

On January 5, 2012, the Associated Press issued an article exploring public perception of euthanasia as it occurs within the sheltering community. Of the topics surveyed, one figure struck me in particular:

Younger pet owners are most likely to favor no-kill policies, with 79 percent of those under 30 saying shelters should only euthanize animals that are untreatable or too aggressive, compared with 67 percent of those age 50 or over...

These “younger pet owners” who largely support the no-kill movement are also moving into the next phase of their professional careers and becoming the demographic we rely on the most for financial support. Understanding this demographic, speaking their language, and meeting their wants and needs is the key to our future success.

So what do we know about our younger pet owners?

For starters, they watch increasingly less television; they enjoy the flexibility and convenience of services like Hulu, YouTube, and Netflix. Likewise, their cell phones are less for talking; they are increasingly for texting, downloading, and updating their social network on their whereabouts and activities on sites like Facebook.

There is a prevailing and growing attitude of “less is more”. They are tired of their parents’ excesses and have seen firsthand, through foreclosures and uncertainty, the dangers of spending more than one makes.

They embrace social media in business and in life: think Meetup.com, Eventbrite, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. They’re equipped to be highly mobile, often juggle multiple priorities, and have high expectations of their own success. They are because of this focus on career development marrying later and later, and having children later too.

So how can we, as animal welfare professionals, learn from this group and leverage their passion, energy and views toward animal welfare?

We can start by revisiting our marketing and communications:

1. **Engage:** Invite a young volunteer or employee to manage your social media accounts. You need someone who understands the platforms and can provide quick, timely updates. Keep it current, brief and relevant.
2. **Get Visual:** Remember, this group’s expectations of convenience and access to information is arguably greater than earlier generations. Make sure all your animals on PetPoint have photos and descriptions so your online visitors have all the information they need. The easier we make the adoption process for this group, the lower our stay rates, the higher our adoption rates and the greater the support we’re likely to receive in future based on a positive experience.
3. **Add Video:** As of February 2011, YouTube had 490 million unique visitors per month watching 2.9 billion hours of video monthly. By posting adoptable pet videos through PetPoint and subsequently on Petango.com you can offer online users the kind of media-rich experience they are accustomed to and expect, and by extension, improve their experience and decision making process.

4. **Harness Charitable Purchasing:** The global trend toward charitable purchasing means our donors are increasingly seeking to support a variety of causes by combining their good will with daily spending. Whether you choose to white label your own store or promote ThePetangoStore.com, these are opportunities for us to adapt to this approach to charity and help ensure animal welfare continues to receive support.

We can also improve our understanding and relationship with this demographic by inviting those interested in animal welfare to join our organizations and participate in planning the next stages of our cause and profession:

1. **Start a Focus Group:** One of the challenges of any profession is learning to embrace younger generations rather than fear or ignore them. Invite the younger members among your staff and volunteers to create a focus group. Ask for their opinions and be prepared to implement some of their ideas.
2. **Gain Representation:** You rely on your Board of Directors to guide strategy and decision making for your organization. Bring on a Board member who can represent this demographic and ensure their voice is heard.
3. **Seek Assistance Online:** Young professionals are hungry for success in a challenging job market. Reach out online for volunteers who can help you with design, social media, public relations, event coordination, direct marketing, and more. The beauty of PetPoint as a cloud-based program is the ability to give your volunteers access at home.

Lastly, have fun with them. This demographic not only believes in our cause, but is more educated about animal welfare issues than earlier generations.

For those of you interested in the full Associated Press article, follow [this link](#).

Did you know? Last year's "Save a Life with a Like" contest hosted by Petango.com helped improve pet adopters' online experiences and your adoption rates by encouraging the use of photos, videos, and descriptions of adoptable pets. Based on statistics collected through PetPoint, animals with online profiles that include personality traits have nearly an 8% greater rate of adoption and those with even just a single photo have an adoption rate nearly 20% greater than those without!

Beginning this month those organizations that post complete records for their adoptable animals on PetMatch, including photos, PetMatch profiles, Petango memos and videos of their animals will automatically display at the top of the adoptable search results.

Ask us how you can improve your pet postings and their rank in customer search results.

Sincerely,

Connie Howard
Director Animal Welfare Relations
Pethealth Inc.
Office: 1-866-630-7387 ext 617
Mobile: 1-720-459-0959
Email: connie@petpoint.com