

## give it away

**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER AND PROFIT—IF YOU LET PEOPLE KNOW YOU HAVE IT.**

BY NICHOLE L. TORRES

**YOU'RE** probably already well aware that giving products away for free is one of the best ways to market your business. What might surprise you is that giving away your *knowledge* can also get the word out about your business—and make customers come running to pay for your services. “You can give people a taste of information or even detailed information,” says Margie Zable Fisher, president of Zable Fisher PR and author of *The Do-It-Yourself Public Relations Kit* (zfpr.com). “Most people will say, ‘That company really knows what it’s talking about, so when I’m in the market for that product or service, I’m going to go back to them.’”

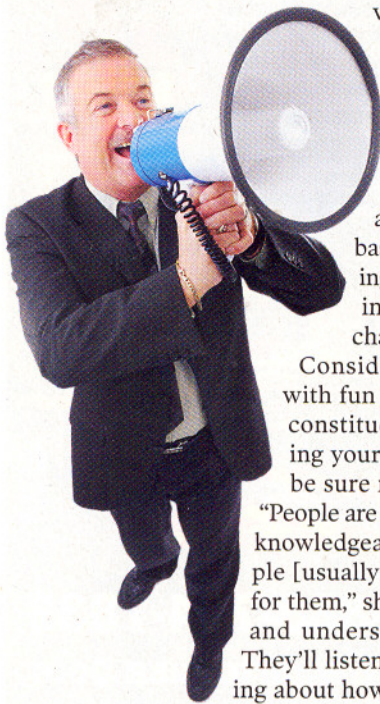
By establishing himself as *the* go-to dog training expert, Ty Brown has built his Riverton, Utah, dog training business, CommuniCanine, to more than \$160,000 in projected 2008 sales, just one year after startup. With no money to market his company in the early days, he used his expertise to land a radio interview during National Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month. “The callers were

so excited for the [dog training advice] that they kept inviting me back until it became a weekly appearance,” says Brown, 27. “By giving away free information, it’s brought me more business than I can handle.”

He has also written articles and appeared on TV, giving basic tips to dog owners and doing dog training demonstrations in public parks, sometimes for charitable organizations.

Consider creating an e-newsletter with fun and interesting tips for your constituents. Whenever you’re sharing your expertise, says Zable Fisher, be sure not to get into lecture mode.

“People are trying so hard to prove they’re knowledgeable that they forget that people [usually] only care about what’s in it for them,” she says. “Connect with people and understand what their needs are. They’ll listen to you all day if you’re talking about how you can help them.”



### ask a lawyer

## PRIVACY MATTERS

**QUESTION:** SOME FRIENDS AND I JUST LAUNCHED A FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITE, AND WE’RE STARTING TO HEAR FROM ADVERTISERS. ONE OF THEM WANTS ACCESS TO OUR MEMBER DATABASE. I LOOKED AT OUR PRIVACY POLICY, AND IT SAYS WE CAN’T GIVE OUT ANY OF OUR MEMBERS’ INFORMATION. IS THERE ANY WAY TO FIX THIS?

**ANSWER:** When it comes to privacy policies, many websites are faced with a Catch-22. Make it too restrictive, and you won’t attract advertisers. Make it too liberal, and you’ll scare away visitors. Here are some basic tips for staying out of trouble:

**1. DON’T DO IT YOURSELF** or “borrow” from other websites. There are no boilerplate privacy policies. Tell your attorney what you want to accomplish and let him or her search the web for the right language.

**2. MAKE A PRECISE LIST** of all the information you collect from visitors.

**3. STATE CLEARLY TO WHOM** visitor information will be disclosed. If you plan to sell customer data to advertisers, say that information will be disclosed to “our partners and affiliates.”

**4. GIVE VISITORS THE OPPORTUNITY** to exclude their information from disclosure, and tell them how. You might say, for example, to send an e-mail to [privacy@whatever.com](mailto:privacy@whatever.com).

**5. IF CHILDREN UNDER 13 ARE VISITING YOUR WEBSITE**, tell them they need a parent or guardian’s consent (and provide the consent form for them). If you find out certain users are lying about their age, boot them off the site immediately.

**6. STATE CLEARLY** that you can change your privacy policy anytime without notifying subscribers via e-mail.

**7. HAVE YOUR POLICY APPROVED** by Truste (truste.org), a “Good Housekeeping Seal” for privacy policies. But be careful: They’ll check your site periodically to make sure you’re still following the rules.

Finally, check with your attorney at least once a year—and whenever you change your data collection forms—to see if your policy needs to be changed or updated.

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