

Lisa's Movin' and Groomin'

Providing cheerful and attentive personal service is a watchword for many businesses, and it appears it is no different for the pet grooming business. Meet Lisa Alvernia, owner of Lisa's Movin' and Groomin' a mobile pet grooming business in suburban Chicago.

Ms. Alvernia visits your home or business by appointment and gives Fido or FiFi her bath, and comb out, and your pup emerges with clipped toenails and clean ears, ready for her close-up. Having the groomer come to you has proven to be a unique marketing tool for Ms. Alvernia's business, and it is thriving. In just six short months since starting the business, pets are booked six weeks in advance for their twice monthly grooming appointment with Lisa's Movin' and Groomin'.

The idea for Ms. Alvernia's business was developed about a year and a half ago. Just out of college, but thinking about changing career direction, Ms. Alvernia got a job working part time at a local pet superstore as an obedience trainer. There she realized that she liked interacting with her clients on a one on one basis—both the human and canine variety.

In the mean time, Ms. Alvernia began attending classes to become certified as a dog groomer at the Elgin Community College. At a trade show, she discovered a company that fitted vans with all the equipment needed for a mobile pet grooming salon. She thought this was a good business idea, and seriously began to discuss opening her own mobile pet grooming business.

In the Summer of 2002, she visited with Victor Lattan, a counselor at the Elgin Community College Small Business Development Center to discuss her research. He encouraged her to develop a business plan. To finance her start up, Mr. Lattan suggested that Ms. Alvernia approach the local Harris Bank to see if her business plan would be acceptable for a business start up loan. The bank was impressed with her business plan and agreed to loan her money for her start up. Ultimately her father contributed to her start up through a home equity loan at lower interest rate than the bank.

Market research for the business indicated that the fees should be based on the breed of the dog. Most dogs are groomed every two to three weeks. Right now Ms. Alvernia travels throughout McHenry, Kane and some of Lake County to meet her clients. Ms. Alvernia is now thinking about expanding, by buying another van to take on another grooming route.

Ms. Alvernia credits Mr. Lattan with giving her confidence that the business could succeed. She felt the one on one counseling that she got from him was excellent. Mr. Lattan "was one of the most supportive people, and helped me get my business off the ground." Ms. Alvernia noted "Vic said I had a great idea and should just run with it."

The Elgin Community College Small Business Development Center is a member of the Illinois Small Business Development Center Network, working in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Small Business Development Center and the US Small Business Administration.