

Special Report



Seven Keys to Writing More Effective Copy for the Pet Industry



by **Rachel Monroe**
Pet Industry Copywriter

Pets are rapidly gaining an important place in our society. People see their pets as valued members of the family and substitutes for human children. Pets are spoiled, pampered, loved and doted over by their owners. They are provided with all the comforts life has to offer—from doggy massages to gourmet meals.

Below are seven things to keep in mind when writing for the highly specialized audience of pet owners.

Follow these tips and you're copy will pack a powerful punch.

1. Know Your Audience

This is crucial. Your first and most important task is to get thoroughly acquainted with your audience. Find out what your prospects believe or feel concerning your product. What keeps them awake at night? What is their biggest concern? What is their attitude toward the topic you are writing on?

Whether you're writing to engineers, doctors or pet owners you must know your audience inside and out. Otherwise you will not be able to reach them with an effective sales message.

Effective copy speaks directly to the needs, feelings and desires of your audience. The better you know your audience, the better your chances of turning a prospect into a customer.

So before you sit down and start writing take some time to get acquainted with your audience. There are many ways to do this.

Read several pet consumer magazines. There are hundreds to choose from. This will

give you a clear picture of how pet owners think and feel about their pets. Attend pet shows and exhibits. Visit a local pet store and try to strike up a conversation with another shopper.

Pet owners and lovers are everywhere and opportunities for talking with them abound. Your neighbor, friend, or mother-in-law may all be enthusiastic pet owners. Talk to them about their pets. You'll learn loads of information and gain a great amount of insight into the way pet owners think.

2. Show Concern For The Reader's Pet

When writing to pet owners, make it clear that you have their pets best interest at heart. Show your readers that you truly care about their pet's health, happiness, comfort and well-being. Statements such as "At [name of company] your pet comes first" or "Your pet's health is our top priority" work well. These statements reflect a genuine concern for pets in general and for the reader's pet in particular.

Pet owners spend a lot of time and energy worrying about their pets. They spend hours reading labels trying to find the 'best' brand of food. Or they may agonize over finding the "right" place to leave their pet while on vacation.

Pet owners are a conscientious bunch. They are concerned for their pets well being. And you should be too. Address this concern in your copy. Help your readers understand that you are aware of how important their pet is to them. You know they want the absolute best for their pet and your mission is to help them provide the best.

People will appreciate your caring attitude. They will think, "here's a person who is really interested in helping me take better care of my pet. Here's a person I can trust."

3. Treat the Reader's Pet Special

It's a simple fact: people are in love with their pets. And they are thrilled to death when someone—anyone, shows an interest in or admiration of their pet.

Have you ever petted a dog who was taking a stroll with its owner around the neighborhood? Notice how pleased the owner seems when you pet the dog and compliment on its well-kept coat or sweet disposition. If you ask the owner a single question about the dog you will probably be standing there for 15 minutes as the owner gives you the dog's life story and lets you in on its every behavioral pattern. People love it when you show an interest in their pet.

When writing copy don't be afraid to talk about the reader's pets as though it were a

very special person. As far as your reader is concerned their pet is a definitely a VIP. Owners see their pets as unique individuals who have their own personalities and quirks. And they love it when businesses cater to their pet's specific needs and wants.

Although you cannot write a separate letter or ad for each pet, you can make your writing as personal as possible. Give the reader the impression that you are writing specifically for their pet. The whole tone of your writing should communicate this message: "Your pet is special and unique. He deserves the best."

I recently read an article addressed to dog owners. The author did a wonderful job of treating pet's special. She referred to the reader's pet as "your little princess" and "your canine friend." The whole article rings with warmth and sincerity. The author gives you the impression that she is writing specifically to you and your pooch. This is exactly what you want to achieve in your copy. Make it personal. Treat the reader's pet special and your copy will be dynamite.

4. Acknowledge People's Love for Their Pets

People love their pets dearly. In fact, many love them better than life itself. In an article written by MSNBC it is reported that 93 percent of puppy owners say they would risk their life to save their dog. This is no minor attachment. It is full-blown love and devotion.

Never ignore this fact when writing to pet owners. Understanding the bond between people and pets is the underlying basis to writing effective copy for the pet industry. It is key to understanding how your customers think and feel and what their decisions are based upon.

In many cases it is more like you are talking to a parent of a child than to a pet owner. What parent would not struggle to provide her kids with the best? Most parents want to buy their kids well-made clothes that last, food that is nutritious and toys that will bring them enjoyment and satisfaction.

Well, the same is true of 'pet parents.'

And the desire to 'provide the best'... 'feel like a good parent'...'make my pet happy' ..and 'keep my pet healthy' are strong motivators that get pet owners to buy.

5. Empathize with the Reader

The most successful copywriters first establish a sense of trust and friendship with the reader. Don't sit down and write a canned sales pitch. Instead you should seek to understand the feelings, personality and mood of your audience. Then write in such a

way that reflects those very sentiments. By making statements and suggestions that mirror the readers own feelings and observations, you will gain their trust and break down their resistance to your sales message.

Empathize with the reader. Show them you understand their needs and feelings. This is especially important when writing to pet owners. Pet owners take their responsibilities as parents very seriously. And they will feel much more comfortable doing business with you if they are given the impression that you love animals as much as they do. It assures them...settles their mind... and builds their confidence in you.

So when writing copy to pet owners let your love and enthusiasm for pets shine through. Mirror the reader's own feelings and thoughts concerning their pet.

This will immediately identify you as an ally and fellow pet-lover instead of a marketer who is trying to get them to sign the dotted line. By showing the reader you share their love for pets, you will gain their confidence and be much more likely to make a sale.

6. Focus on the Benefits for Both Parties

One of the most basic rules of copywriting is this: emphasize the benefits. You must tell the reader what the product can do for him. Give him a reason to make the purchase.

When selling pet products there are often two parties who will benefit: the pet and the pet owner.

But each of them will benefit differently.

For instance, lets say you are selling an automated pet feeder. The benefit to the owner is that it saves her time. Now she does not have to worry about filling her dog's bowl and measuring out the right portion of food twice a day.

The pet benefits as well but in a different way. He will receive the right amount of food at the same time every day. This will prevent obesity and overeating and will provide the pet with a feeling of security.

Always try to show how both the owner and the pet will benefit from your product or service.

"But what if my product does not offer a benefit to the owner?" you ask "what if it really only benefit's the pet?"

The truth is that if a product benefits the pet it will benefit the owner as well. It may decrease the owner's workload. Save him time or money. Or provide him with the benefit of a healthier more active dog, who will be an excellent jogging companion.

Lets say you are selling some sort of dog toy. It's just a dog toy right? Does it really offer a benefit to the owner? The answer is yes.

The toy benefits the dog by keeping him entertained and making his playtime more enjoyable. The toy benefits the owner by enhancing the quality of time the owner spends with her pet. If the owner enjoys playing tug-a-ware or frisbee with her pet after work, then this toy can enhance the time they spend together, making it more enjoyable for both of them. It will help them build a stronger bond and allow them both to get a little exercise in the process.

Another benefit of the toy may be that it keeps the dog occupied and reduces boredom. The benefit to the owner is that he won't have to worry about a board little puppy running around the house chewing on shoes and slippers.

If you emphasize how your product will enhance the life of both the pet and owner you're sales message will be that much more powerful.

7. Educate the Reader

When writing a sales letter or advertisements one of the first things you should do is present a problem or need. Then position your product or service as the solution. Nearly every product fills a need or solves a problem. Pet food solves the problem of keeping your pet healthy and active. Interesting toys solve the problem of keeping pets entertained and exercised. Fluffy beds offer pets a comfortable solution to sleeping on the hard floor.

But for some products the need might not be so obvious. This is when you must educate consumers. You may have to inform them of a specific need their pet has that they are unaware of. This could be a physical, nutritional, or emotional need. Then proceed to present your product as a means of filling that need or solving that problem.

Let's say you are selling a dental chew toy. The owner might not be aware of the need for this product. So you must educate him. Inform the reader that plaque and tarter buildup on his dog's teeth can cause series infection and decay. However, he can reduce this problem by giving his pet dental chews, which are specifically designed to remove tarter and promote healthy teeth and gums.

Once the consumer is aware of this need and determined to solve it, he will continue to buy your product again and again. So you have effectively educated a prospect and turned him into a loyal customer.

But if the owner is unaware of the potential threat tartar buildup poses to her pet, she would see no reason to buy your dental chews.

The key to selling more is to educate consumers. Tell them why they need your product and how it will benefit their pet. Present them with facts, statistics or other valuable information that will “sell” them on your product.

If you educate consumers instead of offering a hyped up sales pitch you will build their trust and confidence in you. They will begin to see you as a helpful problem solver and will become extremely loyal to your brand.

Pet owners are hungry for information. They are eager to learn more about their pet’s needs and how they can better care for them. Look at all the books and magazines on the market. They deal with anything from pet health. To pet behavior to pet psychology.

Pet owners want to be able to make informed decisions. And in order to do that they want lots of information. So give it to them. Use your advertisements and brochures as an opportunity to educate the reader and sell them on your products. Remember an educated consumer is your best customer.

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Rachel Monroe is a freelance copywriter who specializes in writing crisp, persuasive copy for the pet industry. She’s worked in the pet industry for many years and has nearly a decade of experience.

She’s worked extensively with groomers, veterinarians, trainers, breeders, manufacturers and retailers. She has owned and operated a dog boarding business and worked in numerous grooming shops. She has helped launch several pet-related businesses and been a pet owner herself for over 12 years. Having been raised on a farm, she has owned and cared for a wide variety of animals including dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, horses and goats.

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