Veterinarians make great entrepreneurs. In practice, veterinarians may be faced with complex problems and limited diagnostics, so they must make clinical decisions for their patients with just a few facts. They often have to make life or death decisions with little time to consult and collaborate. Veterinarians often develop intuition, powerful observational skills, and
the ability to pivot in a moment’s notice, all of which are the same skills an entrepreneur needs to be successful.

In this series, we have looked at starting, building, branding, and growing a successful business. To wrap up the series, we will look at several veterinarians who found a problem in the veterinary industry they wanted to solve and went on to found their own businesses.

**Steps to Successful Entrepreneurship**

1. Be sure your idea solves a real problem.
2. Create a prototype and test your idea before you quit your day job.
3. Stay in your lane and gain product market fit as quickly as possible.
4. Raise funds strategically from friends, family, or investors to grow your company.
5. Assemble a team that shares your vision and will help build a culture of innovation.
6. Create and promote your brand to secure your place in the market.
Caleb Frankel, DVM

Instinct

Dr. Frankel, a practitioner in a busy specialty practice, was frustrated with the practice’s treatment sheets. He envisioned a more efficient method that would automatically connect work orders from veterinarians to invoices for clients. He formed a technology start-up called Instinct, a company that builds software for veterinary emergency and specialty teams that improves team communication, patient care, and fee capture. Although the product launched only last year, Instinct has entered the market at a rapid pace and already serves more than 30 practices.¹
Jennifer Garcia, DVM, DACVIM

Vet Companion

As a veterinarian board-certified in internal medicine, Dr. Garcia became passionate about spreading information about the latest treatments and diagnostics to private practitioners and veterinary students. She often wrote journal articles but envisioned a better way to connect with colleagues—a mobile-friendly platform that
would round up all the latest and most useful clinical information in one place. She partnered with Matt Mauer, DO, NPH, FACOEM, and in 2014 they built the platform, Vet Companion, that now has users worldwide who span every corner of the veterinary industry from students, to recent graduates, to interns, to practice owners.²

Ira Gordon, DVM, DACVR (Radiation Oncology)

VetPrep

Dr. Gordon and his classmates were studying for their veterinary board examinations using flip books and handmade flash cards but knew there had to be a better way. After seeing a medical student and friend use a computer program when she was studying, Dr. Gordon and his partners began building a database of questions and answers that all veterinary students could use. The questions in the database became VetPrep, a website and mobile
app that currently has been used by more than 50,000 students who have answered more than 180 million study questions to prepare for their North American Veterinary Licensing Examination.³

Justine Lee, DVM, DACVECC, DABT, &
Garret Pachtinger, VMD, DACVECC

VETgirl
Dr. Lee was frustrated because she could not find the time to read veterinary journals and study for her board examinations, as well as carve out personal time for activities like running with her dog. She wanted someone to read the journals to her and came up with the idea of turning CE into a subscription-based online platform that busy veterinarians could listen to during their daily commute or workout at the gym. In 2012, she partnered with Dr. Pachtinger to start VETgirl, which has delivered hundreds of education modules to more than 25,000 subscribers.4

Julien Renard, DVM

Vetstory Booking
After graduation from veterinary school in Belgium, Dr. Renard became a race-track veterinarian in France, where he began experimenting with ways to improve the veterinary-client experience. He found that the practice management software he was using was not efficient enough, especially for scheduling. In 2015, Dr. Renard launched Vetstoria Booking, a software system that allows clients to directly schedule appointments in real time into the practice management software. His software is now available in the US and Europe, and more than 1000 practices use his technology every day.⁵

**Conclusion**

I will leave you with the question, “Is there anything you feel inspired to change?”

New ideas are important for our profession. When entrepreneurs like those above come together to solve problems in the veterinary industry, everybody wins. (See **Personal Experience**) Your idea may be just a dream today, but it could be the next big success story tomorrow. If you do not try, you will never know.

**Personal Experience**

![The Vet2Pet team](#)

*Our purpose is to help veterinary teams build stronger relationships with their clients, implement efficient systems, improve patient care, grow revenue with innovation and to create space that will foster happiness and success in the profession.*

*Here is the author’s personal story:*

I remember one day walking out of the examination room and throwing my hands in the air because yet another client had not given her pet monthly heartworm prevention as directed over
the summer. All my suggestions to help clients remember their pets’ medications were falling on deaf ears. I knew there had to be a better way to remind my clients to medicate their pets.

I came up with the idea of sending a push notification to clients’ smartphones on the first of the month, which I was sure would solve the problem. However, no such thing existed for small-practice veterinarians, so I founded a company in California that turned my idea into a reality. My clients loved it.

And so began Vet2Pet. Today the Vet2Pet team, composed primarily of former practice managers, veterinary nurses, and customer service representatives, is focused on helping veterinary teams to connect better with their clients, implement efficient systems, improve patient care, use innovation to grow revenue, and create space to foster happiness and professional success. From its beginnings of building one app per month in my bedroom after work, Vet2Pet now services more than 600 veterinary practices in 9 countries.

REFERENCES

1. Author’s personal conversation with Dr. Frankel, September 2018.
2. Author’s personal conversation with Dr. Garcia, September 2018.
3. Author’s personal conversation with Dr. Gordon, September 2018.
4. Author’s personal conversation with Dr. Lee, September 2018.
5. Author’s personal conversation with Dr. Renard, September 2018.

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Stacee Santi, DVM, is CEO of Vet2Pet App Builders, a business she founded after she developed a strategy to connect with clients and improve patient care through a mobile app. She earned her DVM from Colorado State University in 1996. Stacee has served as a medical advisory consultant for a major veterinary corporate group, a medical director for an AAHA multiveterinarian general and ER practice for 9 years, and a board member for the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association. She is a key opinion leader in veterinary reward programs and mobile applications.
FUN FACT: Stacee was born and raised in a small town after her grandfather emigrated from Italy and married a girl from Clovis, New Mexico.

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