



*From Her Lips
to Dogs' Ears*



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Economic downturn not too "ruff" on local dog business.

Dairydell Canine achieves big gains in tough times

(Petaluma, CA, August 24, 2010)—Ask Camilla Gray-Nelson how business is these days and you might get a surprising answer. Camilla is the owner of Dairydell Canine, Northern California's fastest growing dog training and boarding center. In what some might call a stroke of bad luck, Camilla decided to embark on a multi-million dollar expansion to her business in 2007, just prior to the first signs of the general economic downturn.

"My business plan and growing client base called for expansion and major capital investment. The family's dairy business was already being phased out, and I thought the timing was perfect" she says with a laugh. "Little did I know!"

When the recession hit with full force in 2008, Camilla's dream facility had already been built. Located on a 120-acre former dairy ranch in Petaluma, Dairydell Canine has a 11,000 square foot boarding barn, 25,000 square foot covered sports arena and another 20,000 square foot training and exercise arena. It's a state-of-the-art center and is priced accordingly. Overnight stays in private suites run \$55 per dog and four-week training packages can cost as much as \$3,500. The services are clearly aimed at pampered pooches in homes with discretionary incomes. It's just the kind of professional service to get hammered in tough economic times.

In response to the challenge of expanding at a moment of historic economic contraction, this farmer's daughter claims she had several things in her favor. "First I'm Irish, and for the Irish bad times are just another day. I wasn't raised to whine and frankly didn't have time to wallow." But Gray-Nelson had more than a stubborn attitude to help her. She was positive. "I knew my business model was solid. I knew that if I kept what was working, and was flexible enough to respond to the times with some strategic changes, I could make it."

Gray-Nelson held true to the business' fundamentals but also diversified to incorporate more than the standard dog training and boarding services other competitors were offering. She expanded her business hours to accommodate more commuting dog owners who wanted doggie daycare. She added a beautifully maintained private dog park to draw another customer base; the first of its kind in California. She also established herself as "the" authority for helping women manage the family dog. She created the first dog blog for women: [DogTalkDiva](http://DogTalkDiva.com), and now lectures regularly on the subject of "natural



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leadership and power." Statistics show her point of differentiation is well founded. Over 73 percent of all US dog-owning households leave primary dog care responsibilities to the woman of the house.

In addition, Gray-Nelson says she's been brought kicking and screaming into the world of social-media. "Like a lot of people, I'm still not sure I understand it, but even old dogs have to learn new tricks. After dragging my feet and consulting with some very savvy specialists, I knew I had to up my relevancy." Bill Grey of Grey Visual Design has been a key resource and mentor in the process. "There was some foot-dragging at first, but Camilla's a smart businesswoman; she knew she had to do this." In addition to her blog, Gray-Nelson has a robust website www.dairydell.com, a presence on Twitter and the requisite Facebook fan page.

Last but not least, Gray-Nelson is quick to point out that she was a forerunner in what has now become a trend in businesses vying for their piece of the consumer pie — direct-to-consumer best practices. "That's just a fancy way of saying we must not only meet, but exceed our client's expectations, and that's how I've built my business since the beginning." She now regularly trains staff on the finer points of her brand of customer service. "We greet every customer and dog by name, and consider them our personal friends, not just clients. Like our mission statements says, we treat every client as a friend, and every dog as our own." She's quick to say this is the key driver of her customer's loyalty.

The results are impressive. In 2009, at the deepest point of U.S. economic downturn and with consumer confidence at an all time low, Dairydell Canine sales revenues grew by over 30 percent. (They've grown over 300% since 2007). Over 4,000 dogs have stayed or trained at the new Dairydell facility and the organization continues to add staff positions. Gray-Nelson is currently penning a book on her experiences and is in increasing demand for media appearances and on the lecture circuit. "Growing my business in the face of tough marketplace challenges is a great source of pride – and thankfulness", she adds. "Behind my trademark cheery exterior and positive demeanor, I can't say I haven't been a little scared, but I wouldn't change a thing. And you can take that to the bank!"

For more information on Camilla Gray-Nelson or Dairydell Canine please visit: www.dairydell.com or call (707) 929-3558.

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