

BEST PRACTICES: MARKETING



**WE BELIEVE THAT ALL DOGS ARE INDIVIDUALS
AND EVERY DOG DESERVES A CHANCE TO SHINE.**

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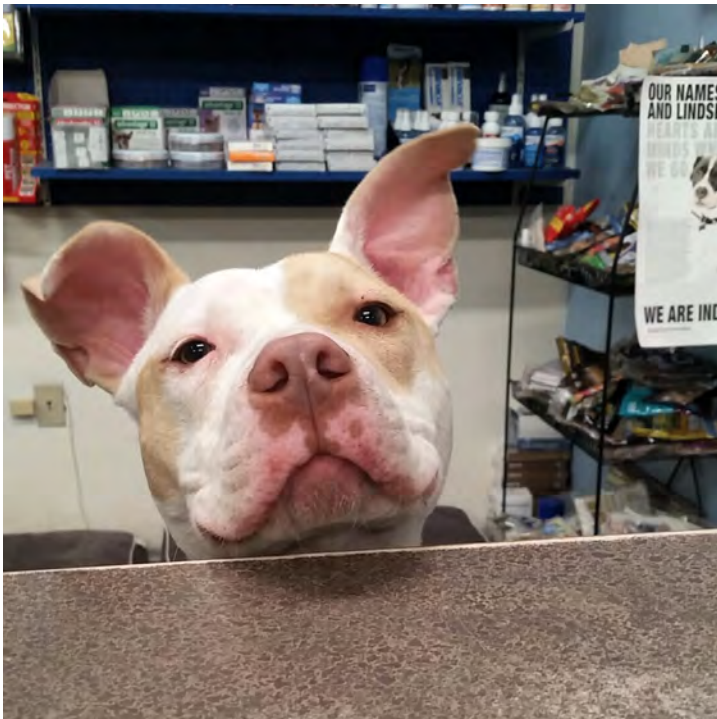
MARKETING RESOURCES

Marketing in the animal rescue world isn't the same as it once was. The internet has changed everything about how we communicate with our communities. It's also changed how people react to the information we share.

It's not enough to put up a list detailing a dog's physical attributes and personality. You need to take those things and craft them into a story in order to gain the public's interest. You also need to pair that story with great photographs and maybe some videos.




ADOPTION MARKETING IS ABOUT TELLING AN ENGAGING STORY ABOUT EACH INDIVIDUAL DOG



For an understaffed and/or busy organization, all of this change can sound overwhelming. It's actually really easy and fun.

The change doesn't mean that you abandon traditional methods either. On the ground community outreach and shelter promotions are all part of a great adoption marketing strategy.

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IT ALL STARTS WITH WHAT YOU NAME THE DOGS IN YOUR CARE

What you name the dogs in your care might seem like a small thing. But, it's the second thing people notice about a dog after their appearance. If the name you give your dog isn't memorable, you're missing out on an opportunity to create a lasting positive first impression with potential adopters.

Think about a potential adopter. Let's say that person has had a really hard day and they're scrolling through Facebook and up pops a picture of a dog named "Chardonnay." The potential adopter might think:

"Wow, a glass of Chardonnay sounds really good right now."

That doesn't sound like it has much to do with the dog, but here's the thing - that dog is going to stick with them. That dog's name triggered

something in them. They made a connection. If the dog was named "Fido," well, they likely would have kept scrolling.

At AFF, we've had dogs named after wines and recently a litter of puppies with fish aquatic names (think Dory from *Finding Nemo*).

Unleashed Pet Rescue and Adoption in Mission, Kansas is one of the best at naming their dogs. The rescue works with open intake shelters in their area, particularly Kansas City Animal Control.

We chatted with Unleashed's Danielle Reno, the organization's director, about how the shelter decides on crazy names for the dogs in their care and the effect that has on adoption rates.

To make things simple, Unleashed uses themes to

name their dogs. They choose a different theme each week for the dogs from Kansas City Animal Shelter.

Danielle told us:

"[We choose] names that appeal to the senses and subconsciously appeal to adopters."

So, Jelly Bean, Chocolate Chip Cookie, Cucumber Melon, Salted Caramel Blondie, Autumn Air, Cotton, etc... will help get an animal more attention and essentially adopted quicker."

She added:

"NO TOPIC OR THEME IS OFF THE TABLE. WE GET INSPIRATION FROM MUSIC, POP CULTURE, TV, ETC..."

GIVE PEOPLE SOMETHING TO REMEMBER. DON'T BE AFRAID TO GET A LITTLE CRAZY.

The day David Bowie died, three dogs were named in his honor – China Girl, Space Oddity, and Starman. They did something similar when Natalie Cole (Pink Cadillac, Paper Moon, and Unforgettable, to name a few) and Merle Haggard (Workin' Man Blues, Twinkle Twinkle Lucky Star, and Big City, among others) died.

They've also named dogs after soap operas.

Some of their other themes include Westerns:

- Blazing Saddles
- Gun Smoke
- Dances with Wolves
- High Noon
- True Grit

Then there were the 90s toys to bring back a little nostalgia for potential adopters:

- Polly Pocket
- Bop-It
- My Size Barbie
- Tamagotchi



“[CHOOSE] NAMES THAT APPEAL TO THE SENSES AND SUBCONSCIOUSLY APPEAL TO ADOPTERS.”

We asked Unleashed what potential adopters thought about these unique names. Danielle said:

“Adopters usually laugh when they find out their names but then they always remember them! I believe it has increased our adoption rate, although I have no definitive way to prove it. But it catches people’s attention, so we know it’s working. We are known for our names!”

And, indeed, Unleashed is known for its names. In 2015, their dog Miss Marshmallow’s story went viral, resulting in her adoption and increased attention on the rescue.

While we can’t guarantee silly names will make your dogs go viral, you will garner extra attention from potential adopters. After all, who can forget names like Slick Booty, Shaggy Booty, and Correction Tape?



PROMOTE HAPPINESS, NOT SADNESS

A GUIDE TO FRAMING A
DOG'S STORY

After you pick a dog's name, it's time to decide how you want to frame the dog's biographical information. That framing will carry through all of your marketing about that particular dog. "Framing" is the tone of the story and the emotion it evokes.

It's tempting to focus on the heartbreak of a dog's story. You find yourself angry and emotional about it, so you want to express how you feel. You've seen larger, more well-known and well-resourced organizations run campaigns using sadness to gain support and donations (cue the Sarah McLachlan song), but that's not something that works for smaller groups. Larger organizations are very strategic about the campaigns they run. These are designed to raise funds, not promote specific pets who need homes.



"REMEMBER THAT YOU'RE IN THE BUSINESS OF MAKING PEOPLE AND PETS HAPPY."



Then there are the media outlets that seem to thrive on sad stories about dogs. You've seen those stories go viral, so why wouldn't they work for you and the dogs in your care? Sad and traumatic stories may get a dog attention on social media, but they don't always translate to adoptions. Undoubtedly, these stories will make people feel compassion for a dog, but they don't say anything about why a dog would make a good pet.

Also, remember that media attention may result in a flood of adoption applications, but that doesn't mean you'll receive one from someone who would make an excellent guardian for that dog.

DON'T LET A DOG'S BACKGROUND OVERSHADOW THEIR PERSONALITY.

Think about it in terms of breed labels. Due to widely circulated misinformation, many breed labels carry a negative connotation. The same is true of a dog's background. Whether a dog was abandoned, abused, from a puppy mill, a hoarding situation, or a myriad of other circumstances, that background can overshadow a dog's actual personality.

Your focus should always be on helping potential adopters see a dog with a loving personality who can provide a future of happiness for whoever is lucky enough to adopt him.

There is evidence to support the idea that positive ads are more successful in promoting adoptions and raising funds for local animal welfare organizations than ads that focus on sadness and despair.

Remember that you're in the business of making people and pets happy. You want to create long lasting matches between pets and families. You're also in the business of connecting with your community. People want to experience happiness. People won't want to visit your shelter if they think it's a sad place. Let them know that the dogs in your care are happy and fun-loving. People want companion animals that will enrich their lives. Show them why the dogs in your care can do that.

When you tell a dog's story, focus on who that dog is, not on where they came from. Remember that every time you write a bio, a social media post, or speak with a potential adopter.

DON'T CONFUSE ADOPTION MARKETING WITH ADOPTION COUNSELING



Focusing on happiness vs sadness doesn't mean that you hide a dog's past from potential adopters.

Remember that framing a dog's story in a purely positive light only relates to marketing. Marketing is not adoption counseling.

You do need to be honest with potential adopters and give them all of the information they need before they adopt a new member of their family. But this shouldn't happen on the internet. Adoption counseling should happen in person.

Here's why:

Statements like "must have a fenced backyard," "must live with adults," "has resource guarding issues" work as stop signs for potential adopters. So does focusing on a dog's traumatic past, if they have one.

These statements get taken out of the context and don't reflect who the dog is, how trainable they are, and how they well they might fit into a person's family. They give

people the impression that a dog is damaged or will make a difficult pet. This means that people might miss out on a dog who would actually make the perfect addition to their family.

When that in person meeting happens, that's when you disclose everything you've observed, assessed, and know about that particular dog.

"MARKETING IS MEANT TO GRAB ATTENTION AND OPEN A DOOR. ADOPTION COUNSELING IS FOR FULL DISCLOSURE."

- Kristen Auerbach, Deputy Chief
Animal Services Officer, Austin Animal Center

- What does he like?
- What are his challenges?
- What health issues does he have?
- What's his history?

DON'T include every single detail about an animal's entire life or explain every possible flaw or challenge in one post.

Imagine writing a job resume where you list every mistake you've ever made, all the projects that didn't go well, and all the things your coworkers find most annoying about you. You're probably never going to get the call to come in for that job interview, even if you are a great prospect!

Your resume is a way to land the interview where you have a chance to discuss your strengths and weaknesses. The social media post or bio is the way to get adopters to meet your dogs and have a discussion with you about all of their needs.

TIPS FOR KEEPING MARKETING AND ADOPTION COUNSELING SEPARATE

By: Kristen Auerbach,
Deputy Chief Animal
Services Officer,
Austin Animal Center

DO tell a story!

We had a dog in our shelter who was a wild child. He barked and whined while kenneled and had tons of energy. His behavior in the shelter sent adopters running.

In the past, we might have posted that Dalton was a 'high energy' dog looking for an 'active' family who would take him running and hiking. But we've learned potential adopters read through the lines, even when we try to be subtle.

We sent Dalton to a foster home for a few days, so we could learn more about how he would behave in a home. His foster mom shared a quick story with us about something he did while at their house.

The story was so cute that we shared it on Facebook. It brought in dozens of interested adopters. Marketing him this way allowed us to find a family from this group who was perfect for this young, exuberant pooch. Everyone else that was interested adopted other dogs.

DON'T focus on restrictions.

Restrictions are articulated either as a directive statement, as in "no kids" or as a passive statement such as, "would do best in a home with no kids." A restriction like this means different things to different people. It leaves a lot of room for people to imagine why you've included it in your marketing.



For most adopters, a statement like this acts as a stop sign. They don't know why you're using it and it may sound scary. Even potential adopters who don't have kids might think, "Well, my neighborhood has kids and so I guess this dog won't work for me," or alternately, "I don't have kids, but who wants a dog that doesn't like kids?" or even, "I wonder if this dog has hurt kids?"

By placing restrictions in your marketing, you may turn off some really great adopters.

DO stick to positive marketing.

Focus on inspiring adoptions and creating the opportunity for adopters to meet the dog, before beginning the counseling process.

DON'T feel bad if the marketing doesn't lead to the right match.

If someone comes to meet a pet because of your positive marketing and they can't adopt that particular pet because of a medical or behavioral issue that you discuss with them, that's ok.

DO see this as opportunity to make the right match.

All of our staff makes an effort to always know some information about six or seven different animals in our shelter. That way, if the pet the adopter saw on social media wasn't the perfect fit, we have



several other potential matches already in mind!

DON'T use industry language, or 'shelter-speak' in your marketing efforts.

Terms like 'barrier reactive' and 'resource guarding' might be everyday lingo for you, but to adopters that are both frightening and confusing.

Even terms like, 'jumpy/mouthy' mean something different to you than what they might mean to a person who is unfamiliar with animal welfare jargon. They may scare off adopters.

DO use everyday language.

You want to use language that regular people understand in your marketing and adoption counseling.

For marketing, feel free to use internet lingo and trendy words.

For counseling, be open and warm with your potential adopters. Use accessible language and give them the tools they need to decide whether or not a dog is right for them.

Remember that marketing gets people in the door who are excited to adopt and creates the opportunity for honest, open adoption counseling to happen at the shelter, where the best possible matches can be made.



DOG BIOGRAPHY EXAMPLES

BLAH

Max is a cute medium-sized dog with floppy ears. He likes to go on walks and cuddle with everyone he meets. Want to meet Max? Come to our shelter today!

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

In general, this bio gives virtually no information on who this dog is. A bio must reflect a dog's personality.

First off, there are hundreds of dogs named Max and lots of dogs have cute ears. If you're going to describe a dog's looks, you have to give those looks a personality that is unique to that dog.

Most dogs like to cuddle and go on walks. Tell a story that conveys the dog as an individual - quirks and all!

VS

ENGAGING

Maximilian Money-Bags has heart-stopping good looks, accented by his floppy ears. One day, after a really long walk, he told us he was ready for a snuggle session by jumping up on the couch. Then he pawed the remote control and turned on the TV! We're not sure it was an accident. We think he was trying to tell us he wanted to watch some Netflix!

If hikes and Game of Thrones marathons are your thing, come and spend some time with Max!

WHAT WORKS?

Lots of personality and a story that helps adopters envision a happy life with Maximilian Money-Bags.

SAD

Cutie Pie had a rough start to life. She was found as a stray and at some point, someone cropped her ears. She may have been used as a bait dog. Because people were so horrible to her, she's a bit shy and fearful of new people but once she warms up to you, she's a super lovebug!

She loves kids, but she's not too sure of other dogs. We think that might be because of her past.

If you think you can help Cutie Pie learn that the world isn't a scary place, visit her today!

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

Not only is there too much information, much of it is negative. This bio gives the impression that regardless of what you do to socialize Cutie Pie, she'll always be affected by her past - which is only an assumed past since there is no actual information on her history, only guesses made on her appearance.

VS

ENGAGING

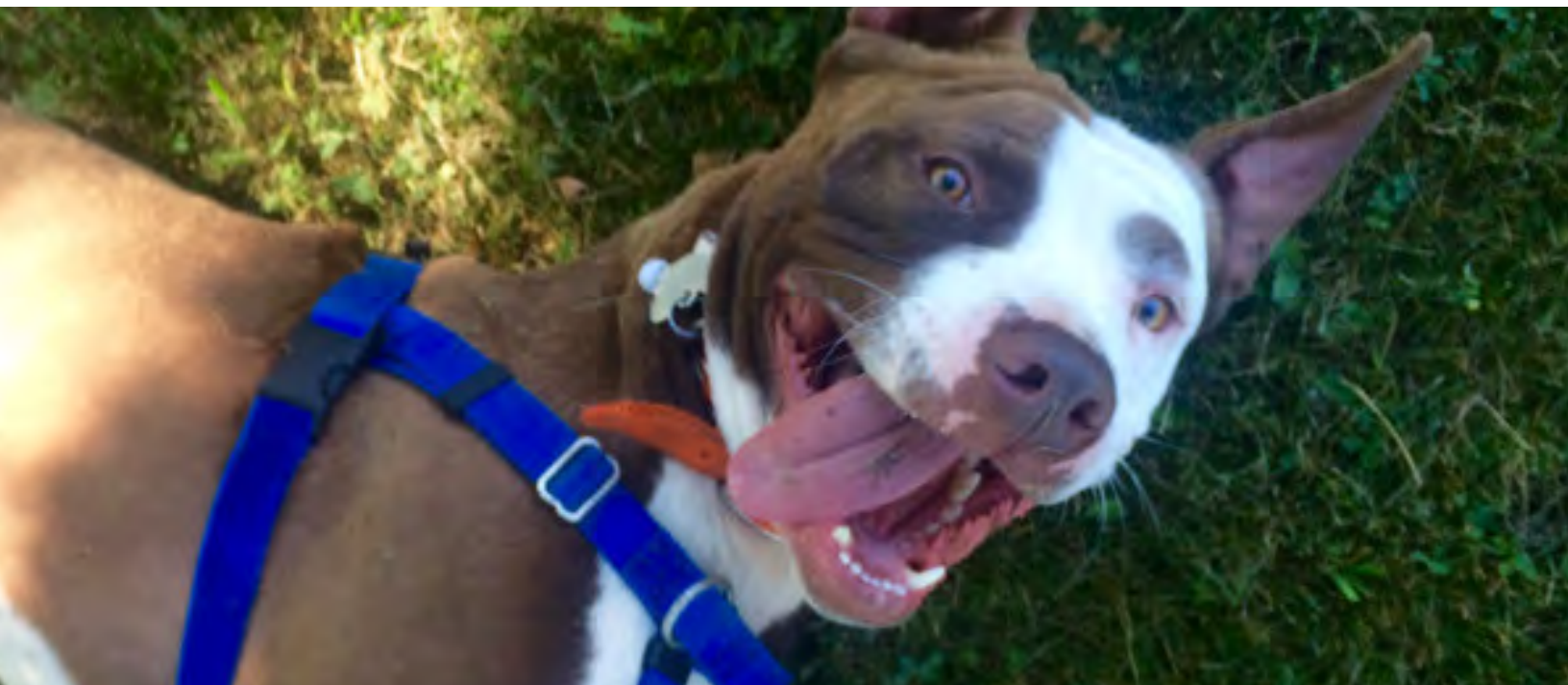
Cutie Pie is a totally chill girl, who likes to hang out with her favorite people. She's big into feeling cozy, so we made her a little den in her kennel. Basically, she's got her own apartment and she's pretty happy.

After she got to know one of our volunteers, they took her on the town and had the best time! They went for ice cream and met lots of kids and Cutie Pie demanded belly rubs!

Want to take Cutie out for a date? Drop by our shelter and get to know her.

WHAT WORKS?

We get to know who Cutie Pie is without the negativity of her past. Plus, we learn about her personality in two engaging anecdotes that will make people want to spend time with her.



COUNSELING

VS

MARKETING

Butterbeer is high energy and requires an experienced owner with a fenced yard. This handsome boy still needs to focus on his manners. He loves to jump and give people hugs when he sees them.

Although he's usually sweet, he has some resource guarding issues and probably shouldn't be in a home with other dogs.

If you can commit to training Butterbeer and meet the requirements, come by and meet him!

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

This is a lot of, mostly negative, information that can overwhelm people. It also sounds like you'll only adopt Butterbeer out to the "perfect" person - but perfect people don't exist.

Plus, resource guarding doesn't necessarily mean that he can't live with other dogs and it's a behavior that can often be worked through.

Butterbeer is the town gossip! He loves to know what everyone is doing and wants everyone to know what he's doing.

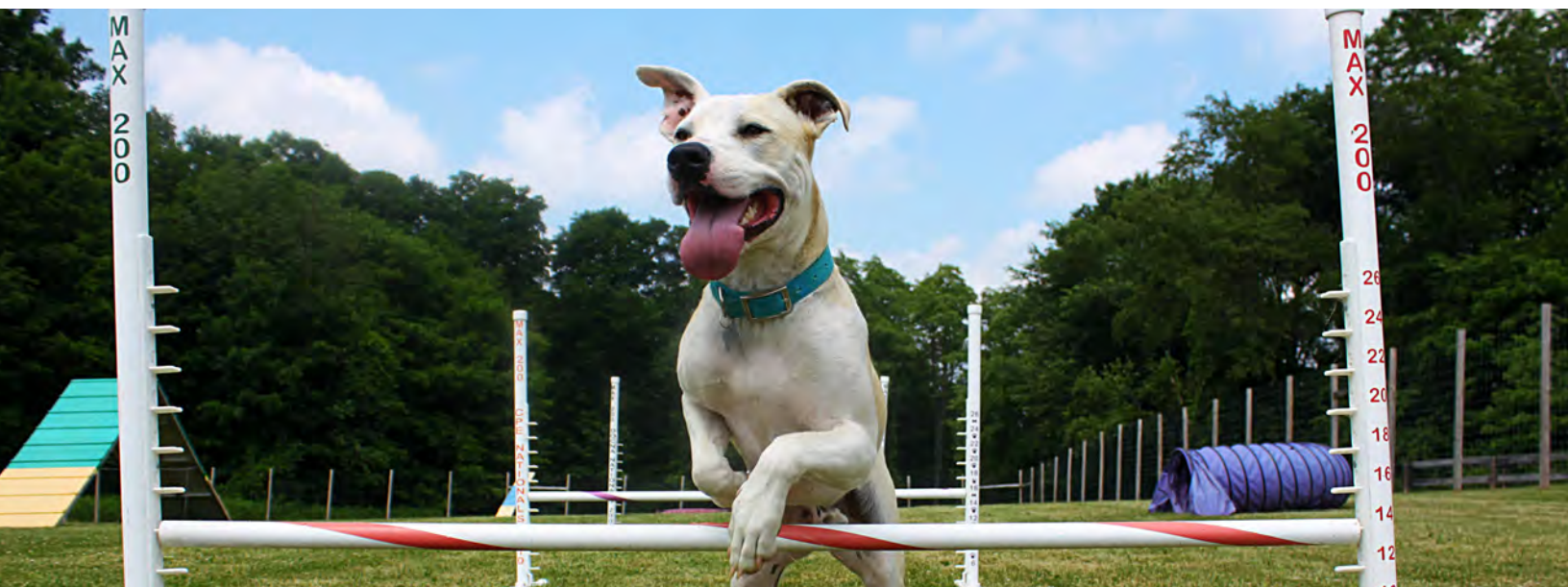
He gets right up in your business and wants to sit on your lap and give you slobbery kisses.

When he's not being nosy, he adores going walks - the longer the better. He likes it even more if he has a running partner.

Want to have Butterbeer tell you everything that's going on at the shelter? Come and say hello to him!

WHAT WORKS?

This bio doesn't hide Butterbeer's energy levels, but it doesn't paint them in a negative light. It captures the dog's fun-loving nature. It also doesn't overwhelm people with restrictions that might lead them to think Butterbeer is a bad dog who wouldn't fit into a family.



PHOTOGRAPHY 101


Tips and Tricks from HeARTs Speak, Inc.



The pictures you post of the dogs in your care are just as important as the stories you tell about them - in fact, they might be more important.

In the age of social media, people tend to look before they read. The first thing they see is a dog's appearance. That's where first impressions happen. If a dog looks sad, people will feel an emotional connection, but it's likely not one that will make them want to bring that dog into their home.

Remember, you're in the business of creating joy and establishing a warm connection is a big part piece of the puzzle!

You don't always need professional camera equipment, studio lighting or fancy props to create engaging photos, though there are many photographers who will gladly work with your shelter (like the creative professionals at HeARTs Speak.) 

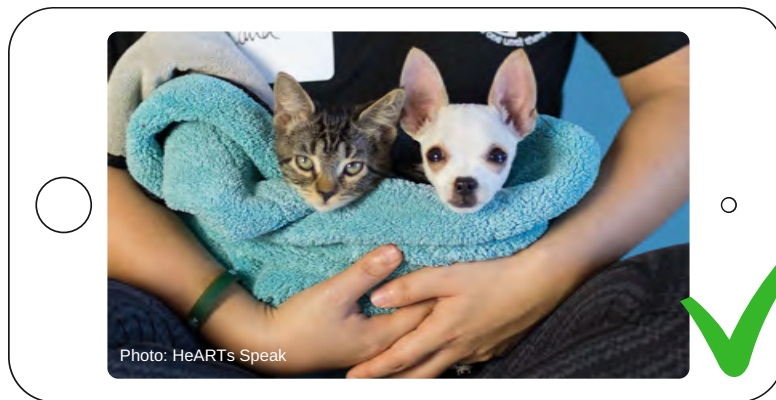
Cell phone cameras have come a long way and with a few tricks, maybe some costumes, and some treats, you can create photos that will bring out each dog's individual personality and make people want to get to know them.

These photos are critical to increasing a pet's chances at adoption. You want to put a dog's best face forward whether you're posting on a site like PetFinder, one of your social media accounts, or on your own website and blog.

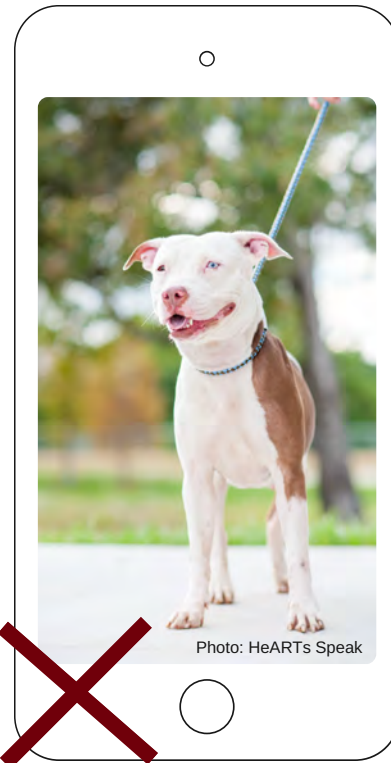


QUICK TIPS FOR MASTERING CELL PHONE PHOTOGRAPHY

FLIP YOUR PHONE: ALMOST EVERY ONLINE PLATFORM IS OPTIMIZED FOR SQUARE OR HORIZONTAL PHOTOS.



Because sites are designed for square or horizontal images, vertical pictures might end up getting cropped in odd ways and/or may appear smaller than they are. Depending on the image, some vertical photos are impossible to crop for Instagram, sites like Petfinder, or feature images on blogs and Facebook. By keeping things horizontal, you'll open up your options and allow your images to remain optimized for social sharing



INCLUDE PEOPLE IN YOUR PHOTOS: IT SENDS A MESSAGE OF CONNECTION AND CARE.



We all get a little camera shy every now and then, but the benefits of keeping people in your photos, even when it's just a hand, arm or shoes, should help you step into the spotlight:

- Holding, petting or otherwise being in the picture helps shy dogs look and feel more comfortable. Remember to let the dog decide how cozy this gets.
- A staff or volunteer in your photos sends a message about how much you care for the pets in your facility. This helps combat undeserved criticism or mythology associated with shelters
- Having people in photos gives potential adopters a size reference and sometimes conveys more information about the dog's pet qualities.

FIND THE LIGHT: THE KEY TO A GOOD PHOTO IS UNDERSTANDING YOUR LIGHT SOURCE AND HAVING A WELL-LIT SUBJECT.

For a better quality image, seek out good lighting as opposed to using the flash. For example, if you're outdoors, wait until the sun goes behind a cloud or find a patch of open shade ---for instance under a overhang of a building, in a shady play yard, or beneath a tent or sail shade.

Direct, strong sunlight will reduce details, cause squinting and generally wash out your image, leaving harsh shadows and overexposed highlights.

Avoid dappled light or half-in/half-out of the sun areas as this will make it hard to correctly expose your photo, again leading to loss of detail and a lesser quality photo.

If you're inside, position your subject near a window to take advantage of that beautiful, filtered, natural light. Strive for a 45 degree angle to your subjects face and voila! A masterpiece is created!



Photo: HeARTs Speak

GET IN CLOSE; SKIP THE ZOOM FEATURE ON YOUR PHONE AND MOVE YOUR BODY INSTEAD.



Photo: HeARTs Speak

Use your feet to zoom. Move closer to your subject as opposed to using the zoom function on your phone.

Because it is a digital zoom rather than an optical zoom, it'll reduce the quality of the image and you'll tend to get a grainier, less pleasing photo.

As you "zoom," pay attention to background clutter and changes in lighting. Be sure you're not cropping the dog's ears or toes out of the final image, as this will distract from an otherwise awesome finished product!

SET THE STAGE

Whether you're a seasoned photographer looking to complement your craft with the portability of a cell phone, or a photography newbie hoping to better capture spur-of-the-moment magic, you'll be happy to know that a little knowledge goes a long way when it comes to cell phone photography.

When you work or volunteer in a shelter environment, the day-to-day action often causes us to overlook the details of our environment. But believe it or not, we're often surrounded by everyday backdrops that work perfectly for capturing beautiful photos --from concrete walls to colorful murals, and from metal fencing to wooden doors and everything in between!



Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak

The key to making our everyday environments into the perfect backdrops is seeking out good light and working to blur the background of your photos by shooting at a shallow depth of field.

A shallow depth of field helps to turn concrete blocks into a soft grey backdrop, and turns a chain link fence from institutional to a blurry, beautiful bokeh!

If you remember just one thing about the value of a shallow depth of field, it's that it allows the subject to stand out by intentionally blurring the background. While this is easiest to achieve when you are able to control aperture, there are tips and tricks for cell phone photography that will help you create a beautiful shot and maximize on locations in and around your shelter.

FRESH PERSPECTIVE



Photo: HeARTs Speak

Look at your environment through a new lens and brainstorm how everyday locations and elements can become exciting new potential backdrops for photos. Whether concrete or traditional red brick, or simple stone can provide the perfect place for photos.

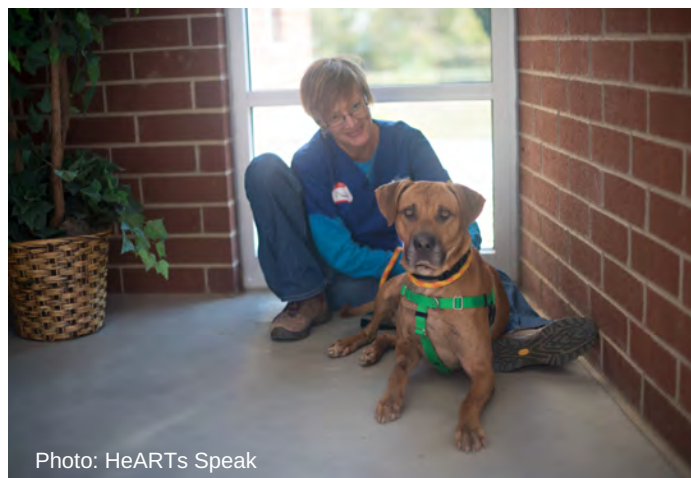


Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak

Grassy areas, from playgrounds to neighboring fields, or a small patch of turf, make great neutral backdrops that not only add a bit of color, but also combat stereotypes about sheltering environments, making your organization more inviting for new audiences and potential adopters. Think beyond ground-cover and take advantage of trees, bushes, and anything else that sparks your creativity.



Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak

We typically think of fencing as a barrier in more ways than one ---it can be intimidating, can look institutional, and generally tends to reinforce stereotypes that shelters are somehow jail-like. And yet, in photos that embrace a shallow depth of field, fencing can look beautifully blurry, leaving any trace of negativity behind.

PERFECT EXPOSURE PROJECT 2015



Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak

Think about areas where a dog may be able to climb up and get comfy, giving the photo a unique perspective or an interesting angle. Photos are always more engaging when the animal is eye-level with the photographer. Consider elevating them on a picnic table, bench or even playground and agility equipment. Alternatively, a lap is *always* a good location and conveys connection and care.

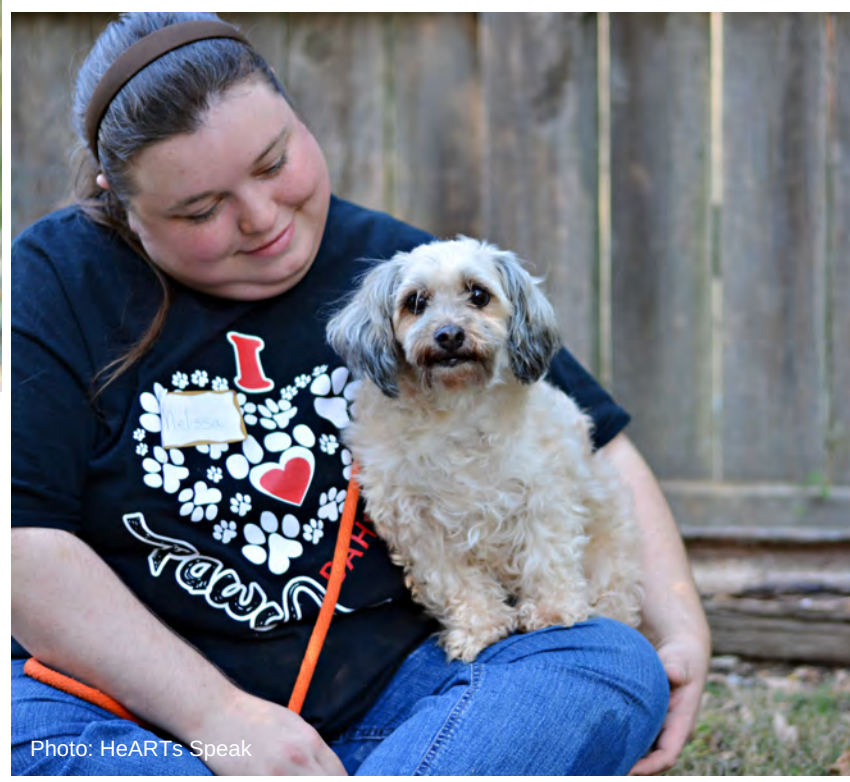


Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak



Photo: HeARTs Speak

If your phone has a 'pro' or 'manual' mode, use it to adjust exposure and focus, and ultimately have more control over the quality of your shot.

Better yet, try settings like selective focus, which allow you to be even more precise about keeping your subject in focus, while the background becomes more blurry. This kind of setting mimics the shallow depth of field you can achieve when you can control aperture on a DSLR.

GET IN FOCUS

THE SECRET KEY TO A SHARP
PHOTO AND A BLURRY
BACKGROUND



Photo: HeARTs Speak

STAY AHEAD OF THE ACTION TO CAPTURE THE MAGIC MOMENTS



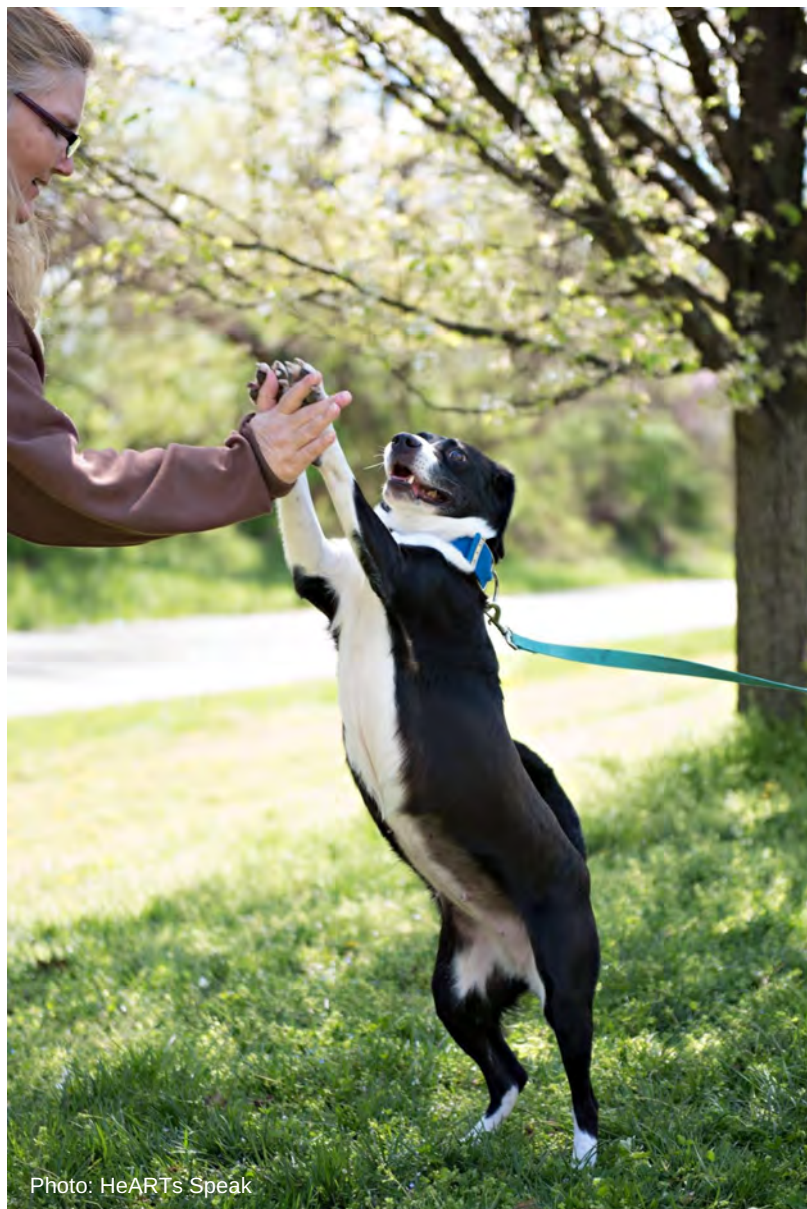
Photo: HeARTs Speak

Anticipate shutter lag. Get used to your camera phone's timing so when something interesting happens, you'll have a good feel for the point when you need to press the shutter release to capture the most interesting moment.

If you're able to control shutter speed, choose a faster setting to freeze action and eliminate blur.

FINAL TOUCHES FOR THE PERFECT CELL PHONE SHOT

- Use the volume buttons on the phone as the shutter button instead of the on-screen button, and you might have less camera shake to battle.
- Try using HDR. It helps with drastic lighting conditions and gives more vibrant colors, especially outdoors in bright sunlight.
- Gain more control over the exposure of your image by using the focus and exposure lock function. Tap the screen where your subject is to lock your focus and exposure (a little yellow icon will show up on your screen to indicate lock), and then slide your finger up or down on the screen to adjust exposure. This is especially useful when your subject is much darker than the background.
- Want a more of a shallow depth of field to blur out some of that background clutter and pull attention into your subject? Move in closer and then use the focus lock feature.



HeARTs Speak is a global nonprofit organization uniting art and advocacy to increase the visibility of shelter animals. They meet their mission through a variety of programs that offer resources and education to both artists and animal shelters to help increase adoptions and lifesaving impact.

Check out HeARTs Speak's line of free downloadable resources for more tips, tricks and tutorials on photography and creative marketing. Visit heartsspeak.org for more information!

The internet has changed everything about our lives, including the way we market and talk about the dogs in our care. Sites like Facebook and Instagram give us the chance to directly and consistently communicate with the members of our community. We can share information about our dogs and our work in real time.

That real-time nature means we're not only sharing with our community, but we're *building* a community around the dogs in our care. That means more people will care about the dogs, talk about the dogs, and, consequently, more dogs will find homes.

Figuring out how to manage all of the various social networks out there can be stressful. The good news is that you don't have to manage all of them.

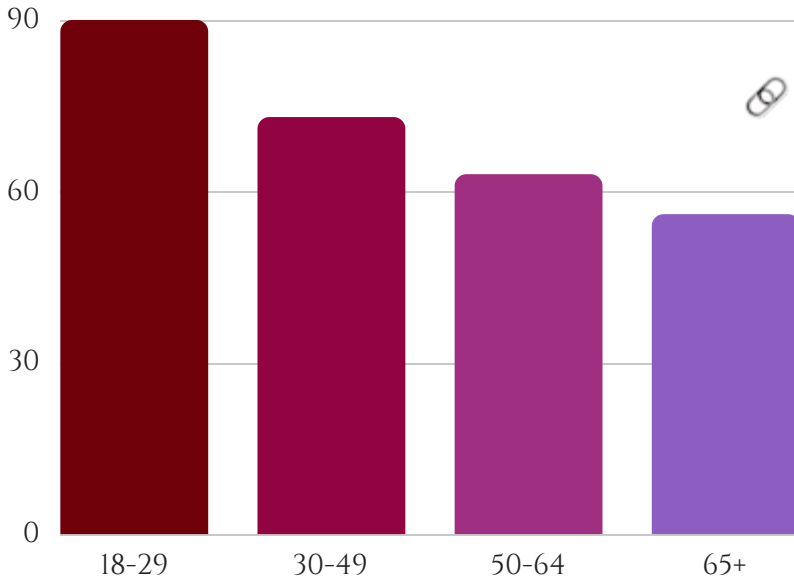
You only have to manage *one* of them really well.



WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORK SHOULD YOU USE?

FACEBOOK

IF YOU ONLY HAVE TIME
FOR ONE SOCIAL NETWORK, MAKE IT THIS ONE



Facebook is the perfect mixture of text and photography. It's a platform that has something for everyone - and nearly everyone uses it.

According to Sprout Social, over 50% of adults use Facebook. That number skyrockets to nearly 90% in the 18-29 age group. If those stats don't convince you that your shelter needs to be on Facebook, consider this: Facebook is entirely free.

In other words, it costs nothing to get your dogs in front of thousands of people. Unlike traditional marketing, which sometimes costs money, even for non-profits.

WHAT SHOULD YOU POST TO FACEBOOK?

- Create photo albums for all of your available dogs. Use the album description for the dog bio and then use individual photo captions for more detail and specific stories.
- Share videos of playgroups and other fun things your dogs do.
- Post photos and updates from fosters so that potential adopters can see dogs in a home setting.
- Talk about your upcoming shelter promotions.
- Share photos or videos of dogs when they first get adopted and then regularly share updates, if possible.
- Post pictures and videos of volunteers and community activities at your shelter.
- Remember that your options are limitless with Facebook. You can tell longer stories or write short quips. Whatever you do, make sure there's a photo or a video involved.



INSTAGRAM

Instagram doesn't have the wide-range of demographics that Facebook has - it's users are predominately in the 18-29 range. But, if you consider that userbase is over 300 million people residing in urban, suburban, and rural areas, Instagram undoubtedly gives you a huge platform to showcase the dogs in your care to members of your community.

Like Facebook, Instagram has options for videos and photos. Unlike Facebook, Instagram is not the place for lengthy stories. Keep descriptions short, no more than 3 - 4 sentences.

Because Instagram focuses on visuals, it's a great way to convey a sense of fun and happiness - which can translate to more adoptions.



HOW TO MAKE INSTAGRAM WORK FOR YOU

- Remember that Instagram posts photos and videos as squares.
 - Post the same types of photos and videos that you would post to Facebook.
 - Keep the copy short. No more than a few sentences.
 - Try taking a humorous angle with your posts. Instagram users expect cheerier content.
 - Don't use too many hashtags in your caption. Instead, make another comment on your photo with the hashtags.
- Here are popular hashtags that will bring visibility to your posts:
- #alldogsareindividuals
 - #dogsofinstagram
 - #instadog
 - #shelterdog
 - #dogsofinsta
 - #doggram
 - #dog
 - #dogoftheday



NOTES ON OTHER SOCIAL NETWORKS



Use **YouTube** if you produce longform videos or more professional looking videos. An example would be people who record their rescues of dogs, like Hope for Paws.



Twitter is typically a place for conversations and sharing news. It's not the best platform for showcasing dogs. However, you can share relevant articles and information. Check our Twitter for an example on what we mean.



Snapchat can be a great tool for showcasing your dogs, especially during events or when they are having a foster outing, but it is best left to organizations with a large existing social media presence.



While **Pinterest** is a visual platform, it has little to offer rescues. People typically look to Pinterest for DIY tips. It's likely you won't have a lot of those to share, and what you do have you can share on other networks.



CREATE A MORE MEANINGFUL CONNECTION WITH VIDEOS

IF A GREAT PICTURE IS WORTH 1000 WORDS, THEN A GOOD VIDEO IS WORTH A MILLION.

Before video took over social media, the only frame of reference people had for a dog's personality were static images or words. Of course, those convey powerful messages, but the right video can make someone feel like they are actually with the dog, not just watching the dog. That feeling is even more

powerful if you take advantage of live video features on Facebook and Instagram.

Remember, it's awesome if you can have professionals help you make a video, and there are lots who are willing to donate their time, but you can easily create a video with your cell phone.

Here are some tips for creating a great social media video:

Shorter Is Better. Keep videos to 60 seconds or less.

Remember Your Goal. The purpose of the video is to attract adopters. So, focus on the best qualities of the dog. You want people to envision the dog as a pet in their home.

Get In on the Action. Film dogs interacting with people. This can be doing a trick, snuggling, walking, or just being goofy. Encourage staff and volunteers to capture videos of their interactions with the dogs throughout the day.

Show Off Your Playgroup Rockstars. Playgroups are a source of joy for the dogs, and thus a source of joy for people who watch the dogs play. They make great videos for social media and help potential adopters get to know the dogs.





There's an App for That.

Editing videos is a snap these days thanks to the multitude of apps for computers and smartphones. Many of these apps are free or cost less than \$5.

Be Selective with Your Music.

Pick songs that are happy, fun, and will resonate with a lot of people.

Be Direct. Upload your videos to Facebook and Twitter directly. Don't link to other sites. The videos will have a stronger impact this way.

If possible, share videos on your website and the dog's individual Petfinder (or similar site) page.

Go Live. Let people get to know your dogs and your shelter in real time through livestreaming. You can live stream events, playgroups, adoptions, and enrichment activities.

You can also use livestreams as an opportunity to let your community get to know you and you can educate them in the process. Host a question and answer livestream where you answer questions about the dogs in your care and any general questions they may have.

SHELTER PROMOTIONS



Shelter promotions have a two-fold effect on the dogs in your care. In the short term, they help your current dogs find homes. In the long-term, promotions increase awareness and help the community build a positive association with your shelter. This leads to larger volunteer and foster programs - not to mention increased adoption rates overall.

Promotions don't have to be difficult. You can easily recycle and adapt them based on holidays and current events.

SPECIAL EVENT DISCOUNTS

Discounts usually happen around holidays. They include things like \$4 adoptions on the Fourth of July or free adoptions for veterans on Veterans' Day.

But, you can get creative and offer a discount on the anniversary of your shelter's opening, or any other special day.

IN-HOUSE EVENTS

Invite community members to your shelter for a pizza night, game night, or craft night. Let

your dogs mingle with the guests and offer adoption discounts during the event.

INVITE A DOG TO DINNER

You can tailor your temporary foster program for any current event. On Thanksgiving, you can ask people to invite a dog over for dinner. On Valentine's Day, tell people that a date with a dog is better than a blind date with a human.

TAKE A DOG ON A DATE

Whether it's shelter staff, volunteers, or temporary fosters, getting your dogs out on the town is the perfect marketing tool.

Take dogs to pet friendly events, stores, and restaurants.

This gives the public a chance to meet shelter dogs in a new and comfortable environment. It also lets a dog's individual personality shine through.

You may want to work with a local business to set up a visit every week at the same time so that potential adopters know when to expect you.

Make sure the dogs you take are well-behaved and are wearing an "adopt me" vest, scarf, or leash.

DON'T FORGET

Advertise the promotions on social media with great photos and/or videos.

Consider stepping things up by doing a livestream during in house events.





MARKETING RESOURCES

CANVA

Canva is a free design software with which you can create graphics for social media, kennel cards, and a variety of other marketing purposes. We used Canva to design this ebook!



HOOTSUITE

Schedule Facebook and Twitter posts in advance with Hootsuite. The software also has automatic scheduling, which picks optimal times for your posts to hit your social networks.



PIXLR

Expertly edit your photos with Pixlr's free web app.



SPLICE

Splice, by GoPro, is one of the highest rated free video apps in the iOS App Store. It's packed with features, including music.



For more information, please visit our website:

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