

INTERVIEW



Paul Nolan, CEO
The Company of Animals (US)

“Consumers today are looking for value at the price and experience level”

How did you decide to work for The Company of Animals (CoA) in 2011?

It happened quite suddenly. I got a phone call from a recruiter one day, who told me there was an “animal whisperer” looking for someone to head up Operations, and that I had to go and check them out. An “animal whisperer” isn’t something you hear about every day, so I arranged for a meeting. A tour of the farm (where the offices are) and an hour in a room with Dr. Roger Mugford was all it took, and I was sold on his vision for the future for CoA. I knew I’d found a rare company that puts its mission and values first.

What are your priorities for 2018?

My responsibilities are really all-encompassing; there is not one area that I focus on more than others as every part of our organization is vital to the overall growth and health of the company as a whole. One area of particular importance has been our company-wide rebrand. Primary initiatives of our rebrand touch everything from new logos to more sustainable and environmentally-friendly packaging. Larger initiatives for our rebrand involve tapping into our story and heritage as training and behavior experts. With our new identity, we hope to further ourselves as thought leaders in our space and make the training category much easier to shop, while empowering pet parents to make positive, informed decisions.

What makes CoA a good fit for you?

Our headquarters in the UK are based on a working farm in Surrey, surrounded by beautiful countryside with dogs, horses, sheep, chickens and llamas. I haven’t come across a culture that comes close to what we have at our company,

embodied by all that work with us. Pets really are at the heart of what we do and that passion comes through in every project we undertake. Core values are important to me, and I’m perfectly aligned with the ones we live by.

What do you enjoy about working in the pet industry?

Aside from my love of animals, it’s the satisfaction of genuinely enhancing the special bond between owners and their pets. Commerce is changing at a breathtaking pace, but more than ever there is an opportunity to engage in conversation with pet parents, and we endeavor to leave a lasting impression on the way they train their pets.

How does the pet industry compare today to when you joined in 2011?

It’s unrecognizable! Aside from the obvious changes to the way pet parents shop, there is an unprecedented level of innovation across all pet categories. You must continuously innovate and embrace change and that’s something we encourage companywide at CoA.

How have online retailers affected the industry?

Accessibility has been a major theme in online and brick and mortar retail. In terms of online accessibility, consumers can shop at 1 o’clock in the morning if they choose to do so and can find practically everything and anything they need for their dogs and get it within a matter of days at little to no extra cost for shipping. We have all experienced the ways online shopping has affected brick-and-mortar retailers, but what the brick-and-mortar in-store shopping experiences bring to pet owners is still invaluable. From a product accessibility

standpoint, it’s important for pet parents to be able to try on a product for size with their dog before committing to a purchase. This consideration of accessibility has been a main factor in how we’ve redesigned our packaging which will be released during the full launch of our rebrand in 2019. The unique component of product accessibility from brick-and-mortar is something we value and have been dedicated to uphold.

How are pet specialty retailers incentivizing people to shop at brick-and-mortar locations?

Consumers today are looking for value at the price and experience level. With high-speed browsing, competitive price checking and free next-day shipping all available online, customer experiences in store are now more important than ever. Product assortment, merchandising and customer service are key factors of brick-and-mortar success. We’re using the valuable relationships with our stores and distributors to help ensure customers shopping for our products have a great experience. We love our pets and shopping for them is part of the fun as a pet parent. We ensure we’re making that experience as seamless and enjoyable as possible.

How does CoA balance competitive prices with superior products?

For us, competitive pricing and high quality products are not mutually exclusive. We have set a standard from early stages of development within CoA to never compromise our product integrity to hit a competitive price point. What sets us apart from others in the industry is our commitment to our belief that our products must improve the wellbeing of pets as well as their owners.