

Internet Fraud Targets Parrot Enthusiasts

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Introduction: Experts in the animal industry are often providing information. This information may be based on hands on experience, education and usually a combination of both. The internet has offered an opportunity for those with little of either to exploit the unsuspecting parrot owning public. Those seeking to make a living off of the internet are instructed to position themselves as gurus. In many cases the self-proclaimed expert is practicing fraud by misrepresenting themselves, their knowledge and their experiences. This paper will expose the various questionable practices used to sell information on the internet, how to safeguard the consumer, how to protect intellectual property and use the internet to market ethically.

How Internet Marketing Works

The internet has led to new ways of generating income. In recent years a controversial and not well-regulated type of internet based business has emerged. The classification of infopreneur is a new style of business on the internet which allows anybody with a computer and an internet connection to start businesses by publishing information. An infopreneur is generally considered an entrepreneur who makes money selling information on the internet. They use existing data and target a specific audience. The most profitable areas are usually non-fiction 'how-to' subject matter, where you teach or demonstrate how to do something.

There are generally two kinds of infopreneurs: those that sell information they have amassed on their own and those that earn commissions from selling information that they know nothing about. The latter may be considered more of an "information trafficker". Many of them utilize the power of the World Wide Web, creating web sites and blogs to act as their storefront.

The infopreneur may attract traffic to his/her site by manipulating their site to appear higher on search engine results. This may be done by creating a site that is robust in information, and configuring META keywords and descriptions that accurately describes the web page. But often, infopreneurs that are out to get a "quick buck", will create a mash-together of information by publishing popular, sought after content, often incorporating RSS feeds from more popular sites. The infopreneur then makes money from ads, affiliate links, referrals and leads, and/or selling eBooks that are related to the search parameters and keywords. These infopreneurs "piggy-back" on already established information. For example, there are many spam blogs (splogs) that copy verbatim the articles from other websites, which is then used to promote affiliated websites, to increase the search engine rankings of associated sites or to simply sell links/ads.¹ The bottom line is to increase traffic to pages to draw in as many potential consumers as possible.

Expert defined

To be a successful infopreneur, it is recommended to position oneself as an expert. According to sites that teach internet business strategies people like to buy from experts, which is why top sales professionals invest substantial time and energy in positioning themselves as experts in their field.²

Positioning oneself as an expert and actually meeting the criteria of being an expert are two different things. According to the Dreyfus model of skills acquisition there are very specific criteria that must be met in order for an individual to be considered an expert in a field or at a task. The following is a summary of the five skill levels as defined by Dreyfus.

Dreyfus Model of Skills Acquisition

1. Novices

The main goal of novices is to accomplish immediate tasks. Since they have little or no previous experience, they're usually insecure and are focused only on having their first successes. Novices need clear rules and unambiguous instructions, and to concentrate on following them strictly. As such, they commonly don't feel responsible for anything other than correctly following what was passed to them ("I'm just following orders!"). To improve, novices usually need close monitoring to bring their actions as close as possible to achieve what is expected by adhering to the rules.

2. Advanced Beginners

Advanced beginners still operate following rules, but they're able to apply them not only on the exact situations that they were intended for, but also on similar contexts. The once-rigid rules become more like guidelines. Advanced beginners try new things out, but still have difficulty troubleshooting problems. Just like novices, they're still focused on completing tasks — they don't want lengthy theorizing and don't have much interest in the big picture. To improve, advanced beginners need to gain experience dealing with real situations, preferably in limited and controlled situations (with much of the 'real-world complexity' filtered out).

3. Competent

As the rules and guidelines become prohibitively complex, practitioners begin organizing and sorting them by relevance, forming conceptual models. Competent practitioners can troubleshoot problems, and will work based on deliberate planning and past experience. They are willing to make decisions and to accept responsibility for their outcomes. To improve, competent practitioners need exposure to a wide variety of typical, real-world, 'whole' situations. By dealing with those, they better grasp the connections between the isolated conceptual models they already use.

4. Proficient

Proficient practitioners create not only conceptual models, but a conceptual framework around their whole skill. They want the big picture, and become frustrated with oversimplified information. They're conscious of their performance and can adjust their behaviors accordingly. They can also use and adapt others' experiences, as well as grasp and apply maxims — which require much more sophisticated interpretation than mere rules or guidelines (as they're much more generic and context-dependent). To advance to the fifth and last level, proficient practitioners need even more practice. And, as much as possible, they should practice without being hindered by policies or guidelines. The intuition of the expert starts with a vast pool of practical knowledge, and that can only be developed by experimenting freely.

5. Experts

The hallmark of experts is intuition: they just do what works. No explicit analysis or planning is involved. While proficient practitioners can intuitively identify problems, experts can go and intuitively solve them. They tap into their vast pool of knowledge and effortlessly identify patterns, applying solutions in context. Although experts are amazingly intuitive, they are usually rather inarticulate in explaining how they arrived at a conclusion. Although technically this is the last stage in the model, experts never cease to practice and evolve in subtle ways, incorporating rarer and exceptional cases in their knowledge pool.³

The Dreyfus model of skills acquisition is an excellent tool as it evaluates performance. Many times degrees, certification, titles, memberships to professional organizations, years in a profession and a high profile are considered elements of expert status. However there are many who meet those criteria who may not demonstrate expert skills. There are others who will use certifications, titles and organizational memberships to inappropriately exaggerate their qualifications. And there are others who carry no

degrees, certification or memberships that perform at an expert level. Being an expert and being perceived as an expert involve meeting different criteria.

Perceived experts

People that qualify as experts can certainly successfully follow the formula to become an infopreneur. However what is more prevalent is the desire to make money via the internet without meeting the expert criteria. Internet marketing strategists' advise such individuals to use the following tactics to create a perceived expert status.

Flood the internet with information

This can include massive blogging efforts, press releases, articles, Google ads, podcasts, video clips, social media postings (Facebook, twitter, etc.). To quote one site "It's the strangest thing...but as soon as someone sees your name in print, your 'expert' status automatically leaps up!" Guest blogging also raises presence as a perceived expert. 4

Write an eBook

Infopreneurs are advised to compile any existing writings, such as blog posts, into an eBook and self-publish. As one site suggests "Once you've gone ahead and published it, you're an author. There's nothing quite like the title 'author' on your biography to hoist you up the 'expert' scale."5

Call yourself an expert

As one site suggests "People are more impressed with titles than wealth. Tell them you are the creator of this, you are the author of that, a founder of this, a director, a CEO. Reference this in your bio, in your video and in your speeches. Tell them you have perspective of the industry, challenge or problem." 6 From another site "This might sound funny, but believe me, it is very effective. I discovered this is one of the most effective ways of being seen as an expert in your niche. Don't just be afraid because you have no results, the results will come. If you want to be called a pro-blogger then write it boldly on your blog, in your author bio and even in your about page, this will make other people call you an expert. It is what you call yourself that others will call you."7

Promote yourself as the most popular

Those seeking perceived expert status are told to tell their audience they have the best-selling products, most downloaded items, most viewed sites, etc. One site goes as far to say that many beginning experts do not yet have these examples of social proof, but that it doesn't matter. Later they will.

Partner with other experts (real or perceived)

According to internet marketers partnering with other experts gives borrowed credibility

Gather testimonials

These can be about the infopreneur and/or product.

Provide a product

Having something to sell is also said to be important to be perceived as an expert. This can include eBooks, presentations, hard goods, etc. Anything that people can purchase to acquire help or information from the perceived expert.

Creating a fan base

Operating as an infopreneur is much like being a conventional author, artist or musician. Typically the infopreneur is trying to create a fan base or following. Having copious content on the internet is an important aspect of driving search engine traffic to an infopreneurs material. Once on a site, one goal is

for the infopreneur to capture contact information. This allows the infopreneur to market directly to the potential customer.

Infopreneurs use the following strategies to create massive amounts of content and drive traffic to their sites and materials:

- Blog frequently
- Pay others to blog as guest bloggers
- Pay other to blog on their sites with references back to the infopreneur
- Create eBooks
- Pay ghostwriters to make eBooks
- Post YouTube videos
- Post comments frequently on other blogs, YouTube pages, and Facebook pages
- Employ Facebook campaigns to increase “likes” for fan pages
- Use hash tags to post on trending topics
- Respond to twitter posts
- Post in yahoo and other chat groups or forums
- Request back links from other sites
- Use back links in blogs that refer to the infopreneurs material
- Use keywords in all posts that include text (blogs, tweets, YouTube text)
- Use relevant tags on any posts that include tagging
- Write blogs on trending topics with appropriate keywords
- Use affiliate programs to increase presence on other sites

For more information on how to use apply these strategies see “Marketing: Beyond the Basics” by Laurie Hess, DVM Dipl ABVP (Avian) and Bill Schroeder in the Association of Avian Veterinarians conference proceedings 2011. 8

Once a fan base is well established infopreneurs focus on continuing to build their following and marketing to their existing fans. Email addresses are captured via marketing tactics such as signing up for a newsletter, providing address in order to receive a free digital product and/or contact forms.

Unethical Practices

Information marketing has the potential to be an excellent opportunity for credentialed professionals to deliver quality information. Recognized experts can use the strategies of providing content, building a fan base and selling products as easily as the perceived experts. However typically those with credentials are less focused on being infopreneurs and more focused on practicing their craft. The unfortunate result is that the perceived experts are dominating the internet and public attention. While on the surface this may appear harmless, as one digs deeper into some of the strategies employed it becomes clear that many are practicing fraud on the consumer, copyright infringement, plagiarism and endangering animals due to their lack of experience.

The following are examples of unethical practices exhibited by some infopreneurs that target the companion parrot community.

Misrepresentation of identity and/or credentials

Knowing that being perceived as an expert is a key ingredient in successful information marketing; it is no surprise that those without credentials resort to misrepresentation of skills and experience. One particular example includes the following biographical sketch on the “About” page of the site for ParrotSecrets.com.

“About 13 years ago, Nathalie Roberts discovered the world of parrots and soon swore lifelong fidelity to these beautiful creatures. Today, she is one of those rare and ardent parrot enthusiasts who took up the cause of taking care and protecting this wonderful avian species. It's difficult to believe that this lifelong relationship began as a mere accident, while on a visit to a friend. Since then, she has also become a formidable authority and renowned expert on the subject. Nathalie has successfully raised and trained a motley group of parrots over the years, organized over 210 seminars and 47 workshops in the US and outside, and authored over half a dozen books. Countless parrot-owners from around the world have benefited enormously from her massive repertoire of practical tips and home-grown techniques of parrot parenting, training and maintenance.”⁹

Bob Cringley, PC pioneer, wrote a blog to commend the owner of this website's internet marketing prowess. However in doing so he also exposed an underbelly to internet marketing. Cringley says “The owner of Parrotsecrets, for one thing, doesn't even own a parrot. That's why the figurehead for Parrotsecrets is Nathalie Roberts (“A Parrot Lover for the Last 12 Years”). Nathalie looks like someone we can trust. Nathalie also doesn't exist. The owner of Parrotsecrets isn't Nathalie Roberts, isn't even a woman, and isn't even American. He's Indian and lives in India.”¹⁰ In this example a fictitious expert was created to make it possible for the infopreneur to market and sell parrot related information. The site is still active.

Another example of similar fraudulent practices involves a prominent parrot training infopreneur. This individual has several web businesses that focus on parrot training, dog training and parenting. The infopreneur has no prior work experience or education in any of the topics for which he sells information. His qualifications are equivalent of any parrot owner, dog owner or parent. He followed the formula for positioning himself as an expert and selling information on the internet. In various signature lines he has called himself author, expert on behavior modification and learning, parrot training expert, professional dog trainer, and expert author. None of which are backed up by professional experience or credentials in the industries mentioned. When a publishing house contracts an author, it is generally considered validation and thus infers credibility. However in this example all published materials were self-published.

For two of his businesses he uses his real name. For his parenting site he has given himself a pseudonym and refers to himself with the fictitious name in videos, blog posts and articles posted to his parenting site. It is not stated why a fictitious name/persona is used for the parenting site.

The same infopreneur has also admitted to using ghostwriters and paying other known experts to write content that is meant to represent the knowledge of the infopreneur. This misrepresents the actual skills and expertise of the infopreneur.

Plagiarism and copyright infringement

Two of the most difficult to address unethical practices that have emerged with the development of the internet is plagiarism and copyright infringement. Intellectual property is routinely appropriated by information marketing practitioners. It appears the generations that have grown up with the internet have not learned to cite or reference sources. If it is on the internet, it is assumed to be fair game. Unfortunately the practice is rampant and difficult to fight. Copyright lawsuits are expensive and difficult to prove. Furthermore the consumer is easily duped into thinking plagiarized material is original to the author. There are many examples of materials being lifted for the benefit of others.

The DVD *Captive Foraging* by Scott Echols, DVM Dipl ABVP (Avian) was released in 2006. In November of 2008 a video that mimicked the content but claimed it as the infopreneurs original idea was posted to the internet without credit or reference to Dr. Echols.

The authors DVD Understanding Parrot Body Language was purchased by the same entrepreneur on August 9th, 2008. In January of the following year a video that contained similar content was produced and posted by the same infopreneur without reference or credit to the author.

Another of the author's techniques was utilized in a video of a case study by the same infopreneur and presented as a new technique he had discovered without credit or reference to the author.

The same infopreneur asked to shadow another professional animal trainer to learn about free flying parrots. The animal trainer reports "We picked them up and dropped them off at the airport; let them stay in our home and all for free. While here they told us this was their first venture into free flying parrots. 18 months later they have expanded their business to include selling their "expert advice" on free flight training. For \$5000 they will provide personal instruction on flying parrots, including personal training with the person's bird here in our city, at the very locations we took them."¹¹

Many infopreneur sites will embed videos of excellent parrot training from a zoo or animal park. Sometimes the videos are embedded from YouTube, which at least allows the viewer to see the source. However often they are lifted and hosted on the site selling product, which prevents the viewer from finding where the video came from. These videos are presented as examples of what the consumer's bird can learn from their product. However the video clips are of other animal training professionals not associated with the infopreneur. This is not clear to the viewer and the clips are used without permission to sell a product.

Other infopreneurs will track the Facebook posts, tweets and videos posted by recognized professionals in the industry. They will then post similar content to their own sites as their own original piece without reference to the original post. For example the author wrote an article about training a parrot to drop an item on cue. An infopreneur shortly thereafter wrote a blog on the same topic presenting it as an original idea. Similarly a photo of a parrot bathing posted on an experts site, may prompt another marketing to post bathing parrots photos. This practice occurs frequently.

Some individuals reproduce product such as workshops or presentations based on other people's materials without reference to the original product. In some situations even the wording to describe the product is almost identical to the original source.

The unrestricted lifting of materials makes it challenging to share intellectual property to help the consumer. It is a risk credentialed professionals take whenever they put information out in the world.

Deceptive practices

Misrepresentation of one's credentials certainly qualifies as deceptive. However there are other practices that occur as well. One common strategy used by a prominent infopreneur is to have friends/family/employees pose as pet owners and get involved in chat groups. The post most frequently contributed by these participants is along the lines of "Have you heard of 'Infopreneur?' What do you think of his product? I heard it is pretty good." To a consumer this may appear as an innocent post requesting information, when it is actually a marketing opportunity. The post just mentioned the infopreneurs name and product to a large group of people with an interest in parrots. Even if the post results in negative feedback, another person assigned to post to groups can respond with a positive comment. Either way the result is more exposure for the infopreneur.

Another strategy is to post comments on other people's blogs. What may seem like a genuine compliment is another attempt for exposure. Many times the compliments are generic in nature and could work on any site. For example "Great post! I love the information you provide. Can't wait to read more." The commenters profile will appear with a link and potentially lead to more traffic. This same strategy can also be applied to Facebook's photos and postings. Others will create tweets that include a recognized

professional's twitter name so that the post will appear on the professionals twitter page and potentially reach thousands of followers. Rather than develop their own fan base, they take advantage of the existing following amassed by someone else's efforts.

Another strategy employed by a prominent infopreneur is to create new names for known principles of behavior analysis or animal training techniques and claim them as a new discovery. This marketing strategy helps perpetuate the illusion of guru status. This has been applied to target training (renamed "touch training" by the infopreneur), negative reinforcement (renamed the "power pause" by the infopreneur), and intermittent schedule of reinforcement (renamed "random rewarding" by the infopreneur.)

In another example a prominent infopreneur decided to provide in a marketing video an explanation for where his parrot training knowledge was derived. Rather than from work history, hands on experience or education, he explained he had purchased a \$300 book off the internet that was recommended by his veterinarian. The book was filled with all the secrets to parrot training. He explained in the video the day after he bought the book the website disappeared. When contacted privately by another professional animal trainer for the name of the book and author the infopreneur refused to answer. It was pointed out by another professional animal trainer that the infopreneurs story bore many resemblances to the premise of a popular best-selling book called "The Secret."

Another deceptive practice found on infopreneurs websites is the use of duplicate but slightly modified testimonials. For example a site on parakeets has a testimonial by person X about their parakeet. On a page for parrotlets, the exact same testimonial appears except the word parakeet has been replaced with parrotlet.

In another example a false testimonial was written using the name of a customer and posted to the infopreneurs site. When the customer (who had returned the product) complained, the testimonial was removed.

Other questionable practices

There are many practices to increase traffic and attention to a website and ultimately sales. Many of them can be utilized in a way that most would consider ethical and appropriate. However some infopreneurs stretch the boundaries. For example, affiliate programs allow others with a similar interest to promote and/or sell an infopreneurs product. This can work well for a group or organization who cannot afford to warehouse merchandise. Instead their website acts as a storefront and any sales via their site result in a commission for the organization. Bird clubs, rescues and veterinary hospitals are examples of businesses that can take advantage of this arrangement.

However rather than carefully select affiliate candidates some infopreneurs will accept any offer for partnership. This leads to other internet marketers with no knowledge or experience in the subject matter creating sites to generate affiliate income. These sites are filled with misinformation, fraudulent credentials and lifted material. Typically the infopreneur that allows this does not monitor the activities of the affiliate. When it was pointed out to one prominent parrot training infopreneur that his affiliates were using videos by recognized professionals on their site without permission, they claimed they have no control over their affiliate's actions. When it was suggested they could remove the offenders from the affiliate program, they refused stating "I don't see how they are using that content to promote us. They just happen to have our ads on those pages." There were no other affiliate links on the site.

Individuals focused solely on building income via the internet have also resorted to lifting email addresses from parrot chat groups to send unsolicited marketing emails. As anti-spamming regulations evolve to protect the consumer more, it is anticipated some of these practices will be stopped.

Another strategy to drive traffic to a blog or post is to use keywords that are trending or searchable on the internet. For example if a celebrity buys a parrot, an infopreneur may find ways to include the celebrity's name and the word parrot in blog posts, Facebook posts and tweets. This can draw search engine traffic to his postings. However some infopreneurs will use the name of recognized parrot professionals as a way to pull search engine traffic away from those known experts. The post may be as simple as "I heard person X released a new DVD. I have not seen it yet" but it ties the professional's name with the infopreneur and creates searchable content to pull in the credentialed professionals followers. It also can give a false impression that the credentialed expert and the infopreneur are colleagues.

A common practice for the income focused infopreneur is to tell the consumer what they want to hear. This can include quick solutions, magic cures and outrageous claims. They are often presented in a way that is quite compelling to a parrot owner desperate to address a problem. Many are presented as "secret" methods, never seen before, newly discovered, etc. Some examples taken directly from prominent parrot infopreneurs materials include the following:

- You will get a 3 step formula Mrs. X (a top parrot behavior consultant) revealed to me during a private consultation that cures even the meanest parrot's fear of you in 3 days.
- Learn our techniques and you can walk into any parrot store and have them meanest parrot begging you to pick him up and play with him.
- Learn cures for feather plucking.
- Teach your parrot to say a new word in 24 hours.
- Stop biting in under 7 days.

Protecting the Consumer

Although the way in which material is acquired and provided by some infopreneurs may be questionable, one might ask "does it matter?" if the information is sound. Because the infopreneur is misrepresenting themselves as an expert, the information provided carries more weight than the casual post by a hobbyist or pet owner on a forum or discussion group. This is especially problematic when the perceived expert with no experience posts information that is in fact harmful to animals. Due to the infopreneurs lack of actual experience or knowledge, he is unable to evaluate or apply the information he has collected from others.

In one example a prominent infopreneur shared a strategy called "weight management" sometimes used in professional bird shows to train birds. It involves determining a weight range and corresponding amount of food that facilitates sufficient motivation for food reinforcers for training. This strategy is one that professional trainers use primarily with raptors and can be harmful if applied inappropriately. It is therefore usually carefully monitored and is used in conjunction with a variety of other science based training technology to ensure the animal is not compromised. An inexperienced infopreneur applied this to a budgerigar and reported the process on the internet. The birds weight was dropped from 42 grams to as low as 25 grams. The infopreneur reported the training weight he determined to be most effective was 27 grams. This was a 35 - 40% weight reduction. In professional animal training a 10% weight loss is considered the maximum acceptable standard. The infopreneur freely shared this with his followers as a recommend strategy and example of successful bird training.

Another infopreneur with very little bird training experience applied the same weight management technique to his bird. His bird is featured in his self-produced instructional video on the internet in which his adult bird has reverted back to baby vocalizations in anticipation of being fed. Experienced trainers recognize this behavior as an indication of poor training strategies and inappropriate use of weight management.

Other examples from the same infopreneur include using a technique in which two sticks are used to harass a bird until it gives up and steps onto a stick. In the video clip the infopreneur is smiling throughout the process of the bird attempting to attack the sticks. Although unknown to the infopreneur at the time the scientific principle behind this process is called flooding. Flooding has been shown to be highly damaging to animals. When the infopreneur was informed of the problems with flooding he agreed to change his approach. However the material is still present on the internet and was later re-released in conjunction with a customer success story using the technique.

In another example the same perceived expert suggests an outdated method to address biting. He states that parrots are “bluffing” when they bite and to teach a parrot to stop biting, one should leave the hand and take the bite. Professional animal trainers routinely teach that parrot biting is clear communication from the bird. Rather than ignore aggressive behavior, it is better to avoid it and respond to the slightest response in order to teach the bird biting is not necessary.

The same infopreneur is the one who shadowed a professional free flight parrot trainer and has now offered his services to train consumers how to fly their parrots outdoors. When the infopreneur initially began marketing and promoting his free flight training he posted many video clips on the internet without warning or disclaimers. At least one known individual attempted to use the information in the video clips and lost and never recovered his parrot when it flew from his balcony during a flight training session. Most professional bird trainers concur that free flight involves risks and is best learned with an experienced mentor by your side as opposed to over the internet.

Many parrot enthusiasts are easily persuaded by the sales, marketing techniques and perceived expert status. One consumer reported “I was amazed at how stupid I was to believe all their claims in my attempt to get my bird to quit biting and screaming. The specific site mentioned by Bob Cringely is one of the sites from which I bought eBooks. I now realize that most of the things they said to do actually caused my bird to get more aggravated with me and to bite me every time I get close to him. All I can do is try and undo everything I have done wrong and regain his trust again”

Protecting Content and Marketing Ethically

For many businesses marketing is equally as important as providing a quality product. Although there are people who use techniques others may consider unethical, those practices are not required to successfully use the internet to promote products and services. Developing a marketing plan and position statement can help business owners define parameters for marketing tactics. Business owners can decide what is considered ethical for the company and abide by those rules. This may also include not supporting other infopreneurs that do not practice those ethics.¹²

Providing original content is an important part of internet marketing. Content can be protected by including the name of the author, the words “copyright”, the year the content was created and a URL for the website in any text posted to the internet. This should be placed at the end of blogs, in the text that supports YouTube videos, or any other location on the internet that includes text. Crawlers will often lift text to place it on other sites for content. This will ensure the author still gets credited for the material. It is also helpful to add the word “copyright” and the URL for the creator’s website to any videos posted to the internet. Filming could also be done so that a logo or sign appears in the background that cannot be edited out.

It is also recommended to set all comments or postings to moderation for blogs, YouTube sites, chat groups and other pages. This will prevent individuals from marketing products on sites without permission. These should be monitored daily as some may slip through. On Facebook people will often

“tag” someone in order for their promotion to appear on that person’s wall. Remove tags and report the posting as spam. The person can also be blocked from future postings if the problem is recurring.

It is also helpful to set up Google alerts for keywords that are relevant to your industry or business. This may include the business or expert’s name. This can alert professionals when their name is being used by another infopreneur. It will also allow professionals to see if their materials are appearing on other websites without permission.

Internet marketing can be beneficial to parrots and their caregivers when done with integrity and honest practices. Infopreneurs can be a part of the solution by demonstrating good internet marketing etiquette and supporting others who follow suit.

Conclusion

Most of the unethical examples presented come from a handful of offenders. While the number practicing fraud on the consumer is limited, their reach is broad. Their heavy emphasis on internet marketing means they have likely in some way connected with most every parrot person who has been online. There is power in numbers, but this also works in favor of those promoting ethical practices. True animal industry professionals and experts outweigh the unethical internet salesman. When veterinary professionals, aviculturists, bird trainers, behavior specialists, parrot welfare organizations and companion parrot enthusiasts gather their numbers to expose these hidden problems, parrot caregivers have the opportunity to make an informed decision. By exposing the questionable practices utilized to sell information on the internet it is my hope that members of a professional community, will be better prepared to educate clients and other colleagues about resources available on the internet.

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In 1982 Barbara Heidenreich secured her first job working with animals in a veterinary hospital. In 1990 after exploring various animal related professions, Barbara started her career as an animal trainer at a zoological park and has been a professional trainer ever since. Barbara provides consulting services to zoos, nature centers and other animal facilities. She lectures regularly to the veterinary community and is an adjunct clinical instructor at Texas A & M University, Veterinary Medicine and Biological Sciences. In her career she has trained animals, trained staff, lectured and/or presented shows at over 40 facilities around the world.

Barbara also owns and operates Good Bird Inc (www.GoodBirdInc.com) that provides behavior and training products to the companion parrot and small mammal communities (www.BunnyTraining.com) These products include, books, DVDs, and animal training workshops. Barbara Heidenreich has been a featured speaker on animal training on six continents, over 20 countries and has been published in nine different languages. (For a complete list of past presentations, please view her [past calendar](#) Barbara Heidenreich is a former president of the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators (www.IAATE.org) and served on the Board of Directors from 1997-2009.

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