

Good to Go

With innovative products, Kurgo encourages owners to get out and do things with their pets.

Melissa Breau

Kurgo Products entered the pet travel industry in 2005, with its creation of the Backseat Barrier. The company had been founded two years prior, manufacturing accessories for the automotive aftermarket. Today, although the company still sells some automotive accessories, its primary focus is pet travel products.

As a company, Kurgo is focused on creating products that make it easier and safer for dog owners to take their pets with them wherever they go. According to Gordon Spater, Kurgo's president, the biggest concern, from a safety standpoint, is reducing distractions. One of the largest causes of accidents is distraction, and with more pets traveling as a part of the family, it becomes important to keep the pet safely and comfortably out of the driver's way.

Since joining the industry, Kurgo has created an entire line of pet travel products and has expanded its offering from pet products specifically for the car, to pet products for pets on the go. Its newest products, the pet Wander Pack, a backpack for dogs, and the Collapse-a-bowl, a silicone pop-up bowl, are designed to make it easier to take pets everywhere they want to go.

Merchandising

"Our merchandising philosophy is to make it easy for retailers to sell Kurgo products," says Spater. The company has two display programs. Both contain Kurgo's best products and include a free merchandising rack. The racks are durable with headers that help retailers communicate the benefits of Kurgo products to their customers. The standard display program is a metal rack that comes loaded with a choice of product configurations, including items like the Backseat Barrier, harnesses, the Auto Zip Line, Sky Booster Seats and hammocks. The company's second display rack is called the woody rack and it is a natural wooden rack made in Vermont. It contains approximately



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half the amount product included with the standard metal rack display.

The racks are designed to make it easy for retailers that may not currently carry pet travel products (or those who carry a limited supply of products) to stock and display a variety of pet travel products at a reasonable price point without having to clear out shelf space.

"Variety is key," says Spater, "because people have different size cars, different size dogs, and the dogs have different temperaments and demeanors. So we're trying to provide a range of products that works for all those different combinations ... which is why pet specialty is perfect, because specialty retail-

ers have that touch, they are able to talk to a customer and say, 'Oh you just drove in, lets see if we can find the product that will work best for your car and your needs.'"

Kurgo also provides a full page of other merchandising tools, including posters, stuffed copies of a blue dog named 'Roosevelt' that serves as its mascot, DVDs and stickers.

Added Value

Kurgo works to give both retailers and customers the most for their money. "We have been accused of 'over engineering' some of our products," says Spater.

The packaging for the backseat barrier is designed to become a dispenser for doggie bags that attaches to a car's headrest; all the slides and fasteners on the harnesses are made of steel; and Kurgo's hammock is made from custom fabric, so it will look better in a customer's backseat. The products are meant to be used regularly and are designed to be durable. They are also designed to work in a variety of vehicles.

Spater says, "We design the product so that it's easy for a dog owner who wants to go out and do something with their dog." **PB**

