![LeashTime logo - Professional Pet Sitting Software]

The Monthly Poop

Perspectives

When I was kid, our family used to be big Washington Redskins fans (for those of you who do not follow sports, that's a professional football team). My mom was one of the biggest fans of all, which was kind of funny because she came to the United States when she was 25 years old. Our whole family's favorite player was Darrell Green, the fastest man in the NFL.

My mom referred to him as #28. That was his player number. She would talk about #28 intercepting the ball and scoring touchdowns and making great plays. She did not know his name. In fact, she knew the Redskin's players exclusively by their player numbers. She had a different perspective on the world. Since she was Korean, the letters and sounds of an English alphabet made little sense to her. It was easier for her to memorize and communicate through numbers than strange sounding names.

One of my family's funniest stories (though it did not seem that way at the time) was when my Mom was arrested because of the language barrier. My father, who was born in America of Irish descent, told her never sign anything -- it was sound advice, as she was legally able to sign away the deed to the house or title to the car with complete ignorance since she was illiterate in the English language.

![Painting of a dog swimming in water]

One day my Mom got pulled over by the police with my sister and me sitting in the back seat. The car's inspection sticker was expired. The police officer required her to sign the citation acknowledging receipt. This is pretty routine to all of us. You are not admitting guilt or giving up any of your rights, just acknowledging that you received a citation. You can probably guess what happened next. She refused to sign the citation, per instructions from my Dad.

So, the police asked her to get out of the car, patted her down, and cuffed her. She had just been arrested and was heading to the county jail. We waited until my Dad could be contacted, posted bail for my mom and picked us all up.

Why am I telling you these stories?

They illustrate the point that based on each of our personal backgrounds, cultures, personality quirks, geographical issues, we each have our own window to the world. Our job at LeashTime is to ensure that we account for diverse perspectives of the world and build our product to meet as many unique needs as possible.

In the example about my Mom's brush with the law, there was a break down in the user interaction design. Was it my Mom's fault for not thinking about the exceptions to the rule? No. Was it the policeman's fault for not realizing that this person was afraid of signing something they did not understand? No. It was my father's (the designer) fault for not thinking through the issue thoroughly and understanding the exceptions. He did not prepare the user (of his advice) about the exceptions and account for them so that the user did not get into trouble. For most interactions that my mom was likely to have, his advice was rock solid. It was the exception that he did not account for that caused big trouble.

Everyone has a unique perspective, proclivities and predilections. The bar continues to get raised higher and higher as we have more diverse users joining LeashTime. But it's a challenge we're ready to face!

POINTERS (NOT THE DOG BREED)

Back again next month...

Basics of Billing

Surcharges

As with many things in LeashTime, there are multiple methods for managing surcharges. Let's quickly define surcharges. These are charges that are applied to visits for extraordinary events such as a holiday, late night, early morning or last minute visit (there can be other reasons to apply a surcharge).

First, you will want to define your surcharges by going to **ADMIN > Surcharges**. You will see a list of pre-defined holidays and the surcharges that will be applied for those holidays. There are a couple of attributes you can set for each defined holiday surcharge. First, you can tell the system that you want surcharges automatically applied. Second, you can tell the system that you want surcharges applied on a per visit or per day policy. Finally, you will tell LeashTime that the surcharge is Active.

You can add your own holiday surcharges on dates that you choose as well. For each of the holidays you define, LeashTime will automatically create the surcharge for a visit (or visits) when created on that particular holiday. You do not have to separately create surcharges for these holidays. You must make sure that you check the **Automatic** box, though.

There is an exception. LeashTime does not create surcharges for visits generated by a recurring schedule. However, we do use the defined holiday surcharges to flag appointments generated by recurring schedules that may need to be canceled. For instance, let's say you charge $10 for President's Day as a surcharge. Many of your recurring schedule clients may cancel appointments for that day because they are not working on President's Day. You will receive a reminder notification prior to the holiday so that you can manage recurring visits.

The next section of the surcharges page is for weekend visits and early morning and late evening visits. You can set the boundaries of the visits. If the time window is set prior to or after one of the boundaries, then LeashTime will create an automatic surcharge.

Finally, you can create your own "anytime" surcharges. These surcharges will not be automatically applied and not associated with a single visit. They will not be auto-created and they will not automatically associated with a visit. An example of this type of surcharge would be a Last Minute Booking.

Automatic surcharges follow the visit. If a surcharge has been automatically created, then if you cancel or reassign a visit, the surcharge will be canceled or reassigned to a new sitter. If you do not want surcharges to be automatically applied, you can turn off this option in the surcharge configuration screen. One limitation of automated surcharges is that it makes no distinction between the type of service being offered. For instance, you may not charge a surcharge for overnights but do charge a surcharge for evening walks. Both types of services will generate a surcharge (.

What about a situation where there are multiple surcharges that can be applied to a single visit (e.g. Christmas visit, late PM, on a Saturday). This is what we call a surcharge collision and you can configure LeashTime to enforce a certain policy. Go to **ADMIN> Preferences > Billing Preferences** and choose **Automatic Surcharge Collision Policy**. Tell LeashTime how you want surcharges applied when there are multiple charges that can be applied. Even if a surcharge is automatically generated, you can delete it manually by clicking on the black X in the EZ Schedule editor.
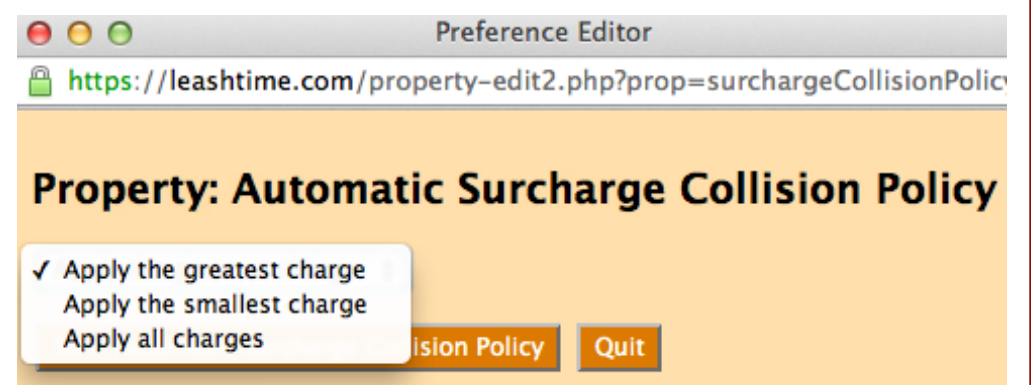
Sometimes, you need greater control over surcharges and how they are applied. You may not want surcharges to be automatically applied. In this case, you will create a surcharge in your standard service list. You can do this by going to **ADMIN > Service List**. The surcharge will have to be manually applied each time you would like to add it, similar to a service that is being scheduled. If you reassign or cancel the visit, the surcharge will not follow the visit so you will have to reassign and/or cancel it as a separate action.
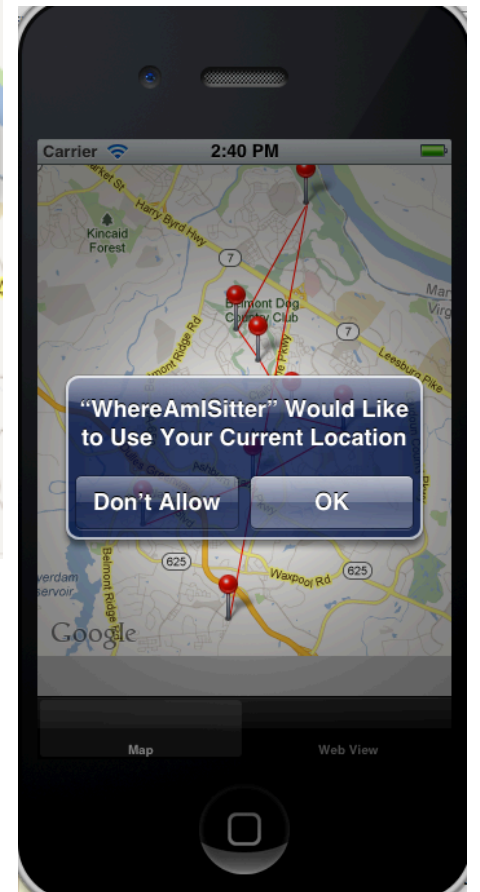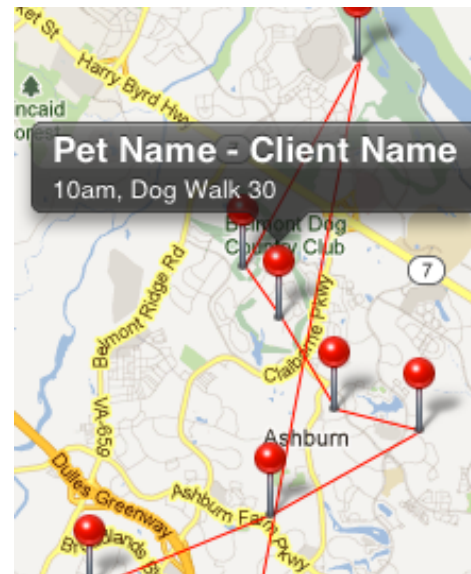
Mobile GPS Tracking and Reporting Issues

Many of you have sent us information about new petsitting software technologies that allow you to track your sitters in real-time or through QR-Codes (or mobile tags). We have looked at each of the solutions. In answer to the inquiries about whether we are working on something similar, the answer is yes. Even before we were aware there were other solutions on the market we had been experimenting with real-time GPS tracking via mobile.

We have learned it is better to roll something out carefully to ensure that the solution is flexible enough to meet everyone's needs, because everyone has a different perspective. There are several issues we are addressing:

- GPS tracking consumes a lot of energy and battery time. Let's say you are tracking sitters in real time and consume all their battery power, then you actually need to contact them via normal telephone call but cannot reach them because they are out of battery power. From a design perspective we must ensure that we are only consuming GPS resources when necessary.

- If you publish arrival and completion times to all your clients, they will then have an expectation that those times will be adhered to in the future. For instance, if you have a 11-1pm time window to complete a visit and today the arrival time is 11:53am, then guess what time the client may expect you to be there tomorrow? At least by 12pm. Some clients will abuse this information, ignoring your clearly defined policy of a 2 hour time window. You need to be empowered to selectively turn this feature on and off for your clients as you know who will abuse it and who will not.

- This may be a bit a of fad. How serious or common is the problem that clients do not trust you to complete visits? Will they really want to check in on you everyday? Perhaps some will (see the second point about problem clients). After a while, the novelty wears off and this is no longer interesting or useful to the client.

We have always believed GPS tracking data is more valuable in helping the manager make the business more efficient and reliable. Though we want to provide the capability to publish this information to clients, we do not believe this is the true value of GPS tracking and reporting.

Pet Name - Client Name
10am, Dog Walk 30

"WhereAmISitter" Would Like to Use Your Current Location
Don't Allow   OK

minute changes or cancelations. Sitters may call in sick and need to have their visits reassigned. The schedules are in a bit of flux.

You then proceed to manage the status of all the visits. You cancel, reassign, create. Once you do that, you will somehow communicate schedule changes to affected sitters. You want to make sure that they are aware that their schedule has been modified from the email they received early in the morning. At this point, you are expecting them to be on email or to log into their web account to see changes. Depending on circumstances, you may even text or call sitters to ensure they are aware of schedule changes.

You can see an example of this with a new feature that we are planning to release shortly in the Figure below. It is a report of Arrival and Completions on individual visits. We plan to allow you to manage the policies for publishing this information to your clients. For instance, you may want to only provide arrival and completion information in real-time to specific clients. You may also want to charge a premium for this sort of reporting and/or flag the client as a recipient of real-time information about visit status.

We feel a sense of urgency in delivering more mobile solutions for you. The world is changing and mobile computing is the future.

What is the true value? The true value is being able to identify miscommunication problems while there is still time to provide a solution. Let's say you auto-email schedules out to your sitters very early each morning. The state of the visits on a sitter schedule at 8am when they view it may be different than when they begin their visits at 11am. Between 8am and 11am, clients may call in with last

Visit Performance

Sitter: --All Sitters-- Starting: 09/10/2012 ending: 09/10/2012 Show

32 appointments found.

	Monday, September 10				
Time	Client	Service	Sitter	Arrived	Completed
7:00 am-9:00 am	Erisnor, Jude	Dog Walk	Garret	--	05:14 am
7:00 am-9:00 am	Acre, Allan	Dog Walk	Garcia	--	--
10:30 am-2:00 pm	Hults, Jacques	Mid-day Walks	LeAnne	--	--
11:00 am-1:00 pm	McIntyre, Susan	Dog Walk	Garret	--	--
11:00 am-1:00 pm	Alonso BOARD, Damien	Mid-day Walks	Kimberly	--	--
11:00 am-1:00 pm	Barrington, Burt L.	Mid-day Walks	Kendra	--	--
11:00 am-2:00 pm	Baumer, Tegan	Mid-day Walks	Kendra	--	--
11:00 am-1:00 pm	Linck, Max	Mid-day Walks	Kendra	--	--
11:00 am-1:00 pm	Acre, Allan	Dog Walk	Garcia		

Tutorial: Sending Emails - Part Three

This month, we will provide a tutorial for sending emails to sitters. There are multiple methods of communication for sending emails to sitters.

If you go to **SITTERS > Email / Alerts**, you will see a list of all sitters in your database that you can send email to. You can select individual sitters and send them a templated email. If you are unfamiliar with a template, it is basically a mail-merge. You write a generic message, including using tokens (covered in the last issue). You can then utilize the templates to send out mail messages to a specific sitter or group of sitter.

A common question we get is: can I send out a schedule to sitters showing their next 3 days of visits. Although we allow you to send automatic emails of daily visits and a weekly email, sometimes you would like to send out an email with a rolling 3 days of future visits.

To do so, go to **SITTERS > Sitter Schedules**. You can send out an email to a single sitter for a given period of time. Select a sitter, set the date range, click **Show** and then click the envelope icon. An email will be sent to the selected sitter for the dates shown.

All outbound communications are captured in the sitter's **Communications** tab.

Email Templates

LeashTime has standard email templates for common communication scenarios. To view and edit these templates, go to **ADMIN > Client Management > Email Templates**.

You can create templates to send to sitters or to clients. The process is the same as we showed you last month with clients, except instead of clicking the clients radio button, you would click the sitters radio button when defining the type of template. We will walk through an example for creating a template for sitters.

1. Click **Add New Template**
2. Type "Leave Notes with Client" in the **Label** field
3. Click the **sitters** radio button
4. Type "Be sure to leave note with client" in the **Subject** field
5. Type the following message in the **Body of Email** field:

```
#LOGO#

Dear #RECIPIENT#,

As you know, more notes means more gratuities.

Thanks,

Pack Leader Patti
```

Make sure you check the **Active** box (at bottom of message) and click **Save Template**. Congratulations, you have created a sitter email template.

If you now go back to **SITTERS > Email / Alerts**, the "Leave Notes with Client" template is now available. On this page, you can filter sitters by those who have visits within a particular date range. You can Select All Active and, choose a template and Send Email to Selected Sitters. You will probably observe that there is a Upcoming Sitter Schedule email template already available. This is a system template that will create an upcoming schedule email. Earlier we showed you how to send a rolling 3 day schedule to a single sitter. If you want to do the same for a group of sitters (or all of them), you could use this template. In fact, you can send them a rolling 3 days, 4 days, two weeks or whatever you desire.

You can create email templates for sitters and clients and send out batch messages. All outbound emails are logged into the respective Communications tab. Hopefully, you can begin to benefit from the powerful capabilities of template emails.