

# Re-engineering Social Paws as a lifestyle business for animal behaviourist

by Robin Waite | October 17, 2017

## SUMMARY

Pet care and animal behaviour specialist, Helen Motteram, is guided by business coach, Robin Waite, to re-define the range of services offered by Social Paws to coach and support pet owners, veterinary practices and pet professionals – resulting in a focused 45-hour week instead of working over 60 hours and much less stress in her family life.

## CHALLENGE

In 2012, animal enthusiast, Helen Motteram BSc, established Social Paws after studying Animal Behaviour and Welfare and working at Cheltenham's Animal Shelter and a local vets practice. Her goal is to make a difference in animal welfare, particularly helping to rehabilitate anxious dogs and support their owners. Her passion for looking after animals led her to offer a wide range of services, walking dogs, caring for rescue animals, re-training pets with behavioural problems and even pet-sitting overnight to aid an animal's rehabilitation. She developed a fantastic reputation, working with hundreds of pet owners in Cheltenham and around Gloucestershire. However, her working hours strained her family life, as she was spending 12-15 hour days walking dogs, training with owners and evenings catching up on business administration, sales and marketing. In spite of continuously growing Social Paws, exhaustion began to affect her confidence. On hearing of the benefits of business coaching from a local marketing colleague [Sali Green], she sought Robin Waite's advice in an initial consultation.

## FEARLESS TRANSFORMATION

Robin's first step in the free consultation was to explore Helen's goals for Social Paws and review how to balance her lifestyle with the business. Her love of animals facilitated her committing wholeheartedly to working so many hours each week. Yet Robin immediately helped her to calculate, on average, she was earning less than the minimum wage and the business wasn't profitable. It was apparent, working one-to-one with pets and their owners with her hourly tariff would not sustain her income nor allow her to share her expertise more widely. Robin motivated Helen to set up a Default Diary, review her pricing and re-engineer her services, and on the first session, she signed up for monthly one-to-one business coaching with him.

To solve the pricing challenge, Robin guided Helen on Creating a Product – re-engineering the former 20 plus services into a coherent set of products where her clients will perceive and value the benefits and outcomes she delivers. This work focused on packaging the value of her animal behavioural expertise in with her animal and owner sessions. Before launching Social Paws, Helen had developed a wide range of advertising, events and marketing skills, so she found herself supporting other pet professionals with free advice on Facebook. Robin helped her recognise the value of this experience and formalise a programme to support them.

Next they reviewed the Customer Journey, to look at Social Paws' onboarding process and how Helen could save time by structuring her free advice for a wider audience and tweak her consultation model to attract longer term clients. Robin talked Helen through ways she could share more information to an even larger number of people – attracting more conversations and enquiries, then converting them to consult with her after a free telephone consultation.

## IMPACT

The outcome from the coaching is clear: within 6 months of her first session, Helen was earning the same money from working regular 8-hour days that she was previously earned by working 12-20 hours per day. Her success rate from implementing the Customer Journey is almost 95% conversion once she talks to people via her telephone consultation. Social Paws helps even more people through her online videos and free tips. Although Helen has experienced quieter months during the business transition, her positive energy, enthusiasm for business and personal health are all intact.

Helen has scaled back Social Paws to regular hours by offering three core “Walk and train” programmes with ongoing therapy and support to transform her furry clients into obedient, relaxed pets. These are designed to help pet owners, where they have struggled to train nervous dogs or leave them with a dog-walker, making it especially difficult to work away or take holidays. As she has become well-recognised in the veterinary and pet industry, Helen is coaching other professional animal specialists to build their business model around their expertise and provide support in her Pet Professional Network. Helen has also launched a book featuring her celebrity rescue rook, Russell Crow, who has been instrumental in gaining national TV fame and opportunities for Helen to speak publicly on topics she holds dear. She credits Robin for helping her to re-structure her pricing and her diary management to make it all possible.

“Working with Robin will change your life. It has changed mine – and if I hadn't seen Robin, I possibly wouldn't have been working now because I was getting to the point of making myself ill. He learned so quickly about my industry and thought outside the box to adapt what he knew to apply it to my business. Pets are a popular comfort in our lives, with more than 44% of households owning an animal in 2017, but the challenges of pet behaviour do cause stress. You could say I have doubled my money already, because I've gained so much time back. That's the next step which Robin is helping me with – to make the most of my time and expertise to help other pet professionals to grow their businesses too.”