

A woman with dark curly hair and red-rimmed glasses is sitting on a light-colored tufted sofa. She is wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. She is holding a large, wrinkled dog, possibly a Mastiff, in her arms. The dog is resting its head on her chest. The background shows a window with a view of greenery outside.

furbaby

carefully-curated pet care

An on-line resource for pet owners to help them find just the right care—when they can't be there.



THE BACKSTORY

Twenty years ago San Francisco helped start a revolution. It became the first U.S. community to guarantee a home to every adoptable dog and cat.

And figures show that San Franciscans have done an amazing job at adopting pets.

Today, San Francisco is home to 837,442 people and an estimated 120,000 dogs—living in more than one-third of San Francisco households.

The number of canines in our city is now greater than the number of children, whose numbers dropped to 107,000 from 112,000 over the past decade.

Demanding work schedules, commuting, little or no outdoor space all contribute to creating a large percentage of pet owners in need of outside help with dog care. Services like walking, day care, play groups and overnight boarding.

If San Francisco is indeed the fifth best city in the U.S. to raise a dog, why does it seem so challenging for dog owners to find care for their pets?

Sure, we have Google searches, Yelp reviews, friend's recommendations... but where is that one resource that brings together all of the pet care offerings available and serves them up to users in a way that matches their needs?

Who are these pet owners? What do they say they want? And what does that really mean?

These are the questions my project will address.

TELL ME ABOUT YOU

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR PET OWNERS

- 1) Describe your household for me, the people, where do you live, work, play?
- 2) Your pets, their age, personality. (how long a pet owner)
- 3) Describe a typical work day for you.
- 4) What's the schedule for your pets on a typical work day? Weekend day?
- 5) What pet care do you need/use? How often? Regular or on an as-needed basis?
- 6) How do you find services providers? Could be any type. (interested in how you go about finding providers) Tell me about the last time you looked for someone to fix your stove, clean your house, do electrical work, plumbing...
- 7) When you're researching service providers are you on your laptop, desktop, phone, tablet...
- 8) Tell me about your last experience looking for a pet care service or provider.
- 9) What was the hardest thing about that, what would have made it easier for you?
- 10) When you find a care service/provider you're interested in, what do you do next? (call, email, do more research on them...)
- 11) What information are you most interested in knowing, right up front, when you're looking for pet care? (most important considerations)
- 12) What 3-5 things most influence your decision to choose a provider (ie: price, location, reviews, pictures, videos...)

TO FOLLOW UP

- a) What do you typically spend a month on pet care?
- b) So... you say you do most of your services research on your _____.
What do you mainly use your other devices for?

WHO I TALKED TO : PET OWNERS

Kathy L : single, age 54, 1 dog, 2 cats

Rhonda C : married, early 50's, 2 dogs

Renee T : single, early 30's, 1 dog

Robert M : single, early 40's, 1 dog, 2 cats

Jane B : lives with boyfriend, 47, 2 dogs

Wendy T : single, age 51, 1 dog

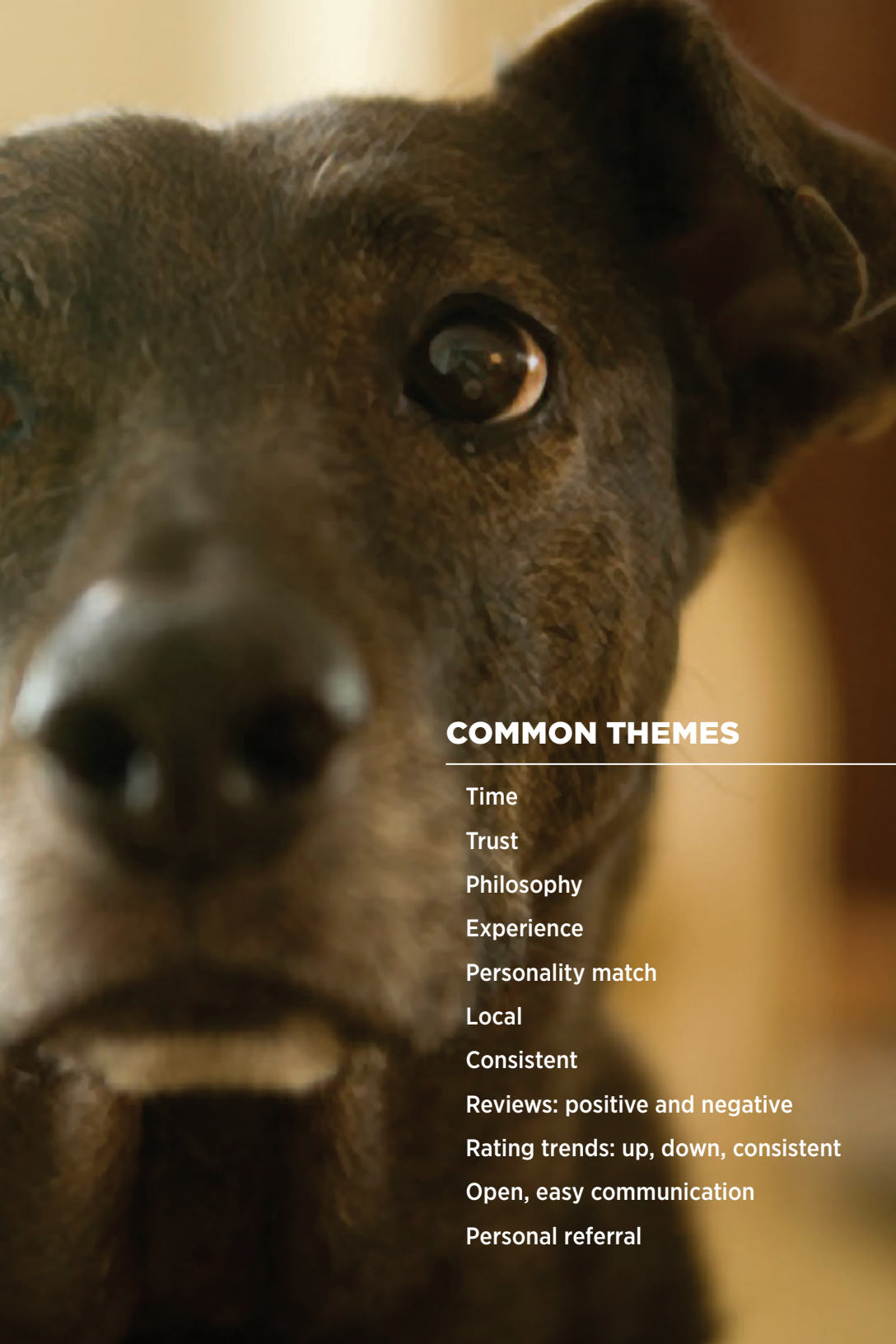
Monica M : single, late 40's, 2 dogs

Kevin K : married, early 30's, 1 dog

Lori M : single, late 50's, 1 dog, 1 cat

Adrian D : single, mid 30's, 1 dog





COMMON THEMES

Time

Trust

Philosophy

Experience

Personality match

Local

Consistent

Reviews: positive and negative

Rating trends: up, down, consistent

Open, easy communication

Personal referral

WHAT I DISCOVERED

- Pets are equal members of the family, just like kids
- Finding just the right care is very important
- All pets are different, have different needs
- Finding pet care:
 - Is hard, just coming up with an initial list of people to contact can be daunting
 - Takes a lot of time, but is worth it
 - Is a lot of trial and error
 - Should be simpler
- People find pet care through:
 - Google—going through long lists is a pain
 - Yelp—most have a love/hate relationship with Yelp
 - Word of mouth—friends, other pet owners, vets, rescue groups
- Pet owners compare multiple providers before making a choice
- Want lots of facts, all in one place to get to the next step, the in-person meeting
- Have to meet the care provider in person and see how they interact with the pet
- Subscription services not widely used to find providers
- Services with advertising can be suspect
- A visual “sense” of the provider helps distill the choices for next steps
- Money/price is not typically the first consideration
- Credentials, ratings, recommendations, pictures, videos are all looked at
- Everyone has some horror story about pet care

MY PROBLEM IS



I'm Julie. A tech-savvy pet owner with a wacky life/work schedule and not a lot of tolerance for tasks that aren't simple.

Work and friends aside, I have one important priority in my life and he's sitting next to me on this couch.

I'm focused on finding the perfect care environment for Bruno, but it's tough. When I do a Google search for pet care in my zip code (and what else can I do, really?) I get a big, nasty, long list to go through.

Good that I have a lot of choices? Bad that there's no easy way of distilling the list to better fit Bruno's, and my, specific needs.

This painful process makes me worried that I won't find the loving care I want for Bruno when I can't be there. Plus, I'm peeved that it takes so long just to go through the list to try and figure out if there are any qualified (according to me!) care providers on it.



“ I’ve gotta find day care for my shy guy Rufus. My lap just isn’t optimal anymore. ”

LET’S TALK SOLUTION

What if there was **one web site** specifically **devoted to helping pet owners discover care** for their four-legged family members?

Not a site where pet care is simply one of the many care categories offered. Or one where **you have to pay** to get the best listings. Or one whose **listings are mainly driven by advertising or ratings**.

What about a site that **searches on your terms**?

Now, let’s make that a site that covers pretty much **every category of pet care**. From overnight boarding to once-a-week walks. Day care, grooming, training, even health care—all in one place.

Enter Furbaby. A single, on-line resource for pet owners, to help them find just the right care. Served up according to their—and their pets—needs.

Needs that owners can **specify upfront** to help define and **provide exactly the results they’re looking for**. Without wading through a list of care providers that just won’t work for them and, more importantly, for their pets.

furbaby [dot com]
carefully-curated pet care

WHAT MAKES FURBABY DIFFERENT?

FEATURE

ADDRESSES THIS PAIN POINT

One web site

Now, users might go to 5, 10, fifteen, even twenty different sites to individually research each care provider. Often to find that some of them should never have been on their short list in the first place. And FYI, Furbaby is a web site because research indicated that users search for services on their laptops, not on mobile devices.

Devoted to pet owners

Other sites may offer an amalgamated listing of pet care, but that's not the only type of care they are offering. Pet owners are focused on pet care, not child care or hospice care.

Offer many categories of care

Pet owners typically use more than one type of care service.
Why go to more than one site to find all the different types of care providers you need?

Results driven by needs users specify

What good does a long list of options do for a user, when half of them aren't what they are looking for?
When needs are user specified, results fit the need. Frustration ebbs.

Not subscription based

Research indicated that users don't want to pay subscription fees to search for pet care.





WHO'S GOING TO USE FURBABY? AND WHAT DO THEY WANT?

Pet owner personas—part of the equation

The questions remain “Who are the Furbaby care providers?” and “What do they want?”



“ I could lease a nice car for what I pay for day care, but my dog gives me more joy than an amazing car would ;) ”

KYLE the consistent commuter

Kyle loves his job. He gets to work with brilliant people, think creatively, travel to “exotic” places and manage billions of dollars. That’s why he’s been there almost five years now.

What makes him less than happy is the no pets policy his company adopted several years back and his crazy long commute. Every week, every day he’s in the office.

Because the one thing Kyle loves more than his job is his easy-going dog Joey (and his two cats aren’t bad either).

With Joey’s daily care is in the hands of a virtual stranger, Kyle has always taken the responsibility of finding and monitoring that care very seriously. It’s one of his top priorities.

And Kyle is relentless about ensuring that all of his life priorities are handled perfectly.

MAIN WAYS KYLE USES TECHNOLOGY



Text, commuting calls, quick Google search, Instagram. Talks to Siri a lot.

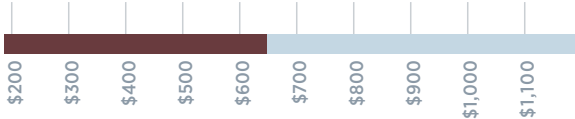


Pet care web cam, travel, reading, movies, social media.



Work! Pet care web cam, filling out forms, researching stuff—lots of stuff.

MONTHLY PET CARE COST*



M:7yrs



F:8yrs



M:12yrs

AGE : 39
WORKS : finance director / tech company
LIVES : urban condo
PETS : joey (dog) + chloe & charles (cats)

SEARCH BEHAVIORS

Google search > typically leads to a YELP listing
 Little trust in single YELP reviews, trends in reviews are of interest
 Ask everyone he knows

WANTS & PAINS

See videos, pictures
 Ways to contact/connect
 No long lists full of stuff I'm not looking for

TOP PET CARE CONSIDERATIONS

Trust
 Up-to-date training, licenses
 Loving interactions
 Ability to check-in while pet is at care

PET CARE USED

Full-time day care
 In-home overnight care
 Occasional walking
 Veterinary care

*Does not include veterinary, grooming and overnights



“It’s a luxury to have a walker, but I want them to have a great life.”

CASSIDY an at-home artist

Cassidy spent her 30’s living in London where her dog was welcomed in restaurants, shops, even on the trains. Her art career flourished and her dog fully enjoyed London life, happily going everywhere with her.

Now, back home in California she has two beautiful creatures sharing her home, but sometimes feels like there are not many other places they’re truly welcomed. Certainly not inside the cafe down the street from her house where she likes to go to people watch and sketch.

Most days she paints at home in her studio, her dogs there with her. But, she’s immersed in creating and knows her pups need the companionship of other canines and lots of outdoor play time she can’t always provide.

To keep Fannie & Rita out and about in the world they head off several times a week on group, off-leash play walks. Nothing makes Cassidy happier then when they race back in the door and tell her about all the fun they’ve had.

MAIN WAYS CASSIDY USES TECHNOLOGY

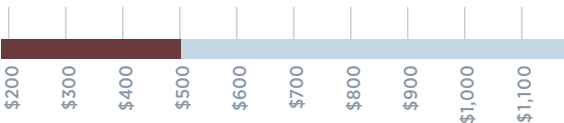


Text, calls, staying in touch, Facebook, posting artwork in progress.



Inspiration, blogs, movies, research, running an online gallery.

MONTHLY PET CARE COST*



SEARCH BEHAVIORS

- Google search backed up by YELP to get more names
- Asks friends and family using similar services, in person and on Facebook
- Does not use paid subscription lists

WANTS & PAINS

- Reviews, even negative to see if improvement is happening
- Side-by-side comparison
- Wants to see “personality,” not everything equalized

TOP PET CARE CONSIDERATIONS

- Philosophy—they have to be dog people
- How do the dogs react to them?
- Wants to support local businesses
- Flexibility

PET CARE USED

- Walking, varied schedule
- In-home overnight care
- Grooming
- Veterinary care

AGE : 54
WORKS : artist / home studio
LIVES : urban single family home
PETS : fannie + rita (dogs)



**Does not include veterinary, grooming and overnights*



“ I thought suburban life was supposed to be more relaxed. The only relaxing being done here, is by Mr. P on the couch.”

ALEC the accidental workaholic

Alec and his husband Byron recently moved out of the City when Byron opened his own restaurant in the suburbs south of them. Alec was used to Byron's long hours as a chef, and knew that wouldn't change. But, he hoped that his own schedule might become more chill, as their move put him closer to his office.

That dream was soon nixed by a well-deserved promotion to Vice President of Sales.

His plans for lunches at home in the garden with Mr. P quickly turned into a frantic search by a new workaholic (him!) for dog care in an unknown neighborhood.

Their only child had to have the best, snarly little beast that he is.

No stranger to the world of on-line advertising, Alec dove into his search. Without many personal connections in their new 'hood he wanted to get to an in-person meeting with potential care providers as quickly as possible.

When it comes to finding dog care “seeing is believing.”

MAIN WAYS ALEC USES TECHNOLOGY



Everything! Everything (almost)!

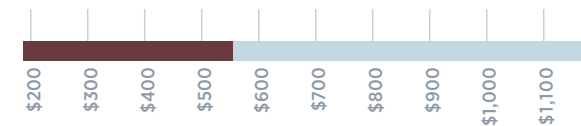


Reserved for relaxation time and the occasional yoga video.



Likes to leave his laptop at work whenever possible. For now, that's just not possible.

MONTHLY PET CARE COST*



BYRON

ALEC

AGE : 46

WORKS : vp / rich media advertising

LIVES : suburban neighborhood home

PETS : mr. p (dog)



SEARCH BEHAVIORS

Localized Google search
Paid lists such as Angie's List
YELP reviews are a joke
Loves personal referrals

WANTS & PAINS

Lots of info to distill a "short list"

Compare that info for me and feed me a summary

Wishes there was some way to read between the lines

TOP PET CARE CONSIDERATIONS

Love quirky dogs
Long history of good ratings
Excellent reviews
Separate by breed & size

PET CARE USED

Full-time day dare
In-home overnight care
Overnight boarding
Veterinary care

*Does not include veterinary, grooming and overnights



“Maxwell is not an income generator for someone!! He should be loved and respected by the people who care for him.”

SONYA ms. erratic schedule

Sonya begins and ends every day with meditation—still, calm, peaceful. Between that, it could all go to hell.

As a consultant for multiple large companies, she’s pulled in many different directions. Sometimes working from home—the reason she became a consultant—but often working on site with clients, for weeks at a time.

Then there are the calls, emails, and finally her actual work, researching and writing engaging client stories. Helping to create a brand and personality for them as robust as her own is.

Needless to say, her schedule is not consistent. But the needs of Maxwell, her spirit buddy, are. And when she’s not there with him, it’s important that whoever is showers him with affection.

Sonya and Maxwell often spend play time with members of her sangha (that’s a meditation community) and practice yoga together before bedtime. Maxwell’s downward dog amazing!

MAIN WAYS SONYA USES TECHNOLOGY

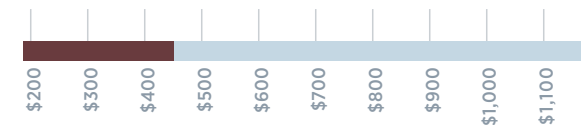


Text, calls, scheduling, social media, LinkedIn, finding stuff. And pictures, lots of pictures!



Writing, Pinterest, Hulu, shopping, researching pet care and other services.

MONTHLY PET CARE COST*



AGE : 35

WORKS : content creator / consultant

LIVES : urban loft

PETS : maxwell (dog) + miranda (cat)

SEARCH BEHAVIORS

Word of mouth / friends
 Google search
 YELP with a grain of salt
 Neighborhood sites like “Nextdoor”
 Never, ever, ever uses Craigslist for services

WANTS & PAINS

Testimonials with backup, “Can I call references?”
 Ways to contact/connect
 Time challenged, does not want to send out a lot of inquires just to get shut down or have no response

TOP PET CARE CONSIDERATIONS

Loving
 Reputable & responsible
 Trustworthy
 Hands on
 Communicative

PET CARE USED

Daily walking, M-F
 In-home overnight care
 Overnight boarding
 Veterinary care

*Does not include veterinary, grooming and overnights



“ There’s no bargain shopping when it comes to our pets.”

NEDA devoted to dogs

Neda is married to Jason. Neda loves dogs. Jason loves dogs. So, early on in their marriage they decided to adopt kids—Logan and Zoe—from the same rescue group.

Neda comes from a large, local, loving family. She studied criminology in college and followed in her favorite Aunt’s career footsteps by joining the police force after she graduated. During her sometimes 12-hr shifts as a dispatcher she thinks fast, reacts fast and works with incredibly high, seemingly endless energy.

Energy that matches that of their rambunctious dogs who spend their weekdays at day care in the large dog group, working off all of their puppy energy.

Time off is spent with Jason, taking the dogs on long hikes and pursuing other adventures.

Luckily Jason’s 9-5 (on a good day) job in finance helps them afford all of the training and care they need for Zoe and Logan.

MAIN WAYS NEDA USES TECHNOLOGY



Texting her husband and sister, Googling things, lots of social media chatting with friends.

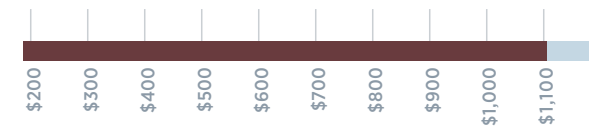


Updating the dogs Facebook page and Instagram feed. Chilling out after a long shift.



At-home budgeting and bill paying. Vacation research for dog-friendly places

MONTHLY PET CARE COST*



M:2yrs



F:2yrs

AGE : 31

WORKS : dispatcher / police dept

LIVES : almost urban loft

PETS : logan + zoe (dogs)

SEARCH BEHAVIORS

YELP, for pure speed of gathering a list, fast
Level of trust in YELP—6 on a scale of 1-10
Quick clicker

WANTS & PAINS

Choices, quick compare
Photos & videos of care providers
Needs lots of facts, all in one place, not scattered all over a zillion sites

TOP PET CARE CONSIDERATIONS

Connection with the dogs
Reputable, award winning
Experience and up-to-date staff training
Lots of supervised play

PET CARE USED

Full-time day care
Training & behaviorists
Family or friends for overnight care
Veterinary care

*Does not include veterinary, grooming and overnights