



SPECIAL REPORT

# **How to Develop Your Pet Sitting Market Profile**

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# How to Develop Your Market Profile

Your market profile describes how your pet sitting business fits within your local market. It outlines the features and benefits of your service, identifies what makes your business unique, describes the characteristics of your ideal customers, and profiles the services of your competitors, and their target market.

Before we dive into doing some research and discovery, take a few minutes to describe right here in the space provided the features and benefits of your pet sitting business. The features should include the services you provide and any products that you offer. List all the benefits that your customers experience by using your services.

Features

Benefits

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Now that you have those in front of you in writing, we'll use them to as we take the next step - identification of the target market for your services.

## What Is a Target Market?

A target market is the group of people that you aim to have as clients for your pet sitting services. It's those people whose pets you want to sit for and those who are inclined to want or need your pet sitting services.

You may currently consider all pet owners in your geographical area as potential customers. While all pet owners at some time may need pet sitting services, your business appeals, or has the potential to appeal, much more strongly to a certain group of pet owners. If you can define and target your marketing to this group then you will be much more successful in attracting new customers and also need to spend less money on marketing.

The identity of these pet owners can be revealed by conducting market research and analyzing the demographics of you current customers.

## Why Target Markets Are Important

Identifying a target audience is extremely important to the success your business. You need to pinpoint and break down your target audience and appeal specifically to them. Knowing exactly who your target market is can also help you streamline your marketing efforts and increase the chances that you'll reach the people who are most likely to become clients instead of wasting time and resources marketing to people who don't want or need your services. Imagine all the money you could lose by marketing to the general public, many of whom don't even have pets!

## Using a Target Market to Market Services

Once you've identified your target market, the next step is to use its specific information to maximize the possibility of getting new clients. For example:

- Finding out where your target market works can influence where you put advertisements or tell you about their after-hour habits. If many of your clients have IT jobs, you can assume that they access the Internet at home and visit pet-related websites. These pet-related websites can be prime places to advertise your business.
- Identifying your target market's species of pet may affect the types of services that you offer. A target audience that owns dogs will need different services than one that owns iguanas.
- Knowing how much your target audience makes in a year may influence how much you charge for your services. More telling information may be how much they spend on their pets annually. Does your target market spend only the bare minimum on pet maintenance services or do they splurge on their furry friends? The answer can also guide you when determining but how many "extra" or "special" services you offer.

Of course, your research and marketing doesn't end there. As your business expands, your target market will likely change and your marketing efforts will have to change with them. But having a working knowledge of your target market is the first step to seeing your pet sitting business blossom into a success.

## How to Define Your Target Market

Your target market can be defined using 3 criteria:

- 1) Geographical targeting - Defining your potential customers based on the city or zip code in which they live.

Typically a pet sitting business owner chooses to target their services in an area within 5-10 miles of their home to minimize travel time and gas expenses. When you conduct your market research and examine the characteristics of the residents in your area you may however discover that residents of an adjacent city may make better potential customers.

One of the easiest ways to examine neighborhoods is to do a simple drive through. Notice the condition of the houses and yards, notice what type of cars are parked in the driveway.

Compact and sporty cars - young married couples.

Bulky sedans and luxury cars – middle aged residents

BMW's and the like - upscale professionals

Bicycles and basketball hoops in driveways indicates that families live in the area.

While these are obviously generalizations, these observations can still be useful in determining the best geographic areas to target in your marketing.

- 2) Demographic targeting

Defining potential customers based on statistical, behavioral, and psychological things they have in common.

Demographic characteristics can include age, sex, marital status, occupation, annual income, if they have children, how often they travel, what credit cards they carry, what magazines they read, how many and what type of pets they own, where they shop for pet supplies etc etc

- 3) Affiliation and Association

Defining potential customers based on their common membership in clubs or associations.

Are there any associations or clubs where you have been a member for many years – a PTA, civic group, church group, or dog club or rescue? If so, this may provide a large pool of people who already recognize your name and reputation. Because they

know you, fellow members of these clubs are probably more receptive to hearing about your pet sitting services. Large groups in which you are a member can become a super target market for your services. Actively promote your business at group events by offering to speak about topics that are a concern for pet owners.

If there are local dog clubs or rescue groups where you know that local pet owners congregate why not become a member so that you can network and market your services to these caring and engaged pet owners.

The first place to start when you are trying to identify the geographic location and demographic characteristics of your ideal customer is to take a good look at your existing customers.

Look at the characteristics of your best customers and make an effort to identify any trends. By filling out the table below for your best 15 customers you it will be easier to see what basic common traits exist.



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Did you find anything that your customers had in common that jumped out at you after you wrote it in the table? If you did then this characteristic is definitely a descriptor of your target market.

If you don't yet have a customer base you can also find this information by conducting some research by surveying local pet owners.

Some of the ways that you can collect potential customer information is by:

- 1) Stopping and surveying people in their environment (for example: at a dog park, or in the street walking their dog)
- 2) Asking questions at local online forums
- 3) Emailing friends and family with questions
- 4) Putting a survey form on your website and offering an incentive to customers to fill out the survey

You can use the demographics in the previous table as a basis of your survey questions. As they are not already customers, you will want to qualify them by making sure that one of the questions in your survey asks pet owners if they have ever used a pet sitting service or would consider using a pet sitting service. This will help you to identify which of the people that you survey will fall into your target market group.

Once you identify these people that are interested in pet sitting services then take a look at their answers to the other questions that you asked them. Again, summarize their answers into a table so that you can identify common traits.

### **Researching the Target Market of Your Competitors**

Another great way tool in identification of the target market for your services is to look at the target market of your competitors. Their target market will not necessarily determine your ideal customers as you may not offer the exactly the same services, but it will give you some clues about what types of people they are targeting. Typically they will be targeting people that they have found to make good pet sitting clients for their business.

Knowing more about your competitors and the people they are trying to target in their marketing will be valuable when we move on to the next lesson and discuss how you can differentiate your services.




After you have these completed both of the tables your next task is to fill out a description of the target market for your business. Remember not to be too broad – you want to list the profile of your ideal customer, someone who you enjoy working for, and who appreciates the benefits of your services. It may even help to think of one specific person and describe their geographic location, demographics, and affiliations.

Don't worry that you are being too narrow – by defining your target market you are not excluding other pet owners who don't perfectly fit this profile from using your services. Having a very specific profile of your target market will make it much easier for you to write your marketing materials to appeal to this group.

Use the space below to describe your target market:

Geographic:

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Demographic:

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Affiliation:

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What are the needs of these customers:

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## How to Create Your USP

A unique selling proposition, or unique selling point, is a marketing device intended to make your business stand out to your target market. It's the real or perceived benefit that convinces your target market to invest in your service. For pet sitters, it's crucial to define your USP, as many pet sitting businesses offer the same kinds of services.

To define your USP, you must first evaluate how your business measures up against your local competitors. Take a look back at the competitor research that you completed in lesson 1.

As you looked at the websites and marketing materials of other pet sitting businesses in your service area did you notice differences in the services or customer experience that your pet sitting business provides?

If nothing jumped out at you immediately here are some questions to get you started:

- Do you offer free initial interviews or consultations?
- Do you offer a uniquely secure key system?
- Do you offer a rare pet sitting service?
- Do you have more years of experience serving your local area?
- Do you specialize in exotic pets?
- Do you offer overnight visits or house and pet sitting?
- Do you offer payment by credit card or paypal?
- Do you offer text message or email daily or weekly pet updates?
- Do you offer weekly or monthly dog walking packages?
- Do you offer any additional convenience to your customers?
- Do you offer online or email booking service?
- Do you offer dog training services?
- Do you have accreditation with a pet sitting association?
- Do you have a disaster emergency plan?
- Do you have an arrangement to have a vet on call for emergency service?

Another important question to ask is – is there anything that other competitive pet sitting services lack that you could provide in your business? Is there a customer need that is not being met in your area?

The answers to these questions and those like them can help you define your USP and give you the extra edge against your competitors.

Also consider the needs and desires of your target market. What services do your target market value? Is the need already being met by a competitor in the business? If it's not, you may have an easy opportunity to develop a USP. For instance, if your target market contains active, outdoorsy young adults, it's likely that they take their pets out for runs with them. In a scenario like this, you could offer an "exercise" service in which you stand in for the owner and jog along with the pet if no other business does.

Evaluate your business against others objectively. It's easy to think that you've found a USP when, in reality, it's common or existed as part of the business for years. Think outside of the box and get as unique as you can. What does your competition fail or refuse to provide? What can *you* only offer potential customers who want a pet sitter?

Sometimes, uniqueness in a business can be difficult to identify- especially if the market is already saturated with business offering similar services. In cases like these, you may want to make your unique selling point yourself. Consider the experience you may have in pet sitting or your familiarity with certain breeds of animals.

- Have you worked at a veterinary hospital or volunteered at an animal shelter?
- Do you have pet first aid training?
- Do you have experience administering medication or providing daily shots?
- Do you have experience preparing raw or special diets?
- Do you have grooming experience?
- Do you network with other local pet care providers and can offer backup care?

If your target market is made up entirely of women and you're a woman yourself, think about making your gender a selling point. After all, women may feel more comfortable having someone of their own gender entering their homes and taking care of their pets.

What are the unique features of your business:

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What features can you add to your business that customers want :

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Once you've identified your USP, it's important to incorporate it into your marketing strategy. You want potential customers to know that you stand out over the rest.

Now put together the elements of you USP into a single statement. (2 sentences at most). Make it short, sweet and enticing so that potential customers know why they should use your service and think of you the next time they need a specialized pet sitting service.

- 1) Make it benefit-oriented (tell your client what's in it for her or him).
- 2) Be specific (avoid generalities).
- 3) Use simple language.
- 4) Be direct and to the point (be concise).

My USP is :

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Place this sentence or tagline in all of your marketing materials, including your website, business card, flyers and postcards.

## Creating Your Brand

A brand can come in the form of a name, sign, term, symbol, design or any combination of these. Your brand is what sets you apart from your competition and convinces customers that yours is the only business that can meet their needs.

### *Why Is Creating a Brand Important?*

Brands can speak for your business in short, memorable terms. It represents what your business is about and its potential to deliver its service. Increasing credibility, motivation to buy, customer loyalty and emotional connections with buyers can all be achieved by creating the perfect brand for your business. In many respects, a brand is a representation of potential customers' experiences with your business and can influence the perception of it within the market and in potential customers' eyes.

### *How Do You Define Your Brand?*

Consider what your business has to offer your target market and how it stands out from the competition. Ask yourself these questions:

What are your company's goal, mission and values? How are they similar to your target market's? Is your business' main goal to provide quality pet sitting services for the elderly? Is your mission to provide green, healthy pet sitting care? Are you dedicated to treating pets as valued companions?

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What sets your marketing apart from your competitors? Think about your name, taglines, logos and designs.

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If you need logos and designs created for your business you can find graphic designers at [www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com). I have had some excellent designs done by their contractors including my Working with Pets logo. Just post your project on their site and have contractors supply you with bids to complete the work. You can review the contractors profile, experience, and reviews from other customers.

### *How to Create a Unique Customer Experience*

Take what's unique about your business and find a why to present or deliver it in an uncommon way. Think about what you can give your customers during service that will "wow" them, make them want to talk to everyone they meet about your service.

What is a unique customer experience?

Have you ever visited a store where you feel so relaxed and comfortable? Ever been to a car wash, dry cleaner, restaurant, or clothing store that treated you so well and went the extra mile to make your visit extraordinary? Every wonder why many people are willing to pay more for a cup of Starbucks? Sometimes, it is not about your product or service, it is all about the experience the customer has with your business.

Starbucks is a great example. Starbucks turned a commodity like coffee to cravings. Imagine a relaxing, ambient place where you can hang out and drink coffee with your friends or romantic partners while listening to jazz or some soothing music. Great right? – it's one of my favorites!

What is your unique customer experience:

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Now, bring this lesson to your products or services. Create a compelling experience that will make your customers come back again and again. Make your service so convenient and easy that customers that they are instantly impressed!

### *How to Use Your Brand in Your Marketing*

Understand that your brand acts as a promise to your customers. It represents both an ideal and your business. That being said, you need to infuse your brand into as many of your marketing materials as you can. Put your brand on your business cards, on signs and posters, on electronic advertisements, websites and anywhere else where people can see it and logically connect the brand to your pet sitting business.

## How to Use Testimonials to Provide Proof of Your USP and Brand

### *What are Testimonials?*

Testimonials are statements from customers that testify to a product or service's quality or value. For pet-sitting business owners, testimonials will most likely reflect on the quality of pet-sitting services available from your business.

### *Why Are Testimonials Important?*

What customers have to say about your pet-sitting business can give extra credibility to it. Testimonials can serve as endorsements that can convince tough-sell potential customers to give your services a try. Many times, testimonials from real customers are the driving force behind sale conversions- they are what turn a potential customer into a real client. In some ways, testimonials act like word-of-mouth buzz. They make potential clients trust in your ability to deliver a service by having past and present customers speak about their experiences with your business. And convincing your target market that you are trustworthy and dependable is an important part in getting your business off the ground. No one wants someone sketchy and unpredictable to take care of their pets, do they?

A very powerful way of showing proof of the claims that you make about your business in your USP, and taglines is to have customers complement you on these specific aspects of the service that you provide. For example, if you claim that your pet sitting service offers more peace of mind because you offer regular email updates – having a customer provide a testimonial in which they state “I felt very confident that my animals were receiving excellent care during our vacation – we loved receiving the daily email updates” will add great credibility to your claim.

### *How Do You Collect Testimonials?*

While it may seem easy, collecting testimonials can be a challenging aspect of marketing. You can be the best pet sitter in the world, but you probably won't collect any testimonials unless you actively try. To ensure that you'll get great testimonials, you'll have to start by doing a great job pet sitting. Then, you can try doing the following:

- Listen to your clients. If a client makes a positive remark about your service, take the opportunity to ask for a testimonial.
- Follow up on services. Use post-service communication as an opportunity to request testimonials.
- Communicate with your most frequent and best customers. Write letters to them and ask them to provide you with testimonials.

### Some Tips:

- Provide sample templates of what a good testimonial looks like. Many people don't know how to write testimonials, so give them examples. Don't change the testimonial if it doesn't follow the exact template, as it can end up looking fake.
- Insist on detail.
- Give your clients the opportunity to give you testimonials by email, video, phone and via snail mail. Many people will prefer one method of delivery over the other.
- Don't be afraid to compensate customers for their time. Consider giving your customers a small discount on a future purchase if they offer to help. However, choose rewards carefully or they might be considered bribes.
- Adding a picture and the full name and location of a satisfied client can also lend credibility to your business' testimonials. You might even want to request that a client take a picture with their pet and include the pet's name in the testimonial.

### *Ways to Use Them in Your Marketing*

You can use good testimonials that support your USP and brand in all your marketing materials. Set up a testimonial page on your website, include a quote in your flyers, or even a quote on your business card.

Ask customers who give you testimonials if they are willing to record them into sound files so that you can upload them and have them available to play on your website. For even more impact try using video testimonials so that people can see and hear your happy customers and their pets. A great service for publishing audio and video to your website is Audio Acrobat. You can see their services at : <http://ace.audioacrobat.com/>

Now you are ready to complete a short USP statement and define what you will do to create a unique customer experience and brand. Fill out the following page to put this together with your target market statement to complete your market profile.

The market profile is the foundation for all your marketing activities and will keep you focused and on track.

## 101 Marketing Ideas

Now that you have your marketing profile it's time to discover some fresh marketing ideas. Visit my blog <http://www.workingwithpets.com> and fill out the box at the top left of the page to get my free report "101 Ways to Market Your Pet Sitting Business".

Best wishes for the success of your business.



Danielle Chonody  
The Pet Sitting Success Coach

# My Market Profile

My target market is:

Geographic:

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Demographic:

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Affiliation:

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My USP is:

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The unique customer experience that I want to create is:

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My brand is defined by:

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## About the Author

Danielle Chonody got her start in the pet care industry in 2003 when she opened her pet sitting business - [ProtectingMax](#) - in the Mid-Cities of Dallas Fort Worth. Since 2003 she has worked a full time job and grown her part time pet sitting business to over 150 customers. In the last 2 years she has partnered with 4 independent contract pet sitters to grow her business.

Danielle's passion is to help pet sitting business owners grow their business faster, with less frustration and more fun. She has created a coaching and mastermind group exclusively for pet sitters that provides resources for pet sitters that want to:

- Position Themselves As THE Pet Care Expert in Their Community
- Transform Their Pet Sitting Business Into a Highly Profitable Service That Is Run With Ease and That Consistently Wows Customers with Exceptional Customer

To learn more about the Pet Business Success Circle visit <http://www.petbusinesssuccesscircle.com>

Danielle is also the owner of :

[Working with Pets](#) – The Blog for Pet Sitters. Working with pets provides sitters with pet news and information and provides resources and tips that help them grow and strengthen their business through knowledge and excellent customer service. Subscribe to my weekly updates at <http://www.workingwithpets.com> to get your **free report “101 Ways to Market Your Pet Sitting Business”**.

[Pet Business Power Tips Ezine](#) – A bi-weekly e-zine that delivers marketing, management, and motivational tips for pet sitting business owners. Subscribe at <http://www.petbusinesspowertips.com>

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