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WEDNESDAY, JULY 05, 2006

Poop Scooping Millionaires



Matthew Osborn

<http://www.pooper-scooper.com>

Matt Boswell

<http://www.petbutler.com>

The most noted pioneer in the poop-scooping business is Matthew Osborn, who runs Pooper-Scooper.com. He never knew that this business would one day make him a millionaire. Osborn got started back in 1987 when he opened Pet Butler in Columbus, Ohio. "I had been interested in small-business ideas since I was a kid," he says. "My friends thought it was an interesting but far-out idea, and many of them just couldn't grasp the concept. They all said, 'People aren't going to pay you

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for that."

At the time, Osborn was working two full-time jobs and making less than \$6 per hour at each. He had a wife, a daughter and a son on the way, and was desperate to make some extra money. Osborn began doing research at the local library, studying the area's demographics and census data. He eventually contacted the county auditor and learned that there were about 100,000 dogs within 15 miles of his home. "I just happened to be in the right place at the right time and got started with very little money," he says.

The business slowly took off, and despite the dirty work, Osborn says he enjoyed satisfying the customers and working outdoors in some of the nicest backyards in Ohio. However, it wasn't all fun and games. "I didn't enjoy driving around in my little Honda Civic with hundreds of pounds of dog poop in the back," he says. "It sort of gave me nightmares until I was able to buy pickup trucks for the business."

Eventually Osborn employed seven people and owned a fleet of six trucks serving about 700 regular customers. "I was making more money than ever before and spending most of my time with my family doing the things I enjoyed," he says. After a nearly 10-year run, Osborn sold his business in 1998 and started Pooper-Scooper.com, which contains an international directory of pet waste removal businesses. His newest business venture is that of writer. He recently released a book, "The Professional Pooper-Scooper: How to Start Your Own Low-Cost, High-Profit Dog Waste Removal Service."

While Osborn may have put poop scooping on the map, Matt "Red" Boswell is taking it into the future. Boswell owns the Texas-based Pet Butler. He recently moved the business out of his house and into a 1,200-square-foot office just north of Dallas. Today, Pet Butler is the largest pet waste removal service in the country, and serves about 3,000 clients.

"Most of our customers are middle and upper-middle income," says Boswell. "But can you think of anyone who wants to clean up dog poop or cat poop?"

Boswell explains that at an average of just \$10 per visit, nearly anyone can afford Pet Butler's services. "Rarely is Pet Butler considered a luxury service by those who

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use us," he says. "Most consider Pet Butler a mandatory and highly valued staple for their yard maintenance needs."

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Boswell, 35, hasn't always been the poop-scoop king he is today. Back in 1997 he was near bankruptcy after his Internet start-up venture crashed and burned. After months of false starts and dead ends, his girlfriend suggested starting a poop-scooping business. "I was quite offended she thought I would even do it," Boswell says. But figuring he had nothing to lose, he launched Pet Butler in 1998. "It failed miserably," he says. "But I was done quitting. I didn't care if everybody on the planet thought I was an idiot. I dropped all pride. I was determined to make it happen."

Two years later Pet Butler was still struggling, but through relentless marketing, a little press, and word-of-mouth referrals, he finally started making some headway.

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Boswell, who refers to himself as Pet Butler's "chief excrement officer," is quick to point out that he's not just some executive in a suit, but that he's paid his dues and gotten his hands dirty -- literally. "I have personally scooped over a million piles of poop," he says proudly. "I have had more than a few make me literally gag. Even the dogs wouldn't go near them."

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The company has seven employees working in the field scooping poop, and six in the office who help run the day-to-day business operations. Boswell admits it's not what'd you call a glamorous job, and there are some occupational hazards.

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"This job has caused some guys to lose more than their share of girlfriends," Boswell says.

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And Boswell says that most of his "Fecal Matter Removal Technicians" have to occasionally deal with temperamental "clients." "Most technicians will normally get bitten sometime in their first six months because they get lazy and too trusting," he says. "Fortunately that is all it takes for the tech to never let it happen again."

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Boswell is in the midst of launching Pet Butler Franchise Services Corp., and

foresees Pet Butler franchises popping up all over the country. And despite his unorthodox and some would say unsavory career choice, Boswell says he has long gotten over any embarrassment he had over his job, and actually relishes the attention. "I love when people ask what I do for a living," he says. "People just can't get enough of the idea that we actually scoop poop for a living."

Of course, when your company is projected to gross over a million dollars and you have nearly 20 franchises sprouting up all over the country, including 10 in the Dallas/Forth Worth area, it helps ease the embarrassment. In fact it was Boswell's success story that landed him a gig as guest speaker at last year's Pooper Scooper Round-Up in Houston. Boswell was also awarded the Golden Shovel for winning the Turd Herding contest. However, there was some controversy over his technique. "He decided to forgo tools, and just grabbed the turds and stuffed them inside his slacks," says aPaws president Ewing, who came in second. "This is not a technique that is used in the field, so I protested his win, but the board voted against me."

Boswell says he's put the controversy behind him and is focusing on the future goals of Pet Butler. In fact they're posted on a big bulletin board in the new office above the printer: "By June 2010 Pet Butler will support at least 100 franchises across North America. We will serve more than 50,000 clients each week, and offer service to over 50 million people in North America and collect in excess of \$500,000 each week and donate \$100,000 to pet-friendly organizations each year."

"We've got some huge goals," Boswell says. "It's an industry that's untapped. We plan on becoming the Microsoft of dog poop."

[The Scoop on Poop](#)

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