

Creating happy, healthy lives for animals

Solidifying the Animal Humane Society brand and building a content strategy

Kelly Erickson

University of Minnesota - Twin Cities



INTRODUCTION

I began working for Animal Humane Society (AHS) in December 2017. One of the many reasons I chose to work there was due to the goal of formulating a content strategy. During the first few months, it became apparent that there were other challenges facing the Brand team — not only within the team, but also regarding our impact throughout the organization — intervening with the ability to form said strategy. As such, I chose to revisit the AHS brand — to solidify its personality and archetype, and define our key messages. I then apply this work to a formulating a content strategy. Through internal interviews and a content analysis, I have discerned what we're currently saying, where we want to go, and ultimately where discrepancy exists.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Nonprofit branding

Like any other corporate company, nonprofit organizations need to create a brand with which consumers can easily identify and connect. A brand, according to Fogel (2007), “is the intangible sum of a product’s attributes,” (p. 13) and differentiates companies from their competition, builds relationships, and creates trust. Nonprofit brands go a step further as “they represent the organizations themselves,” (Fogel, 2007, p. 13). A nonprofit brand envelopes the organization’s mission, ideas, images, feelings, beliefs, and values (Fogel, 2007). Developing and sharing a brand persona that captures the essence of the organization doesn’t rely solely on the brand or communications team, “it belongs to everyone, and the board and senior staff must support it 100 percent or it’s

a dead-end effort,” (Fogel, 2007, p. 14).

A cohesive brand idea has many benefits, but first and foremost, it helps attract and retain key audiences including donors, volunteers, and constituents served. It speaks to these target audiences in ways that understand them, helping funnel them along their respective stakeholder journeys, moving from first learning about the organization to interacting with it in the way that serves the audience best. The stakeholder journey considers the relationship with each audience segment that is important or relevant to AHS. Rather than focusing on persuading the stakeholder to make a purchase, it's focused on deepening the relationship with the audience and supporting their needs. These audiences include donors, volunteers, pet owners, and internal employees. As such, “the look and feel of the organization must be applied the same throughout whether communication comes from the CEO, a volunteer or a receptionist. Inconsistency breeds confusion and sometimes contempt,” (Fogel, 2007, p. 14). Chapleo (2015) adds, consistency in the brand experience throughout the organization and through all contact points can become a competitive advantage, especially if employees deeply believe in the brand's values.

With these benefits of a strong brand experience in mind, we (AHS) first need to solidify our brand persona and consider how it's communicated or experienced throughout the organization, both internally and externally. As Fogel (2007) points out, we need to consider why people support us, what their emotional drivers are, and how we can enhance their experiences. Through this extra attention to clearly defining the brand and its purpose, we can acutely tell our story to build long lasting relationships with our target audiences.

Communication theory

Communication theory can also aid in this work to understand the power of our brand experiences through content and how to better relate to target audiences.

By considering our brand and content through Relationship Management Theory (Ledingham, 2003), it's important to remember that “relationships need to be seen as mutually beneficial, based on mutual interest between an organization and its significant publics,” (Ledingham, 2003, p. 185). Content should help build and support relationships, especially in the areas of trust, reciprocity, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction and understanding (Ledingham, 2003). “Relationships are driven by perceived wants and needs,” (Ledingham, 2003, p. 195), and how relationships grow between organizations and consumers depends on how these wants and needs are met. As target audiences grow and change, and the relationship changes over time, the communications must continue to fit their needs — to meet the audience where they are, and help them continue to grow and trust in the organization. To develop stronger relationships with our target audiences, we need to use our content to deepen the relationship — to anticipate their needs and wants, and ultimately build trust.

Trust is integral to success for nonprofit organizations. According to Bennett and Barkensjo (2004), “trust is evidenced by the perceptions that an organisation (sic) is credible, reliable, sincere and honest ... [and] will increase a donor’s confidence that a charity will use the donor’s gift wisely,” (p. 129). This concept applies to more than donors, and should include all those impacted by the nonprofit as increased trust leads to greater confidence in the organization and a stronger relationship. “Trust, commitment, and satisfaction are not only instrumental in increasing ... support, but they may also be

important in helping a nonprofit organization to collaborate more meaningfully and effectively ... to build a strong future,” (O’Neil, 2008, p. 267).

To understand needs and wants, we need to connect with the functions that AHS fulfills, taking Functional Theory of Attitudes (Katz, 1960) into consideration. Functional theory explores “the needs that attitudes fulfill and the motives they serve,” (Perloff, 2014, p. 117). According to Katz (1960), attitudes serve six functions (Perloff, 2014, p. 118-120):

- Knowledge — to make sense of the world,
- Utilitarian — to obtain rewards and avoid punishment,
- Social adjustive — to fit in with a group,
- Social identity — to communicate who one is,
- Value-expressive — to express beliefs,
- Ego-defensive — to guard against unpleasant emotions.

Clary, Synder, and Ridge (1992) note that it’s critical to remember that people can hold the same attitude or perform the same behavior for different reasons, serving multiple functions at once.

In relation to nonprofit organizations, I looked at donors and volunteers specifically, as they are some of the most involved people, either giving money or time. Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, and Miene (1998) apply those functions directly to volunteering, asserting that it serves multiple functions: value-expressive, understanding (knowledge), social (social adjustive), career (utilitarian), protective (escaping negative feelings) and enhancement (utilitarian). Griggs, Peterson, and Gregory (2010) add that of the six functions, value-expressive and career have shown to be more

predictive of specific behaviors, like volunteering. The more altruistic or other-oriented (versus me-oriented) one's motives are, the more positive the attitude toward volunteering (Griggs, Peterson and Gregory, 2010, p. 73). "The key to understanding volunteer motives and their impact on attitudes and behavior begins with identifying and activating core values in promoting a cause," (Griggs, Peterson and Gregory, 2010, p. 73). As communicators, we need to ask what values our organization allows our target audiences to express or how it allows them to identify themselves in social contexts — what meaning the nonprofit gives them.

Attitudes serve similar functions for donors. Hyung Hur (2006) found motivations that align with some of Katz's functions: altruism (ego-defensive), a good deed (utilitarian), a desire for social responsibility (social identity or value-expressive), a desire for the common good (value-expressive), showing off (ego) and mass psychology (social adjustive). Radley and Kennedy (1995) also found that giving is often normative — a social function that is expected "to fall in line with what is expected of any person with a social conscience," (p. 689). From these functions it can be extrapolated that people interact or get involved with nonprofits because it helps them express who they are and makes them feel good. To this point, our communications can help reassure them and help them feel an even deeper connection to our organization by tapping into those feelings as well as their needs.

Content strategy

A content strategy, one that guides our brand voice, messages, and communications, particularly on our owned channels (website, video, fundraising appeals), will help us better meet the needs of our audiences and help them feel like they belong to something more or express their values. According to Content Marketing Institute (2018), content strategy is “focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience,” (paragraph 3). Kristina Halvorson offers a similar definition: “Content strategy is the practice of planning for the creation, delivery and governance of useful, usable content,” (Johnson, 2017). Both definitions focus on the generation of valuable or useful content.

According to Pulizzi, a content strategy is purpose driven, audience focused and generates indirect revenue. While a return on investment cannot always be tied to content, it generates value several steps down the stakeholder journey when action is taken through donation or a purchase, or some other form of involvement (Johnson, 2017). Looking through the nonprofit lens, a content strategy focuses on providing relevant and useful information that helps our audience solve their problem — which can be as simple as wanting to learn more about a topic or feeling like they belong.

With a greater focus on brand journalism — a hybrid form of traditional journalism, marketing and public relations (Bull, 2013, pg. 1) — through a content strategy, the organization claims and owns the information space, becoming a thought leader (Johnson, 2017). As part of the strategy, the organization needs to think in terms of beats, identifying and dedicating part of the strategy to certain topics that meet the needs of the target audiences, and distribute that information in relevant ways that fit both the

content and the audience (Johnson, 2017). When developing the strategy and the content to support it, the organization needs to ask itself what outcomes its trying to achieve with the effort, setting specific, measurable communications objectives (Johnson, 2017).

Johnson (2017) also notes that the plan needs to define specific audiences with real personas, and determine what value the organization offers the audience, prioritizing their experience.

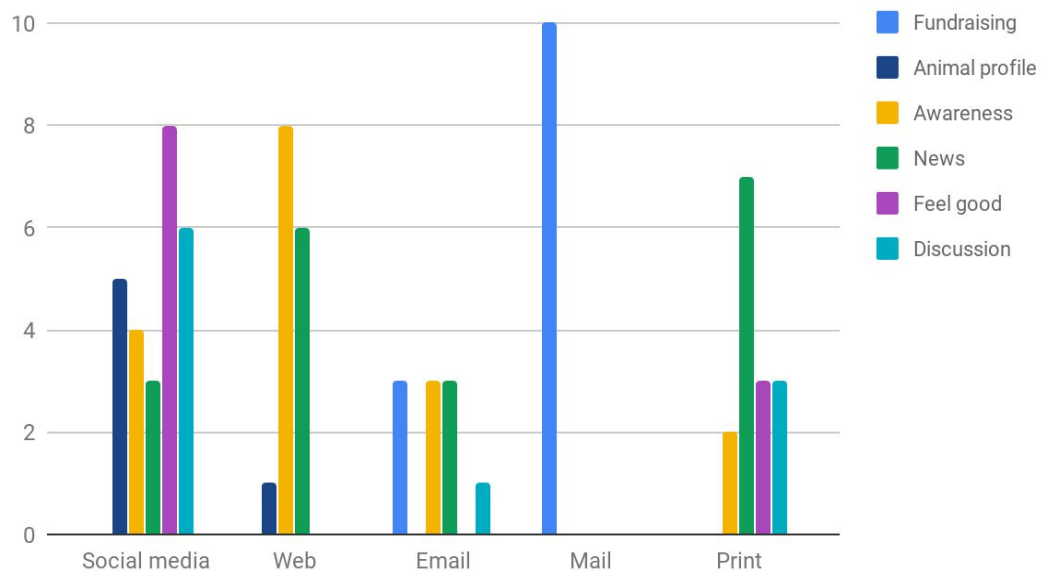
Generating a content strategy starts with understanding how AHS IS communicating now and what needs or wants it's meeting for our audience through a content audit or analysis. Once I know what we as the organization are communicating, I can identify the discrepancies between what we're saying and our goal or aim — therefore taking time to solidify our brand, define its story, and set up key messages to build a valuable strategy.

APPLIED RESEARCH METHODS

Content analysis

As mentioned above, I first conducted a content analysis of Animal Humane Society’s communications to assess the state of our communications and the brand. The audit and analysis was conducted April, 10-12, 2018, assessing 67 pieces of content across content vehicles, including social media (n=20), website (n=15), emails (n=10), direct mail (n=10), and print (n=12).

Story type by vehicle (Figure 1)



The analysis also considered:

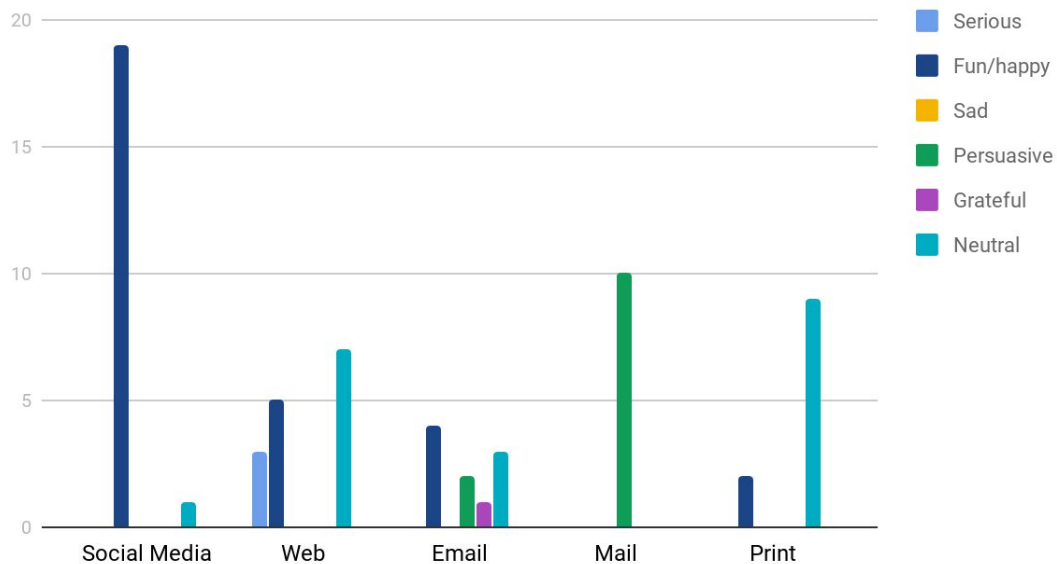
- Format of the content: text (n=7), video (n=2), image and text (n=58), and graphic (n=0).
- Theme of the content: fundraising (n=13), animal profile (n=6), awareness/educational (n=16), news (n=17), feel good story (n=8), and

discussion (n=7).

- Messenger, either AHS (n=55) as an entity or someone specific (n=12)
- Tone of the content: serious (n=4), fun/happy (n=29), sad (n=0), persuasive (n=12), grateful (n=2), and neutral or no personality (n=20).
- Keywords: variations of “animal” (n=39), “adoption” (n=23), “community” (n=22), and “support” (n=17) were the most frequently counted.

The content analysis revealed distinct differences between the channel used, the type of information in the content and the tone used, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The content analysis code and results is listed in Appendix 1.

Content tone (Figure 2)



- Social media posts most often had a fun or happy tone (n=19) with a focus on feel-good stories (n=8) and discussion (n=6); none of the posts analyzed focused on fundraising.

- Website content and articles are almost exclusively focused on news (n=6) and awareness or educational (n=8) pieces. The tone is more reserved with a more neutral feel (n=7), some serious (n=3), but still a touch of a fun and happy tone (n=5).
- Email had the greatest variety as far as tone and type of content. Content was almost evenly split on fundraising (n=3), awareness and educational (n=3), and news (n=3). Tone was often fun and happy (n=4) or fell more neutral (n=3).
- Direct mail has one objective: fundraising. All ten pieces of mail content coded focused on fundraising with a persuasive angle.
- Print had a news focus (n=7), with feel good stories (n=3), and awareness and educational pieces (n=2) as secondary focuses. The tone is more neutral (n=9) in print.

Expert interviews

Three expert interviews were conducted with AHS CEO & President Janelle Dixon (April 24, 2018), Vice President of Advancement Lisa Bonds (April 27, 2018), and Director of Brand Paul Sorenson (April 24, 2018). These interviews, done in person, ranged from 20 minutes to an hour. Dixon, Bonds and Sorenson were each asked seven questions, touching on the mission, vision, values, and experiences they feel embody the organization. The full interview transcripts are in Appendix 2.

Major themes naturally stood out across the interviews. One of the first apparent themes was the vision of the organization. Dixon, Bonds and Sorenson each touched on how Animal Humane Society is aspirational — focused on evolving animal welfare and

continually working to make things better. Bonds sums it up: “We’re cutting-edge and innovative. We take the leap before others even think about it.” Dixon added, “we’re always open to new and different ways of doing things. Change is part of the culture here as is the exploration of what’s possible.” Sorenson added to that idea, noting “The pace of that ambition doesn’t slow down, never settling for good enough.”

They each pointed out some major points of differentiation. Sorenson said it best, noting the size and scope of the work AHS is able to accomplish: “Few others can do all that we do, as well as we do, and in as many places.” Bonds points out the quality and integrity she sees at every level, noting that it goes hand in hand with the passion each employee has for the work they do. Sorenson also points out that AHS is driven by what’s best for the animal — balancing emotions and logic when faced with decisions; “we’re not afraid to make a difficult decision if it’s right for the animal. ... It’s not always easy, but if we can do something and it makes sense to do it, then we should.”

Finally, when discussing keywords to describe the brand, similar concepts were mentioned, particularly fun, friendly, compassionate, and expertise. Fun, friendly, and compassionate suggest a warmth and sincerity, while expertise denotes trust and being a resource for others. Bonds explains further about wanting to be more of an expert: “I want us to be the place for all things animal in Minnesota. We are, and can be even more, a local organization with national chops. ... We are leading the way for animals. Period. Full stop.”

BRAND RESET

While the leaders of the AHS brand spoke at length about the organization as a leader with unwavering ambition, it doesn't completely shine through in communications. The content analysis revealed a few areas of concern, particularly the inconsistent tone and understanding it lends to the content, resulting in an unclear brand archetype and uncertainty in key messages.

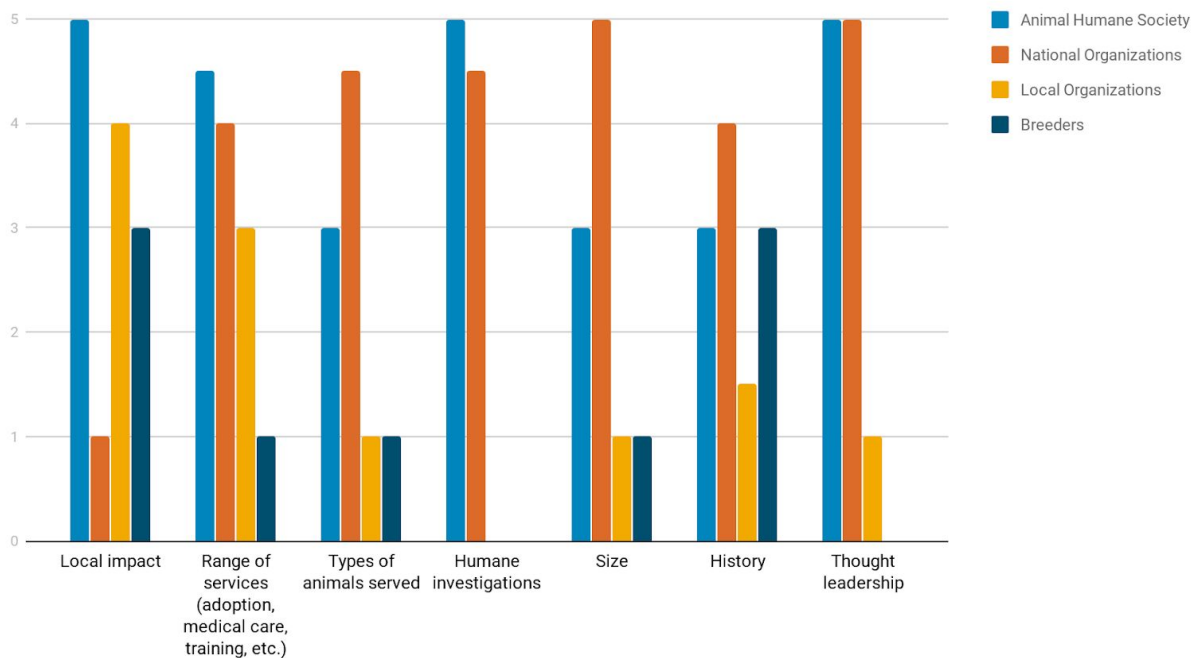
It also means we at AHS can do more with the brand, that we have room to grow and truly form the brand into the story we want to tell. Therefore, before diving into generating a content strategy, I'll first revisit the brand and solidify its story and key messaging by using the steps and tactics as laid out by Steve Wehrenberg in his course on the generation and selection of communication strategy at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

Animal Humane Society's mission is to engage the hearts, hands and minds of the community to help animals. That mission works toward its vision to compassionately and responsibly create a more humane world for animals, by being good to animals, partnering with people, and leading responsibly with compassion — it's three core values. By solidifying the brand, we can work more efficiently to better live out the AHS mission.

Strategy canvas

To start this brand work, I'll first compare AHS to its competition, based on several key factors of competition. While animal welfare groups are working toward a better, humane world for animals, they do compete for donor dollars, volunteers, and, of course, adopters. Given AHS's size, influence, and where it wants to be, the nonprofit competes against local rescues, breeders, as well as national organizations including the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and Best Friends. I determined local competition against which to compare by running a google search for "Minnesota animal rescue," and selecting the top results: Secondhand Hounds, Ruff Start Animal Rescue, Midwest Animal Rescue & Services, Underdog Rescue. I also included breeders as a general group given their competition as a provider of a new pet.

Strategy Canvas (Figure 3)

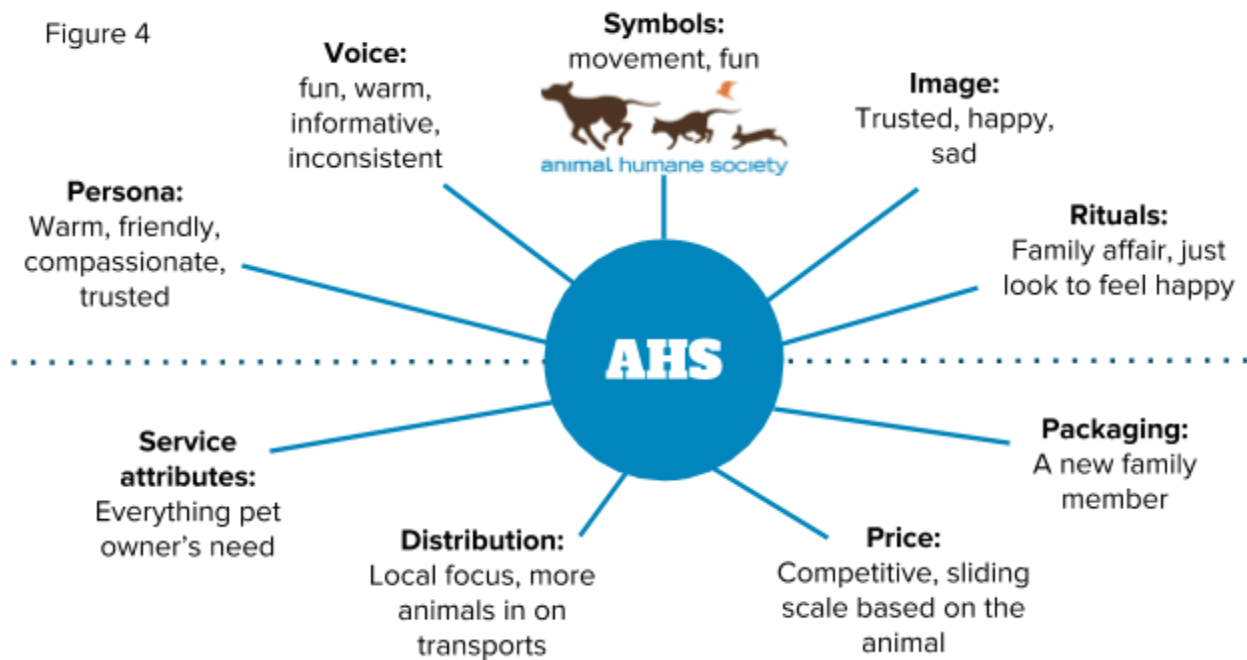


As shown in Figure 3, factors of competition — many of which were noted by AHS leadership in the interviews — include local impact, range of services, types of animals served, humane investigations, size, history, and thought leadership. Local impact considers the effect the rescue has in their community. The smaller the rescue, the more rooted it is in its immediate location. AHS is unique in its local impact in that it has the resources to help more than just the animals in need in its community, it also has programs that serve pet owners and pet owners in need. Range of services looks at what, beyond a pet, the organization provides to consumers. AHS is one of the most comprehensive rescues in all the work that it does, but it isn't ranked at the top because it's outpaced by those organizations who also offer just a few more services AHS doesn't have, such as grooming. This ties to the next factor: the types of animals served. While AHS serves cats, dogs and critters, there are rescues who also help wildlife and farm animals. Humane investigations is a factor of competition that rescues either have or they don't. AHS is the only organization in Minnesota that has a dedicated team; the only other organizations in this group that also have teams are nationally focused.

The next three factors of competition are factors AHS leadership either noted in the interviews or prides itself in. Regarding size, though AHS is large locally, it doesn't yet have the reach of national organizations. That reach includes impact and advertising. History simply considers the longevity of the organization, how long it's been around; only HSUS and the ASPCA have a longer history. Finally, AHS considers itself to be a thought leader, pushing the envelope on how to better care or provide for animals while in our care. ASPCA, HSUS and Best Friends are all highly ranked as thought leaders, but in their own ways that serve their animal welfare niche.

Branding elements & archetype

Given the results so far, we can now define the brand elements and brand archetype. The brand elements as shown in Figure 4 are all the parts, tangible and intangible, that come together to inform what the brand is and how people connect with it.



Persona, voice, symbols, image, and rituals are more subjective elements while service attributes, distribution, price, and packaging are objective elements that can be compared across competition more concretely. These elements inform the brand story, how it's told, and what sort of archetype the brand fits.

As has already been noted, Animal Humane Society's current brand archetype isn't defined. It's a little different based on which channel is visited, what communications are read, or what experiences are had. With the consistent motivation to care for and help animals, AHS is definitely a Caregiver. The Caregiver is caring,

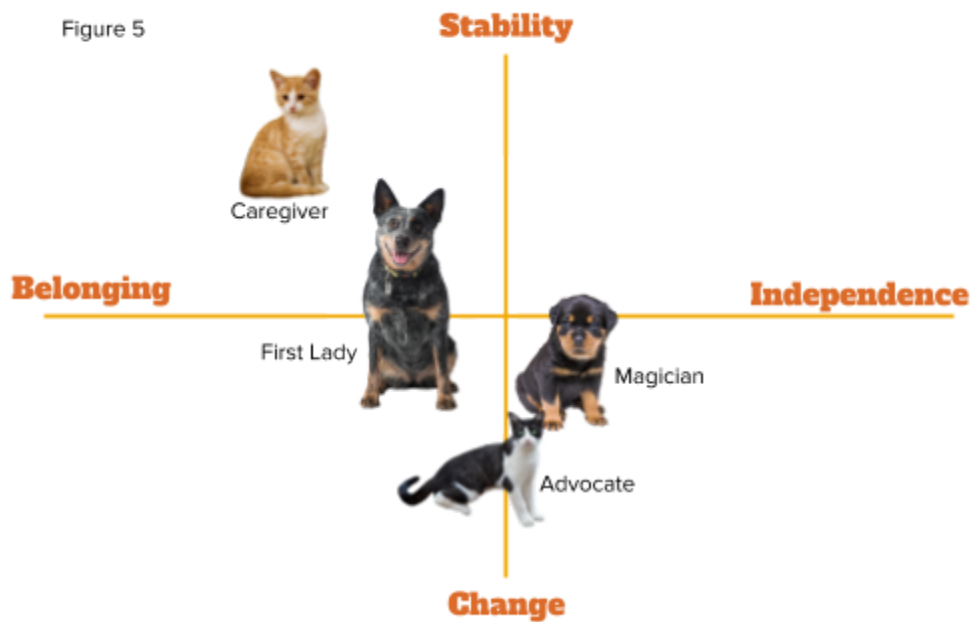
maternal, nurturing, selfless, generous, and compassionate.

While AHS is all these things for animals, it is not solely a Caregiver. There are two options to pursue. First, the Caregiver could be combined with the Magician — making dreams come true, creating something special — to become the Fairy Godmother. This combination would focus more on the happy new beginnings and the transformative experience of life with a pet. The second option is to combine with the Advocate — working toward positive change and calling others into action — to become the First Lady. This combination leans into creating positive change, to working toward something bigger and better, while prioritizing that maternal care instinct for the animals.

I suggest we pursue the First Lady archetype. It represents leadership, tapping into that major theme AHS leadership named. The First Lady acts with the animals best interests in mind, pushing forward to help them live their best lives while leading the way with compassion. While the First Lady takes risks and tries new things, at the end of the day, it's about the animals and urging others to join in our pursuits. Our current branding standards fit well with this archetype, relying on bright, bold colors that symbolize leadership and stability (blue), energy, movement (orange), and happiness (yellow). Therefore, with more consistency in the voice, I do think the brand style and elements are appropriately defined.

As the First Lady, the Caregiver would move from an agent of stability, closer to an agent of change, essentially straddling the line between the stability and change (see Figure 5). It does still retain the Caregiver pull toward belonging rather than independence. The Advocate shares this same pull toward belonging — collectively

working together to create change.



By claiming our role as the First Lady, our personality and pursuits are more clearly structured — bringing more consistency to our brand experience across every touchpoint.

Brand purpose

The brand purpose is focused on putting the mission into action — the verb to the noun — keeping the archetype in mind. With the mission to engage the hearts, hands, and minds of the community to help animals, AHS believes we achieve our goals through a team effort. From donations, volunteers, and adopters, it takes our collective work to make a difference. But we're also here for pet owners, providing the resources they need to better understand and live harmoniously with their pet. Therefore, our brand purpose is simply stated: **create happy, healthy lives for animals.**

This purpose additionally defines our behaviors. The first is simple: do what's best

for animals. Second, lead with compassion and understanding. And finally, take risks and push boundaries for positive change. These behaviors inform how the brand acts to achieve its purpose and mission.

Target audience and personas

In order to understand how to best use these newly defined concepts, our target audience also needs to be named. AHS's target audience is simply the **Animal Lover**. The Animal Lover, well, loves animals and simply wants the best for them. Their heart aches when they see an animal in need — whether it's sick, injured or homeless. They can't help but smile when they see a happy story, a cute animal video or a sweet face smiling back at them. They're cat-, dog-, critter-, lizard-, bird-, horse-, bunny-, or all-of-the-above people. Their pets are more than a critter, they're family.

The Animal Lover can be split into three segments, based on psychological beliefs and needs. The three segments are the Donor, the Pet Owner, and the Potential Adopter. The below descriptions are based on intuition and gut-feeling, based on loose interpretations of our audiences.

Meet the Donor

Dave and Diana

- Mid-50s
- Household income: \$180,000
- Live in the east suburbs
- Three kids, empty-nesters
- He drives a truck, she drives a Subaru



- Enjoy cabin weekends, exploring local restaurants and breweries, big sports fans
- Have pets: two cats, two granddogs
- Favorite social media: Facebook for her, Twitter for him
- Regularly give to charity

Meet the Pet Owner

Jim and Susan

- Early 30s
- Household income: \$150,000
- Lives just west of Minneapolis
- Fur kids: cat and new puppy
- Enjoy camping and spending time outdoors, breweries, and live music shows
- Favorite social media: Instagram
- Give to causes they're passionate about



Meet the Potential Adopter

Blake

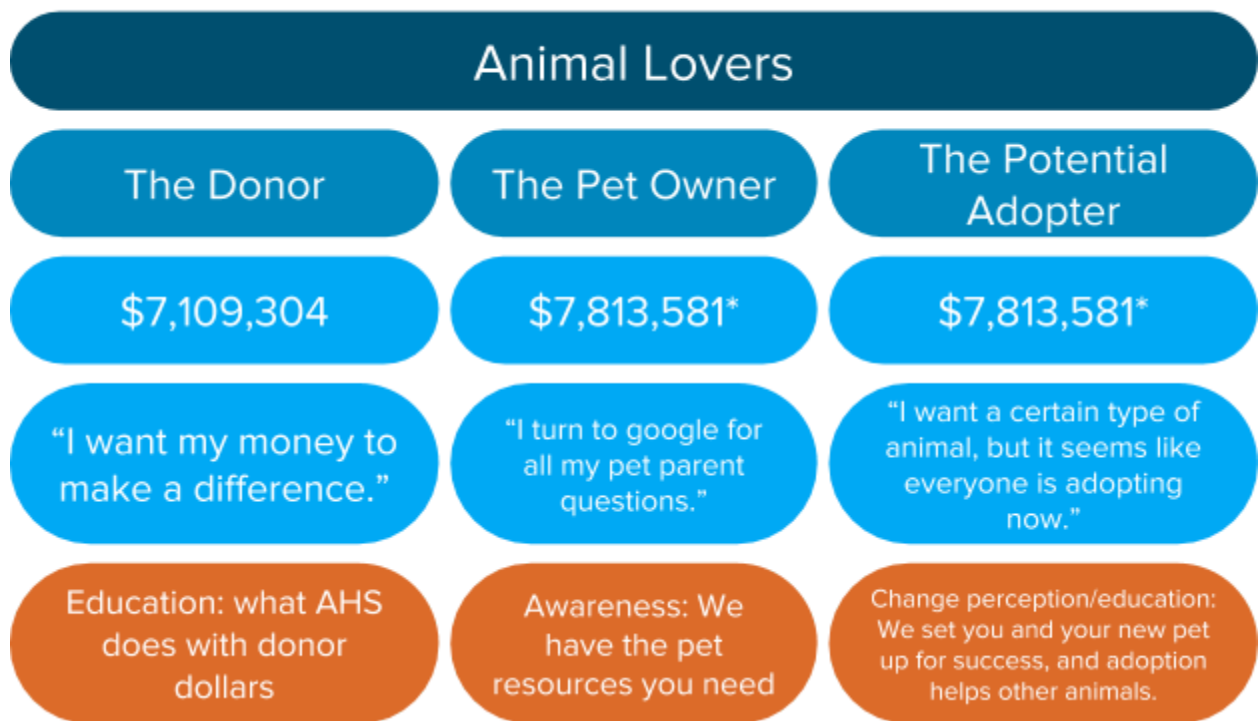
- Late 20s
- Household income: \$50,000
- Lives in the cities
- Grew up with pets
- Enjoys fishing and sharing memes with friends
- Favorite social media: Twitter
- Doesn't donate much, but does from time to time if the cause is right



Audience values, opportunities & barriers

Each audience segment offers a certain value and requires distinct communication objectives for AHS. But they also face certain barriers in their engagement with the organization. Figure 6 lays out these values (row 2), barriers (row 3), and objectives (row 4). The values, listed in third row, are pulled from AHS’s FY17 Annual Report. The Pet Owner and the Potential Adopter share the same value as adoption fees and training fees are listed together.

Figure 6



The Donor does face barriers with other charity options and knowledge about AHS’s full range of services. Communications objectives for the Donor include awareness and education around how AHS creates happy, healthy lives for animals, moving them to

action, and generating loyalty.

The Pet Owner faces barriers around the knowledge or awareness as to how AHS can support them and their pet, as well as competition from other pet companies, and perceptions around AHS as just about adoption or its expertise in all things animal. As a result, communications objectives for the Pet Owner center on awareness and education about the services and support AHS provides for pets, moving the Pet Owner to act and turn to AHS when in need, and finally participation and on-going involvement with our overall work.

Finally, the Potential Adopter runs into barriers with competition from other rescues or breeders, the price point as AHS isn't necessarily the cheapest option in getting a pet, and finally knowledge around the full slate of benefits with which new adopters are provided. Therefore, communication objectives include shifting perceptions about what adoption at AHS supports and means, as well as awareness and education around the benefits received as a new adopter and support given to Pet Owners.

The target audience segments and their full stakeholder journeys will be addressed later.

Insights

With the brand archetype and audiences identified, we can now find a niche to occupy, or our sweet spot. By looking at four categories to generate insights — cultural, brand, market, and target — we can define our sweet spot between these insights.

Figure 7



Figure 7 defines each insight and the sweet spot. For the cultural insight, charitable giving has never faced so much choice. There's pressure to give to certain causes as well, given the current political climate and changes in tax law. People feel pulled in different directions with more choice. This insight doesn't apply to donors, but also volunteers, and customers — as there are seemingly an infinite number of ways to rescue an animal as well. The brand insight calls back to our newly defined archetype: the First Lady. It's that innovative leader with a maternal, fun feel. The market insight

boils down to rescues versus breeders — the “adopt don’t shop” movement against the designer animal. That same idea floats into the target insight. While it’s about the Animal Lover, they do know what they’re looking for, they have a preference for what kind of animal they like before they visit the shelter, whether its a specific personality, breed, or size. The Animal Lover is still particular when rescuing.

These insights all lead to the sweet spot: your compassionate animal guide. AHS is here to help find the pet that’s right for you, help you and your pet live your best lives together, or to help animals in need find new beginnings. We’re a leader but will still bring understanding to our work, a compassion not only for animals, but for people too.

Brand positioning

As all this work continues to build to the next step, as we can now refine the brand positioning, with the sweet spot in place. Thinking back to the strategy canvas, the factors of competition represent some key points of difference, which inform brand positioning. Important points of difference include:

- Size and scope
- History
- Local impact
- Thought leadership, innovation
- Physical location
- Open admission/open adoption
- Expertise, driven by compassion

As a result, AHS’s brand position can be stated: **For animal lovers, it’s a compassionate guide that helps create happy, healthy lives for animals.** Looking

across these points of difference, they all point to the fact that AHS prioritizes the animals and works to help them be their best.

Messaging

At this point, we can finally start to apply some messaging to speak to our audiences in a relevant manner, meeting their interests and needs. Figure 8 lays out the messaging structure, building on the foundation of the First Lady archetype. Keeping in mind the sweet spot and brand purpose named previously, each audience segment is assigned a key message that will resonate with them.

- The Donor is working to make a difference for animals in our care at AHS, tapping into that value-expressive function. Therefore the Donor's key message is "Together we create a safe world for animals." This taps into their functional need to feel like they belong to a group, we're working together to make this change or difference for animals.
- The Pet Owner wants the best for their pet, whether that's collars, leashes, training, boarding, etc. The services AHS provides for pets is as much about the animal as it is about the human. Therefore, the key message for the Pet Owner is "The resources you need to bring out the best in your pet," working to bring them closer together and serving both of their needs.
- The Potential Adopter is still just looking. They may not even be on the cusp of adopting a pet just yet, but they know one day they want to. The key message here is simple: "Your best friend is waiting for you." It gets at that idea that when they're ready, we'll be here for them. In the meantime, they can get their animal fix from us, too.

Figure 8

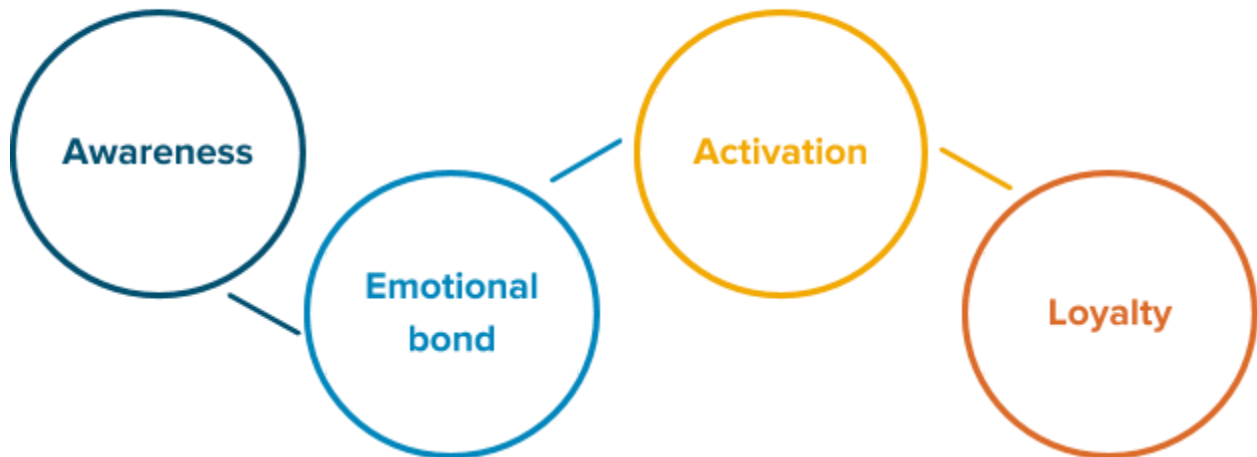


These key messages can work together toward the purpose to create happy, healthy lives for animals. They also inform what themes we should hone in on when speaking with each audience, helping guide them through their respective stakeholder journey.

Marketing drivers and stakeholder journey

All the work done up to this point builds into to the stakeholder journey, to help our target audience segments move from consideration, to action, and finally to community and enjoyment. It's a distilled stakeholder journey that gets at the key phases an individual goes through when interacting with a brand or organization. For AHS, as laid out in Figure 9, the journey starts with awareness in the discovery phase, moving to forming an emotional bond before activation in the action phase, and finally fostering loyalty in the community phase.

Figure 9



Awareness and emotional bond can be similar in each segment, but they split at activation. Activation and loyalty look different for each segment — the action is different, as is the community or form that the loyalty then takes. But once they act, we want them coming back.

By mapping out the journeys of our target audience segments, we can identify points where we can support their journey with better experiences and content.

The Donor journey

Dave and Diana regularly give to charity. They have disposable income and enjoy giving back to the community — particularly to causes with which they feel a connection or about which they feel passionately. They also give because they enjoy the tax benefits. They’ve always been animal lovers. They had a family dog while their kids grew up and currently have two brother cats they dote on, especially now that they’re empty nesters.

Near the end of the year, Diana decides where to give for their annual giving.

Driving to work one day, she saw a billboard ([awareness](#)) for AHS. Having lived in the Twin Cities area for 22 years, she's known about AHS, but never gave. She went to the AHS website to learn more ([awareness/content opportunity](#)). Diana decided to make a \$25 donation ([content opportunity](#)). She had a friend who recently adopted a cat there and felt the need to help more cats and dogs find loving homes ([emotional bond](#)). A few months later, Diana received an email from AHS about their March Match campaign and if she gave, her donation in any amount would be matched dollar-for-dollar ([activation](#)), helping create new beginnings for animals in need. Dave chimed in and noted that not all their giving needs to happen at the end of the year — in fact, spreading their giving throughout the year makes financial sense. So they gave once again, happy that they doubled their impact ([activation](#)).

Shortly after, they saw an article from the Star Tribune ([awareness/content opportunity](#)) about AHS and a case of neglect and overcrowding they were handling, rescuing 40 dogs from unsanitary and overcrowded conditions. This article popped up on their google newsfeeds, having recently searched for AHS. Though they didn't feel compelled to give again so quickly, Dave and Diana felt satisfied that this recent donation would help those animals.

Future opportunities:

- Stewardship content: telling donors more about their impact and what their dollars do. They want to know how their money is being used. This will help inspire a deeper emotional bond and loyalty.

The Pet Owner journey

Jim and Susan recently bought a new house with a bigger yard, and surrounded by neighbors with dogs. They felt it was time to get a dog of their own. Since they already have a cat, they decided to get a puppy, thinking it would be easier to introduce the dog into their family ([content opportunity](#)). Living near AHS Golden Valley, Susan started to peruse their website, just to see who's there ([awareness](#)). She saw pup she liked, but later in the day he was off the website, already adopted. Susan decided she needed to do a little more research to prepare to adopt a puppy, introduce it to her cat, and figure out which type of dog would best suit her and Jim's lifestyle ([content opportunities](#)).

Jim and Susan determined a lab would be best — playful, but more calm and easygoing. They also decided that they did in fact want to adopt, rather than shop, and felt AHS was the best choice given the amount of animals it helps ([emotional bond](#)). Susan started to get supplies — a leash, collar, bowls, food, a kennel and a baby gate to keep the pup contained ([content opportunity](#)).

Finally, one day she saw a cute puppy, Marley. A lab mix, he seemed perfect for their interests and lifestyle. They went to meet him and with the help of a friendly volunteer ([emotional bond](#)), they went to a visitation room. Jim and Susan decided he was the one and started the adoption process, simply filling out the paper work — no background check or home visitation needed ([activation/content opportunity](#)). They renamed him Moe, picked up a few extra toys the adoption specialist recommended to keep him busy ([activation/loyalty](#)), grabbed their adoption packet ([content opportunity](#)), and took him home. They made sure to grab a few extra treats for Bella, their cat, so she didn't feel left out. The following day they received an email congratulating them on

their new family member ([loyalty/content opportunity](#)), reminding them that people and pets are better together. Jim set up his first health check-up at a veterinarian AHS recommended, to get Moe checked out to be sure he was completely healthy.

Over the following weeks, they went through all the paces of new parenthood — looking up why dogs eat grass, what a weird poop means, when to start training, crate training, how to socialize Moe, ([content opportunities](#)) and more. Eventually they received another email from AHS, offering a coupon on training classes, including puppy kindergarten ([activation/loyalty/content opportunity](#)). Looking into the training classes, they noticed a regularly held puppy playgroup and decided to go to the next session.

Future opportunities:

- Continue the loyalty progression: Be a resource for their new pet. Content opportunities around the importance of training and the expertise at AHS.
- Reassurance through the choice to adopt and what that means for other animals in need.
- Opportunity to turn into donor. Through continued emotional bond and loyalty, nudge them down the donor journey, pieces are already in place, activation looks different and new loyalty journey, working tangentially.

The Potential Adopter journey

Blake has always loved animals. He grew up with pets and has dreamed of getting one of his own someday. Blake recently got his own apartment and is at point where he feels ready to take the next step in his career. Though he longs for a dog, he knows it's a big commitment ([content opportunity](#)). Recently, his friend adopted a dog from AHS, reminding him of the local shelter ([awareness](#)). He started to look through the animals, but cut himself off before getting too invested. On hard days at work, sometimes he'll pull up the page, just to see some cute animals and think about one day getting his own ([emotional bond](#)). He's been starting to think about how his life might change when he does get a dog ([content opportunity](#)) and he's not sure he's quite ready.

He grew up with a pure-bred black lab, a hunting and fishing companion, and always imagined owning another. He also looked at some local breeders, but with more and more of his friends adopting, Blake has started to feel that adopting is a better choice ([content opportunity \(why adopt!\)/activation](#)) and would make him feel better by helping an animal in need ([content opportunity \(why AHS\)](#)). He's not ready to make the commitment yet, but someday soon, when he feels more ready and the right dog comes along. In the meantime, he follows AHS on Instagram and Twitter to get his daily fill of cute animals and other fun animal memes ([content opportunities](#)). As a result, AHS is there to remind him that his best friend is waiting for him.

Future opportunities:

- One challenge to consider is how we create loyalty for the potential adopter. Is it mainly through social? Is it more stories on pet parenthood or how to find the

right pet? These may be a start, but I do believe social will be the strongest way to build a community for this person.

- We can also nudge the Potential Adopter down the Donor journey. We can remind him that he can help animals in need while he waits for the right one for him. He may even help his future pet.

CONTENT STRATEGY

With the brand experience in place, I can now turn to the content strategy. As pointed out in the stakeholder journey, there are many content opportunities to support the key audiences and deepen our relationship with them, moving them along their respective paths. Some of these opportunities are already being met by tactics AHS already has in place. AHS has ramped up with content efforts, but right now it's still a little bit reactionary — for example producing content for the upcoming e-newsletter. We're starting to come up with more ideas and writing to fit those ideas. So the effort here is to put goals to our strategy, give it a structure, and create standards we can all work toward.

Strategy goal

Become a trusted thought leader and news source for animal lovers, building trust and loyalty while deepening their relationships with AHS.

Business case/plan:

Pursuing this strategy is low-risk with the potential for high reward. The biggest cost is time. There is cost-saving as the subject matter experts are in-house. We can also reuse evergreen content that is already in place or backlogged.

Audience goals

Each audience segment will be the focus of content relevant to their interests, with a varying degree of focus for each.

- The Donor: Increase engagement and giving by telling captivating stories that tell our donors how their funds are being used to create new beginnings for animals in need. Focus: 40%
- The Pet Owner: Increase interest in full services by providing pet owners with our expertise in easy and helpful content pieces that help them and their pets feel better together. Focus: 50%
- The Potential Adopter: Create an emotional bond through animal stories and information, meeting the potential adopter's animal needs until they're ready to meet their new best friend. Focus: 10%

Measuring success

Content boosts revenue indirectly. Success can't be tied directly to dollars, but we'll rely on online data for tracking engagement. We can measure traffic, click-through rates, social shares, and conversions to newsletters, to name a few, to measure how content fares over time.

Content plan & tactics

While there are audience goals, it must be acknowledged that there will be crossover as we can't segment the content like an email, only sending or giving access to specific people. That said, key topic areas include:

- Donor stewardship — Tap into how they're creating new beginnings for animals

in need. Can and should align with current communications campaign.

- Pet Owner resources — Informational pieces or relatable stories, coming from a human perspective that understands the highs, lows, and needs of pet ownership.
- Potential adopter bonding — Establish a relationship with the potential adopter to help them with how to best make their decision. Can be through stories about our animals, our work, or even fun animal posts.

Tactical goals

- One long-form story per month (most human, speaks to all three audiences) ex: a success story regarding an animal that had an extra special case.
- Two animal info stories per month, focused on helping or relating to pet owners
- One stewardship story laser-focused on donor impact

Note: There is a web video series initiative that is already being executed and falls in line with these goals, supporting them further. That web series is owned and created by an internal employee who is an expert in video storytelling.

Also, this plan doesn't take into account social as a channel strategy just yet. There are some social-only initiatives, including stories. This plan leaves space to add in those social-only initiatives.

Example Campaigns

Below are two example campaigns showing how content can support or tactically fit in with two communications campaigns that are already being used by AHS.

Summer Needs

- Main target: Donors
- Campaign theme: For every animal under the sun.

June 2018						
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6 Eappeal	7	8 Eappeal kicker	9
10	11 Stewardship story	12 Pet Dish Newsletter	13	14	15 Web series Long-form feature	16
17	18	19	20 Eappeal	21	22	23
24	25 Animal Info Story #2	26 Pet Dish Newsletter	27 Eappeal	28	29 Eappeal kicker	30

- Tactics for June (email appeal schedule determined by Annual Giving team):
 - Email: 5/29 appeal (video message)
 - Email: June 6 appeal — animal story
 - Email: June 20 appeal — animal story
 - Email: June 28 appeal — overheard at AHS graphic
 - Web video series: June 15 — Summer is the busiest time of year, add to June 26 Pet Dish newsletter, share on social on June 16.
 - Stewardship story: June 11 — Donor dollars at work in the summer, add to June 26 Pet Dish newsletter, share on social on June 14.

- Animal info story #1: May 25 — Stay safe in summer heat (recycled content), share on social on May 25.
- Animal info story #2: June 25 — Lymes disease prevention, share on social on June 27.
- Long-form story: June 15 — Feature story on the bottle baby foster program. Go in-depth on what it takes to be a bottle baby volunteer. Posted in conjunction with the web video series, which also touches on kitten season. Boost on social June 18; add to July 10 Pet Dish newsletter.

Awareness campaign

- Main target: Pet Owners
- Campaign theme: Experts in all things animal

July 2018						
1	2 Animal Info Story #1	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 Stewardship story	10 Pet Dish Newsletter	11	12	13 Web series	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 Long-form feature	21
22	23 Animal Info Story #2	24 Pet Dish Newsletter	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

- Tactics for July:
 - Web video series: July 13 — Dog training tips with our expert trainers. Boost on social on July 15.
 - Stewardship story: July 9 — Feature on Lucy, Amber or Rhea, three dogs who have each had very unique medical cases. Follow their story from diagnosis to post adoption. Share on social on July 12, add to July 24 Pet Dish newsletter.
 - Animal info story #1: July 2 — Help your pets stay calm during fireworks. Boost on July 3.
 - Animal info story #2: July 23 — The power of heartworm preventatives for dogs. Boost on social on July 25.
 - Long-form story: July 20 — Life as a new pet parent (an honest look at the good and the bad). Share on social on July 23, add to August 14 Pet Dish newsletter.

Execution

To share this content, and serve up other relevant pieces alongside it — making the content accessible, useful, and findable — I recommend that we build out a true blog experience on the website. We can use keywords or tags to categorize content, creating different feeds and experiences based on intended audience and/or subject matter. It creates a better user experience that also allows us to serve up relevant content and lead them through a content trail on the website. This breadcrumb trail only adds another drop in the bucket of trust we're hoping to fill.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend AHS takes the branding strategy laid out here and apply it to both external and internal communications to create a consistent and cohesive brand experience across all channels and touchpoints. This would include internal customer service training, internal strategy, and external channel strategy such as social media and earned media. If we revisit and update our brand guidelines, to ensure clarity, we can, hopefully, create greater consistency across all touchpoints. Moreover, I do think a stronger focus on customer service training will help generate this consistency with the experience in shelter.

In addition to applying this branding internally, it's also recommended that AHS assess the temperature of the employees values and if they're in line with the organization's. As noted earlier, the consistency in the brand experience throughout the organization can be a competitive advantage, especially when the employees are deeply connected to the brand values. As a nonprofit, it's feasible to think that the people who work at AHS want to work there because they believe in the organization's mission. But, it'd be worth investing some time in.

When it comes to our brand communications, I have a few more small recommendations that I think will help people more easily connect with us.

- Stop using the phrase “human-animal bond.” The phrase is prescriptive and seems too scientific. It's not a simple, straightforward idea that taps into any emotion.

- Provide more context or understanding when using the term “enrichment” as a benefit AHS provides to the animals. What does enrichment mean for the animals? Simply by describing what that enrichment looks like — special treats or blankets — brings more emotion to the interaction, forming a deeper connection.
- While this project didn’t focus on it, much of the literature I came across about donor involvement also spoke about how important donor stewardship is in deepening a relationship between a nonprofit and the donor, creating loyalty. I do think an increased focus on stewardship, through content and experiences, can only help AHS foster greater trust and loyalty with its donor base, as well as with prospective donors who will see that work.

CONCLUSION

Through this brand work and suggested content plan, I hope to help AHS build a stronger brand experience that resonates more deeply with its target audiences. My hope is this strategy will help give direction and structure to our work, not only to create a better experience for our customers, but also to bridge the silos we currently work in more often than not. While the brand work overarches all our communications, I also hope the content strategy can help move us from a tactically-based reactive plan, to a proactive plan that anticipates the needs of our target audience, fulfilling those desires before they even realize them.

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Appendix 1 - Content Analysis Code

1. Vehicle
 - a. Social post
 - b. Webpage
 - c. Web post
 - d. Direct mail
 - e. Email
 - f. Print
2. Format
 - a. Text
 - b. Video
 - c. Image and text
 - d. Graphic
3. Theme
 - a. Fundraising
 - b. Animal profile information
 - c. Awareness/educational
 - d. News
 - e. Feel-good/success story
 - f. Discussion
4. Tone
 - a. Serious
 - b. Fun/happy
 - c. Sad
 - d. Persuasive
 - e. Grateful
 - f. Neutral
5. Messenger
 - a. AHS
 - b. Specific person
6. Keywords (open ended)

Content Piece	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/photos/a.69513319713.92962.35867734713/10156834844099714/?type=3&theater	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/photos/a.69513319713.92962.35867734713/10156834411759714/?type=3&theater	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/photos/a.69513319713.92962.35867734713/10156832308574714/?type=3&theater	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/photos/a.69513319713.92962.35867734713/10156832072789714/?type=3&theater	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/posts/10156831808719714	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/photos/a.69513319713.92962.35867734713/10156831394459714/?type=3	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/photos/a.69513319713.92962.35867734713/10156829493989714/?type=3	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/posts/10156829196749714	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/videos/10156828693509714/	https://www.facebook.com/animalhumanesociety/photos/a.69513319713.92962.35867734713/10156826291509714/?type=3	https://www.instagram.com/p/Bhhb4atHray/?hl=en&taken-by=animalhumanemn	https://www.instagram.com/p/BhhKsBXHhT6/?hl=en&taken-by=animalhumanemn	https://www.instagram.com/p/BhZ8KsnDyKd/?hl=en&taken-by=animalhumanemn	https://www.instagram.com/p/BhZzqjCBIOq/?hl=en&taken-by=animalhumanemn		
Vehicle																
Social Post	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
webpage																
Web post																
Mailing																
Email																
Print																
Format																
Text						x										
Video										x						
Image and text	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Graphic																
Theme																
Fundraising																
Animal profile info		x		x								x				
Awareness/educational			x		x				x							
News											x					
Feel-good/success story	x									x	x			x	x	
Discussion						x	x									
Tone																
Serious					x											
Fun/Happy	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Sad																
Persuasive																
Grateful																
Neutral											x					
Messenger																
AHS	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Specific person																
Key words																
(open ended)	tiny, kitten, rock star, volunteers, thrive, find, family, cuddler	sweet, Forget-Me-Not, happiest, find, adopter, good-natured boy, learn more	animals, volunteer	we kid!, pretty, affectionate kitty,	troubling practice, undermines, credibility, animal welfare, does not support, good intentions, finding, homeless animals, care, medical treatment, advocate, protect, abuse, neglect	pet, excited	Pet, share	Walk for Animals, biggest, party, celebrate, human/animal bond, fun, depend, help, homeless, negelected,	Cute, friend	adopted, cared for, blind, loves, sweet	please note	available, adoption	Awww, Congrats	scared, shy, sweetest, luckily, adopted, happy		
										*10 facebook posts covered April 10-13						

4.4.18 WFA Tips and Tricks #6	04.18 April Humane Investigations Appeal	03.18 March Match Appeal	01.18 and 02.18 January and February Supporter Card	12.17 Greeting Card Control	12.17 Major Donor	12.1 Year End Donor	11.17 Gift Catalog	11.17 Nov Donor Gift Certificate	10.17 October Donor Appeal	09.17 September and September Follow-up Donor Appeal	Animal Tracks: Janelle's Message (https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/tracks/article/2017/11/06/message-janelle-dixon)	AT: New Programs (https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/tracks/article/2017/11/06/new-programs-help-young-animal-lovers-get-involved)	AT: Buffalo (https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/tracks/article/2017/11/06/services-staff-shifted-buffalo-other-sites)	AT: AHS unveils new website (https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/tracks/article/2017/11/06/ahs-unveils-new-website)
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
x											x			
												x	x	x
x														
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
x	Janelle	Janelle	Janelle	Janelle	Janelle	Janelle	Janelle	Janelle	Janelle	Janelle	Janelle	x	x	x
celebration, animals, thank, appreciated, donate, fundraiser, fun, love	Poor, adorable, abandoned, suffering, heartbreaking, help, friends, saved, care, happy, loving, animals, neglected, desperately, love, adoption, strive, rescued, urgently, support, dire, community, thank you	animal, passionately, loving, home, support, rescue, adoption, generously, medical, care, loving, helpless, debilitating, desperately, need, family, depend, urge, critical	homeless, abandoned, animals, support, generosity, chances, vulnerable, you, owe, loving, home, demonstrate, commitment, depend, survival, friend	Thanks, support, abandoned, injured, neglected, loving, families, help, need, community, donate, safe, medical, care	Thanks, extraordinary, support, abandoned, injured, neglected, gift, animals, community, shelter, medical, generosity,	rescued, cared, need, help, homeless, neglected, saved, adopted, loving, generous, support	thrilled, save, animals, community, neglected, vulnerable, happy, life-changing, need, adoption, give, care, need,	life-saving, suffered, homelessness, neglect, need, care, support, desperate, need, human, help, home, loving, adoption, love, community, thanks, provide, support,	you, impact, community, urgently, need, compassionate, adoption, home, family, generous, support, rescue, animals, community, shelter, life-changing, powerful, difference, gift	gift, help, local, animals, community, needed, medical, care, family, support, life-saving, love, compassion, suffering, unfortunate, adoption, home, abandoned, caring, friends	awe, accomplished, people, animals, loving, homes, celebrate, community, support,	animal, advocates, pet, care, animals, ambassador,	communities	pet, community
*everything up to this point was coded on 4/14/18														

Appendix 2 - Interview transcripts

Janelle Dixon, conducted April 24, 2018

1. Why do you come to work everyday and why do you think others do?

The mission. Everybody interprets it differently. It's important to me, personally. Plus, two things: they love the work for animals and the people they work with. I'm sure, too, that people here grew up with pets and looked for jobs where they could work with animals. It's an evolving field and interesting from a professional perspective, to have a high impact.

2. Where do you want this organization to go? What are its aspirations?

The capital campaign is really a reflection of that. We're hyper focused on the animal and hands-on. That's changing. We're looking at the impact on people who have the ultimate impact on the animals and the value they place on them.

3. If you could only name three, what are the top values you'd list?

Be good to animals. Partner with people. Balancing the head and heart.

4. What makes us different from other competitive organizations? What unique benefit experiences do we create for people?

We're always open to new and different ways of doing things. Change is part of the culture, and exploring what's possible. Our size and scope is also important; we're much larger. We have a strong reputation and trust with our donor base.

We also have a long history. Finally, the emphasis around the human-animal bond. Our rescue work still focuses on the animal and trusting good intentions.

5. What keywords would you use to describe our brand persona or personality?

What story are we trying to tell with our brand?

Fun. Good things happen here. It's not a sad place. It's good for people and animals.

We're a full resource.

6. Name some examples where we really got it right, where the persona and key messages were on point.

When we closed the Buffalo site. We're transparent and own mistakes. We don't want to come across as if we have something to hid.

7. Name some examples where people lived the brand promise.

Most of the stuff we put out. There's tons of stories we use effectively. We're constantly sharing them. Also, when we do the right thing and can't change the why.

Paul Sorenson, conducted April 24, 2018

1. Why do you come to work everyday and why do you think others do?

I love what I do. I think it's the same reason for others. It's also the people I work with. They believe in what we do. You can see directly the impact of the work. You're immersed in it. You see, every day, what our work does. It makes challenging things worthwhile.

2. Where do you want this organization to go? What are its aspirations?

We have an opportunity with the capital campaign to change perspectives about what an animal welfare organization can be. Taking in animals by transport, but there's so much more to us. I see our work in Outreach and Kindest Cut, our ability to take our expertise to serve animals in the community, people and their pets, to help them have great, happy, healthy lives with their pets and not worry about losing their pet.

We know what stories resonate in terms of fundraising, but they're only a fraction of the stories we have. We have to figure out how to tell those other stories in a way that gets people to support it.

We have so much expertise. We have a huge opportunity and haven't fully realized that yet.

3. If you could only name three, what are the top values you'd list?

Compassion. Balancing emotion and logic; we see a lot of organizations driven completely by heart without the head attached. Attention and effort toward

making this a great place to work. So many decisions are informed by doing right by the people who work here, the volunteers, employees and others in the animal welfare world. That leads to doing right by the animals.

And leading. We're always trying to be at the forefront and how we can do better for animals. The pace of that ambition doesn't slow down, never settling for good enough. It's in our brand but not always present. It comes in bursts, not woven into the tapestry of our brand message.

4. What makes us different from other competitive organizations? What unique benefit experiences do we create for people?

Versus other rescue organizations, we're open admission, taking in any animal and have the capacity to do so.

We balance the head and the heart. All decisions are made with both in mind.

We're not afraid to make a difficult decision if it's right for the animal.

We have expertise and passion around all things animal. Few others can do all that we do in as many places.

We're drive by what's best for animals. It's not always easy. If we can do something and it makes sense to do it, then we should.

5. What keywords would you use to describe our brand persona or personality? What story are we trying to tell with our brand?

Friendly. Fun. Joyful. Compassionate. Trusted/trustworthy, and we've earned it. Helpful.

Pets make our lives better. We're here for you and your pet, and every other animal that needs us.

6. Name some examples where we really got it right, where the persona and key messages were on point.

A few years ago there was the dog flu outbreak. We got out in front of the story and were transparent about it. People were grateful in their response to it. Trust was built already and the way we handled it, we lived up to our values and ideals.

Another instance is Pine River. There was a real concern about exploiting the dogs for money. We spent a lot of time figuring out how to tell that story and show the impact we had on the animals and vice versa. There was compassion. It was hard to tell the story in a way that conveys all the pieces. We tend to do well at telling a part of the story.

7. Name some examples where people lived the brand promise.

Again, I'll go back to Pine River. Everyone in the organization cleaned cages. We all took shifts, doing what it took to make sure those dogs had what they needed.

We don't judge. We're here to help people and if that means surrender, we don't make them feel judged for making that decision.

Also, we changed the approach to adoption away from an interrogation. We made acquiring a pet a more collaborative and wonderful experience. We shifted from "prove that we can trust you" to "of course we can trust you," removing barriers between people and animals.

Lisa Bonds, conducted April 27, 2018

1. Why do you come to work everyday and why do you think others do?

The culture of the organization. There's a piece of the brand, but more tangential. For others, it's a mix. On the frontline, the work we do is hands-on with animals. And then there are others who are helping make that possible.

2. Where do you want this organization to go? What are its aspirations?

I want us to be the place for all things animal in Minnesota. We are now, and can be even more, a local organization with national chops. The stuff we're doing is at that level. People don't know that.

We are leading the way for animals. Period. Full stop.

I don't want us to be an asshole and worry we'd hurt relationships. But they know it.

One thing I don't think we've hit hard enough is differentiation. There's audience confusion with national organizations. We need to say what makes us different, that we get the job done and don't think about how the work defines us.

3. If you could only name three, what are the top values you'd list?

Aspirational, innovation (no one knows it). Compassion and we think about it to a fault. Fun, light, cheeky while still serious.

4. What makes us different from other competitive organizations? What unique benefit experiences do we create for people?

Cutting-edge and innovative. We take the leap before others even think about it. There's quality and integrity at every level. Quality of work and heart is all over the organization.

5. What keywords would you use to describe our brand persona or personality?

What story are we trying to tell with our brand?

Rescue. Expertise, I want that one more. Passion/compassion. I want to move away from rescue and more to something that's more for the community, in the future. We need the words to describe a movement.

6. Name some examples where we really got it right, where the persona and key messages were on point.

Community engagement. The boy and his dog video. It was just a piece of our work people know the least about.

Some of the HI stuff. It's a slippery slope to rescue. But we're more apt to talk about our uniqueness in HI with the only people in the state.

Donor lunches, they're our ambassadors.

Part of the reason we haven't gotten to where we want to get is because we're understaffed. We have a huge mandate. We just need to take time to stop the day-to-day and figure stuff out.

7. Name some examples where people lived the brand promise.

I think of our board, Dick Hall, the chair of fund development. He very naturally

talks about us and is used to cutting to the chase.

Janelle sometimes really nails it. She can do a brilliant job depending on the context.

Depends on the interview but I think Zach does a good job.