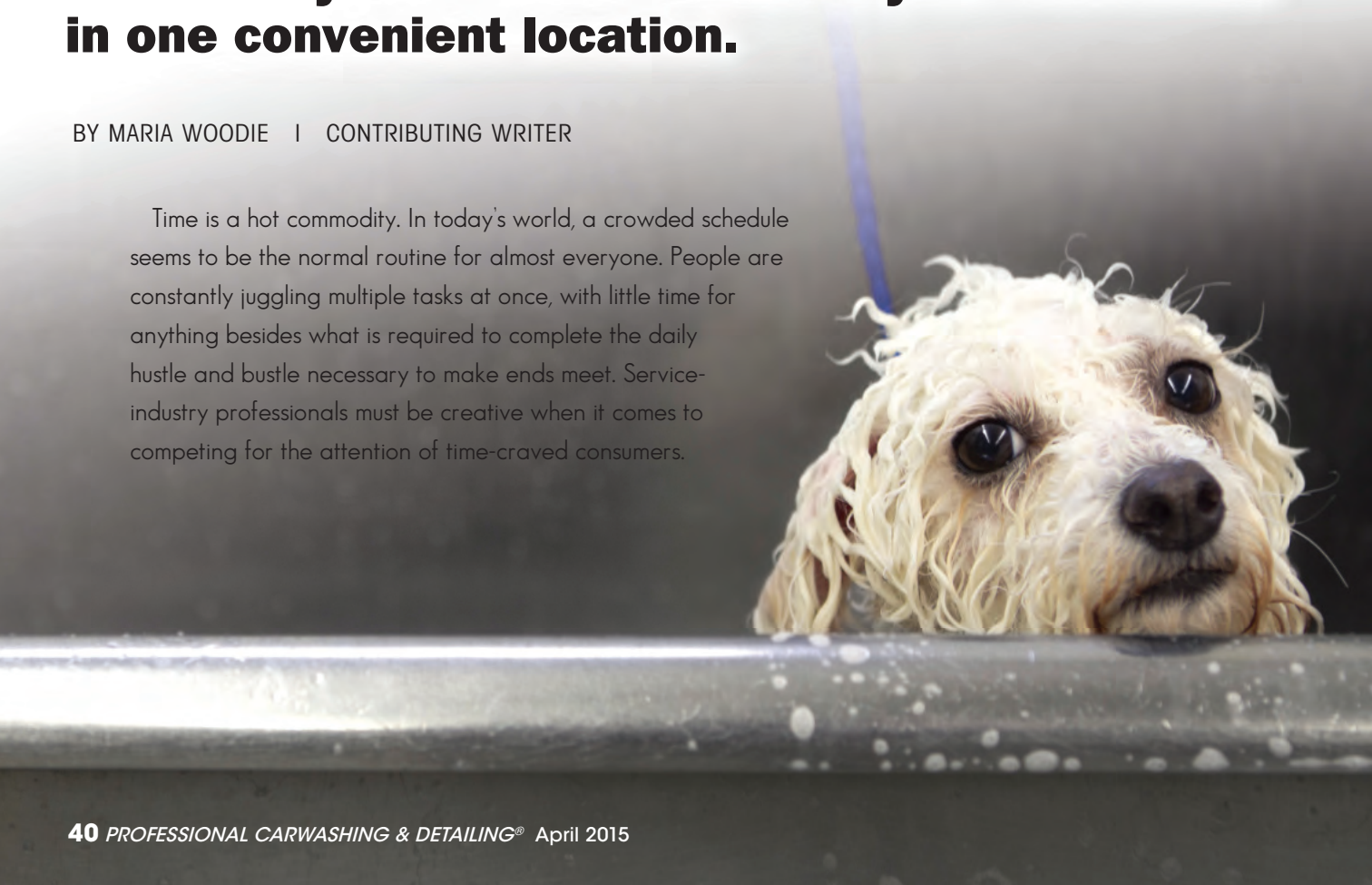
The 'one-stop-shop' mentality

Additional profit centers like pet washes can satisfy the various needs of your customers in one convenient location.

BY MARIA WOODIE | CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Time is a hot commodity. In today's world, a crowded schedule seems to be the normal routine for almost everyone. People are constantly juggling multiple tasks at once, with little time for anything besides what is required to complete the daily hustle and bustle necessary to make ends meet. Service-industry professionals must be creative when it comes to competing for the attention of time-craved consumers.



"Time is valuable," explains Keith Caldwell, vice president of All Paws Pet Wash. "Customers want services such as gasoline, mini-mart purchases, pet washes, etc., to take the least amount of time and get the most for their time spent."

So what can a carwash owner and/or operator do to ensure a thriving business? A great way to increase the chances of success is to offer additional profit centers, preferably ones that will expand the wash's overall customer base. A pet wash is one such profit-boosting service a carwash can offer its clientele.

"Making your carwash a 'one-stop shop' is probably the [single] biggest advantage to adding additional profit centers such as a pet wash," asserts Caldwell. "Again, customers are looking [to maximize] the value in their time. If a carwash location suddenly serves more than one need in one location, it becomes more valuable to a customer."

Attracting a new customer base

Caldwell reports that a pet wash is a prolific way to expand a wash's demographic by drawing in a new clientele to the carwash. Customers will see a location's pet wash as a convenient, often affordable and quick way to wash their pets, and while they tend to their furry friends, they most likely will tend to the cleaning needs of their vehicles as well. This opportune, one-stop shop essentially holds true to the common cliché: killing two birds with one stone – or better yet, meeting two wash needs for your clients in one convenient location. "The one-stop-shop mentality draws new customers in, and the added value keeps them coming," notes Caldwell.

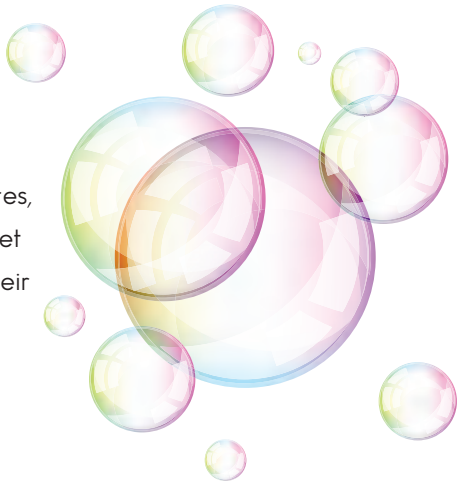
According to Gary Frey, national sales manager for Kleen-Rite Corp., "[A pet wash] is an opportunity to give customers within a geographical region another reason to stop in and visit your location," adding, "It's [a] minimum investment to offer a high return on investment."

However, many carwashes undervalue their pet wash centers, reports Frey. Washes will offer their pet services at such low costs that true ROI potential is often overlooked. Carwashes interested in adding additional profit centers like pet washes should study the local pricing for stand-alone and add-on pet washes offered around the area and create a price that profitably competes with these other facilities.

Establishing a lucrative pet wash

In addition to taking note of local pricing for pet wash services, carwashes must keep in mind a few other significant factors when launching a pet wash, such as location. Frey encourages those interested in establishing a pet wash to find out if their local municipalities provide the region's dog licensing. This will allow a carwash to discover how many dogs are located nearby.

To help upsell a pet wash, Frey also advises carwashes to work in coordination with different pet shelters, local veterinarians, pet stores, etc., to help washes get the word out about their pet washing service and reach a larger



customer base that otherwise might not come to their facilities. "Customers come in and wash their dog and the next thing you know, you have the opportunity to perhaps [gain a new] carwash customer as well," says Frey.

Frey also explains that carwashes can directly market, cross-market and/or add the pet wash as part of a wash package to increase the overall revenue potential, and Caldwell adds that a simple banner marketing the pet wash can "do wonders."

Additionally, with the spike in popularity for additional profit centers like pet washes, carwashes must learn to be a little more creative to distinguish their extra services and pet washes from other similar carwashes. Caldwell recommends adding extras, such as vending, within the pet wash. "Vending items might include things like mess bags and

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treats," states Caldwell. "These types of add-ons seem small, but compounded, they can be big business."

Educating customers

Once the pet wash has been established, proper upkeep is the key to ensuring optimal productivity.

"The main thing, as with any business, is to create an environment that is inviting," notes Frey, adding that operators/owners must train their customer bases to be mindful of the next person in line and properly clean up after they are finished using the pet wash.

Caldwell says that educating customers in general regarding a pet wash is important to optimize productivity. "Education is a key element to the success of any profit center," explains Caldwell. "Ensure that customers have instructions on how to use the pet wash. It is necessary for customers to understand what a self-serve pet wash is. It is very easy for customers to make assumptions on how pet washes work and associate positive/negative feelings towards them if they are misunderstood."

Above all it is important to remember when establishing a pet wash, "Most pets are much more than pets, they are family," informs Caldwell. "Providing a clean, bright and safe facility for pet owners is one of the biggest ways to achieve optimal success." ❑

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