

# Pet Lodge

Matt Sames – Managing Partner  
Owner – Tom Brown

**Success Magazine:** does success mean to you both?

*Tom Brown: Business success means creating wealth among friends on projects that are fun, while producing passive income forever.*

*Matt Sames: Building a business with my friends that we can be proud of, and creating a work atmosphere that employees and customers enjoy. In the end, I would like work to be optional and leisure to be affordable.*

**SM:** Where did you go to school?

TB: University of Colorado for undergrad and Cornell University for Veterinary school.

**SM:** How did you come up with the idea to start Pet Lodge?

TB: I watched the re-invention of boarding in the early stages of my career. People stopped boarding their pets at vet hospitals and preferred a larger, hotel option with outdoor access and doggie daycare.

**SM:** Matt, how did you go from General Sales Manager at WRGB to opening a number of Pet Lodge locations?

MS: I loved my job at Channel 6 and really enjoyed my staff and the daily rigors of sales management, but I wanted to work for myself. I was also looking into franchise opportunities in 2003. After seeing a lot of the popular chain sales pitches, my friend Dr. Tom Brown approached me about his concept of boarding facilities. I guess that's what got the ball rolling.

**SM:** Is there a third partner?

TB: William Davis brings his business development and entrepreneurial skills on a global level, having created and run multi-million dollar catering and construction businesses.

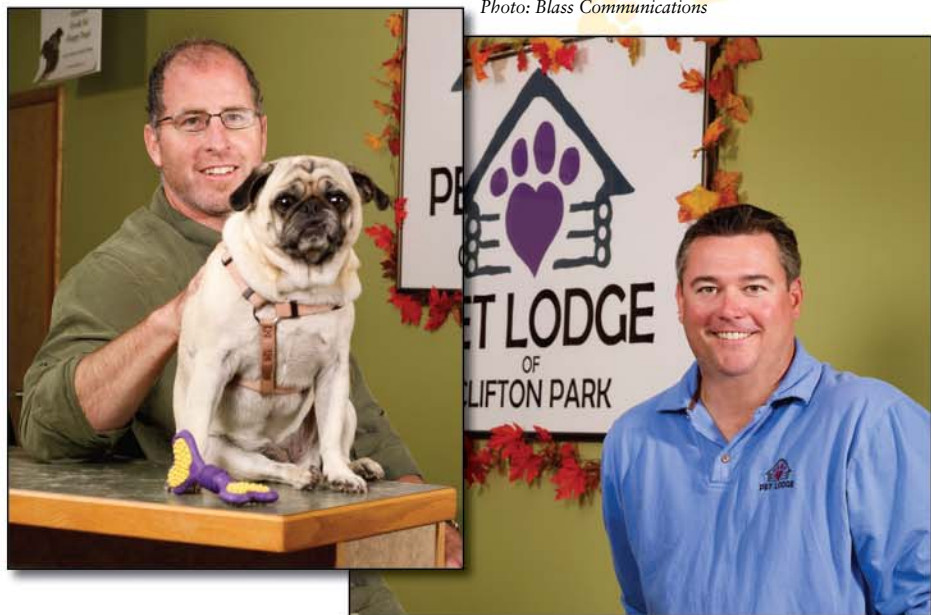


Photo: Blass Communications

MS: Bill is a very successful entrepreneur who lives in Seattle for half of the year, and Russia the other half. We all grew up together in Plattsburgh, and our professional skills and experiences complement each other well.

**SM:** Why was this business venture so appealing to you?

MS: I loved Tom's concept, but thought we could present it a little differently than he had envisioned. It didn't take a lot of research to discover that the pet industry is growing and has a healthy future. Our business model of boarding and doggie daycare wasn't revolutionary, but hadn't

really taken hold in the northeast yet. We saw an opportunity, emptied our life savings, and rolled the dice.

**SM:** What were your main objectives in starting Pet Lodge?

TB: To provide clean and healthy boarding and daycare to pet owners while creating a passive business model. I needed to create a business that would not require me to

be on call, or employ a constant hands-on approach like the veterinary business.

MS: Creating a service that separated us from other traditional boarding facilities. Our look, our procedures, and our presentation to the public all needed to be different and updated.

**SM:** How did you get the funding for this business venture? Did you have a business or marketing plan?

MS: We had all of the above. However, we didn't foresee the two year government approval process, or the \$250,000 in unbudgeted professional services fees. We used the SBA 504 program through a local bank, had to empty our life savings, and pursue private financing from family members to come up with the 20% down payment and large closing costs for the project in Clifton Park.

**SM:** You currently have four Pet Lodge locations. How did you decide upon the placement of each of these facilities?

MS: We just opened our fifth location in Glenville. I look at where people live and where they drive, and try to open up near those two zones. It's limited due to stringent zoning for our business type.

**SM:** What are some of the amenities that you offer?

MS: Our menu of services differs a little bit from location to location, but we offer doggie daycare, overnight boarding, nature walks, one on one playtime, baths, nail clipping, training, and private exercise. Our new location in Glenville is under the same roof as Checkerhills Farm Pet Supplies, so we have all of

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Photos: SchoolhouseGraphics.com

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