

Internship Review

Rachel Long

5/31/14

PetDoors.com

PetDoors.com was incorporated in 1976 as Patio Pacific, which remains the name of the company's manufacturing side. PetDoors.com is the name of the website that they sell their own products on as well as many other pet door products. The company is completely based out of their warehouse in San Luis Obispo, and ships products all over the country as well as throughout the world. With only 8-9 employees, everyone is very involved in the success of the company. There are builders as well as Shipping, Customer Service, and Management departments. Half of the warehouse is devoted to building their own products, while the other half houses the shipping department and offices. Inventory is kept for many of the products that they distribute, while the rest are drop-shipped from their manufacturers. This year, they have started to get into email marketing as a method to increase website visits and ultimately increase sales. The company has also started working through Amazon to sell even more of their Patio Pacific products.

My main role at the company was in the Customer Service department, with some dabbling in marketing. Answering phone calls, chats, and emails from customers is always their priority. I also did do quite a bit of PO and invoice handling, and was in charge of emailing customers with their tracking numbers once we received them from the manufacturer that was drop-shipping their product. I was also responsible for staying on top of these drop-shipped orders to make sure that the manufacturer received the order and shipped it out in a timely manner. Other office duties included filing bills and paperwork and working with customers that came to the warehouse directly to pick up a pet door. During my internship time, I ran first a photo contest, and then a video contest. These were marketed through their email marketing system as well as through social media sites. I also created some emails to be sent out to tens of thousands of people on their email list. Some of these I

photographed new subject matter as well as designed images for, while others I simply designed using photos that the company already had on file. I also spent some time photographing products to improve the quality of the website, as there were several popular items that were not shown clearly on the website. I greatly enjoyed learning so many different aspects about running a company, from both the manufacturing side as well as the distributing side. Learning about shipping dynamics and inventory as well as marketing strategies in web design and emails all in one place was a fantastic experience if I ever decide to start a small business of my own! My favorite things to do were definitely involving photography and marketing, especially when I could be photographing my dog as the subject since pet photography is a passion of mine.

I worked closely with the manager on all marketing projects, and the head Customer Service Rep on all other tasks. Training in the beginning could have been streamlined with some more structured instructions on how to answer phone calls and with appropriate answers to give in different scenarios. During my time at the company, I did work on documents that will help improve this learning process for new employees as part of my learning process, including quizzes about the website and pre-typed quick answers to send to people that communicate with them through their chat option on their website. With a permanent position at this company I would hope to keep growing the success rate of marketing via email and social media sites. I also would want to do more with the imagery on the website, and keep taking new pictures for products that could use more visual explanation. The position that I would hold would likely be something towards Customer Service and Marketing. The company would benefit from having someone devoted to marketing and sales, and hopefully that would help drive up sales and grow the company as a whole.

An example of one the marketing emails that I designed for the company is pictured below. I took the pictures of my own dog for the image, edited them together and then inserted this into an actual email that was then sent to around 100,000 people. This particular email generated over \$7,000 in revenue from the people who clicked on the email to get to the website.



Another marketing project I worked on was creating customer contests to help engage the social media pages as well as bring in revenue from people going to look on the website. The first one I did earlier during my time at the company, and was rather successful. This was a Customer Photo Contest, which asked customers to send us pictures of

\$100.00 at
amazon.com

Here's how:

- Send pictures of YOUR pets using their pet doors before March 31st
- Check Facebook and Instagram for your pictures
- Get the most LIKES by April 15th



their pets using their pet doors. We got over 50 entries, which really drove up the Facebook page's activity since the winner was determined by the



number of "likes" their picture received. Later on, I

started a Customer Video Contest, which due to its more labor-

intensive entry material did not get as much attention. The initial announcement email did however generate some revenue just by catching people's attention.

My ongoing project that I chose to work on was to write a dog training guide to teach a fearful or unambitious dog to use a pet door. Along with the written portion, I filmed and edited a supplemental instructional video, structured around the same ideas that are in the written guide. It is a multistep process designed to allow very easily stressed dogs to learn about their pet door at a gradual, step-by-step pace tailored to their individual needs. The guide can also be used on less timid dogs who just do not care to learn how to go through the pet door, and steps would simply be completed much faster. I used my own dog as my model, as with most other things I've completed during this job! I could not find any training videos readily available on the websites of competitors and other pet door distributor company websites. On YouTube, there are some videos that have good information but are long or poorly filmed, making them more difficult to follow. I filmed with my Nikon 5100, and edited with Final Cut Pro. The training guide is attached to this packet. A copy of the video has also been enclosed.

The “Any Dog” Method

The Problem

You have a dog that is timid, fearful, or unambitious. Your life would really benefit from a dog door, but your dog will not even touch the new dog door! Or, you know that your dog will be difficult when you get a new door and want to start the training process right away. This method will solve all those problems using games that the dog can learn to enjoy, and with time and patience you will be able to help just about any dog to learn to use their dog door. If you think your dog will have difficulty learning to use their door, you can do step one and step two without even having your doggy door yet! These steps are written for the most fearful of dogs, so if your dog is totally comfortable with something, you can move on or skip the step completely. Step One prepares your dog for training, Step Two teaches your dog how to go towards the door, Step Three teaches your dog how to go through the door, and Step Four teaches your dog how to open the door and go through.

What you need:

- Favorite treat, or toy
- Clicker (optional)
- Target object
- Sticky-note or paper that is opposite the color of the doggy flap

Step One

CLICKER TRAINING

To start off, it might be a good idea to “clicker train” your dog. The clicker helps clear up uncertainties that your dog may have when learning something new, because it is a quick and clear signal that they have done the correct thing. To introduce the clicker, start by just clicking it and feeding some treats. Once they are used to the sound, click and then reward. Repeat this in short sessions until the dog hears the click and looks to you for the reward. It might be a good idea to reinforce the clicker by using it while doing some simple commands that the dog already knows, such as “sit”, “stay”, or “come”.

Step Two

TARGET GAME

The most useful game to teach a wary dog is to focus on something other than whatever is scaring them. Good memories in scary environments help to build confidence! To begin this game, you’ll have to acquire an object to start working with, such as a stick with a ball at the end, or any object with a distinguishable end for the dog to aim and touch. An example would be two paper plates taped to the end of a stick. Show the object to the dog and click when they sniff it. Reward, then repeat. Be sure to also always give lots of verbal praise! Adding a verbal cue to touch the target is also a good idea, such as “touch” or “nose” to encourage them to touch the target. Take a break from the exercise as soon as the dog is starting to understand. If the dog lacks interest in the object, you can rub the scent from a treat on to the surface to trigger a sniffing response.

After the dog understands that touching the object will earn a click and reward, try moving the target around. Lead the dog forward and

sideways by moving the target, and soon the game will be easy for the dog. Praise will be VERY important to making this a fun game for the dog.

An additional step that you can take to make it even simpler to start working with the doggy door would be to teach the dog to target a sticky-note. This could then be easily stuck to the pet door's flap.

Alternatively, you could use a piece of paper that contrasts in color to the color of the flap, and tape it on the flap for training. A sticky note can be fun to move around and stick in difference places, until it loses its stick of course! This method is further discussed in Step Four.

Step Three

THROUGH THE DOOR

Now that your dog knows how to target an object, you can use this game to help get the dog comfortable with the doggy door. Start by holding the target as close to the door as the dog is comfortable approaching, and continue increasing the dog's comfort zone until approaching the door is no longer an issue. You'll then find it easiest to securely tape up the flap, or remove it all together. Then, repeat the target game and see if the dog shows interest in looking out through the open door. Click and reward if they do!

You can then step outside, and put your target through the door and reward the dog from the outside. You can then gradually move the target through the door, praising the dog for all efforts and clicking each time they touch the target. If going through the door is particularly stressful for your dog, you'll want to take a break after only a couple times of reaching through the door. If your dog is fine with going through the opening, you can play fetch through the door, or throw treats through the door so that the dog goes through the door to get the treat.

Soon the dog should be comfortable with coming out of the door. You'll want to repeat the exercise going both directions. Once the dog can be called through the door both directions, you'll want to start introducing the flap. You can do this by un-taping the flap, and while still holding it open have the dog go through and then gently drop the flap on their back. This will help nervous dogs grow accustomed to the feeling of the flap on their back, and should be done very carefully if the dog's fear is of the flap itself. Continue this until the dog is comfortable with the feeling of the flap, however do limit your sessions to 10 minutes max, and less if the dog is stressed. You can always revert back to an easier exercise if the dog is starting to be too stressed!

Step Four

THE FLAP GAME

After your dog understands how to go through the opening, you will want to teach the dog to push open the flap. Sometimes, after going through the opening several times, the flap will just be in their way and they will just push it on their own. That should be rewarded! However, if the flap is the challenge of using the doggy door, this can be the most unappealing part for the dog. You might have to get the dog use to the sound of the flap opening and closing, which should be done thoughtfully. If the dog is very afraid of the sound, have the dog some distance away and ask someone to open and close the flap. Reward the dog for staying still while the sound happens, and gradually decrease your distance from the door while the sound occurs. If the dog is not very fearful, then having them watch you push the flap open and letting it close might be sufficient.

At this point, teaching the dog to target a sticky-note or contrasting colored piece of paper can be quite useful. You would teach this just as you taught them to target the first object, but instead of holding up the

target to direct the dog, you would set it on the ground, or stick it to a wall. Using the same verbal cue can make this learning process very fast, and you can stick the paper anywhere! You would then put it on the flap, and start playing the flap game! Every time the dog touches the flap, click and reward. If they don't want to touch the flap at first, you can put the target next to the door, or on the frame. Repeat these sessions as many times as necessary for the dog to be comfortable with touching, or perhaps even pushing open the flap. As soon as the dog starts pushing on the flap a little harder, start only rewarding with a click and treat when they actually push, though still verbally praising for the touches as well.

If the dog still doesn't want to push through the flap very much, try going on the opposite side and hold the flap partially open and hold the original target object through the door again. The first time the dog goes all the way through, reward BIG! And then take a break and play or let the dog relax. This will keep stress levels low.

Troubleshooting

- Now, even though your dog knows how to use the dog door, what if they choose not to use it? This is not terribly uncommon. A simple way to encourage using of the dog door is to feed them on the opposite side of the door, so they have to travel through to get their food. You can also do this with water by keeping water only outside or inside, however, you must be careful to monitor that they are drinking enough! Take them to the water side periodically to ensure they are drinking.

References

Setler, Rebecca. "Teaching Fido to use a Dog Door". The Housebreaking Bible. < <http://www.thehousebreakingbible.com/training/dog-door-use.htm> >

Pryor, Karen. Clicker Training.

<<http://www.thehousebreakingbible.com/training/dog-door-use.htm> >