

Find Your Target Audience

How to bring more prospective adopters to your website

BY DANIELLE HAMILTON



When people in your community surf the Web for prospective pets, their searches may result in pages of animals advertised on Freecycle and Craigslist, in newspaper classifieds, or on breeders' websites. But by focusing on specific keywords related to your group, you can help pet-seekers find you. The following tips can help you increase traffic to your website, raise awareness of your organization, and improve your chances of finding adoptive homes for the animals you care for.

1) Determine how easy it is for people to find your website—and how they're finding it. You can pay a company to do this, or you can experiment with a search engine yourself. Use combinations of words that local residents might use; for instance, type in the words "dog," "adopt," and your city or town's name. Does your group's website show up in the search results—and if so, how far down the list does it appear? You can also check your website statistics report to find out the search terms that bring people to your pages.

2) Create an effective title for your website. Incorporate the most important search terms within the HTML

code for your group's website title. The title you create will appear as the title of your page both in a search engine's results and again in the bar at the top of your browser.

Example: `<title> Super Pet Rescue—Dogs, Cats, and Small Animals Available for Adoption in MyTown, USA </title>`

3) Make sure you have a "meta name description" that accurately describes your group in one or two complete sentences. The meta name description is the short blurb that will appear in search engine results under the title. This is what many people will read when deciding

Resources

To learn more, check out these guides to search engine optimization.

“Beginner’s Guide to SEO”
seomoz.org/article/beginners-1-page

“Search Engine Optimization”
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_optimization

Webmaster Help Center
google.com/support/webmasters

Search Engine Optimization: An Hour a Day
Jennifer Grappone and Gradiva Couzin
Sybex, 2006, \$29.99

One way to get better quality links is to ask local organizations and businesses that are related to or support you in some way to include a link to your website on theirs—perhaps within a list of local animal organizations.



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whether to click on your link, so it should accurately and succinctly describe your group’s work. The concise sentence below hits on several keywords for a fictional rescue group in Mobile, Ala.

Example: `<meta name="description" content="4 Paws Rescue is a non-profit animal rescue adopting out pet dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens in the Mobile area, serving all of Coastal Alabama.">`

■ **4) Instead of labeling the photos on your website as simply “dog” or “fund-raiser,” use the opportunity to include more keywords.** For instance, if you have a photo of a dog on your site, use a caption under the photo that describes the dog, your organization, and your programs. You could also use an “alt” in your source code, which is text that will not be seen by the average viewer but will be scanned by web-crawling spiders that determine website content to rank search results. Here’s a sample code for an “alt” for a photo of an annual fundraiser:

Example: ``

■ **5) Increase the number of “good,” relevant links to your website.** The number of websites that link to yours helps search engines decide where you rank in search results. But any old link won’t do—you should avoid “free for all” link websites, for example. The only purpose of these sites is to sell links to other sites, so search engines ignore this type of link. One way to get better quality links is to ask local organizations and businesses that are related to or support you in some way to include a link to your website on theirs—perhaps within a list of local animal organizations. Try local pet supply stores, rescue groups (or shelters, if your group is a rescue), veterinarians, and pet sitting companies.

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