

FOCUS ON  
store promotions

# Generating Buzz

There are a multitude of promotional strategies specialty pet stores can employ to increase customer traffic, enhance store image, create excitement and build sales.

By Carol Radice

**I**f you ask small to mid-size retailers what their business strategy is, it's likely they'll say improving the bottom line, increasing customer loyalty and attracting new shoppers. For these retailers, experts say, routinely engaging shoppers with creative in-store promotions is an effective way to do that, and more.

"This year, a good 30 percent or more of businesses will fail because they underestimate the value of marketing. In today's competitive environment, all bets are off and retail-

ers need to do everything possible to encourage repeat purchases and shopper loyalty. Capturing consumer interest at the point of sale is a key part of this," says Janet Simmons, vice president of West Hampton, N.Y.-based Island Business Group.

Simmons and others feel the computer is an invaluable yet underused tool for promotional mailings, emailing newsletters, tracking customer purchases and trends, and analyzing sales data to see what products are moving and

1/2 Horizontal  
Ad

CIRCLE #130 ON READER INQUIRY CARD

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which aren't. "Computers can also assist retailers in managing customer and pet profiles, following buying patterns, etc., all which go a long way toward increasing customer loyalty and repeat business," notes Simmons.

Given recent findings suggesting shoppers are favoring other retail channels for their pet supplies, the timing is critical for retailers to engage in a strong promotional program, if they aren't doing so already. A

American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (AAPMA) study that found pet owners increasingly shopping in mass discounters and chain stores for their pet needs.

Richard Kann, president and CEO

### Top 5 In-store Promotion ideas

- **Loyalty Programs**— Give customers a reason to come back.
- **Special Sales**— Events like Midnight Madness sales help move product and generate excitement.
- **Newsletters**— Electronic newsletters are an inexpensive and quick way to communicate with customers about special sales, new products, food recalls, animal care tips, etc.
- **Instore ads**— Having a monitor at the checkout is a great way to alert customers about sales and specials.
- **Birthday Clubs**— Sending pet guardians a coupon for a free birthday treat for their pet is a great way to build customer relations.

### 1/2 Vertical (Island) Ad

of Comp-Ware Systems, based in Christmas, Fla., agrees that now is the time for specialty retailers to take their promotions into overdrive. "This news is not the end of the world, but it does signal an opportunity for specialty retailers to step up their in-store promotions," says Kann.

"Add-on sales are where the money is, and today's technology can prompt salespeople to offer a customer who just bought dog food, for example, a special deal on a new brand of dog biscuits," notes Kann. One out of three times, he adds, customers say yes.

Generating suggested shopping lists are another feature of some POS systems. These lists are ideal for new pet owners who oftentimes have no idea what to purchase. It's also an ideal feature for retailers who sell products for multiple types of pets, because it enables employees, regardless of their

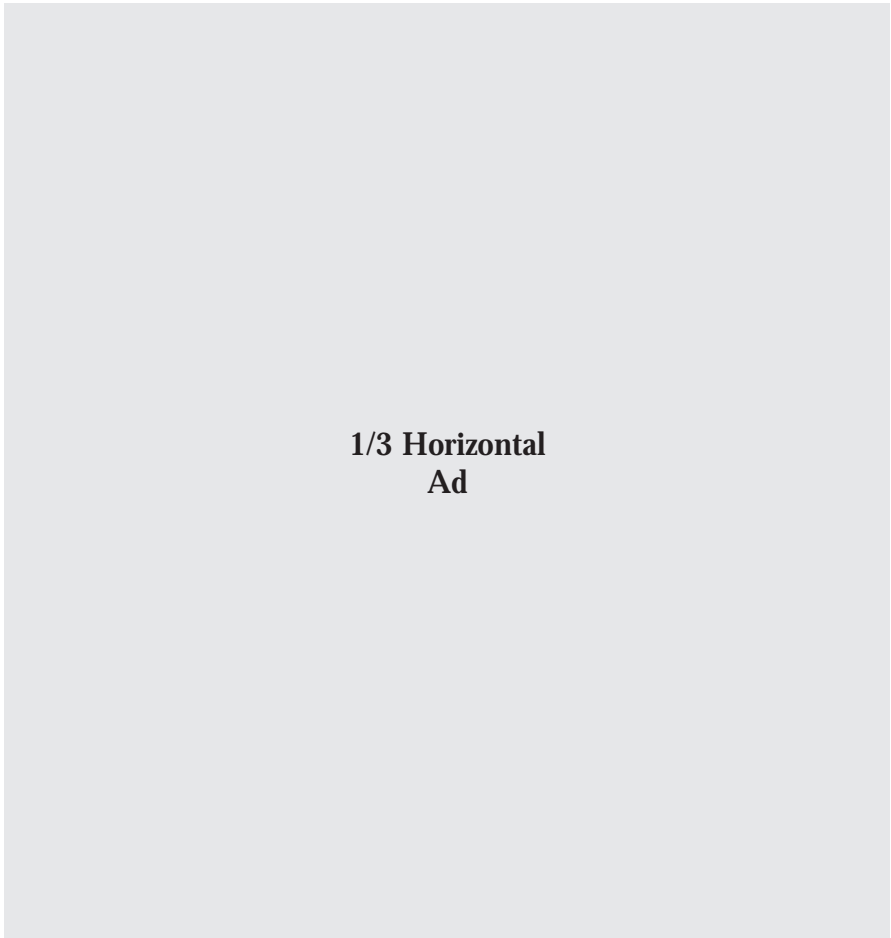
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knowledge level, to use that list to help customers find what they need.

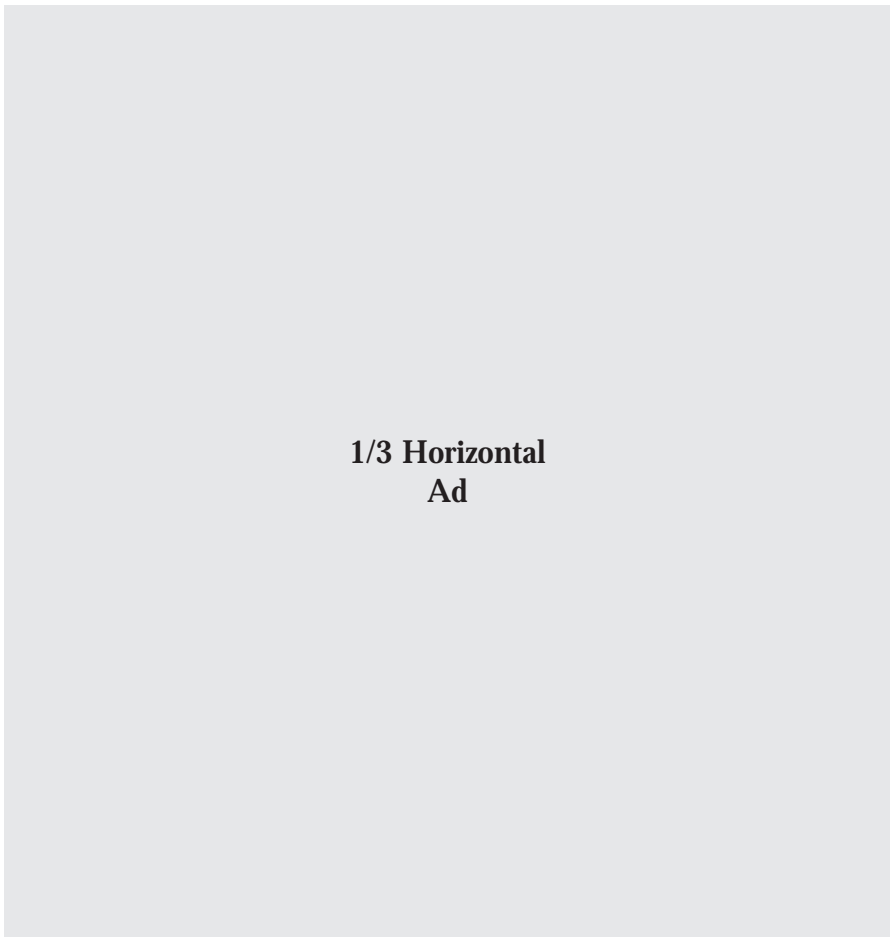
Charlie Marvin, manager of Ocean, N.J.-based Tropiquarium says his company's rewards program has been a highly effective tool in bringing customers back into the store and helping him to compete against online retailers. "Our Fish Club has been an extremely successful program and helped us to capture business we might not otherwise get," Marvin notes. The company has about 3,000 active members who, in exchange for joining, receive a \$5 coupon for every \$100 of fish they purchase. Given that general pricing in the store is competitive with online retailers, Marvin says the program is limited to fish sales.

B&B Pet Stop in Mobile, Ala. also offers a frequent-shopper program, as well as a newsletter. According to Sally Trufant, general manager at B&B, VIP (Very Important Pet) members pay a one-time \$15 fee and are entitled to benefits like a five-percent discount off the bottom line of every purchase including sale items; 15 percent off any regular priced item when they sign up; 10 percent off regular-priced livestock, including all fish, plants, birds, small animals and reptiles; and 10 percent off all regular-priced packaged rawhide, bulk rawhide, bulk treats and bulk bones for dogs. VIP members are also offered monthly "Super Specials," free bird and small animal grooming, discounts on the pet wash and free pet food with the purchase of a certain amount. To encourage employee involvement, associates are paid a dollar for every customer who signs up. **PB**



**1/3 Horizontal  
Ad**

CIRCLE #190 ON READER INQUIRY CARD



**1/3 Horizontal  
Ad**

CIRCLE #134 ON READER INQUIRY CARD

CIRCLE #199 ON READER  
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