

1.9: Case study - Vets now - Taking care of the brand

One-line summary

Vets now, an industry-known UK accident and emergency veterinarian service, wanted to become the brand of choice amongst consumers and veterinarians.



Figure 1.9.1: The Vets now Logo

The challenge

Vets now provided their accident and emergency service to over 1 000 veterinary practices across the UK. But, with more and more smaller local emergency veterinary clinics opening, and day clinics starting to offer out-of-hours services, Vets now was experiencing intense competition. They decided to target pet owners directly and make themselves the brand of choice for pet owners, if and when their pet required emergency care.

However, the brand didn't deal directly with clients too often, and brand awareness of Vets now among pet owners was at about 8% (despite 1 in 4 UK vet practices using the service). The brand was also offering inconsistent sub-brands, which confused pet owners.

Vets now wanted to improve brand awareness, consolidate their offering, and offer a pet-owner led approach.

The solution

Vets now recognised that they needed to conduct a brand audit to determine their unifying core purpose. A brand workshop was held, and the key insight was that emergency and critical care was the heart of the brand. All other sub-brands and straplines were negating from this core message. The brand wanted to present a singular pet owner brand proposition and developed the single unifying strapline: Introducing Vets now – Your pet emergency service.

To appeal to customers directly, they needed to know who their potential customers were and what their feelings were towards their pets. Vets now conducted surveys, interviews and focus groups with over 1 000 pet owners. They identified 8 pet owner types, and highlighted the key drivers behind pet ownership in the UK. They then mapped out the owner types against these drivers.



Figure 1.9.2: Vets now's map of pet ownership

The key insight was that pet owners expect others to treat their pets as they would other human beings. This means that the care and professionalism offered to pets is paramount. Pet-owners are dedicated to keeping their pet happy and healthy, and want the best care possible if an emergency were to occur. Pet owners needed emotional support and reassurance when dealing with an emergency involving their pet.

Vets now also identified three touchpoints of customers with the brand.

- Search and online – finding an emergency vet
- Clinical – referred to Vets now by another veterinary clinician
- Social space – engaging with other pet owners and online content.

Using these insights, the brand consolidated itself as one single brand offering. The brand also identified its essential brand principles and used these to inform all its branding and marketing communication. Vets now created new branding and imagery and chose a reassuring and expert but friendly and straightforward tone of voice to use across all communications. This unified and consolidated look and feel conveyed the core purpose of the brand and offered consumers brand recognition.

This new look and feel was rolled out across the website, Vets now hospitals and clinics, internal branding, and in print and digital marketing campaigns. These were chosen to ensure the new branding reached consumers at all three touchpoints.

The marketing campaign included various platforms and a mixture of traditional and digital tactics. There were print and digital ads, as well as content delivered across the website, social media, printed flyers and in-clinic posters. Content included emergency plans for if a pet becomes ill or has an accident, dangers that are present in the home over the Christmas holiday period, and how to ensure a pet stays happy and healthy over the festive season. This content was specifically created to resonate with the audience and used the insights gained from the in-depth research conducted by the brand to inform content development and creation.

The results

The research and ensuing strategy ensured the brand's awareness among customers increased. After the campaigns and rebranding, 59% of respondents had an unprompted recall of Vets now, up 20% from before the campaign. Within the sample of respondents, propensity to use Vets now after the campaign was up 138% from before. These were strong indicators of positive performance. The new website also saw a 23% drop in bounce rate within 5 days of going live, showing that the brand was now more in line with what users were searching for.

The importance of relooking at your brand and really investigating your customers is clearly demonstrated in this case study. It shows how a B2B brand can reposition itself as B2C with the right analysis and strategy. Clearly laying down your objectives, doing the necessary research and identifying how to address your customer across all touchpoints is essential to marketing strategy (Marketing Society, 2017).

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