A Study of Dog Adoption, Retention, and Use of Social Media

Final Report

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Research to be shared with Pedigree and the American Humane Association to support their efforts to understand pet adoption and retention.
# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. 2
Secondary Research .................................................................................................................. 4
   Euthanization Rates .............................................................................................................. 4
   Increasing Animal Adoption ............................................................................................... 4
   Adoption Retention ............................................................................................................ 4
   Prevention ........................................................................................................................... 5
Social Media ............................................................................................................................. 6
   What’s Out There? ................................................................................................................ 6
   Themes ............................................................................................................................... 7
   What’s Missing? .................................................................................................................... 8
   Social Media Users ............................................................................................................ 8
   How Social Media Can Help ............................................................................................... 10
Primary Research .................................................................................................................... 11
   Negative Viewpoints of Shelters ....................................................................................... 11
   Breeders, Adoption, and Pet Stores .................................................................................. 12
   Suggested Solutions ......................................................................................................... 12
   Dog Preferences ............................................................................................................... 13
   Social Media Impact ......................................................................................................... 13
   Most Commonly Used Outreach ....................................................................................... 14
   Retention .......................................................................................................................... 14
   Adoption ........................................................................................................................... 15
   Fostering ............................................................................................................................ 15
   Animal Adoption Locations .............................................................................................. 16
   Overall Findings ............................................................................................................... 16
Recommendation ...................................................................................................................... 18
   Suggested Sites ................................................................................................................ 18
   Posts ................................................................................................................................ 19
   Who Will Do This? ............................................................................................................. 19
Works Cited ............................................................................................................................. 21
Appendix .................................................................................................................................. 23
   I. Focus Group .................................................................................................................. 23
   II. Personal Interviews ..................................................................................................... 26
   III. Interviewees Information ............................................................................................ 28
   IV. Social Media Recommendations .................................................................................. 30
   V. Social Media Chart ........................................................................................................ 33
Executive Summary

The ultimate goal of this research study was to understand how social media can be implemented to help improve adoption rates and retention. Extensive secondary research was conducted to gain information on adoption, adoption retention rates, animal shelters, the current uses for social media, along with numerous problems pertaining to dog adoption. Primary research was used through conducting personal interviews with shelters, dog adopters, and dog fosterers. To gain a better insight, a focus group about dog adoption and shelters was held. Both the primary and secondary data was used to create a social media plan for The ANNA Shelter, a local animal shelter in the Erie, Pennsylvania area.

Throughout the secondary research articles, many consistent themes seemed to occur. These themes ranged from euthanasia rates, benefits of dog training, and adoption retention rates. Euthanasia rates were recently analyzed to find the most commonly put down dog breeds. These breeds are Pit Bulls, Rottweiler’s, and Chow Chow Breeds. Secondary research showed that these dogs are often euthanized due to behavior issues. Behavioral issues turned out to be another concern when adopting dogs. However, with proper training prior to adoption the dogs can change specific behavioral attributes. The study showed that dogs that had specific training in a shelter were more than 1.4 times more likely to be adopted. The research conducted on retention gave shocking results. Over a year span at one shelter, 18.6% of adopted dogs were no longer in the original adopter’s home. Some had been returned to the shelter, euthanized, or given away due to behavior issues.

Seven personal interviews were completed to get a more in-depth view on the adoption process and associated issues. Secondary research supports the findings from the interviews in that certain dogs do have issues with being adopted. Dogs that are black take the longest to be adopted, along with older dogs. Puppies are easily adopted, but we found that repeatedly people would rather adopt a dog that is house broken and well mannered than adopting a puppy and having to start from scratch. It was also found that often time’s people looking to adopt are frequently interviewed and can be turned down if the shelter does not feel that they will be giving the dog a sufficient home.

Lastly, a focus group was held to see how social media affects their view points of adoption, and what their opinions were on shelters, pure breeds, and euthanasia. Through the focus group, we found that most participants did not realize how severe the euthanasia rates
were. Over half of the participants had adopted pure bred dogs, rather than going to a shelter. It was discovered that through social media they often only see the sad posts about dogs being abused, or the “ASPCA commercials”. They said they would rather see the dogs happy, than the negative or sad profile that regularly comes out.

After conducting both secondary and primary research, many conclusions were made. Among these conclusions was that social media is not being utilized to its fullest potential in assisting animal shelters with adoption and retention rates. In order to improve these rates in the Erie, Pennsylvania area, a social media plan of action has been created for the ANNA Shelter.
Secondary Research Findings

The information gathered from the secondary researched allowed for a better understanding of the severity of dog adoption issues. In order to conduct the focus group and interviews, an understanding of animal adoption and retention was essential.

Euthanization Rates

One of the major take-aways was the euthanization rates of the animals placed in the shelters. There are many different types of shelters that have different policies on the euthanization of the animals who are not adopted within a certain time period. There are some that euthanize after 30 days, where some have a strict no-kill policy. Another interesting fact about euthanization had to do with specific dog breeds. In a study, rates were analyzed to find the most commonly put down dog breeds. These breeds are Pit Bulls, Rottweiler’s, and Chow Chow Breeds. There are a few things that can help prevent the euthanization rates of the animals, which include spaying and neutering them before placing for adoption. However, secondary research showed that states that mandated spaying and neutering of dogs increased the likelihood of owners getting rid of them due the procedure’s high cost. Generally, one can conclude that if the animal is younger, house trained, doesn’t have a black coat, has medium hair, or is a female they have a better chance at being adopted sooner.

Increasing Animal Adoption

The ways to increase animal adoption can also be found through the secondary research. These ways include reducing or waiving the animal adoption fees, programs which include human interaction, and special training for dogs with behavioral problems. In one of the studies examined, it showed that if the animal was trained to be taken into a home with children, they were more likely to be adopted than those who were not trained. It also showed that if they had a colored name tag versus a black or a white one, this increased adoption rates.

Adoption Retention

In choosing the right dog, knowing what type the family is looking for is a great place to start. Ensuring that the adoption process goes well is very crucial in order to increase the retention rates of the new family pet. When looking to buy a new pet, conducting the proper research is necessary in order to make the most informed decision. Choosing a pure bred dog isn’t always the best strategy since they tend to develop more illnesses. When choosing a dog that is a mixed breed, they tend to inherit the best traits from each parents breed. Selecting the right pet for the family is very important in order to help retention.
At the adoption facility, a thorough interview and background check should be conducted in order to help with the retention rates. Both the adoption agency and adopter should make a careful decision when selecting a new dog.

**Prevention**

To ensure the animal’s safety, the owners are encouraged to get their dogs micro chipped. In most cases, a collar with tags isn’t enough to help reunite the animal to their prospective owners. Microchipping the family pet is very important to help reunite them with their owners to prevent strays from entering the shelters. If the animal were to be lost, social media is a great way to reunite. One article showed how the power of social media sites can help the pet owners find their lost animals. Social media sites are rapidly growing enabling the news to spread easily and quickly.
Social Media

Social media is being utilized now more than ever for business oriented purposes. It is no longer restrained to only a small market, but is now a common connection for businesses, consumers, and a multitude of different demographics. In order for pet related social media to become effective, social media sites need to be kept up to date, be visually appealing, be reliable, and be relevant to the business’ purpose.

What’s Out There?

Within the *Pet Related Social Media* chart twenty different organizations were researched along with their main websites (See Appendix V). It is very common for an organization to have a main webpage. From this page social media is attached in the form of icons. This creates a link from the webpage to the desired social media that visitors decide to visit. The most common places for the placements of these icons included the top right corner, and the very bottom of their homepages. It was easy to identify which organizations were highly recognized by the public, and which ones were local or smaller businesses. This can be observed by looking at the number of followers each of their social media cites has.

There were multiple commonalities that were discovered while researching the organizations that were chosen for the *Pet Related Social Media* chart. For example, all of the organizations that were researched used Facebook. Thus, Facebook is a main choice for businesses that choose to use social media. Another commonality was that all of the organizations used social media in order to further inform the public about their purpose. While their purposes and goals may have been different depending on what their business strived for, they all used social media to achieve the same obstacle. This was to achieve a higher rate of public awareness for their organization and its cause. This further leads to the finding that the most common uses for social media include; posting schedules of events, posting currently available animals for adoption, and posting information about the organization.

All of these organizations are very community oriented and publicly interactive. The ones that are more recognized and generally larger show a higher number of followers (please view chart). Social media helps extend communication to the public and execute their goals. They are
used in order to show animals that are up for adoption, events that are taking place, and getting the community more involved in their cause.

**Themes**

**Color.** Color is the first thing that stands out when a webpage is accessed. It should catch the eye of the person viewing it, and spark their interest. One visual commonality from all the organizations is that all of the main webpages contained either a bright eye catching design, or they had an element that immediately draws a viewer’s attention. This is useful because once the initial attention of the audience has been obtained they can then begin to navigate through the webpages content for further exploration.

**Visual aids.** Another theme that all the webpages share is their visual aids that flow throughout their webpage. Pictures are very good visual aids that help elicit emotion from the viewers. Especially in the cases that involve animals. If a caption is available along with a text it is easier to form a picture in your mind of what the text is trying to convey to you. It also makes the webpage more visually appealing.

This also extends to the social media sites. For example, when there are stories posted on ASPCA’s Facebook, Pinterest, and other accounts they post a photo of the animal along with their story. This shows their followers what animals have been adopted, are currently available, and also rescued. This helps coordinate to the followers what dogs are available, which ones are not available, and also gives information about the dogs that initiates interest from the followers of the social media sites.

**Tone.** A third important theme that all of the organizations express is the tone that they use within their social media sites, as well as their webpages. Throughout all of the sites a sense of urgency comes from the fact that dogs need to be adopted. It is also observed that projecting a sentimental or emotional atmosphere within the social media sites and webpages creates sympathy throughout the audience. This feeling is important because people need to feel emotionally invested in order to want to adopt a dog. If there is no emotional tie then the viewers will feel less inclined to adopt a dog, or feel the need to share the information from the social media with someone else.
What’s Missing?

After viewing a multitude of sites and social media it is clear that there is a gap between the larger and smaller organizations. The smaller organizations do not only consist of a smaller number of social media followers, but they also have less recognition. If they were to post more often to their social media sites, or develop a bigger group following it could increase their overall recognition by the public. It is noted that not all smaller organizations have the ability to develop as big of a following as some of the other larger organizations. However, local shelters and rescue centers may still be able to provide more information to the public that will create a stronger following.

In order for social media sites to stay interesting they must stay up to date. They should also post information onto their social media sites often. If you have everything up to date, but do not have a lot of postings it may appear to the viewers that you do not stay in touch or use social media often. If there are fewer postings, then that requires less visitation time for followers. The less they visit the social media, the less interested that they will become. This is more of a problem for smaller organizations. This could stem from a collection of different reasons however one main concern may be time management.

Social Media Users

Social media is a great tool for companies to use, but certain social media sites are geared more towards specific age groups due to their target markets. As of September 2013 90% of people between the ages of 18-29 years old used the internet while only 46% of 65+ years of age had some sort of an internet presence.15 With this information, it is extremely important to figure out who you target your information to. The more specific of a target market you have the better chance of getting your information to your desired customer. On the next page is a chart that shows the percentage of specific age groups that use the internet.
Understanding the age you are marketing to is important, but having an understanding of exactly what social media sites they are on gives you leverage. The chart below shows that 86% of 18-29 year olds are on Facebook, 28% are on Instagram, and 27% on Twitter. If you were trying to reach this target market, you could conclude that the best ways to reach them would be via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter since the majority of their population is on these medias. The chart below breaks down each age category and the social medias they use.
How Social Media Can Help

By implementing social media sites into their organizational structure information can become increasingly more appealing to customers. Customers want convenience. If there is an option to do so, they will look online for information while they are already on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. They will be more likely to visit the organization’s webpage. This also increases verbal activity between customers and their friends. They will be more willing to spread the word to their friends and family about the organization if they can locate information quickly and easily.
Primary Research

In order to compile primary research a focus group was held and personal interviews were conducted to evaluate the perceptions of dog adoption and retention (See Appendix I, II, III). Throughout this process valuable insight was given and numerous perspectives and trends arose. These trends seemed to be consistent between the focus group attendees and the personal interviewees.

Negative Viewpoints of Shelters

One of the most common responses from the interview participants was that shelters should portray their dogs more positively rather than advertising the dogs as being beaten, starved, or seen in cruel places. When questioned about social media pages about dogs, the participants replied that

“Images are always sad and depressing” and they “Don’t want to click on them because you know they will make you sad.”

This exposes the large issue that many organizations portray undesirable images of dogs. These images and other forms of media influence how people react toward shelters in general. When participants were asked what came to mind when they heard the word “shelter” the most commons responses were

“Sad commercials, sadness, no love, isolation, overcrowded, and euthanization.”

These responses revealed that the organization plays a role in society’s view on the topic of shelters due to the way they choose to advertise negative and depressing photos. The participants brought a key point to our attention stating that,

“Society trains you to see the shelter in this way.”

This proves that many organizations are marketing negative images of shelters which ultimately influence people’s overall views.
Breeders, Adoption, and Pet Stores

Upon further discussion, many of the participants would prefer to purchase or adopt dogs from private breeders. Four of our participants had purchased dogs from private breeders, one from a pet store, and one adopted. Many of them said they chose breeders because they are viewed as a healthier option. They also have heard and read that pet stores are bad places to purchase dogs due to the puppy mills they come from and living conditions that they are born in. One of the participants said that she had a family member who purchased a dog from a pet store and had a negative experience. After purchasing and taking the dog home, they discovered she had physical structure problems. Another student in the group purchased a dog from a pet store said his dog is now eight years old and has had no health or abnormal behavioral issues. The group had a discussion on the issue between them and concluded that with the right amount of research, a pet store may not be as bad of an option as they originally thought.

Suggested Solutions

The participants of the focus group offered multiple solutions towards changing society’s negative view of adoption shelters. Many of the participants felt that social media and other media played a large role on how shelters are viewed. They suggested that social media and advertisements

“Show positive things about the dogs.”

These positive advertisements included photos, videos, training videos, and simple descriptions. One of the participants brought our attention to the Budweiser “Best Buds” commercial. They believed that it was a very unique and positive way of portraying dogs and adoption. When asked what type of social media posts would grasp their attention they suggested something like a pet of the week or a spotlight section. Some of the local radio stations, Happy 92.7, and the local news station have a specific adoptable pet that they focus a portion of their show on each week. Everyone in the group agreed and said they listen and pay attention to these advertisements each week. Overall, the participants said they would be more willing to consider adoption if they saw more positive posts and advertisements. They believe that all dogs deserve an equal opportunity of being adopted and the more positive advertisements shown, the better
chance they will have of finding a home.

**Dog Preferences**

Many of the participants in the focus group had a similar perspective and preference when it came down to owning a dog. Six of the participants own or have previously owned a dog at some point in their life. They named a wide range of breeds that they own or have owned. These breeds included a Pug, Golden Retriever, Shi Tzu, Collie, Husky, and so on. Understanding what characteristics, traits, and preferences intrigued them when obtaining a new dog became a question of discussion. Participants were asked if they had any preference with the physical appearance of a dog while trying to obtain one; they all replied that they did not have a preference when it came to the physical traits of the dog. They would rather try to find a “connection” with the dog instead. Many suggest that they could conduct research before forming a final decision on a dog, such as health and the behavior of certain breeds. This would help them understand the breed beforehand and help facilitate the process of creating a bond. Some of the participants suggested that they could see several reasons why people would look and be affected by a dog’s physical traits. Examples included dogs that shed, human allergies, and size. They explained that,

“*Some people do not want black dog hair everywhere.*”

This is very interesting because many people may choose a dog on behalf of how the dog would impact their daily life, rather than choosing a dog for their physical traits. The participant’s final response was that,

“*You will find the right dog at the right time.*”

**Social Media Impact**

In order to find out how dog adoption organizations can reach people through the use of social media, several questions were asked pertaining to the participant’s daily social media habits. Many of the participants were large users of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. They use these social media sites on a daily basis where they often run into images and videos about dogs. Some of those pages that they came across were sponsored by The Humane Society and local
shelters. When they had the opportunity to view the images or videos they hesitated because they are always sad and depressing, according to our participants. There were also other instances where organizations promote dogs in a positive way that is more viewer-friendly. According to one of the participants, after personally viewing the Budweiser “Best Buds” commercial, he felt “happy” and would like to see more ads that expose dogs in this manner. When participants were asked, “Would seeing animal adoption posts on social media help influence any decisions you made regards to adopting from a shelter?,” they provided excellent feedback. Many suggested that it had great potential only if the posts were more positive rather than displaying the “lonely sad dog.” The common theme was displaying the topic of adoption in a positive manner will improve adoption rates. One of the participants also brought up the ASPCA commercials and how they quickly change the channel every time it comes on. This is something that many people can relate to, which is why it is important to show adoption in a positive manner on social media.

**Most Commonly Used Outreach**

Another topic of discussion was where people go to find a solution to their pet problems. When given a scenario about a dog issue, participants responded that they would use search engines such as Google to look for the best possible solutions. The internet was one of their favorite places to explore solutions, because it was quick and offered multiple solutions. Some of the participants also suggested calling veterinarians due to their strong experience with dog problems. Others would reach out to friends or family members that have experience similar problems. Some of the participants have personally had to use search engines, veterinarians, and friend/family to find a solution to their specific problem such as their dog biting things around the house.

**Retention**

From our findings in the focus group, the participants agreed that they would not return their dogs if they were faced with difficulties. Many suggested that it is important to face the positives and negatives of owning a dog. They would rather investigate multiple solutions than giving up their dogs away. According to the participants, none of them have been put into a situation or issue where they had to give up their dogs. If they were faced with a problem, as
previously mentioned their most favorable option would be to search the internet for a solution.

**Adoption**

After conducting an interview on adoption from a family perspective, one could conclude that they had specifications going into the process, but were also looking to help a dog in need. The adopter wanted to help a dog from a shelter in order to give it a home, but wasn’t willing to just take any animal into their family.

“We just thought it would be a better option, and it would give an animal in need a good home. Rather than going straight to a breeder. We also wanted to adopt an older dog.”

- Sarah Shuleski

This is an understandable statement when involving many others into the equation of the adoption process. With social media, the trend continues with Facebook. Most adoption centers will have at least a Facebook page for their followers to enjoy stories on recent news at the shelter. This was found to be a more sufficient way to update their followers or even people searching for a shelter to adopt from. It is easier to update the Facebook page over having to update a website on events that occur daily within the shelter.

**Fostering**

The two personal interviews we conducted with people who foster gave us interesting insights on the process itself. We discovered that the process can be emotionally draining, yet rewarding at the same time.

“It is emotionally draining to take a dog, love and care for it like it was yours, and then give it away.”

- Erica Deitrich

Both of the fostering families that our group interviewed specifically fostered puppies, which we have learned is a more challenging process. Each interview gave us insight about the different types of social media that is used, along with the process of fostering, and what happens after they have raised the puppy. The procedures described by the interviewees were very similar. They both had the ultimate goal of finding the dog a permanent loving home.
The interviewees said the process begins with a vet visit to ensure the dog is healthy and safe to be around. Once this is complete, the dogs are placed in the volunteer’s home. During the dogs stay at the volunteers home they are house trained and taught to socialize with the other animals in the home. Eventually, the dog will be removed from the home to be adopted.

**Animal Adoption Locations**

Upon interviewing two separate adoption locations, we discovered that their adoption process was conducted in two completely different ways. Both of these processes have proven to be sufficient for each shelter, but it was interesting to learn about the different viewpoints and why they have chosen the process they had.

“The most important issue for pet retention is to conduct good adoptions in the first place. It’s important to know where these animals are going after they leave.”

- **Joseph Grisanti**

Even with the processes being different, they both have the same focus for doing what is best for the animal. To ensure the animal is placed in a safe home they offer a strict application process that even uses home visits. We also found that both of them use social media, to try and promote adoption and educate. Both locations focused mostly on Facebook. They enjoyed using Facebook because of its simplicity. It is quick and easy to add photos and stories while reaching a large audience quickly.

**Overall Findings**

Throughout the media discussions and investigations, information always led back to the adoption facilities. The adoption facilities are failing their potential customers by using such negative advertisements. Their intentions are meant to be good, but in the mind of the consumer it is not.

**Negative Depictions.** Today many organizations tend to promote or market a cause, specifically about dog adoption in a manner that drives the public away from the idea of adoption. Dogs are depicted in small cages, overcrowded environments, abusive injuries, and more. This approach is seen as extremely ineffective.
Social Media. Discussions involving social media allowed for exclusive information and reason for use from multiple organizations. The majority of the organizations use Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote their shelter. Facebook was said to be a great option because it allows for quick, easy posts while reaching a large audience rather quickly. The other social media sites were not utilized as much as Facebook due to the complex posting process and unfamiliarity with the newer applications.

By changing the way the organization markets themselves and adoption, adoption rates could improve and shed a much better light on adoptable animals in general. The first step to a brighter future is to develop new marketing strategies for promotional material and social media. One way that they can handle this issue is by using an approach that will depict a healthier and a more positive image of dogs and the environments that they are in. Social media needs to be utilized as often as possible. Today’s generation is so engulfed in technology that direct contact is not always an option. If someone is interested in getting a dog, having social media lead them to an adoption site would then expand the mind of the potential purchaser. The first thing the younger generation does is search for an organization on social media. If the adoption shelter has these social media sites with positive posts, more people would be excited and willing to look into the option.
**Recommendation**

After conducting our research, we have been able to conclude that social media is not being used to its highest potential to improve adoption and retention rates. Upon this conclusion, we have created a social media action plan for the ANNA Shelter to best improve dog adoption and retention rates for the future.

**Suggested Sites**

After hosting our focus group and personal interviews we were given interesting insights into what social media sites are used the most. Our focus group consisted of college students which gave us the opportunity to learn what is most popular within the younger generation. The most common responses were Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Although they used all of these sites, the focus group concluded that Facebook was used the least. Students are slowly leaving Facebook and traveling more towards Twitter and Instagram posts because the posts are more relevant to their interests.

Our personal interviews consisted of middle aged men and women. From these interviews, we learned that they seem to use Facebook for personal and business use. They loved using Facebook because it was so easy to use and was its ability to reach a large audience quickly.

Overall, we recommend using Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to reach the proper audience. Facebook will be used to reach the middle aged and younger audience, while Instagram and Twitter will be used to reach the younger generation. The great thing about using these three sites is you can sync Instagram and Twitter to Facebook. By syncing them together, you can post a picture on Instagram and it will also post to your Twitter and Facebook page. This is a great asset to have because you only have to post the photo on Instagram to reach your whole audience. Another great thing about this is it may give the older generation more of an incentive to look into other social media forms. When they see a post on Facebook that says “via Instagram,” they may want to join Instagram to get more information. It may seem overwhelming to host three different forms of social media, but with the synchronization and the ease of use for each posting will be simple and reach an even bigger audience faster.
Posts

Although you can synchronize all three social medias, each social media can be used for a specific purpose. Instagram, for example, can be used to showcase pictures and short video clips of all kinds. We recommend having a pet of the week, pictures of dogs with their adoptive families, a new dog to the shelter, pictures of shelter events, and even photos of the staff! These posts will also be posted on Facebook and Twitter with the synchronization feature.

Twitter only allows 140 characters per post, thus making these posts short and sweet. We suggest having brief statements about shelter events, donation requests, interesting statistics, and snapshot of an article.

Facebook is going to be utilized more for longer posts. These posts would consist of animal stories, education information, adoption information, shelter news, and upcoming shelter events. These posts should be positive to keep your audience interested. From our focus group we were able to conclude that people want to see positive things about the sheltered animals. Even if the story begins sad, ending on a positive note is what will keep your audience involved with your shelter and social media sites. A full list of examples of positive posts can be found in our appendix (See Appendix IV).

Who Will Do This?

Posting on all these social medias is definitely a challenging task for an animal shelter. In order to successfully monitor and manage all social media accounts we suggest hiring a social media marketing intern. College students are constantly seeking new internships, so hiring for this position would be simple. An example job description for the position can be seen on the following page.
Having an unpaid intern join the team is a great way to get the results you are looking for without being overwhelmed with other duties of the business. The intern will be gaining the experience they are looking for while you are gaining the interest you desire.

**Final Thoughts.** We believe that implementing these social media sites will improve the chances of dog’s adoption and retention. Using a variety of sources, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter will allow the message to reach numerous age groups fast. When the posts contain positive information, they are more likely to be influential on the followers, generate a response, and encourage them to take action.

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**“Seeking a social media marketing intern for the summer of 2014.”**

We are looking for an intern to assist with all aspects of our social media marketing efforts. You will be working with our team and learning the ins and outs of our business while using your personal and business experience with social media. Interns must be able to assist in formulating social media plans, carrying these plans out, and measuring the results. You will be responsible for, but are not limited to, the following:

- Creating new profiles and pages
- Uploading videos and photo albums
- Seeking out users
- Updating posts
- Tracking the growth and the impact of social media on the business
- Replying to comments
- Report findings and suggestions to team

We need someone who is enthusiastic, hardworking, motivated, and loves animals! If you are interested please send your resume and cover letter to our HR department.
Works Cited


Appendix

I. Focus Group

Script to Introduce Focus Group

Welcome

- Welcome! We wanted to thank all of you for taking the time to participate in this evening’s discussion.

1. Introductions

- My name is Erik Vazquez and I will be the moderator for today’s discussion. This is Dannielle Tomczak and she will be the assistant monitor along with Kourtney Walsh, Rachel Curtiss, and Ashley Micsky taking notes.

2. Purpose

- The purpose of this focus group is to discuss different types of pet ownership. We are very thankful for your input and request that you be completely honest and open with us.

3. Guidelines

- Talk to each other and be comfortable voicing your thoughts and ideas; this is a judge free zone and we want to hear your opinions
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Upon your approval, we will be recording this session to ensure that we capture all the important thoughts and opinions. We won’t identify anyone by name in our report. You will remain anonymous.
- We ask that you turn off your cell phones and devices. If you must respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and rejoin us as quickly as you can.
- My role as moderator will be to guide the discussion, feel free to ask me any questions during the session.

4. ICE BREAKER: We will now take a minute to go around the table to introduce ourselves. We would like to hear your first name and if you could play any musical instrument, what would it be and why? If you already play an instrument(s), what do you play and why?
Focus Group Questions:

- We would like to hear if you own a dog or have a family dog, if so, what type of and how many?
  - What is your favorite part of owning a dog(s)?
  - Where was your dog from? (i.e. shelter, breeder, etc.)

- Do you plan on or have interest in owning a dog in the future?
  - What kind?
  - When? (Age, marital status, etc.)
  - Do you have a preference in what you see when obtaining a dog? (i.e. color, breed, size, hair, etc.)
  - Do you have any personal experiences (positive or negative) with an adopted dog?

- When you think of “shelter”, what is the first thing that comes to mind and why?

- Your friend is thinking about adopting a dog but has no specifics in mind. Your friend visits the local shelter and finds many dogs that interest them. All the dogs within the shelter have high probabilities of getting adopted, except for one. The shelter plans on euthanizing this dog within two weeks (the dog is 5 years old and black). Your friend has the option to save this dog from being euthanized or the option to adopt any of the other dogs. What advice would you give your friend in making the decision and why?

- If you were to guess, how many pets are euthanized each year? (answer: According to the Humane Society, about 2.7 million healthy pets each year in the United States… that is one every 11 seconds)

- What social media sites do you use the most frequently? Why do you like these specific sites?
  - Have you ever seen posts about dog adoption on social media?
  - On which social media?
  - Do you remember the name of the page?
  - Was the page sponsored by an organization? (i.e. Budweiser, Humane Society, etc.)
  - What did you think of social media pages being devoted to dogs?
  - In what ways do you believe social media could be used to improve dog
adoption?
  o What type of post would grasp your attention? (i.e. Pictures, statistics, local animals, etc.)
  o Lets imagine: You are having a problem with your dog. The problem is that your dog chews your shoes. You have just begun to notice this problem. Where would you go first for help to solve this issue? Why have you chosen this method or visited this page?
    ▪ In other situations, when you visited a website for any dog problems did the site help solve the problem? If not, why?
  • Would seeing animal adoption posts on social media help influence any decisions you made in regards to adopting from a shelter? Why?
  • Is there anything else you would like to add to the discussion
II. Personal Interviews

Interview Questions

Adoption:

1. When you made the decision to get a pet, what made you choose adoption?
2. What kind of research did you conduct before the adoption?
3. Before you went to the shelter, what kind of dog did you want? Was there a specific breed, age, or color you were looking for?
4. What type of dog did you end up adopting?
5. Can you describe the adoption process? What was it like?
6. Did you experience any difficulties before, during, or after the adoption process?
7. How was the transition for your dog and your family when he/she was taken home?
8. Did you recognize any behavioral issues? If so, what kind?
9. Have you ever had to return a dog? Why? Can you describe the process?
10. Would you adopt another dog in the future? Why or why not?
11. Have you adopted any other dogs?
12. In a typical day, what social media sites do you find yourself on the most?
13. Does the shelter you adopted from use social media? If so, what do they post?
14. How could social media be used to encourage others to adopt?

Fostering:

1. How did you get into fostering? Did you family foster growing up?
2. Why do you choose to foster over adopting or purchasing?
3. Can you explain how the fostering process works? Is it easy, hard, complicated, etc.?
4. How often do you foster an animal? Do you get a new animal after one is taken back?
5. Have you fostered more than one pet at a time? Do you find this more challenging? Why?
6. What kind of behavioral issues have you noticed with fostering?
7. Have you ever had to return a fostered dog due to issues? If so, what was this process like?
8. What do you find most rewarding about fostering dogs?
9. In a typical day, what social media sites do you find yourself using the most?
10. Does the shelter you foster for use social media? Which sites?
11. If so, what kinds of things do they post?
12. How could social media be used to encourage others to foster animals?

Animal Adoption Locations:

1. On average, how many people a week come in with interest in adopting or fostering?
2. Can you describe the adoption process?
3. What do you think of the process? Could there be improvements?
4. What type of dogs get adopted the quickest? (breed, age, color, etc.)
5. What type of dogs have a harder time get adopted? (breed, age, color, etc.)
6. What kind of training do the dogs receive before getting adopted?
7. What forms of follow up procedures are conducted after a dog is adopted?
8. On average, how many dogs are brought back to the shelter after adoption? What are the reasons?
9. Can you describe the adoption return process?
10. What kind of classes does your facility offer to improve adoption retention?
11. What social media sites does your organization use?
12. What do you use these social media sites for?
13. How do you manage social media within your organization?
14. In what ways do you use social media to promote adoption?
15. How could social media be used to improve pet adoption retention?
III. Interviewees

Foster:
Erica Deitrich
2/20/2014
6:25pm
Phone Interview conducted by Danielle Tomczak
- Erica is from Erie, Pennsylvania and has been fostering puppies for close to 3 years. She has fostered dogs that have become ill and needed to be taken into a home until are healthy enough to be put back into the shelter. She finds it very rewarding to help foster and raise these puppies to be put adopted into their forever home.

Joette Broyer
2/21/2014
6:00 pm
Phone Interview conducted by Ashley Micsky
- Joette lives and fosters puppies in Brookline, New Hampshire at a shelter called WOOFFUN. She used to work as a vet technician for many years, but then went into nursing. She started to foster after she stopped working at the vet because she said, “I saw first hand how much help rescue groups need, I figured fostering was the best way to utilize my skills and help animals.”

Adoption:
Sarah Shuleski
2/15/2014
4:15pm
Face to face interview at owners home conducted by Rachel Curtiss
- Sarah recently adopted a yellow Labrador from a shelter in Brighton Township. She said that she decided to choose a shelter because, “we just thought it would be a better option, and it would give an animal in need a good home. Rather than going to a breeder to get a puppy. Plus we wanted to adopt a dog not a puppy.”
Adoption Locations:
Kris Steiner
2/25/2014
1:15pm
Phone interview conducted by Kourtney Walsh
  - Kris is the Executive Director of Because You Care animal rescue organization. They take in abandoned and abused animals and nurse them back to health. Right now they are in the process of expanding the size of their facility in order to intake more animals and keep the company growing.

Joseph Grisanti
2/25/2014
4:00pm
Face to face interview at Humane Society conducted by Kourtney Walsh
  - Joseph is the Executive Director of the Humane Society of North Western Pennsylvania. They have recently been donated a years worth of food from the Mars Corporation.
IV. Social Media Posts

Instagram:

- **PET OF THE WEEK: Meet Floyd!** He is a two-year-old pup looking for a wonderful home! If you're interested contact our shelter! 814-000-0000

- **Congratulations to Rick, the proud new owner of Frank!**

- **Meet Kourtney!** She is our lead cat care giver here at the ANNA Shelter! Any questions or concerns about cats? She's the one to call!

- **Looking for a gorgeous, cuddly dog with an amazing personality? Meet Piper!** She is new to our shelter and looking for a forever home!

- **Big News! Pedigree and students from Penn State Behrend are sponsoring a renovation at our shelter April 26th and 27th!** Come check it out!
Twitter:

ANNA Shelter
@TeamProject3

Looking for volunteers for this weekends adoption event! Email
buyerbehaviorbehrend@gmail.com for more info! 💼🐶 #volunteer
#adopt
3/25/14, 12:34 PM

ANNA Shelter
@TeamProject3

Great article about successful animal adoptions was just released! Check out our
Facebook page for the full article!
3/25/14, 12:40 PM

ANNA Shelter
@TeamProject3

Did you know that 3 to 4 million dogs and cats are euthanized every year in the US?! #stop
#nokill #adopt
3/25/14, 12:37 PM

ANNA Shelter
@TeamProject3

Want to help sponsor our shelter animals? Call us today at 814-000-0000 for more
information! Every penny counts! #donate #shelter
4/21/14, 5:54 PM
Facebook:

Unofficial: ANNA Animal shelter
4 minutes ago

A.N.N.A Shelter News:
We are proud to announce that we have graciously accepted a $10,000 grant from Mars Pedigree! This money along with Penn State Behrend Volunteers will be renovating our shelter to make it more welcoming to our adoptive families! Pictures of the renovation will be uploaded soon!

Like · Comment · Share

Unofficial: ANNA Animal shelter
11 minutes ago

Adoption Information that is IMPORTANT:
*We DO allow out of the area adoptions - however you must come to the shelter for the adoption. We do not ship our pets - adoption requires a face to face interview with a member of our staff and your personal interaction with the animal. There are no exceptions to this rule.
*It is important for us to meet you here. Adoptions are based on the best possible fit for the new owner and animal. Adoptions are never done on a "first come/first serve basis". Your application may be approved or denied for any reason as we are trying to find the best fit possible in choosing lifelong homes.
*A "Meet and Greet" is required if you have other pets in your home (dogs only). Call or email the shelter if you have questions regarding this rule.

No appointment is necessary for you to meet your future family member!

Like · Comment · Share

Unofficial: ANNA Animal shelter
17 minutes ago

The Association for Needy and Neglected Animals was incorporated as a non-profit animal welfare organization in June of 2004. The group is named for Anna - a Shitzu mix that was brought into the local police impound and was scheduled for euthanasia. Our director spotted her and took her in. With a little time, effort and expense, Anna was cleaned up and back on her way to good health. Our organization was started to help other animals like Anna get a second chance. We put the extra time and effort into getting as many adoptable pets new loving, life long committed homes.

--Learn more about how you can help at our website: www.theannashelter.com

Like · Comment · Share

Unofficial: ANNA Animal shelter shared a link.
March 25

Check out this article about "No Pup Left Behind"

No Pup Left Behind: Frago's Story
theanimalrescue site.greatergood.com

This Patriot Day, while we mourn the losses of this tragic anniversary, we can also pause for a moment to reflect on the gains and growth of the past twelve years. We can share those small stories that demonstrate the principles and values expressed in our daily lives, often in our...