

How to Effectively Use Photographs to Boost Sales for Your Pet Industry Business

Are you using photographs effectively in advertisements for your pet product or service? You may think that it's just a matter of finding a few cute pictures of a dog or cat and strategically placing them throughout the ad, right?

While that's one way to use pet photographs in your marketing material, it's not the best or only use of such a powerful tool. You can make pictures of pets work to your benefit in several different ways.

Pet owners enjoy looking at photographs of other animals. A cute, well-taken shot of a pet warms the heart. Besides that, whether in color or black-and-white, photos draw people's attention quite naturally. If your competition isn't using images, you definitely want to decide to include some in your advertising, since that alone will give you a visual edge.

Photos to Draw Attention...

If there are 2 brochures on display advertising a similar product and one has on its cover a line drawing of a cat while the other has a professional pet photograph on the front, which one will draw the most attention? The picture of a real animal in all its cute glory inevitable wins out and that company ends up with more business.

Another use of attention-grabbing photos is to place them along with a vital point or feature you want your customer to read about: the eye will naturally travel to the image and then to the text that's right there. If there's a feature about your product or service that you're certain will 'make the sale,' include it in close proximity to a photo!

Photographs to Break up the Text...

In the case of a brochure or a webpage, you have the opportunity to write about your pet product or service in quite some detail. However, given the average person's attention span, when faced with paragraph after paragraph of printed words, the mind loses focus.

There are a number of ways to break up the sheer volume of text. One method is to use subheadings which I've done in this article. You can insert testimonials. Let's not, however, forego an opportunity to add an adorable picture of a pet, representative of similar animals that your product has helped.

Rather than risk losing your reader's attention, plan a controlled "mini-break" for their mind through the use of a photo before you segue to your next point or section.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words....

We've all heard that saying before. While the word count may be somewhat exaggerated, there is certainly some truth to the adage. Suppose you need to work with a relatively

small space, such as a quarter page magazine ad: suddenly every word becomes precious. Your font size must be easy to read and yet there's so much detail to include.

Perhaps you want to note that your boarding facility accepts cats as well as dogs ... or that your supplement can be used for both types of animals. Rather than use up another line of text, let a photograph speak for you: include one of a cat and dog together. Readers will pick up on the implication and you now have room to mention another fact about your business or product that a photo cannot convey.

Now About Those Photos...

Try to think like your customers when selecting your photographs. If you're marketing an herbal pain-relief supplement for dogs to the general populace, is it really wise to use a photo of a canine in the show ring? Would it not be better to include a photograph of an average middle-aged dog who still likes to go out for a romp in the park?

It's very tempting to use the cutest photograph or a shot of the most popular breed of the day: but does this really tell your audience what they want to 'hear?' Even more important, is that particular photo suitable? This brings us to the next point....

Amateur or Professional?

Another choice you have to make is what type of photo you want to use. Proud pet owners, like parents with kids, love to share pictures of their animals with you. As a result, you may well have a wonderful selection of dog and/or cat photos that you could use in your advertisements. The real question is: are they usable?

Most of your customers are not professional photographers and have never taken a course in photography. So take a look at those pictures very carefully. Is Snowball nothing more than a small, white, non-descript kitten-like shape against the huge background of the yard? Can you actually see T.J.'s face? Do you want to publish the photo of Misty even though her snout is partially blocked by the tree trunk?

While more costly, it may be a wise one-time investment in your business to solicit the aid of a professional photographer and have him or her take some pet photographs. The Internet may also be a valuable source to find non-copyrighted photo images for your use.

One Final Point...

Is it better to use a photograph rather than a line drawing or cartoon-type image? Let's look at it this way: you're a serious business-owner and you've worked hard to develop your product or service. You're a professional in your field and you want your customers to take you seriously. While a cute cartoon-like image may be appropriate for some pet toys, on the inner pages of a brochure, or selectively placed within your website, start by using a "real" photograph to set the tone for your ad.

Liven up your advertising with photographs by all means, but be particular about the quality and type of images you use and be clear on what purpose each selection serves.

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