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SUBLIMATION



Sublimation Success:

PET



My dad was a practicing veterinarian for 54 years. Growing up, I was surrounded by a variety of pets and animals and was often my dad's assistant for late-night emergency cases at his clinic. I likely would have become a veterinarian if it weren't for my love of electrical engineering that later morphed into a passion for sublimation transfer. Being a pet lover, I must say that it has been very satisfying to have a way to create personalized items for my pets and for the pets of my close family and friends.

PRODUCTS

Areas where you can boost your bottom line

BY W. DAVID GROSS



David Gross is the president of Condé Systems, Inc. For over 30 years, David's goal has been to provide business owners with the superior guidance and resources needed to be successful at these exciting and profitable decorating technologies.

Gross has co-authored several books, including "The Sublimation Journal." He can be reached by email at dgross@conde.com.



Rodolfo models his latest birthday apparel. Pet owners are spending more money than ever to treat their pets. (Image courtesy Brandy Jameson-Neth)

Early in my sublimation career (which is at 31 years now), I mostly produced fun and practical pet-related products such as ID tags, leashes, and collars. The most satisfaction I received, however, was from memorializing pets that have gone to pet heaven by creating loving tributes to them on slate, metal, or glass. Currently on my bedside table is a photo of my deeply missed golden retriever, Sofie. Sublimation was a great way to combine my favorite photo of her with text to create an impressive and lasting tribute. Our current dog, Barron, is a 140-pound Saint Bernard that has been on two of Condé's livestreams over the years. I've produced several ID tags for him and, as you can imagine, I have a long list of products that I plan to make for him in the future.

Are you crazy for your pets or do you know someone who is? In this article, I want to help you sell into the pet market by sharing with you my best pet-related products and detail a few marketing ideas that will help you identify profitable groups of pet lovers and pet-related businesses. As always, follow your sublimation passion!



(Image courtesy of Condé)

Partnering with pet groomers

Perhaps my favorite sublimation money maker is partnering with pet groomers. Put simply, no one takes their dog to a pet groomer because they have to! Often dog owners will spend more money on their pets than they do their children. I suggest finding a popular pet groomer near you and pitching the idea of offering pet-related products to their clients. The pet groomer would display your point-of-purchase sign with a few examples of imprinted products and details on how to order. After the products are decorated, you can deliver them back to the pet groomer for pickup or ship them directly to the client. This will be a win-win for you and the pet groomer as you will share a part of the sale and produce some fun and excitement at their business.






Website for designing and ordering

Although you could simply leave your business cards for customers to take with them, I recommend providing a point-of-purchase sign that directs customers to a website via QR code. Once on the site, the customer can select products, upload their favorite photographs, and then check out. Simple! I have found that InkSoft has an excellent e-commerce site with a built-in designer that can be customized for pet groomers (<https://learn.inksoft.com/conde>). InkSoft is designed for you to create and run many customized sites for clients of all types — pet groomers, schools, churches, clubs, and more. I have created a digital sign that can be downloaded and then transferred to a 12" x 18" piece of aluminum. The file can be downloaded from www.dyetrans.com/pets along with information on my favorite products and InkSoft contact information.



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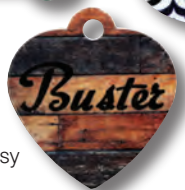
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Oliver Rupert shows off his all-season headwear. (Image courtesy of Sara Reese)



(Images courtesy of Condé)

Pet rescue shelters

Helping rescue shelters is a great way to get your name out to the community! Establish a program with an animal shelter to provide no-charge pet tags. The tags can include the new owners' information on one side of the tag and shelter info or a promotion on the other. With the delivery of the pet tag, you can offer many additional personalized products for sale through your website. It's a great way to make a lasting connection with a pet lover that will be looking for personalized pet products in the future.

Dog parks

Often dog parks have community foundations and support. Like shelters, you can promote your products by giving away pet tags. Find out if the park has a support organization with fundraising events. Get permission to promote your organization again with a donation for products purchased. Be sure to promote your donations to the park to let folks know how you are helping.

Blessing of the pets

Around the first Sunday in October, Catholics worldwide celebrate the Feast of Saint Francis by bringing their pets to church to be blessed. I recommend partnering with a large Catholic Church that participates in the blessing to sublimate pet products on-site. Donate a portion of profits to the church and be sure to promote other products that can be purchased later. Also, collect email addresses for your mailing list so that you can send them product information and/or promote your website. On that website, you should create templated artwork themed for the church with space for personalization.

Pricing

Perhaps the biggest mistake that sublimators make is to underprice their products. This is even more critical when a third party is receiving a portion of the sale. I have put together a free pricing spreadsheet that lets you determine

your product costs and experiment with prices to select your desired profit level (to receive your copy, call your Condé account manager to have them send it to you). If you are selling into many of the markets discussed above, you should be able to sell at the top range of the pricing. I do recommend testing your pricing strategies to determine the optimum level.

Bundling

Building and offering a selection of related products at a special cost is a great way to provide value. Pet products make excellent gift sets, especially around the holidays. Also, this is a different way to get customers to try out a various array of products at one time. A customer will spend \$15-\$25 for a personalized dog collar. But throw in a matching personalized dog tag and leash and you can easily raise the cost to \$40.

Artwork

When determining the value of a decorated product, I consider a few variables: the value, quality, functionality, and need for the blank imprintable product as well as the transferred artwork's quality, color, and composition. This includes the incredibly important pre-made design template and the added personalization. For events or products tied to an organization, their logo or other information needs to be part of this design. It makes folks feel good about their purchase! The added personalization may be a name or favorite photograph. I recommend that a date be added to the personalization as this will mean a lot over the years.

Referral information

To grow your business, you must let folks know what you can do! So, when you deliver a product, make sure that your contact information can easily be found on it for reordering and referrals. Some products can be sublimated on the backside while other products may need a sticker placed somewhere as inconspicuously as possible. Always include your business card with a QR code incorporated into it (QR codes really make life easy).



Helping rescue shelters is a great way to get your name out to the community.

Check out our blogs for great information on how beneficial QR codes can be.

Onsite kiosk sublimation

If you can get plugged into a pet-related event, this may be a great opportunity to do live sublimation! You'll need a laptop, sublimation printer like the Sawgrass SG500, and a smaller heat press like the Geo Knight DK14S. The one essential item for operation is electricity, as heat presses require lots of power. You must plan ahead to verify availability. For outdoor events, you may have the option of using a quiet generator. Typically, you need about 12 to 15 amps at 110 Volt for operation of a George Knight DK14S plus laptop and sublimation printer. If you are running a generator, I recommend also getting a UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) for operation of everything except the heat press.

To communicate what you are doing with the crowd, consider making a ChromaLuxe textured panel with your company name and a blank area for writing which products you are selling and their prices. Believe it or not, these panels can be written on with chalk and then erased as needed. Our Condé Kiosk software can easily get their photo from their phone to your laptop by using a QR code.

Resources

Don't reinvent the wheel! Be sure to check out my books (RTSS: Harnessing the Power of Sublimation for Outstanding Profits, RTSS: Cashing In On The ChromaLuxe Revolution, and others) by visiting conde.com and clicking on the "Books by David Gross" link found on the left side. The books are



also available in both printed and digital Kindle editions on Amazon and were written to help folks just like you with strategies on how to stay on The Road to Sublimation Success!

Pet products for humans

The following are just a few ideas for pet-related products that can be decorated using sublimation. The possibilities are endless, and you can create a huge variety of uniquely personalized products for pets and their owners. My favorite pet products are actually for humans! As human lifetimes often extend over the lives of many pets, remembering them through photos is something that is important to all of us! Here are few examples:

ChromaLuxe stacked metal

A great way to add value to a single piece of sublimation metal is to stack a smaller piece of imaged aluminum on top of a larger piece. Sublimate the larger with an appropriate background image and place the pet's photo on the smaller piece. Then using a spacer block, mount the smaller piece of metal onto the larger. This approach produces a stunning 3D product at little additional cost. Decorating options include multiple layers that includes a larger background piece with multiple foreground pieces. You could also vary the types of metal by having a matte background finish and a glossy foreground finish. This really turns out to be a very high value product.

Drink coasters

Coasters are a great way to protect furniture and a great way to show off an assortment of pet photographs. Pet names and designs can be easily transferred onto a wide variety of coasters to create a unique and personalized gifts for pet owners.

Slate

Slate is a popular substrate that is hand carved and then coated for sublimation transfer. Unique and impressive, slate is offered in a variety of traditional and non-traditional shapes (half oval, rectangle, tablet, left or right contour, square, oval, round, rectangle w/clock

mechanism) and are available in your choice of a matte or gloss white sublimation coating. Most sizes come with black stands for convenient desk, mantle, or table-top display while others are designed for displaying on a home or office wall. Slate products have elegant qualities that superbly demonstrate the value and desirability of the sublimation transfer process.

Phone and tablet stands

Everyone will appreciate this gift! Available in a variety of shapes and sizes, phone and tablet stands provide a personalized resting place for smartphones and stylishly holds the device vertically or horizontally for hands-free upright viewing on a desk, kitchen counter, or nightstand. The stands feature an imprintable glossy white surface with black back and edges that help deliver a professionally finished product for customers and the unique 2-piece lightweight collapsible design makes it the ideal phone accessory for travelers. Also great for books.

Ornaments

Christmas ornaments are perhaps my favorite pet product. Although it may be a little soon to start thinking about Christmas, keep in mind that ornaments are not just for the holidays — they are great sellers all year long. And, I have personally found that fundraising is an excellent way to sell large numbers of ornaments in a short period of time. We sell single and double-sided ornaments in metal, hardboard, FRP, natural wood, glass, acrylic, and more. All holiday ornaments can be decorated using a standard sublimation printer and flat heat press. For some popular styles, an optional production jig is available that enables fast and accurate transfers at the heat press.

Pet products for pets

What makes a great sublimated pet product? Function and personalization! Sublimation provides several great pet products that can be personalized with the pet's name and full-color artwork. A few of my favorites are pet tags, collars and leashes, shirts, bandanas, pet mats, food/water bowls, and pet collar scarves.



Kona. (Photo by Heath Burgess)



(Images courtesy of Condé)

Pet tags

Today's pet owners want and need personalized pet tags that protect and identify their beloved dogs and cats. Although engraved custom dog tags are nice, sublimated tags provide the greatest design flexibility by incorporating full-color backgrounds, fonts, and graphics. This is an essential pet product, and we have lots of different versions in quite a few shapes. Many are even double-sided to provide more space to honor special partnerships. Designs can include the owner's address, home and work phone numbers, veterinarian names and numbers, even medical information — all while colorfully expressing the pet's distinct personality.

Collars and leashes

Great for displaying your pet's name, information, or a fun quote, custom dog collars with matching leashes are fun, stylish, and practical. The adjustable fabric collars come in three size options and include one blank imprintable panel while the 72" leash features two imprintable panels.

Dog collar scarves

Dog collar scarves include an adjustable black collar that fits through an opening at the top of the fabric. Using standard dye-sub equipment, the triangle-shaped, 100% spun polyester scarves can be easily decorated with vibrant, full-color photographs and designs to create highly personalized wearables suitable for any dog's unique personality — whether it's playful designs for pet lovers or brand awareness designs promoting animal rights organizations, pet groomers, and retail pet stores.

Pet shirts

Pet shirts are the perfect addition to any dog's wardrobe. With dye-sub's unlimited color and design possibilities, decorators can create a completely unique pet shirt that includes their name, photos, holiday designs, or special messages for weddings, birthdays, and more. Using a 16" x 20" press, all but the largest two sizes can have images transferred onto the entire front and back for unique and eye-popping all-over designs.



(Images courtesy of Condé)

I hope that this information has been helpful to you and so please get started! The pet market is red hot for personalized products. Please email me with your success stories or questions at dgross@conde.com. I also recommend checking out our client gallery as it is filled with examples of pet-related products. **GP**



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