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# Entrepreneur®

# 7 HOT

# BUSINESSES THAT CAN MAKE YOU RICH!

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ing with the Indy Racing League to broadcast all its races online through 2009, including the famous Indy 500. "We allow [customers] to mix and match and build their own broadcast networks," he says. WhiteBlox also enables interactivity with tools for polls, contests, chats, forums, blogging and even sending live messages to the announcers at an event. Located in The Woodlands, Texas, the company projects 2007 sales of \$16 million.

To make your mark in the tech space, be on the lookout for trends. Says Stibel, "It's a matter of keeping your eyes wide open."

#### PAMPERED PETS

If you're a pet lover, consider getting into the fast-growing pet products and services industry. Pets are a part of the family in 63 percent of U.S.

households. In fact, in 2006, Americans spent \$38.5 billion on pet products and services—a figure expected to rise to over \$40 billion in 2007, according to the American Pet Product Manufacturers Association. Traditional pet lovers might consider a pet franchise business like pet grooming, pet products, pet walking or training. In fact, in our 2007 Franchise 500®, the number of pet-related franchise units grew 23 percent from 2005 to 2006.

There are many niches in which to start your profitable pet business, according to APPMA president Bob Vetere. Natural and organic pet food is a particularly hot area, he notes. Much like in the human world, where green products are all the rage, green pet products are quickly gaining in popularity. "Any trend you see in human foods, about six months later, it pops up on the pet food side of the

ledger," says Vetere. "This is what's happening with organics and naturals. It's finally dawned on marketers that the same person who's buying food for the family is buying food for the pet."

Convenience products are heating up as well—from automatic feeding devices and timed watering devices to automatic pet doors—anything that allows owners to have a busy lifestyle while still taking care of their pets is hot, notes Vetere. On the same convenience trend, consider pet services—pooper scoopers, for instance—to do the dirty work that many pet owners would rather pay someone else to do.

And just as moms buy top-notch products for their children, many pet owners are all about

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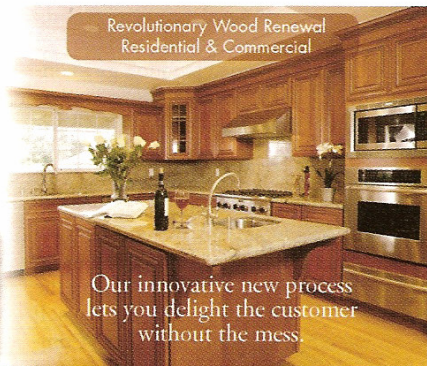


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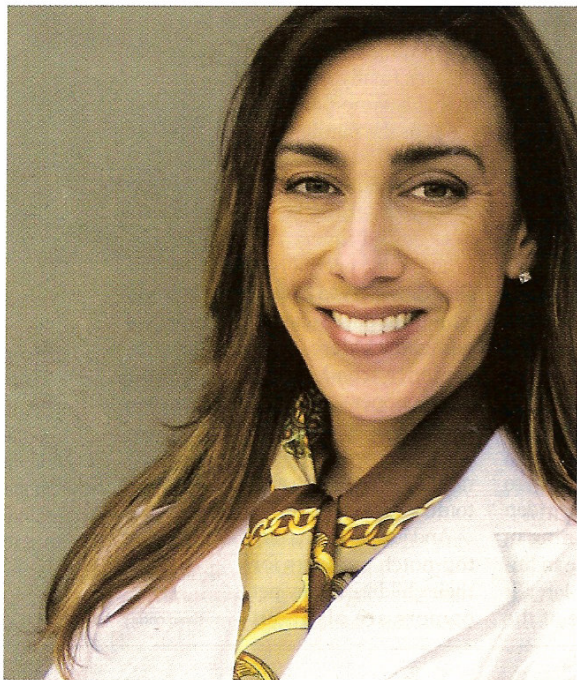


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**Pet pleaser:** Janet McCulley is cashing in on the pet products trend with her canine boutiques.

luxury for their precious pets. If it's high-end or a treat, pet parents will want it. That's what Janet McCulley, 39, and Georgia Goldberg, 44, found when they started Muttropolis, a chain of upscale pet boutiques based in Solana Beach, California. Janet McCulley, a proud pet parent herself to dogs Lulu, Sepia and Zoltan, knew she wasn't alone in wanting to pamper her dogs. She researched the market and opened the doors to her first store in 2002; four more locations and an online store ([muttropolis.com](http://muttropolis.com)) have followed.

McCulley describes the business as "retail meets the dog park." Aside from offering upscale products such as Swarovski crystal dog collars and eco-friendly chew toys, McCulley designed special fixtures in her stores to appeal to the discerning pet lover. Photographic tiles on the ground look like grass, a fountain in the center is full of dog toys, and tree graphics on the walls complete the look.

Winning the "Hottest Retail Concept of 2006" award from the Inter-

national Council of Shopping Centers was a coup, but it's at the monthly Mutt Meet-Up events, where owners bring in their pets for fun and mingling, that McCulley sees the fruits of her success. "We have created a brand that resonates emotionally with the pet parent," she says. With 2007 sales projected at more than \$4.5 million and plans to open 150 more locations within the next five years, Muttropolis is sure to become a household name among the two- and four-legged alike.

#### MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

Companies always need new clients, so if you've got a knack for getting customers to buy, think about

starting a marketing and advertising business. Aspiring marketers can go the franchise route with diverse opportunities ranging from direct mail and coupons to promotional products and outdoor media.

But if you want to be a trendsetter, check out the online ad marketplace. It's a booming market—online ad spending alone hit \$16.9 billion in 2006, a 35 percent leap from 2005, according to a joint report from the Interactive Advertising Bureau and PricewaterhouseCoopers. Trends shaping the industry include the use of audio and video technology in online marketing campaigns as well as integrating online and offline marketing for clients, notes Chip Cummings, a marketing consultant and author of *Stop Selling and Start Listening! Marketing Strategies That Create Top Producers*. "It's not just being on top of the technology, because the technology itself isn't going to sell anybody products or services," Cummings says. "It's the creative use of that technology."

Finding a creative use of technology is exactly what has catapulted Blue Lithium Inc., an online advertising network in San Jose, California. Founded by Gurbaksh Chahal in 2005, the company provides specifically targeted marketing for clients, using data from 145 million consumers worldwide. "That [online] advertising model is focused on display media—banner ads, [etc.]. The model I wanted to recreate was using different ways to add data and using data to create sophistication around individual users," says Chahal. "So when you're serving an ad, it's actually relevant to that user—because you know they're male or female or you know something about their lifestyle through different data sources you can aggregate over time."

Chahal's expertise in providing targeted online ads has grown his startup at least

100 percent per year, pushing 2007 sales projections to nearly \$100 million. Working with clients like Anheuser-Busch, Best Buy and Verizon, Chahal, 25, is looking to grow his company into inter-

national markets such as Germany, Italy and Spain in the near future. Staying ahead of this rapidly changing market is the order of the day. "You've got to make sure you continue to evolve with it and [that] you're evolving faster than the industry is evolving," says Chahal. "Every couple of years there's a bigger company out there. Before it was Yahoo!; now it's Google. There's a trend going on, and whoever is creating the trend ends up being the winner."

For more franchise opportunities you can start now, visit [entrepreneur.com/franchise](http://entrepreneur.com/franchise).

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