's quick, conversational format makes it easy to interact with each other while at the same time creating searchable data. Smart marketers have used Twitter for market research for years.

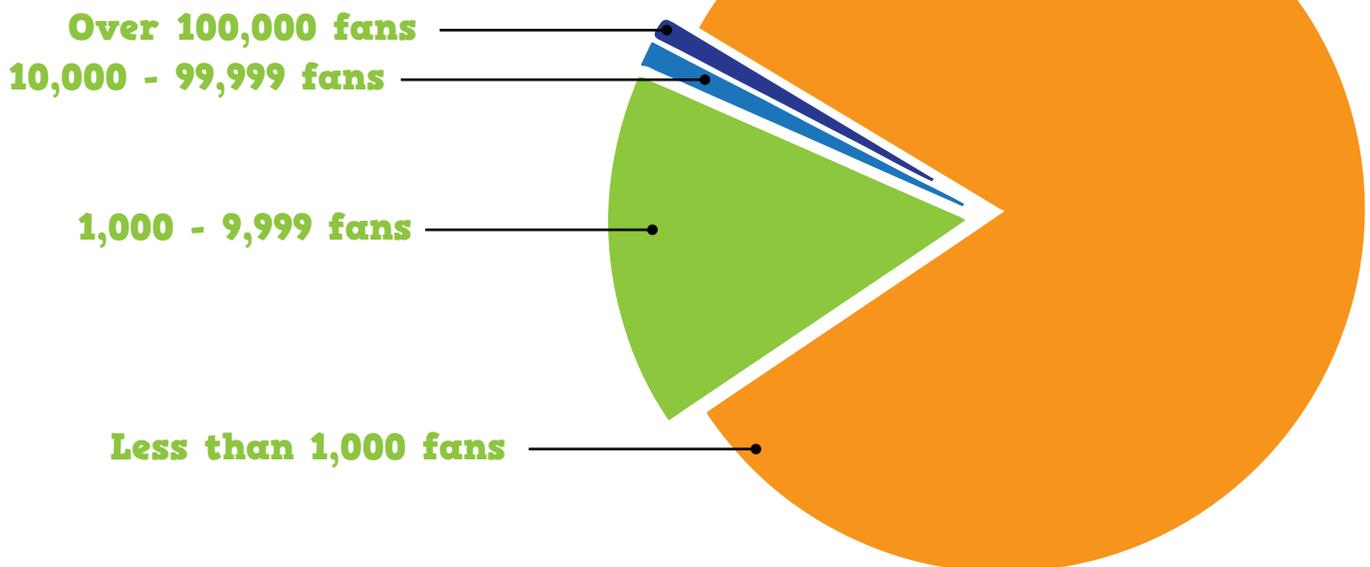
You can use Twitter to keep up with current trends and as a way to listen to your client's conversations about your products and your industry.

GENERAL TWITTER STATISTICS

- Over 500 million users
- 340 million tweets are sent daily
- 1.6 billion search queries daily

TWITTER IN THE PET INDUSTRY

- 58% of companies researched had Twitter accounts
- The majority (82%) had between 0 - 999 followers
- 16% had between 1,000 - 9,999 followers
- 1% had between 10,000 - 99,999 followers
- 1% had over 100,000 followers

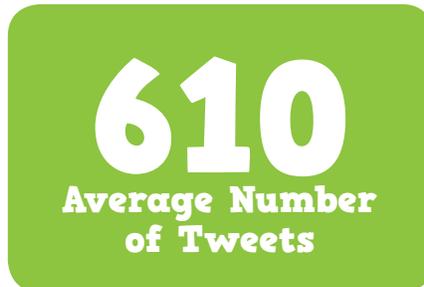


WHY THIS PLATFORM WORKS SO WELL

- **Immediate, real-time conversations.** Similar to text messaging, size constraints make it the perfect platform for quick conversations. While tweets are far from private, communicating with a brand through @ mentions can feel like a one-on-one conversation in a crowded room.
- Twitter's use of **hashtags** and **trending topics** make it easier for users to take part in larger conversation beyond who they follow and their followers. Searching for the simple hashtag "#pets" yields tons of up-to-the minute tweets on the topic! Your company should be in on that conversation!
- **Share, share, share.** 29% of tweets get some kind of reaction whether it be an @ reply (conversation starter!) or a RT (sharing!) People on Twitter generally like to share interesting, informative or fun tweets.



SOME MORE PET INDUSTRY TWITTER STATS



*This calculated with the top 1% removed. Folks like Martha Stewart and Cesar Milan were drastically skewing the numbers.

Who rules at Twitter?



NYLABONE 35K+ followers

This toy, treat and dog chew company was featured in Twitter's case studies as a company that successfully used promoted accounts to boost their following. Nylabone continues to grow through encouraging followers to share pet photos, interacting with followers and using sweepstakes to encourage RTs and shares.



CLEAN + GREEN 27K+ followers

Clean + Green by Sea Yu products are natural, eco-friendly pet odor and stain removers. Nearly every tweet uses hashtags, they post a lot of great pet news articles and post product reviews and giveaways.



WORLD'S BEST CAT LITTER

13K+ followers

This cat litter company not only cleans up on Facebook, but does well on Twitter too. Their tweets range from cat care tips, links to their Pinterest account, links to articles, follower interaction and lots of product facts and information.

OTHER PLATFORMS

While Facebook and Twitter are definitely the most popular social networks today, they are by no means the only ones out there making noise. Some of the more popular networks for the pet industry include the following:

YOUTUBE - Anyone who has watched a cat video (come on, we're all guilty) knows what YouTube is. But it's so much more than funny home videos. Did you know YouTube is the second largest search engine on the web? YouTube is a great place to post information about your product. Additionally, it's a great place for you to engage with customers using your product. A customer uploaded a video of their pet enjoying your toys? Talk about social proof! Video contests are a great way to build brand recognition and engage your most active fans.



Me-ow!

LINKEDIN - A social networking site intended for business professionals, LinkedIn may not be ideal for companies looking to market B2C. But if you're a B2B business (say manufacturing or distributing), LinkedIn may be right up your alley.

GOOGLE+ - Google+ is great for businesses. Since the network already has search engine dominance, your Google+ page can help your business's ranking and search visibility. While it will take a while for Google+ to gain Facebook's numbers, with features like Google account integration, Circles and Hangouts, we can see why people have already started making the switch.

FLICKR - Flickr is a photo sharing and management platform. If you're working with a large set of photos, Flickr is a great public option for sharing them. While there is a community aspect to the site, if you really want to harness the power of images to market your business, may we suggest Pinterest!

PINTEREST - Social media's current darling, Pinterest is a social image sharing and bookmarking site. Despite their initial invite-only status, Pinterest is THE fastest site ever to have 10 million unique visitors. The visual format can be a wonderful way to showcase your product and brand. Your company's account should be a healthy mix of lifestyle-oriented pins and pins of your products. At the very least, if you're selling products on your website, consider a "Pin It" button so visitors can easily share and save photos of your product!

We didn't see many of the following, but here are some other great communities to consider:

- **If you're a local business, check out apps and sites like FourSquare and Yelp!**
- **If you're extra photo savvy, the Instagram app is quickly growing and was recently acquired by Facebook.**
- **Tumblr is a unique blogging platform that is photo-friendly.**

ARE YOU ALREADY USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

**GREAT!
WONDERFUL!
WAHOO!**

Here are a few best practices that we go through with our clients in addition to using them ourselves. Social media is so fast-paced and ever-changing that your marketing plans should be looked-at regularly!

- **Evaluate** where you are in the market and how effective you have been. Look at your campaigns AND your creative to figure out what you are doing well and what can be improved upon.
- **Strategize** – Based on your business objectives (increase sales, increase brand awareness, aid with customer support, etc.) Come up with at least one new campaign that will drive you closer to your business goals.
- **Execute** – Do it. In the world of social media it is easy to get sidetracked with busy-work. Just because you have a Twitter account doesn't mean your business is growing as a result of it. Be purposeful with your social media resources. If they aren't ADDING value to your business then they are most certainly taking it away.

Don't tweet or post just for the sake of tweeting or posting. Leave that to your weird aunt.



**“Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell.”
-Seth Goodin**

NOT REALLY EMBRACING SOCIAL MEDIA YET?

If you aren't using social media OR if you haven't really found a way to "make it work" for your businesses here are a few questions to ask yourself:

What is my goal? What are you trying to get out of social media? Are you trying to increase brand awareness or create more sales? Identifying the ultimate goal will help you determine the right campaign to get you there. If you want to increase sales, a Facebook "Like" campaign will not get you there. (At least not right away!)

Who is my target? As business owners, the smart use of social media means we need to know what each has to offer and then use it to our benefit. Facebook has micro-targeting and Twitter offers an excellent search. How are you using this information to drive your campaigns forward? Are you using the information at all?

Where is the value? Parkinson's Law states that work will expand to fill the time available for its completion. Facebook fans will absolutely sit there and "Like" silly dog photos all day but this doesn't add to your bottom line.

At the end of the day we need the conversation to turn into a conversion.

Your conversion rate is directly proportional to the value you add to your prospect's life. What value are you bringing?



how much TIME do you have for social media?

**Parkinson's Law:
Work will expand to fill the time available for its completion.**

CONCLUSION

Social media represents a significant opportunity for the pet industry because:

- The market is huge. There are more than 100 million pet owners in the US alone!
- There has never been a better way to build immediate and meaningful relationships with your customers.
- Businesses have an incredible ability to target and pinpoint consumers with the wealth of personal data users post on Facebook and Twitter.
- Currently, there is relatively little competition—few do it well and most struggle.

Social media marketing is only one part of a larger marketing strategy known as inbound marketing.

As we previously mentioned, the Internet has leveled the playing field in marketing by opening up free lines of communication with consumers. Through search engines and social media, consumers now control their own content. Instead of marketers blasting their messages out to consumers (outbound), many consumers now come to the companies (inbound) searching for more information on their products and services.

If you're interested in learning more with our content-packed e-book on inbound marketing for the pet industry, head to <http://www.blackdogdev.com/pet-industry/> to download your free copy today.

Social media marketing is only one part of a larger marketing strategy known as inbound marketing

click here to 
LEARN MORE
and download our
“Inbound Marketing in the Pet Industry” e-book!

ABOUT BLACK DOG STUDIOS

Like what you saw? Concerned about what you saw? Want to speak to us more about social media and inbound marketing strategies for your business? Use the information below to contact us and learn more about how Black Dog Studios can play an integral part of your new social marketing team.

You can also find us on Facebook or Twitter!

In addition to looking at puppy photos and watching cat videos in the name of research, Black Dog Studio provides the following services:

- Internet Consulting
- Inbound Marketing
- Social Media Management
- Web Design and Development
- Website Maintenance
- Website Hosting

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BLACK DOG STUDIOS



METHODOLOGY

When all was said and done, we looked at over 1,600 Pet Industry companies. From dog food to luxury litter boxes, we looked at websites, Facebook pages, YouTube accounts and Twitter handles to see who was doing what in the social media realm. Names were gathered through industry associations, online directories and good ol' fashioned Google. We conducted Internet research and spoke to pet professionals to get a better grasp of the climate. The numbers backed up what we noticed right away: there is a huge gap in social media mastery in the pet industry.

CITATIONS

Numbers and percentages specific to the pet industry were drawn from our own research. Percentages of social media accounts calculated using companies that had social media links on their company websites.

1. APPA - Pet Industry Statistics and Trends - http://www.americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp
2. Jeff Bullas – One in Seven People on Facebook – <http://www.jeffbullas.com/2012/08/15/staggering-social-media-statistics-from-the-olympics-infographic/>
3. KISSmetrics - 50% of small business owners report getting new business through social media. 51% of people are more likely to buy from a brand they are a fan of on Facebook - <http://blog.kissmetrics.com/fan-base/>
4. Pew Research - Average User has 229 friends, 150,00 connections through “friends-of-friends” - <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2262/facebook-ipo-friends-profile-social-networking-habits-privacy-online-behavior>
5. Facebook - Site Statistics - <http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22>
6. There are potentially 102,000,000 American pet owners on Facebook - There are over 165,000,000 Facebook accounts in the US. According to the APPA, 62% of American households have pets – this means there are an estimated 102,000,000 US Facebook users who are probably pet owners.
7. Twitter - Nylabone Case Study - <https://business.twitter.com/fa/optimize/case-studies/nylabone/>
8. Wikipedia - Tweets Sent Daily - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>
9. Media Bistro - Twitter Searches Daily - http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/know-your-limits-how-many-tweets-can-you-post-per-day_b13242
10. Sysomos - Twitter Engagment - <http://www.sysomos.com/insidetwitter/engagement/>