



The following is a transcript of the Computers 101 seminar first presented by Chuck Simons at the All American Grooming Show in 2008. For more information, call 866-987-2426 and ask for Chuck.

INTRODUCTION

My name is Chuck Simons and I am the inventor of the Groomers Helper. Today I am presenting this information to you NOT as the inventor of Groomers Helper. Today I am the owner of The Pet Salon, a grooming salon with more than 25 years experience in pet grooming. We recently celebrated our 20th anniversary.

The Pet Salon is a full service salon and spa, and we see an average of 40 dogs a day in the summer when we are at the height of our busy season. We have a team of experienced bathers and groomers, and my wife Beth is a Certified Master Groomer. Our salon has a retail section for food and pet products. And we also have a busy photo business that specializes in pet photography. The photo business is very busy during the holidays as people have greeting cards made to send to their friends.

In short, The Pet Salon is a highly successful pet grooming business that is highly successful. Part of that success is because we use computers every day!

Does anyone here already use computers in their salons? How many consider themselves computer literate? NOW is anyone computer PHOBIC? Has a fear of computers and would just as soon live without them?

Would everyone who is computer phobic stand up?

I have a lamp here and I want to use it to simply demonstrate the use of computers in your shop. Would everyone who is standing clap your hands or snap your fingers? One the count of three – ONE TWO THREE

(Turn on lamp) – There you go! It's as simple as that! Using a computer these days is as simple as turning it on and turning it off. The programs are instantly accessible through desktop icons and you don't have to know how to write computer code or really much more than turning it on and off.



COMPUTER BRANDS AVAILABLE

There are a lot of computers out there these days! Here are just a few of the major brands that are available and this slide doesn't even contain them all. And the price range on computers can go between a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars, so you should shop carefully when purchasing a new computer. Do your homework!

First, check the daily supplements for computer warehouses such as Circuit City and Best Buy who can offer substantial discounts because of volume, but don't forget the superstore chains like Wal-Mart and Kmart who also offer package deals that can include your computer, monitor and printer.

Second, talk to friends and family who own computers. Are they happy with the brand they purchased?

And don't be afraid to make a purchase based on the fact that your computer will be obsolete as soon as it leaves the store. Computers are upgraded and improved every day, so there is a good chance that some change will be made to the model you have purchased no matter what you do. You can always keep up with software changes with a good internet connection.

CHOOSING YOUR SOFTWARE

Some say that your computer is only as good as the software it runs. So how do you decide what software is right for you? Often, we decide on software based on price, but you can't put regular gas in a car that needs high test, so don't limit yourself to inferior software based on the price tag.

There are software manufacturers here at Groom Expo that would be happy to speak with you about their products and how they can benefit your company. Many of them will have demonstration versions available for you to take home and try.

And make sure to check out the SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS before you install any software to make sure that your computer can properly run the program. You will need to make sure there is enough hard drive space on your computer, that you have enough Random Access Memory and that the software runs on the operating system you have installed.

Many software companies offer free trials of their software to demonstrate the functionality. This is a screen capture from Kennelsoft's Avalon software that I downloaded for no charge and was able to evaluate. Try as many as you can, but just remember to uninstall these demos when you are finished evaluating them. You do not want a bunch of computer programs that you are no longer using or not interested in buying taking up your hard drive space.

If you don't do anything else that we talk about today, please use your computer and your pet salon software to know your customers and their pets. A key to the success that we enjoy at The Pet Salon is our ability to track our customers, remind them of their appointments and have their grooming history at our fingertips.



THE POWER OF COMPUTING

NOW some of you may be set in your ways and would still prefer to use the old fashioned method of using 3 x 5 cards to keep track of your customers and their appointments. We all started there once upon a time, but one of the biggest reasons to use salon and grooming appointment software is the ability to **SEE THE FUTURE! And I don't even need a crystal ball!**

By keeping accurate records and tracking appointments, I know what to expect during the weeks ahead? I know how many dogs are scheduled for grooming.

And since I know how many dogs are scheduled, I know how to schedule my groomers and bathers.

And it lets me know how much **MONEY** I should expect to see in any given day, week or month!

Our company sends out **hundreds of reminder cards** each month and thousands each year. We regularly send these postcards and address them to the PETS. The owners get a real kick over the fact that their pet is receiving mail. The postcards are pre-printed on the front and customized messages are printed on the back using our appointment software.

The first card we send out is a THANK YOU card and as I mentioned it is addressed to the PET. They receive the card and it thanks them for visiting our salon, tells them that we think they are THE BEST and mentions that they will be receiving another postcard to remind them to schedule another appointment.

Granted, the cost of mailing a postcard is higher than picking up the telephone. But it is my experience that the average customer prefers to be contacted by mail and not by telephone when it comes to scheduling appointments.

The NEXT postcard they receive can be one of two different postcards. It will either be a reminder that they should schedule a new appointment for their pet – as seen in this example that includes the exact time and date of their appointment - or a reminder that they have an appointment and the time and date of that appointment. The timing for sending postcards must be right so that they do not receive their reminder too far in advance of their appointment. So that is TWO postcards they receive in advance of their next scheduled or recommended appointment.

The next postcard they will receive, if they have not made an appointment as a result of their first reminder, is a postcard that arrives 4 weeks after their last visit. This postcard reminds them that their pet should be groomed on a regular basis and blah blah blah.

The last postcard they receive in the cycle is five months after their first visit. By this time, the odds are good that they are not coming back to the salon, but we still offer a discount if they do book an appointment.

Can you imagine HAND WRITING 150 postcards a week?! You would spend hours writing postcards with none left for grooming. The software program that we use allows the pet's name and customer name and particulars of the appointment and special offer to be automatically entered into the message. With the push of a button, I am making thousands of dollars in new and kept appointments.

If you spent just 3 minutes writing a postcard from start to finish including putting the stamp on – it would take you an average of 7.5 hours and that's ONE entire day of grooming down the drain! So the cost of writing postcards just went up to 30 or 40 dogs times your average cost of grooming and I don't even want to talk about how big a number THAT is!

Even if you are not going to make the leap and get your day to day operations automated, you can use your computer in other ways that will help you to boost your profits and impact your bottom line. The next thing that I would like to discuss really doesn't take expensive software. Let's talk about things you can do with the software that is built into most computers right from the factory.

Most operating systems will come with WORD PROCESSING SOFTWARE, and you can use this software to communicate with your clients, boost sales and keep them informed.

The first thing I would recommend that you create with your word processing software is a daily sign in sheet with your shop policies and procedures.

This is our sign in sheet and we use it every day and make every client sign in when they bring their dog to the salon. As you can see, it allows us to seek out veterinary care should it become necessary. This was created using word processing software and we dropped in our logo and made a simple table with cells for the signatures.



The Pet Salon

Today's Date:

_ / _ / _

DAILY PET SIGN-IN SHEET

Your pet is very important to us. Because we care, every effort will be made to make your pet's visit as pleasant as possible. Occasionally, grooming can expose a hidden medical problem or aggravate a current one. This can happen during or after the grooming procedure. Please advise your groomer of any problem areas or medical issues your pet may have. In the best interest of your pet we request your permission to obtain immediate veterinary treatment should it become necessary. Please sign this form below. Thank you.

#	Pet(s) Name	Signature	#	Pet(s) Name	Signature
1			21		
2			22		

Another useful item to create using your word processing software is a **PRICE SHEET**. This is a comprehensive sales sheet that allows us to accurately and consistently give our new customers pricing when they bring in their pets. Of course, we change this yearly or whenever we change our prices so that we can be on the same PRICING page with our customers.

Here's another way to promote some business! Print yourself some signs that tell your clients it is **OK to tip the groomers**. When our girls get twenty and thirty dollar tips for their work, it can certainly make their day. Some people think this is a NO NO and that it is somehow tacky to solicit tips like this. Yet in my experience, I have often encountered customers who read the sign and say "I didn't know that" and THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT – educating your customers about your salon policies, pricing and procedures.

We recently added spa services to our salon including an Ultimate Spa package where an attendant accompanies the pet throughout their grooming day. How did our customers know about these new services? We made a sign!

And how about a tip sheet that informs your customers on the best ways to keep their dog looking good between grooms? You are probably thinking that you don't have the time to create a newsletter, but many word processing software packages come with easy to use templates. Add your logo and then copy and paste information from the internet. You'll have an information sheet created in no time.

THE POWER OF THE INTERNET

And in order to stay competitive with your pricing, a computer with an internet connection can help you to surf the web for important industry developments, product listings and one-on-one feedback from industry experts.

For example, there's a guy who hangs out at the pet groomer forums and he's a wealth of information. Hundreds of groomers visit this board every day to get answers to questions and voice their opinions on grooming techniques and customer relations. Of course, there are many boards like this including the Groomer to Groomer forum, so find one that suits your needs.

There are internet connection packages available from Verizon and Comcast that will be geared towards your business, so shop around if you want an internet connection in your shop. If this is an expense that you cannot afford at the shop, then you can do your web surfing at home.

You can also use the internet to compare prices for the many items you need to run a successful shop. Check out online shopping carts like Groomstar and make sure to sign up for their email newsletters. They will often have unadvertised specials or 48 hour sales that will allow you to save on products, and we all like to SAVE on products.

And you can also go straight to the manufacturer for many MUST HAVE items like this one – GROOMERS HELPER!

But what if YOU want to get your own salon up on the web? Is this something that you can do yourself?



WEB HOSTING

You can start simple and for ZERO dollars if you get yourself a My Space account. This free service will allow you to put your logo on your page and publish a groomer's profile. Then publish information about the salon and the services that you offer to the public. Tell people to go to your site and become your online friends so that your community grows.

I recommend that if you decide to start a My Space page about your grooming business, do NOT allow people to comment on your posts. This will stop competitors or disgruntled customers from posting negative information about you.

But if you are really planning on creating a web site to promote your business then I recommend visiting a site called Dot Easy where you can purchase a domain name and web server space for as little as \$25 a year. Anyone who knows about the web knows that this is a dirt cheap price to host a web site and it is my experience that Dot Easy is a great place to get started.

So what's next?

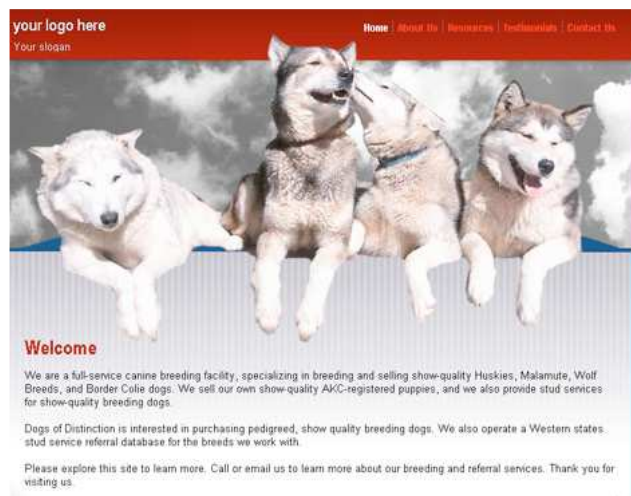


TEMPLATE SERVICES

You could always find a web nerd with a couple of shitzus who wants to do trade!
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Seriously, you may find a local web developer who is willing to work for less in an effort to build a portfolio of happy customers, or a local computer or trade school that has students that want to try their hand at designing your site. And believe me when I say that the average web site can be built from start to finish in about 10 hours. It should cost you an average of 25 dollars an hour for a beginner and I recommend having the basics ready for them.

There are a number of solutions available for the do-it-yourselfer such as Homestead and other paid services. Most of these sites allow you to choose from templates that are ready for you to enter your information into and upload your photos. You just pick the template you want and enter your info into them using your web browser. As you can see from this example, there is a space for your logo and your slogan, and you will be able to change all of the text and add your own content with no HTML or web development experience. **Sites like these can cost as little as 5 dollars a month.**



THE BASICS

What are the basics for a successful web site?

The internet is a VISUAL medium and you want to have lots of pictures. Start with some photos of your location and your groomers at work. You may want to avoid showing any animals in dryers or kennels so that people see more feel good shots than day-to-day operations.

How about some great photos of happy customers? And of course some well groomed dogs!

Concentrate on creating a great SINGLE page – your HOME page – to begin. This is the page where potential customers can get directions to your shop from all of the major highways. At the top, they can see the exact address and telephone number. **PUT THAT ON EVERY PAGE** - somewhere easy to find - not because someone had to click a CONTACT button!

You may not even need an entire web site to start with, just a single page that contains great photos of your shop and your contact information.

Now I DO NOT recommend publishing your price lists because you never know what the final cost of a groom will be. But DO tell them about the services you offer! Here is the page from Pet Salon Dot Com that talks about what we offer. For example, it explains that a full service groom includes bath, anal glands checked, a brush out, blow dry, pads trimmed, ears cleaned, nails clipped, breed specific or customer requested haircut, bows and cologne. **BUT NOWHERE DOES IT SAY WHAT THAT COSTS!**

And here is another service screen that shows the shed less treatment that we offer. The customers can click on the image of the dog or cat and see the de-shedding process in action. I have found that many customers will book more often so that they can have de-shedding done on a regular basis. And of course, more bookings mean more profits.



BUILD PROFITS WITH PHOTOS

Another idea for building profits with your computer is to start taking pictures of your clients. With an affordable digital camera and a decent printer, you will be able to sell pet photography services to your customers. More about that in a moment, but let's say you are not planning on having a pet photography business and still would like to get some mileage out of your digital camera.

A customer brings you a dog for grooming and you do a little BEFORE photo.

START WITH BEFORE AND AFTER

A customer brings you a dog for grooming and you do a little BEFORE photo. Here's a Scottie in for a groom and we have taken the liberty of taking his BEFORE picture.

Now, with the magic of multimedia – VIOLA! Here he is AFTER the groom. By providing this photo to the customer and allowing them to take it home and put it on their refrigerator or in a frame, they have a constant reminder of just how great Scottie can look when he has been groomed at your shop.



They have a reference point that they can compare to their dog on a daily basis and they will always be reminded of exactly how great Scottie looks after his or her groom session. So start with some of your prized groom dogs and the ones you want the public to see. Make yourself a photo album that shows customers what a certain cut can look like so you are on the same page with them. A photo goes a long way towards getting the cut just right.

GREAT PHOTOS

Of course, these photos will help you get some practice before you formally offer pet photography services. With a simple backdrop and some astro turf, you can create a portrait studio that will generate profits.

PHOTO PRODUCTS

And it isn't just portraits that build profits. It is also mugs and tee shirts and mouse pads and holiday cards with holders. Anything you can put that dog's likeness on becomes a potential sale.

The beauty of these items is that they are HIGH profit items. This plain mug can cost as little as 97 CENTS and don't take up a lot of room, but put one of your clients on the mug. **AND YOU CAN NOW CHARGE \$19.95 FOR THE SAME MUG!**

THE PROCESS

You have to get the dogs positioned with the help of an assistant and - click click click - get the photo done. I use all kinds of noise makers and tricks including locking the front door and putting a PHOTO SESSION sign up.

Then I use Photoshop to edit the photo including cropping it to the right size and putting my logo in the corner. I can even cock the dog's head if I need or lift one ear. Anyone who is serious about pet photography will eventually need a copy of Photoshop.

Then comes the really fun part where I get to show the finished product on the big screen and watch the customer's face light up when they see their baby.

WRAP UP

Please don't forget that your computer will allow you to access news and information about the grooming industry. You will be able to shop for equipment online often going straight to the manufacturer. You can connect to groomers across the country by visiting web sites like www.petgroomerforums.com. And don't forget my web sites including:

www.groomershelper.com
www.sageadvice.biz
www.chucksimons.com