The following breaks down a list of best practices that have been key to the growth of Petfinder.com’s social audiences from 20K followers in August of 2009 to 215K fans in May 2012.

These best practices have been hand-picked as ones that may be of use for other pet- and animal welfare-related strategies on social media. However, the presentation is not intended as a comprehensive manual.

Social media strategies must be flexible and constantly reevaluated to maintain their effectiveness, and not all best practices will work for all pages or audiences. Trial and error are key to an effective social media outlet.
Table of Contents
Social Media 101

- Driving traffic vs. building community
- Deciding who controls your pages
- Creating a social media policy
- Creating page terms and conditions
- Facebook
- Blogging
- Twitter
- Flickr and Pinterest
- YouTube
Traffic vs. Community
The two faces of social

- There are two primary aspects of social media:

**Activity**
on a brand page

**Making content**
sharable on Facebook

This presentation covers activity on a brand page
Who Controls Your Pages?
Staff vs. volunteers

• There are pros and cons:

“Staff”:
- Ensures continuity over time and familiarity with your organization’s messaging.
- Uses valuable time and resources (you!)

Volunteers:
- Saves time/resources
- Makes way for talent
- May end suddenly
- Hands over control (scary!)

No matter who controls your pages, having a social media policy for staff and volunteers can help keep you covered.
Creating a Social Media Policy

A social media policy is distributed internally to your organization and lays the groundwork for what staff and volunteers can and can not do on social media outlets.

• **What your social media managers say on your outlets:** Brand guidelines, what can and can not be posted, establishing a POC for overall posting responsibility

• **What staff and volunteers say on their outlets:** What can and can not be said about your organization on personal pages and a POC for questions regarding posting

Download a free sample social media policy at The Social Animal
Terms and Conditions

A terms of use policy is available on your social media outlets outlining what is and is not permissible by fans on your pages.

- Liability coverage
- Establishes a universal set of rules so no one can feel singled out

View a free sample terms of use policy on Petfinder’s Facebook page
Creating a Facebook Page
The different kinds of Facebook accounts

- Facebook has different kinds of user accounts and pages based on who or what you are and what you want to do:

  **Personal Page:**
  An account for individuals who want to keep in touch with friends.

  **Brand Page:**
  A page for an organization, famous person, products and/or services.

Example: Petfinder.com's brand page
Creating a Facebook Page
The different kinds of Facebook accounts

- Facebook has different kinds of user accounts and pages based on who or what you are and what you want to do:

**Groups:**
A page for a group of people who communicate about a specific topic. Group content can be viewable by members-only or the public.
Creating a Facebook Page
The Different Kinds of Facebook Accounts

- Facebook has different kinds of user accounts based on who or what you are and what you want to do:

**Causes Page:**
An page with Facebook Causes that offers expanded fundraising and email tools for nonprofits on Facebook. These pages are not part of Facebook.com and are not findable in Facebook’s search.

Example: Petfinder.com Foundation’s Cause page
Creating a Facebook Page
Brand Page Setup Best Practices

When you’re ready to set up your brand page be sure to:

• **Read Facebook’s Rules:**
  Make sure you know Facebook’s guidelines or your page could be removed. (Brand Page Guidelines: [https://www.facebook.com/page_guidelines.php](https://www.facebook.com/page_guidelines.php))

• **Create Rules for Your Page:**
  Having proactive posting guidelines can head off trouble in the long-run. (Read Petfinder’s: [https://www.facebook.com/Petfinder/app_203351739677351](https://www.facebook.com/Petfinder/app_203351739677351))

Create a Brand Page:
Creating a Facebook Page
Brand Page Setup Best Practices

When you’re ready to set up your brand page be sure to:

- **Beware of Punctuation:**
  Including punctuation in your page name might cause Facebook’s search function to not find you.

- **Create a Custom URL:**
  Claim your custom URL during your page setup. This is great for search engines and helps your fans find you.

Create a Brand Page:
http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php
Growing Your Fans on Facebook
Organic vs. Paid Growth

**Organic Growth:**
Getting people to find out about your page because they see their friends interacting with it

**Paid Growth:**
Getting people to find out about your page because they see an ad
You can grow your fan-base without an ad spend by:

1. Putting a link to your Facebook page on your website. (Tools: http://developers.facebook.com/)

2. Getting Spotlighted on Other Pages:
   Other brand pages can "like" your page, "tag" you (example below), or promote your content. "Tagging" another page in your status update also makes your update show up on that page’s wall.

Image: Iams tagged Petfinder’s Facebook page in it’s status update. Now that update appears on Petfinder’s brand page wall as well as Iams’.
Growing Your Fans on Facebook

Organic Growth

You can grow your fan-base without an ad spend by:

3. Encouraging engagement:
   Make sure your existing fans see and engage with your content.
   (More on this later.)

4. Encouraging Sharing:
   • Give your fans what they’re most likely to share (e.g. – Petfinder fans are more likely to share reasons to spay/neuter than how to clip your dog’s nails)
   • Then ask them to share!

Example of a widely-shared post.
Growing Your Fans on Facebook

Paid Growth

If your budget allows, these can be helpful growth tools as well:

**Facebook ads:**
Have them point to your page or specific posts to boost engagement, not your website; they will perform better. Work on a pay per click or pay per impression basis.

**Apps & Special Promotions:**
Create a Facebook app to encourage people to like your page. (Be sure to check Facebook’s ever-changing guidelines first!)

---

Example of a custom Facebook application designed to gain fans
Facebook has an algorithm that decides what information people see in their “Top Stories” news feed – the way most people consume information on Facebook.

The algorithm changes constantly, but part of it relates to how often users engage (like, comment, share or post something on your brand page wall).

The more often users engage with your brand page, the more likely they will be to see your content in their Top Stories.

Source:
Vitrue.com White Papers, BuddyMedia.com, Petfinder.com & DCI social media team observations
Balancing Engagement and Clicks

• People will often either click or engage with a post.

• Creating a balance is key to a healthy brand page

• While most posts should target both goals, you can divide your posts into two categories to help you focus on strategy and delivery (see next slide)
Balancing Engagement and Clicks

Examples:

Engagement-driven:
The primary goal is to get users to “like,” share or comment.

Click-driven:
The primary goal is to get users to click through.
Brand Page Engagement
How to boost your engagement rates

You can encourage engagement by:

• **Including calls to action in your posts**
  Ask your fans questions so they comment, tell them to like the post or ask them to post something to your wall

• **Making your fans feel listened to**
  Use the answers fans give you on your website or in your future updates

• **Responding to questions**
  Make sure any questions your fans ask receive responses, even if it’s only a “please email us here:” response

• **Removing spam**

• **Using different types of content**
  Photos, links and video usually have higher engagement than plain text updates

*Sources:
Petfinder social media study 2010, Vitrue The Anatomy of a Facebook Post, DCI Social Media Group*
Tips for Promoting Pets
How to Get Adopters and Foster Parents In the Door

You can encourage the right people to find your pets by:

• Emphasize sharing, not clicks
  By getting your loyal fans to share your adoptable pets, you’re getting those pets in front of new people who may be looking to adopt

• Find creative ways to present each pet
  Create a meme out of a funny photo, share a short video, tell a funny story from the adoptive pet’s point of view – have fun!

• ALWAYS include a link!
  No matter what you’re sharing, your audience needs to know where to go for more info. Make sure they have that opportunity.
Tips for Raising Funds
How to Use Facebook As a Fundraising Tool

You can encourage donations by:

• **Post a Donate button or your wish list in a custom tab**
  This is a simple way to bump up your brand page without a developer.

• **Tell personal stories about individual pets**
  Your audience is more likely to connect with the photos and story about an individual than a general call for help.

• **Share your successes and follow-up**
  It’s important to temper your pleas for adoptions and resources with the great parts of your organization. How do you have fun? What makes the staff or volunteers jump for joy? Share those stories!
Here’s another example of a custom iframe app that features a specific shelter’s adoptable pet list.
Blogging
Why start a blog for your organization?

Keeping a blog for your organization can provide many benefits, including:

• Blogs are an easy way to add content fast, without a developer!
• Google will pick up newly and frequently-added articles, bringing you new traffic
• You can email blog articles to your supporters or include links in your e-newsletters
• It’s a readily available and constantly updated portfolio of your work

Examples of free blogging platforms that don’t require a developer to set up or update
Blogging
But what should we write about?

• Spotlight an adoptable pet
• Add a pet list scroller or adoptable pet search widget and encourage others to
• Talk about special events and initiatives
• Write about what means something to YOU.

VIDEO: A Pit Bull goes from shelter reject to World Champion Disc Dog

By jamie.associate.produser
Posted May 17, 2012 11:07 AM
Permalink | Comments | Share on Facebook

This month we're helping pet parents get -- or keep -- their pets fit for life. Check out our expert pet-cize and weight-loss tips and videos. But regular exercise with your pet can have mental benefits, as well as the physical ones.

For Wallace the Pit Bull, regular exercise helped turn him from a shelter resident with behavioral problems into the 2006 Cynosport World Champion and the 2007 Purina Incredible Dog Challenge National Champion for Freestyle Flying Disc. Wallace's dad, Rob, tells their story in the video above. Watch it -- then share this post -- to help us spread the word about the importance of getting off the couch with your pet.
Twitter

What’s it all about?

• Exchange quick, frequent text messages

• No difference between personal and professional accounts

• “Tweets” are sent to your followers

• “Tweets” can also be posted to your Facebook profile or your blog (but not recommended)

• “Tweets” are searchable on Twitter search and Google – great for getting news out quickly

• Can be a great fundraising tool, but gets many fewer clicks than Facebook or other social tools
Twitter
Best posting practices

• Respond to @replies, when possible (programs like TweetDeck and SocialOomph can help)
• Do a minimum of 1 tweet/day
• Conversation is important
• Use hashtags like #TweetAPetTues, #PawPawty, #WoofWednesday
  #MeowMonday, and #Fursday
• Using 3rd party software a-ok!

In one day, tweets using the #TweetAPetTues hashtag went out to over 100,000 twitter followers
Twitter Third-party posting

Check out cute lap #cat Charlie in #oskarspares and help her find a home! http://ow.ly/4g1eX

RT @petfinder: Did you #adopt a pet today? Get your FREE bonus from Rockin Doggie in honor of #AdopttheInternetDay. http://ow.ly/v4fVR

Positive human energies to my #foster #puppy #dog that sheltered tomorrow, adopted Sat. @pawpaw via @Petfinder. See here: http://bit.ly/oVoUuk

@ersle Mar 16, 6:07 am via web
RT @petfinder Did u #adopt a pet today? Get ur FREE bonus from Rockin Doggie in honor of #AdopttheInternetDay. http://ow.ly/v4fVR

@birdhousebooks RT @petfinder Did u #adopt a pet today? Get ur FREE bonus from Rockin Doggie in honor of #AdopttheInternetDay. http://ow.ly/v4fVR

@pitbull1970 RT @petfinder Did u #adopt a pet today? Get ur FREE bonus from Rockin Doggie in honor of #AdopttheInternetDay. http://ow.ly/v4fVR

@MuttMommy RT @petfinder Did u #adopt a pet today? Get ur FREE bonus from Rockin Doggie in honor of #AdopttheInternetDay. http://ow.ly/v4fVR
Flickr and Pinterest
What’s it all about?

• Photo-sharing platforms that encourage strangers to share photos of interest.
• Photo galleries can be divided up into different subjects
• Pinterest is one of the fastest-growing social platforms
• Photos can link back to content on your site
• Beware of terms of use!
Always pin directly from the source website, or be sure to add a link as soon as you’ve posted.
YouTube
What’s it all about?

• Create your own “channel”
• Post multiple videos (and post them to Petfinder!)
• Gather “subscribers” who receive a message every time you add a video
• Have “friends” with additional privileges
• Embed your YouTube videos anywhere (your Petfinder pet profiles, website, Facebook page, blog)
• Create your own “channel”

• Post multiple videos (and post them to Petfinder!)

• Gather “subscribers” who receive a message every time you add a video

• Have “friends” with additional privileges

• Embed your YouTube videos anywhere (your Petfinder pet profiles, website, Facebook page, blog)

• Can add songs from YouTube’s license-free song library and edit video right on YouTube

• Doesn’t need to be professionally-shot video
• Highlight an adoptable pet

Adopt A Kitten Safety Dance featuring Glee and Wesley

Uploaded by MrBubbubs on Nov 7, 2010

UPDATE: Wesley has been adopted! His foster mom decided he was just too sweet to give up. However, K9Kastle still has a number of adoptable CH cats and kittens who need homes. Please help spread the word!

Wesley is an adoptable kitten from K9Kastle in New York City looking for just
YouTube
What should we post?

- Create educational or training videos
YouTube
What should we post?

- Spotlight special accomplishments
Used wisely, social media has the power to bring your audience to you, educate and save lives.
Questions?

Jane Harrell
Petfinder.com
Associate Producer
jane@petfinder.com