

Problem/Situation: The Company needed a two-fold marketing strategy to attract retail placement of their products in pet food stores and attention and buy-in from pet breeders.

Solution: A review of the background materials provided by the company showed the typical results of many in-house efforts – a lack of appealing and consistent design elements and no succinct marketing message that stood out.

Too often companies forget that in marketing it's not about them, it's about the customer. More specifically, it is about the problems or issues that a customer faces and that might be met by the company's products or services. A little digging into the problems facing Nature's Links' audience led me to deliver solutions. Dog and cat breeders have a problem winning awards at dog and cat shows. Pet food retailers face a problem of selling pet foods in their stores.

- ❖ *Dog and cat breeders have a challenge winning awards at dog and cat shows*
 - When I uncovered that the breeder motivation was winning awards, it was just a matter of finding a visual that supported a successful outcome. The winning breeder of a pet show earns a First Place Award, signified by a ribbon. That would be my visual – a brightly colored 1st Place ribbon with supporting copy "The Menu of Champion Pets".
 - More copy – The Seriously Superior Nutrition Your Pet Deserves - focused on the teamwork involved between breeder and pet and touched the nerve that a breeder has a responsibility to provide the pet partner with real and fresh food, with no additives, preservatives or chemicals, because the pet after all works so hard to earn the award.
 - An ideal place to market to breeders is the pet shows itself. I worked with designer Jack Mckinnon of Graphicus to develop a display using the vibrant orange color and the purple (color of a king) ribbon. I wrote the message, (*You Are What You Eat, true for people true for pets*), to quickly say that what goes in will determine what comes out – in this case a healthy coat, and teeth which can be judged favorably.
- ❖ *Pet food retailers face a challenge of selling pet foods in their stores.*
 - Nature's Link products posed a problem in placement with retailers because as fresh and natural foods, there were no preservatives. This meant that the food had to be stored in coolers. The company provided the coolers to store their pet foods. The customers of pet food retailers loved the natural food feature, but the retailers were put off by the coolers.
 - I recast the idea of coolers as a benefit showing that the company would address replenishing the stock at regular intervals.
 - To move the product within the store I worked with Graphicus to develop Point-of-Sale signage. Using the same strong attention grabbing colors, and aided by my benefit based short copy and Jack Mckinnon's animal illustrations, a retail POS package was created to provide to retailers who would become Nature's Link distributors.

Result: The Nature's Links' attention-getting exhibition booth was a magnet for breeders at pet shows. Breeders influenced customers and sales jumped. Numbers are confidential for retailers, but the company reported that using the POS package it very quickly began to place distribution pet food cooler agreements with retailers who had shown no interest at all in previous attempts.

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