



## THE CASE OF THE DOG THAT SCREAMED BLOODY MURDER

A howling schnauzer scares away other grooming clients and traffic continues to lag. Is it time to fire a customer?



STORY  
BY LINDA  
LIEBRAND

JOSH SMILED at the two teenage girls browsing doggie accessories in his grooming store. Their Shih Tzu puppy looked snug in a bag one of the girls carried slung across her shoulder.

He was just going to let them know about his free puppy baths offer, when a blood-curdling scream could be heard from the grooming salon at the back of the store.

"What on earth was that?" the girl with the puppy asked Josh. Her eyes

were filled with concern, and she hugged her puppy tightly. "Is that dog OK in there?"

Josh couldn't help frowning but quickly rearranged his face into a smile. "It's just Rosie. She really hates having a bath and her hair cut. No

matter how often she comes here, she never seems to get used to it. She's fine though," he continued before he got cut off by another sad howl.

The girls looked at each other, whispered something Josh couldn't hear and quickly scampered out of the store.

Josh buried his face in his hands. Everything seemed to go wrong this week. He looked at his bookings calendar and cringed. The first two appointments of the day had been no-shows, and then there was Rosie the schnauzer. Or Rosie the terror as he had come to think of her. No matter how gently his groomer dealt with her, she wouldn't stop screaming bloody murder and trying to nip his groomer Danni's hands. And now she was scaring away customers too it seemed.

Ironically, Rosie's owner seemed to be the only customer who took her appointments seriously and showed up on time. In an effort to bring in new grooming customers Josh had run a half-off campaign in the local newspaper, but he was starting to think that had been a mistake.

The ad attracted the wrong type of customers who didn't even bother cancelling their appointments. And although the rest of the week was fully booked, Josh wondered how many of the dogs would actually show up. To make matters worse, he still had to pay his groomer for the no-shows, and his bottom line was suffering as a result.

And then there was Rosie. Josh pondered the situation as Danni brought the relieved looking schnauzer out from the salon. As if on cue, Rosie's owner Pam stepped through the doors and beamed proudly at her dog.

"She always looks so good when she's been here," she said and smiled up at Josh and Danni. "The other groomers just keep telling me she's impossible, but every time I take her here she looks cute as a button! I tell all my friends about your salon."

Josh smiled back, handed Rosie's leash to Pam and watched the dog's tail wag as they left the store. He couldn't bring himself to fire Pam as a client, but then again he couldn't really afford to have Rosie scaring away more customers when so few actually bothered showing up. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't think of a solution.

## THE BIG QUESTIONS

- How could Josh reduce the number of no-shows to his grooming store?
- How could he attract higher quality customers?
- How should he manage the situation with Rosie the schnauzer?

### REAL RESPONSES

#### TIM HALL

**NATURALLY 4 PAWS, SILVERDALE, WA**

If you want a higher quality customer, never discount your grooming service. Otherwise, you will always attract the bargain hunters who care more about price than quality. If you want to run a promotion, tie it to your base service, like 50 percent off teeth brushing, or a free conditioner and cologne. Get your groomers certified!

#### PAULA ROBINSON

**PET'S SUPPLIES, GLASGOW, KY**

Ask if Rosie could be used as a video advertisement to show how the salon/groomer can handle special clients like Rosie. Rosie's owner could be shown at the end picking her up and telling how awesome she thinks the service is. This could be played in-store to show how the groomer shows compassion and patience with a dog that just does not like the grooming process.

#### LISA HAYES

**ESPECIALLY FOR PETS, MEDWAY, MA**

Place reminder calls to already-booked appointments one or two nights in advance. Make notations on groom cards when folks are no-shows. After one or two, politely explain the groomer loses money when they don't show. Any future no-shows could result in pre-payment for groom services. Place ads in thoroughly researched medias, including social. Offer first-time groom coupon; referral discounts to existing clients.

#### MELODY FULLER

**HAIR OF THE DOG, HAZLETON, PA**

Keep Rosie. With the two girls, explain the importance of early grooming, and let them see Rosie's temper tantrum, invest in a door alarm that lets the groomer know when a customer enters the store and stop grooming Rosie. Be honest with Rosie's mom as to why the groom will take longer.

#### JOAN SCHURER

**JOAN'S ARK, ASTORIA, NY**

Rosie needs to come before or after hours at a higher rate so Rosie doesn't scare others away.

#### RAMIE GULYAS

**FOLLOW YOUR NOSE, EVANSTON IL**

Ask the owner of Rosie to review the business. Let people know she is a difficult dog but worth the effort: Your groomer takes the necessary time and care to make sure she looks good. Maybe music or suggest Rescue Remedy for stressed dogs that howl, schedule them to be first or last for the day, so you can control the interaction around new clients. When Rosie howls, just stay calm yourself and let clients know that some dogs do not enjoy the process but tell them how much extra care you will give their dogs.



**LINDA LIEBRAND** is a former marketing manager for a successful doggie spa and boutique who is now helping others promote their local pet businesses. She writes about pet biz marketing at [mybrandbuddy.com](http://mybrandbuddy.com) and can be reached at [linda@mybrandbuddy.com](mailto:linda@mybrandbuddy.com)

**NOTE** Real Deal is a fictional scenario designed to read like real-life business events. The businesses and people mentioned in this story should not be confused with actual pet businesses and people.

#### STACEY KIMBERLEY ROGERS

**CLUB CANINE DOG WASH, PORTSMOUTH, NH**

Call, text or email grooming appointments to remind them of their appointment. We pre-book appointments six to 12 months in advance, when possible, which greatly reduces no-shows. Have Rosie come in when the salon is quiet. We groom by appointment only so would have her come in at 8 a.m. before the other clients, or at the end of the day.

#### LAURA YURCHAK

**LOVING PAWS, KENOSHA, WI**

We started offering online booking, which requires entering payment info to make a reservation. They do not get charged unless they do not show up. You need to post a cancellation policy so it is clear and list that with any coupons you offer.

#### WENDY WARREN

**THE SHAGGY DOG LODGE AND DAY SPA, WATERTOWN, NY**

I have my grooming area in full view of the customers. I explain when they come in that the dog I am working on has behaviors. I also retrain those dogs and teach them how to behave. I may have to take an extra 30 minutes for the first few groomings, but it pays off in the end.

