

## Home Business Has Its Day: Luxury Pet Products Company Fetches Increased Sales by Going Online

Whiner and Diner makes unique and stylish pet feeders from refinished wooden wine crates. For nine years, the pursuit was more of a weekend hobby for Catherine and Stephen Simms, with modest sales coming from friends and local retailers in their Stamford, Connecticut, hometown. That all changed after the Simms created [www.WhinerAndDiner.net](http://www.WhinerAndDiner.net) using Microsoft® Office Live Small Business ([smallbusiness.officelive.com](http://smallbusiness.officelive.com)). Within one year of putting the business online, Whiner and Diner started taking orders from across the country, received national media attention, and grew sales more than 10 times.



### Company Background

Back in 1998, Catherine and Stephen Simms developed an elegant solution for the messy little corner of the kitchen where their Labrador retriever enjoyed his meals. They cut holes in the top of a wooden wine crate, applied a fine furniture finish, inserted two dog dishes, and *voilà*, they had a unique, stylish, and functional pet feeder.

Suspecting they were on to something, Catherine and Stephen founded Whiner and Diner. Soon, by word of mouth and shoe leather, they were selling about 60 pet feeders a year to friends and through local pet shops around Stamford, Connecticut. "It was a weekend thing," says Catherine Simms. "We had a nice income supplement, but it wasn't exactly paying the mortgage."

### Building a Marketing Platform

The Simms considered marketing online. To save money, they wanted to do it themselves, but felt they lacked the necessary skills. "I bought some Web design software, but couldn't even understand it," says Simms. "You needed to know everything, from design to coding."

Then Catherine read a newspaper article about Microsoft® Office Live Small Business. In February 2007, with virtually no technology experience, she

To learn more about Office Live Small Business, visit: <http://smallbusiness.officelive.com>

used Microsoft Office Live Small Business to build a Whiner and Diner Web site in her spare time. "I had no idea what I was doing," says Simms. "But with Microsoft Office Live Small Business, it was really easy to put together a really nice Web site."

### From Hobby to Success

With the simple to use Web-site creation, editing, and reporting tools in Microsoft Office Live Small Business, Whiner and Diner has expanded and fine-tuned its Web site and business, adding pages to the site and expanding its product line. The Simms eventually added a feature to the site so they could sell Whiner and Diner products directly online.

Within a month of launching the site, Whiner and Diner started getting orders from retailers. With the exposure it generated online, the company has been featured on MSNBC, regional TV channels, and in several national magazines. Sales went from an average of one to more than 10 feeders per week, with orders coming in from California, Florida, Texas, New York, Connecticut—every corner of the U.S., and even Europe.

"With Microsoft Office Live Small Business, we turned Whiner and Diner from a hobby into a real business, and very quickly," says Simms. "And it's fun to do. I love doing it."

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*Catherine Simms, Co-Owner, Whiner and Diner*

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### Overview

**Company Name:** Whiner and Diner

**Web Site:** [www.whineranddiner.net](http://www.whineranddiner.net)

**Employees:** 2

**Industry:** Manufacturing—Consumer packaged goods

**Location:** Stamford, Connecticut

### Highlights:

- **User Friendly** - With virtually no experience, Whiner and Diner built its own Web site with Microsoft® Office Live Small Business.
- **Increased Sales** - After launching its site, the company increased orders from one to more than 10 per week.
- **Enhanced Profile** - With its new Web site, Whiner and Diner has evolved from a home hobby into a business with national exposure and international sales.