Alumni

4 Startups for 4-Legged Friends

With offerings from health insurance to organic dog food, alumni entrepreneurs are taking on the pet industry.

By
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|
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Animation by Michelle Shin

Ollie

Gabby Slome ’10GS, ’15BUS, a former equestrian and lifelong animal lover, got into the dog-food business for the love of Pancho, her rescued Colombian street dog. Pancho suffered from itchy skin and digestive issues, and Slome claims that after she swapped her pup’s processed, preservative-filled kibble for healthy home cooking, she saw a real improvement in his condition. In 2015, inspired by that

success, Slome cofounded Ollie, a subscription service that offers meals made from fresh, all-natural, “human-grade” ingredients and customized to the age, breed, weight, and dietary needs of customers’ dogs.

Pawlicy Advisor

This website from Woody Mawhinney ’18BUS, a former risk consultant for the Department of Homeland Security and a father of two (dogs), compares, recommends, and sells pet-insurance plans based on customer needs and individual health risks. Targeted to dog and cat parents as well as veterinary offices, Pawlicy Advisor was launched in 2018 out of the Columbia Startup Lab.

Petnet

Cofounded in 2013 by engineer Carlos Herrera ’09SEAS, this Los Angeles–based company has brought high technology to a basic item of pet paraphernalia — the food bowl. Petnet’s signature “smart feeder,” which can be controlled through a mobile app or Amazon Alexa, automatically dispenses meals at specified times and customizes portions according to a dog or cat’s age, weight, and activity level.

Diggs

Zel Crampton ’13BUS worked as a management and supply-chain consultant for nearly a decade before he started his own company, Diggs, in 2018. The New York–based retailer, which manufactures and sells collapsible dog crates and accessories, says it prioritizes safety, sleek design, and easy setup.

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