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## News & Info from ...



### Newsletter: Vol. 11, Issue 6 - December 2011

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**"Any day on this side of the flower bed is a good day."**

-'Maxine'

#### WELCOME!

Welcome to our new subscribers!

Christmas ... again ... already! Did you notice the decorations were out on 1 November this year?!

This newsletter I look at tips for pets these holidays as well as warranties - do you know your rights? Plus I share a great article from one of my clients on 5 Tips for Building a Strong Online Brand.

Thank you to my existing clients for another wonderful year - and to those new clients who joined me this year! I appreciate you all so much.



The office will be closed 12 to 15 December inclusive and then from 23 to 28 December.

#### PODCAST

**Don't have to time read articles? Prefer to download podcasts to listen to in the car or at the gym? Then check out the shows at the Virtual Business Show ? Click the titles to be taken to the shows!**

- [Carbon Tax - Small Business Has a Voice](#)
- [Multi-VA Practices](#)
- [Q and A with Ken Phillips](#)
- [Sham Contracting](#)
- [Business Tax Changes - Australia](#)

**Remember** : You can subscribe to the show via RSS, iTunes, Zune, or download the podcast at the iTunes Store. You can also subscribe via email for email delivery of whenever a show is uploaded!

See you next year!

Virtually yours

Lyn PB

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#### 5 Tips for Building a Strong Online Brand

[Annemarie Cross - Branding & Business Coach](#) - shares her 5 tips for building a strong online brand.

With more people using Facebook and other "social" platforms it is VITAL that you maintain your brand and consistent message. I've heard stories of late of VAs who have actually lost contracts because of what they've posted on Facebook. Always be mindful of the message you're putting out. Annemarie's great tips appear below! (shared with permission)

Building and monitoring your online profile is vital for all business owners.

Here are some tips on how to build a strong online brand/profile:

#### BLOG

#### What's been happening at

1. Get totally clear on your signature brand and your authentic brand voice. This is how you are going to stand out from your competitors.

**the blog? Latest articles:**

- [ACTU Targeting Job Security](#)
- [Warranties - Who's Responsible?](#)
- [Small Business People are PEOPLE](#)
- [Are Bricks Missing Out on Clicks?](#)
- [Authors - Pricing Your Work](#)
- [New Rules for Security Providers](#)
- [Corporate Responsibility](#)
- [Carbon Tax](#)
- [Free Small Business Training](#)
- [ACTU Survey - ICA Analysis](#)

2. Get clear on your brand message. What do you want to become known as an expert/specialist in? Being uncertain and posting about a variety of topics will only weaken your brand/information and confuse your prospects.
3. Only share relevant, on-brand information. Wouldn't want a prospect to read something - don't post it! Watch your words CONSTANTLY!
4. Have a solid brand communications plan and how you're going to raise brand awareness.
5. Take consistent daily action to communicate your brand.

**Holiday Tips for Pets**(Adapted from an article from PetSmart.com)

As we deck the halls this holiday season, bear these tips in mind if you share your household with companion animals!

Candles, trees and other decorative items can be hazardous for your pet. We nearly lost the bottom rung of tree decorations when an over-exuberant pup decided to show his love with a serious session of tail-wagging a little too close by!

If, like us, you like to let your **guinea pigs** run free for a short period (a la Peru style sans the eating afterwards) remember they LOVE to chew wiring. Be sure to keep them well away from the cords of holiday lights.

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Some **cats** will ignore the holiday tree; some will consider it Santa's gift to the indoor kitty. To find out which variety you have, bring in the tree a day before you decorate it. Should your feline approach it with malice aforethought, slip four or five coins inside an empty soft drink can and shake it. The noise is likely to startle the cat, and she should get the message: paws off!

Leaning trees are tempting for pouncing cats. Be sure to tether the tree to a nearby window and hang the most valuable and/or breakable items near the top. Also, skip the tinsel. Instead, use any of the vinyl garlands and specialty lights now on the market. They'll brighten the tree, and you won't have to worry about your pet eating them and causing digestive problems or choking. Place fragile or chewable decorations well out of reach. And avoid arranging winter scenes on the coffee table or cards on the hearth.

It's important to be responsible when it comes to **pet-giving**. If you intend to give a pet to a child remember, a pet is a living thing, a member of the family, and the responsibility may be too much depending on the age of the child. If you won't be prepared to do most of the pet-care yourself, perhaps think again.

**Chocolate** is a no-no! Chocolate contains a compound called theobromine which, like caffeine, is dangerous to dogs and cats when eaten in large quantities. Baking chocolate is even more dangerous as it contains 9 times more theobromine than milk chocolate. If your pet gets into the goodies, and you're unsure how much they ate, call a vet immediately.

**Bows** are for presents - not pets. A bow around a cat's or dog's neck can look oh so sweet, but can catch in a paw and easily strangle your pet. You can purchase snap-away collars in holiday colours which are a much better choice, which detach under pressure. However, if you can't resist the idea of putting antlers on your Great Dane or a Santa hat on your guinea pig, do it quickly, take a snapshot for the holiday card, and take off the topper right away. Most such items aren't made for wear and tear, safety or comfort.



If you're planning on being away for the holidays and your pet can't travel with you then this next bit might be a bit too late - plan ahead for **boarding or holiday pet-sitters** and ensure if you do get a pet-sitter that they are right for your pet! Ideally your pet-sitter should come over a few times before you leave to practice feeding the pets in your presence. This gives you the opportunity to gauge the person's interest level and competency - and it gives the



immediately

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sitter your endorsement in the eyes of your pet.

Having **visitors**? Be sure they know in advance about your pet. Even people who have known you for a long time may forget you have a dog, cat or ferret. If your visitors have allergies or aren't as fond of pets as you, and you're only expecting them for an hour or two, go out of your way to accommodate them. If you have smaller pets, keep them out of the way of children who may not know how to handle them - and it's completely your right to insist visitors refrain from squeezing, feeding or teasing your pets.

Any **cage** can sustain a bow - on the outside where teeth and beaks can't nibble at it. You might also try a festive pattern for your bird's night time cage cover - something in red and green for Christmas or an African weave for Kwanzaa.

Your pets are part of your family and it's okay to include them in the festivities ... just be mindful of safety and their unique needs to ensure a happy holiday period for everyone!



Information and advice contained in this article is for your consideration only. Please consult your vet for specific advice concerning the care and treatment of your pet.

## Warranties

With the holiday season upon us and retail purchases about to increase do you know what your rights are as a consumer, and what your obligations are as a retailer?

One of the most common complaints received by the Office of Fair Trading Queensland relates to retailers refusing to honour warranties on faulty electronics with some wrongly telling buyers the manufacturer was responsible for the warranty.

Did you know it's illegal in Queensland to display 'No Refunds' or similar signage?

And what about extended warranties? Are they worth the money?

[Read more to find out...](#)

## Holiday Gifts

Still looking for last minute gift ideas? How about giving gifts that give twice?

If you have a bit of an environmental bent, Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland has some things on offer. Check out their [gift ideas](#). You could adopt a quoll, a glider, buy a subscription or make a donation.

Instead of spending (wasting?) money on cheap imports that'll fall apart a week after Christmas, what about supporting your local home-grown businesses and purchasing gift vouchers from local stores or gifts from local artisans? [Hand Made In Country](#) is a local tourism industry initiative but if you Google 'hand made' and your local area you'll come up with a range of goods by local craftsmen and women.



You can support local businesses by giving the gift of a car service, house cleaner or garden maintenance man for a period of time. Personal services like massages or facials, even day spas, will offer vouchers as gifts.

And don't forget you can support local eateries by eating out in your local area.

Another great opportunity for the environmentally conscious is [Treehenge](#) - where you can plant or dedicate a tree, or give a donation, to the fastest-growing living memorial to sustainability and life.

Giving something personal this year surely has to be better than some of the mindless purchases we all tend to make from the mass-produced rubbish that hits our shelves at this time of year - and you'll be helping local businesses too!

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