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## Service lets people test-drive new jobs

### VocationVacations matches businesses, curious customers

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Wouldn't it be nice to sample a business or career before leaping?

Wouldn't it be nice to scrutinize a business or franchise inside and out, scrub the owner down with questions and comments, see the work/life balance up close and personal and then, and only then, decide whether to pursue the opportunity?

Randy Boyer, 46, the owner of Country Lane Pet Resort of New Richmond, wishes he had a chance to look over a business model for a pet kennel back in 1991 when he opened up his pet resort with 15 spaces for dogs.

The launch would have been much easier if he had only had some direction.

That's why Boyer has embraced VocationVacations, a Portland, Ore.-based service that for a fee ranging between \$399 and \$2,000 matches would-be career changers with existing businesses.

"Back when I made my decision, VocationVacations didn't exist," Boyer said. "It was me doing the fact-finding - ferreting out information, trying to figure out if it was a career for me."

Boyer has served as a mentor for three people in the past year - curious would-be entrepreneurs who came to his Clermont County hilltop on the edge of suburbia to decide whether they truly want to open a kennel.

"I believe so much in individuals having the opportunity to pursue and fulfill their dreams," Boyer said. "This company gives people a chance, a risk-free test drive of a job and career path."

"People truly don't know if something is good or bad unless they have experienced or lived it."

Country Lane Pet Resort, which has six full-time employees and two on-staff trainers, has grown dramatically in recent years and now offers food, recreation and housing for \$18 a night for up to 64 dogs.

Though annual revenues were not revealed, Boyer said Country Lane provided 16,000 nights of boarding, 29,000 custom meals and 1,600 baths in 2006.

Around here, these creatures are not called dogs or even pets, either.

"They are our canine guests," Boyer said. He has room for cats, as well, but most revenues are canine-related.

Brian Kurth, president of VocationVacations, frequently assigns "vocationers" to Country Lane Pet Resort because Boyer is so attentive and forthcoming.

"He has a passion for what he does, and he just exudes it," Kurth said. "We are a dream-job/career-change company."

VocationVacations participants almost always have a different focus as they observe operations here, Boyer noted.

One recent VocationVacations visitor wanted hands-on experiences such as playing with the dogs, administering special medication or cleaning up after the animals.

Another had no inclination to learn in great detail about the animals but instead wanted to understand staffing decisions, bookkeeping, software programs that were needed and the structure of each day.

Whether the company is a pet resort or a firm that hires pit-crew specialists for a car racing team, one trend is likely to be constant no matter the company or sector: "We would never experience success without the devotion of our staff," Boyer said.

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