

WEB EXCLUSIVE: 25 to Watch in 2007



Who will leave their marks, for better or worse, on the pet industry this year?

Who knows? But we're making some educated guesses about who might warrant attention during the year.

These 25 individuals, listed alphabetically, promise to challenge the status quo.

Randy Boyd: His big task is integrating recently acquired Invisible Technologies, particularly Innotek, into the Radio Systems family. It will also be interesting to see how the market rewards the company for its prompt, thorough and transparent recall of heated pet blankets and bed warmers.

Doug Cahill: Tapped to head the Mars North America pet business from Nashville after Mars acquired private-label pet food maker Doane (he had been president), Cahill will be driving Mars' plans for the unit, which includes "accelerating our innovation pipeline." Mars is now launching the Goodlife Recipe brand of dog and cat meals, snacks and treats, describing it as "the largest new brand launch in recent pet food category history."

Wes Davidson: Hired as Central Garden & Pet Co.'s vice president of corporate development and reporting to president and chief executive officer Glenn Novotny, Davidson will be responsible for Central's merger and acquisition activity. Enough said.

Mario Difante: As executive director and co-creator (with fashion director Alexa Cach) of Pet Fashion Week, Difante created an appropriate buzz for the burgeoning segment. Difante's future success will hinge on whether pet fashion is truly a separate business from the pet products market, driven by different demands and requiring its own infrastructure, from retailers and distributors to designers, manufacturers and event organizers.

Jack Drasner: The former Chomp Inc. sales executive relaunched PRISM (Pet Results in Sales and Marketing), his marketing and rep agency, and immediately signed on innovators like Dogmatic Products and Halo Purely for Pets. He'll also be involved in the attempted re-emergence of the Sock Puppet and has some other projects in the works.

Fred Getsinger: The man behind Ancient Mariner Inc. stumbled across an underdeveloped market two years ago when bringing technology he used in his aquarium maintenance business to the retail market—the professional maintenance market. Last year, he developed a commercial line of aquarium cleaning machines for service providers and retail use. He plans to expand his offerings to maintenance providers, for example, by distributing a line of wall-mounted aquariums so they can expand their installation businesses.

Dale Greenbury: The vice president of operations for FullPetential, a start-up maker of functional pet treats, brings an advantageous background to his role. As a former technical sales manager at ingredient broker AFB International, Greenbury has a better-than-average command of the regulatory process, global market and key ingredients. Based on initial responses to the product line, he has some marketing savvy as well.

Ken Johnson: Recently tagged as D&D Commodities national accounts manager for farm and home stores, Johnson symbolizes the growing clout of the farm and feed channel. Johnson's main role: helping other D&D salespeople gain traction in the segment. He'll be charting that course amid skyrocketing grain (hence seed) prices.

Scott Johnson: A quadriplegic attorney living in Carmichael, Calif., Johnson sued 114 businesses, including the pet store he shopped at for years, last year for violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act, according to the Sacramento Bee. He appears to target small businesses for infractions, such as a lack of designated parking, then settles out of court.

David Lenhardt: A rising executive at Petsmart Inc., Lenhardt becomes senior vice president of store operations and services on Feb. 1. Previously he oversaw the chain's rapidly growing services. Petsmart's plans to accelerate the development of its PetsHotel concept and otherwise continue to stake services as a key growth driver show that Lenhardt is one to watch.

Jason Lin (Lin Neng): The selection of a Western name is probably the least important thing Lin has done to grow Porpoise Aquarium Co. Ltd. Most important was moving the 10-year-old company into its new factory complex in Jiangmen City, China. This will provide the company an opportunity to grow its many initiatives, such as becoming the world's largest tissue-cultured aquarium plant producer. He's also making progress in establishing a U.S. base for North American operations.

Paul Mann: The founder and president of Fetch Pet Care is steadily building a franchise network of service providers trusted by pet owners to enter their homes and care for their pets. While some service providers have grown faster, their potential offerings seem more limited to areas of expertise, such as training or waste removal. But Mann ultimately deals in trust, which could be leveraged to other service and product offerings.

Jay Margedant: The president of Red Bandanna Systems Inc. recently opened his 12th Red Bandanna Natural Pet Food store in the Atlanta area. Not only is the location evidence of a vibrant niche, the building itself is an architectural homage to a dog house.

Steve May: The long-time veterinary industry marketer became president of Allerca, which expects to deliver its first genetically manipulated hypoallergenic cats in 2007. The company is also expected to unveil a second "lifestyle" pet during the year and reports it has several more in the pipeline. He'll also oversee the company's move from San Diego to Los Angeles and New York.

Cesar Millan: Although we're probably a year late on the charismatic but controversial dog trainer, he's likely to be a central character in 2007. While his training methods have drawn criticism from animal welfare organizations and other trainers and his business dealings have drawn lawsuits, supporters, including National Geographic and sponsor Petco Animal Supplies, still back him.

Amy Osete: She became vice president of marketing for Bamboo after several years in marketing for parent company Munchkin Inc., a provider of baby products. Osete expects to cross-market the brands more fully, seeing the infant and pet market as not only similar, but complementary.

Wayne Pacelle: With its recent acquisition of the Doris Day Animal League, the Humane Society of the United States keeps getting larger, and its public voice, as personified by its head, will get louder. Despite some political setbacks in November elections (HSUS-backed candidates such as Rick Santorum and George Allen got the boot), the HSUS is not likely to cower under a table licking its wounds. Indeed, the group recently donated \$800,000 to the Louisiana State University's veterinary school to support a spay and neuter program—an investment that will likely pay dividends in public perception of the group in light of a Louisiana state investigation into funds raised by HSUS for pet rescue and reunion after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The group has also launched a billboard campaign against pet store puppy sales.

Nancy Pelosi: How the new Speaker of the House will wield her enormous power will have a tremendous impact on the United States and the rest of the world in the next couple of years. It will mark the first time the Bush administration has had to deal with a Democratic House, whose members may be chomping at the bit to exact political payout for past deeds (hearings, possible impeachment proceedings) and promoting certain populist agendas, such as raising the minimum wage or addressing public healthcare issues. On the other hand, the Democrats may try to tread very carefully in an effort to recapture the White House in 2008.

Irwin Rashkover: A newcomer to the pet industry, Rashkover has opened up the first Wal-Mart-based grooming salon, with an agreement to expand the concept nationally. Not only could his Pet Care Specialists capture a significant portion of the grooming market, but the grooming labor market as well, as the corporate

approach would allow Pet Care to offer attractive benefits, such as retirement plans. More telling, Rashkover's pet plans aren't limited to grooming or Wal-Mart.

Jamie Reaser, Ph.D.: The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council had long been searching for the right candidate to deal with the science behind industry political issues such as invasive species. Reaser has stepped in quickly, and just in time. She will take over Marshall Meyers' seat on the Invasive Species Advisory Committee, ensuring a continuous pet industry representation on the advisory board. She also co-authored with Meyers "Doing It Right: A Pet Store Employee's Guide to Professional Success (and Fun)."

Edward Rendell: Will Pennsylvania's governor continue his aggressive attacks on his state's once-lax enforcement of its dog laws, designed to regulate the state's dog-breeding industry? His efforts thus far include designating prosecutors to focus on enforcement and replacing the entire dog law advisory board.

Mike Spalla: The creative mind behind the Jingle Dogs and Jingle Cats musical endeavors (barking and meowing set to music) is reportedly working on a Jingle Cats movie. His company, Jingle Cats Music, has not announced a release date for the film.

Britney Spears: One of a trio (or more) of essentially interchangeable celebutantes who seemingly constantly tote their pets as fashion items, Spears recently outpolled Paris Hilton (last year's winner) as World's Worst Celebrity Dog Owner for 2006. And with Kevin Federline out of her life (the couple apparently gave their dogs away mid-year), she may bring dogs back into her life—and the nation's gossip mill.

Joell Sullivan: As more non-endemic channels open up for pet supplies, there will be greater opportunity for jobbers and other specialty providers to flourish. Sullivan hopes to capture the travel amenity market for pet products through her newly founded Joell Sullivan Pet Product Marketing. If successful, she'll not only be funneling sales but public opinion, as such amenities can serve as a brand's introduction to a typically affluent demographic.

Pat Wright: Founder of Ferrets Anonymous and legalizeferrets.com and one-time gubernatorial candidate in California (albeit during the 2003 recall election, ultimately won by Arnold Schwarzenegger, when 135 candidates were placed on the ballot, not including approved write-in candidates), Wright has been one of the more vocal proponents of legalizing ferrets as pets in California. Frustrated by the latest failure to pass even modest amnesty legislation, Wright is becoming more active, trying to drum up support for a possible ballot initiative that more conservative ferret proponents believe could be deadly to the cause, reasoning that if an initiative failed, no politician will sponsor legislation in the future due to the lack of majority support.