

The LAFPE Project Presents:

Putting a Face on Your Place!

In the 2012 Superbowl ad bonanza five of the top ten Facebook rated commercials featured animals. Four of the top five were of animals. What does that tell you? Superbowl ads are the most competitive and costly commercials any company will finance, so why the focus on animals?

For the majority of both men and women, animals create a positive response and by association the companies hope now with their products. The first is usually true, but not always the latter. But it's the first part of this equation we want to focus on. People love animals. It's just the way it is!

But that idea alone is not enough. The single biggest mistake an animal program - profit or not - can make is to feature the pain and suffering of an animal. While the intention is to get the consumer or potential donor to want to help, the innate response of most viewers is to want to turn away.

By contrast, the common feature in all those ads was humor, not suffering. Granted, most of the animals in sanctuaries and shelters have had tragedy and not humor in their lives. But the goal isn't to get people to turn away, it is to get people involved - so how do you meet them where they are comfortable and attracted to what you are doing?

One of the best things you can do is to create an association with one or two of your animals with your program. This does a few different things:

- It is now "Fido" that needs donations to eat, not a nameless dog whose bones are being displayed in a photo to elicit sympathy. And Fido needs to be happy, not suffering if you want people to connect.
- Everything you do is about building a relationship with your members, donors, or customers. It's much easier for a person to connect to Morris the cat than random photos with multiple stories.
- People want to know their money is making the animals lives better - you can demonstrate that by sharing how life is getting better for a particular animal, not general statistics.

These are just three reasons and while there are more - using marketing terms like "Brand Recognition" and such, **the bottom line is people want to share in humor, hope, and heartwarming tales (tails!), not share in suffering, pain, and abuse.**

You can start a blog featuring your ambassador animal, feature him or her in videos, create a column in your newsletter, or any other types of tools you are using to reach your customers. What is key is to find a way to connect with your customer or donor base.

There is no single style or format that is more successful; the goal is to find the one that works for your organization! Be creative! Don't be afraid to try things even if they seem silly. I've seen successful youtube videos that only feature a dog sleeping - I have no idea why anyone wants to watch that! You never know what will connect with your group until you try.

Most of you reading this already know which animal is the right one - some just have that personality built in them and they are just waiting for you! Never use an animal that is terrified, this will only build mistrust - pay attention to how your animal is responding to the new attention!

The bottom line is, put a face on your place! There are lots of furry stars just waiting for you