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Special Report

The 5 Crucial Web Content Elements That **Really** Drive Results...

And How Most Pet Websites Are Missing Them!

By Pam Foster / PetCopywriter.com

PetCopywriter.com
Race ahead of the pack

One billion individual web pages.

That's how many pages Google announced it had indexed just a while ago — a major milestone in the world of search engines and SEO (search engine optimization).

And on any given day, 30.3 million of those web pages are related to the pet/veterinary industry, in the categories of:

- veterinary practices
- pet businesses marketing to veterinarians
- pet welfare and adoption organizations
- pet products
- pet groomers, daycares, walkers, sitters and trainers
- pet naming and breed-selection tools
- pet and veterinary blogs and videos
- other pet and veterinary businesses and organizations

The good news for you is – a vast majority of those websites are not following the best practices of web content (the words, images and page structure) that:

a. attract prospects through search engines, and

b. convert website visitors into paying customers.

Why is this great news for you?

Because once you know the 5 crucial web content elements that really drive results, you'll race ahead of the pack in terms of improving search results, building solid relationships with clients and customers, and growing your profits.

So, how does your website break through all that Internet clutter? Is there a clear path to knowing exactly what works online to set your veterinary practice or related business apart from the others, get found in search engines and turn visitors into customers?

Yes, there's a clear path to veterinary website success. But it's not where you think.

Web industry insiders such as MarketingExperiments.com, HubSpot.com and Jakob Nielsen frequently track and measure what works online, and they provide guidance to the web community and online marketers.

The problem is, you would need to monitor these experts individually and then create your own summary, checklist or compilation to make sense of it all.

That's the hard way to stay on top of what works. And I'm pretty certain you have other priorities and projects on your plate.

Therefore, I've made it my mission to report on web-success research findings and outline the opportunities they present to marketers in the veterinary and pet world.

In this report, you'll find 5 clear guidelines on how to get more buying traffic flowing to your site.

You'll discover the best practices most veterinary marketers are missing, giving you a competitive edge if you make adjustments to your web content.

It just may be the secret to your company getting a bigger share of the estimated $50.84 billion being spent on pet care and products in 2012. [Source: *American Pet Products Association*]

As promised, here's what you'll see in the following pages:

- The #1 factor influencing whether or not people find your website among the many web pages competing in your local area or business/service category.
- How to easily make sure your site lets prospects know you offer the BEST veterinary or pet solutions available… giving them lots of reasons to choose you instead of your competitors.
- The simple fix that can increase your web conversions (inquiries, purchases, appointments) by 150%.
- How to avoid the top 3 barriers that sabotage websites, turning buyers away in droves.
- The surprising web content revision strategy that outperforms previous content by 81.87%.
- Where exactly to put your most important web content and boost response.

So let's get started.

Successful web content really blends 5 elements; 5 equally important considerations that each play a role in attracting and delighting visitors… ultimately driving more traffic to websites while also increasing conversions to leads or sales.

Unfortunately, these 5 elements are often overlooked, misunderstood or ignored by many, many companies and even some firms promoting themselves as SEO or web content experts.

It's somewhat understandable because there's still a lot of confusion about SEO, web content and web conversions. This area of marketing is a vast, ever-changing landscape. However, thanks to dedicated experts, we can piece together the best practices. And thanks to them, I can offer you a straightforward perspective that makes sense of it all.

Let's take a look at the 5 Crucial Web Content Elements that really drive results.

◯ 1. Customer-Focused

Rule number one of consistent, effective web content that converts visitors into paying customers:

Make sure your pages focus on your customers' needs and demonstrate how you can help customers in the best way possible.

The fact is, knowing Your Ideal Customer is the KEY to creating a user-friendly, successful site that builds a lasting relationship with buyers.

To understand the motivations and needs of Your Ideal Customer, ask yourself these questions:
- **What does our most profitable current customer look like?**
  Think in terms of basic demographics first: age, gender and income; and other information
  if it's a business or veterinary practice: years in business, size of business and number of employees.

- **Who exactly is the Ideal Customer in more detail?**
  Is it a knowledgeable pet owner… or someone looking for basic information? Is it a snowbird who travels to your area each winter and needs care for her dog? Is it a stay-at-home mom, active senior, shelter-animal volunteer, corporate manager, self-employed professional or retail store owner? Describe the person in a much detail as possible, including hobbies and other lifestyle factors.

- **What do we know about their interests, attitudes, desires, hopes and needs — related to our solutions?**
  What keeps them up at night? What's their biggest worry or emotional driver related to our industry? [Here's an example of what we mean here: If you're selling emergency healthcare services for a family on vacation in your city, your prospect may be a midlife woman who wishes to be a hero to her family by arranging a memorable vacation that includes Hamish, her Westie mix. She worries about a stressful trip-planning experience or not finding the right resources if Hamish should become ill or injured.]

- **Is this individual a sophisticated, knowledgeable consumer when it comes to our products and services?**
  Or is he /she a "newbie" who doesn't even know where to start the search? For example, your products and services may be unique, new or geared toward uncharted territory for the visitor. Consider the first-time puppy owner or someone dealing with a cat that has developed diabetes.]

- **Does The Ideal Customer know our brand?**
  In other words, is he/she clueless about what we offer or does he/she already know what our practice or business is all about — what makes us special or unique? Do we need to establish trust with the prospect?

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**Once you've gathered the answers to these important questions, you can create a set of
"Prospect Personas" to help writers put a face to their audience.**
</div>

This actually works quite well in keeping the tone of voice focused on your Ideal Customer.

In fact, some companies put together a *Persona Profile Sheet* for each type of prospect, **including photographs** representing each person. These sheets are often posted on the writers' walls, next to their computers, so everyone can write to these people in a more conversational and human voice, as if speaking to these prospects one-on-one.

Here's a *Persona Profile Sheet* example for a company whose Ideal Customer is a female Baby Boomer traveler who loves dogs:

Ideal Customer:
Deborah Dog-Lover

Pet Lover, particularly dogs
Busy Boomer
Empty-Nester
Travel Enthusiast

- Female
- 50-60 years old
- 57% are married; 43% are single, divorced or living with a significant other
- Grown children
- Annual household income: $50K-$125K; still working full- or part-time
- Limited budget, yet she finds the resources to travel at least once a year
- Care for her pets is a priority (Spends approximately $1,000-$2,000 a year on care, toys, accessories, day care and other pet-related expenses)
- Plus she contributes to animal welfare organizations, from the local shelter to national ASPCA fundraising campaigns
- Reads pet and travel magazines: Dog Fancy, The Bark, Traveler
- Uses the Internet to find pet products, services, travel ideas and pet care answers

These are just some of the types of insights you can include in a Persona Profile Sheet describing your Ideal Customer. The more insights you have, the better.

Assuming you know your Ideal Customers... ask these questions about your website:

- Why would they come to your site in the first place – what's their specific mission as it relates to your products or services? What motivated them to search for you?

- Which words and phrases will customers use to find you in search engines? Keep in mind that your town, city or service area will be included if you rely on local traffic.

- What do they see when your site appears in search engine results? How do your messages speak to them, and how do you compare to the other choices?

- What will it take to keep them on your website once they arrive?

- Why would they consider choosing you over your competition?

- What will make them say on your website, "Yes! this is exactly what I need!" and hit the MAKE AN APPOINTMENT or BUY NOW button?

Web success is very tough if the messages are NOT written to address the target customer's needs, wishes or problems... or if they don't entertain or inform the customer in a way that **begins or solidifies a relationship**.

This information applies whether your website is geared to pet parents, fellow veterinarians or pet-product manufacturers.

However you choose to get into your customer's head — through research, one-on-one conversations, reading forums and magazines, doing surveys, or something else — it will pay off again and again.

The example here includes website messages that are geared 100% to the Ideal Customers: Dog owners who are frustrated to see their aging dog suffer from joint pain due to arthritis or other issues.

It clearly offers helpful information and provides credibility (veterinarian-written) that reassures the dog owner.

◯◯2. Competitive

These days, you need to do all you can to beat your competition in search engines, because that's where people are looking for what you offer. And how do they find what you have to offer?

They type keywords into search engines. These are the words and phrases people use in Google, Yahoo! and other search engines to find websites that can help them. For example, "cat hairball remedies."

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Therefore, you can leap above the competition with a SMART KEYWORD STRATEGY.

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Let's say your veterinary practice in Minneapolis offers an advanced and fun daycare for dogs. Your primary keyword for the home page is "dog daycare Minneapolis." Before you offer a web page that simply says, "Welcome to our dog daycare Minneapolis," **know what your competition is saying**:

- **First, who is your competition?**
  Do a search in Google using the phrase "dog daycare Minneapolis" and you'll quickly find out. First, you'll see a list of daycare locations in Google Places. There's your first clue. Second, beneath the Google Places listing, you'll see a list of web pages offering information on dog daycare in Minneapolis as shown below, right?

- **What is the competition saying in search results?**
  In the Google results display copy (the blue page title and description just beneath it), is the competition merely listing keywords? Or just saying "Welcome?" Is the text boring? Or does it offer inviting and appealing reasons to choose them?

- **What is the competition saying on their sites?**
  Click on the Google results link for each competitor and see what their web pages look like. Study their messages and how keywords appear in their pages. Are the pages offering clear, benefit-focused copy? Or is it just a boring and repetitive "keyword farm" or worse yet, a big photo with no information… or a page full of "all about us" text?

- **Finally, how can you do a better job?**
  Be sure to weave keywords into inviting messages that appear on your site and in search results. I'll bet anything you can do a better job than most if not all of your competitors.

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Set yourself apart from the competition with a unique promise, benefit or approach.

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Now that you've studied your competition, you know how they're positioning themselves to attract their ideal customers. Those are your ideal customers, too! So use this insight to position yourself differently, in a more appealing and inviting way — and lure those ideal customers to you. For example, "Free Puppy Kit" or "Extended Office Hours" are great ways to attract buyers.

Back to dog daycare in Minneapolis. Let's say the #1 Google result is a business that offers a 24/7 webcam so clients can see their pets online anytime. The site's primary focus is on offering the peace of mind that only a parent's "virtual check-in" can deliver. If your website happens to offer a webcam but also a therapy pool that daycare dogs can play in while easing their joints, you can differentiate yourself with this incredible service nobody else offers.

Or, you could differentiate yourself by being the only dog daycare in Minneapolis offering a veterinary staff in the same location for quick care if needed. This reassures pet parents in a major way.

**An important note about local traffic!**
If you rely on local pet parents and others for building your business, be sure to make the most of local search opportunities:

• **Register your location in Google Places** (you need a Google email account, and you'll find easy instructions once you login to your Google account).

• **Make sure every page of your website includes your location or region in text**. This helps search engines find your web pages, and also helps prospects know where you are/who you serve.

• **Include local mentions/relevance when you add new content (articles, blogs, etc.)**. For example, if you're located in Boston and you're offering "Keep your pet safe in a snowstorm" tips, include Boston in your article… such as, "When last weeks' blizzard hit Boston, pets were affected as much as we were."

Whether you rely on local traffic or global traffic, find out what your audience wants and deliver it in a unique, valuable way. Then make sure all your web content lets people know how you offer the BEST solutions available… leaving your competition in the dust.

The website shown here uses messages to set itself apart in the pet-insurance category by:

• **Stating how it's recommended** by more veterinarians, pet owners and breeders than any other provider

• **Providing independent review data** to back up the statement, and mentioning that 90% of customers renew their policies
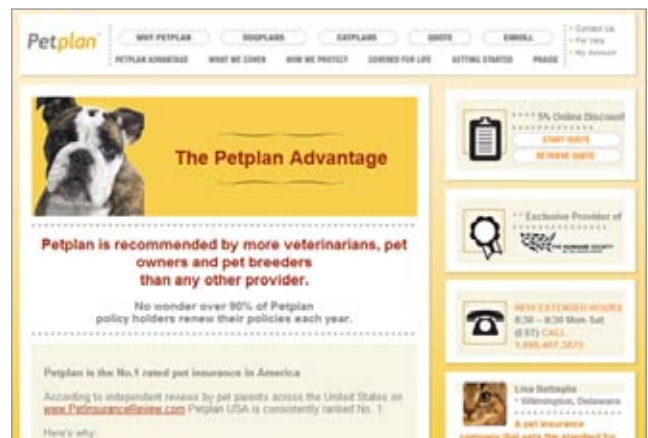
Set yourself apart from the competition by presenting a delightful user experience.

On a daily basis, I visit sites that are a **disaster to navigate because they include**:

• **Big photos** or **animated Flash** features that take forever to load (such as large rotating photos with no information)

• **Unhelpful content**, such as "all about our company" messages in giant blocks of text containing 1,000 words…or worse yet, a series of ads that try to sell something before offering the visitor any empathy, benefits or solutions

• A **confusing navigation** that forces you to click 4-5 times or more to find anything

These are just three major barriers to web success… there are many, many more. And all of these barriers drive potential customers away in droves.

So, if your competitors' sites include these barriers, this is great news for you because visitors will leave them and come to you instead!

Therefore, make sure your website offers a pleasing user experience on every page. It should have:

- A nice clean layout with clear, customer-focused messages about solving their needs (optimized with keywords of course, so people will find your site in search engines).

- An easy to follow structure, with scannable pages, standard navigation buttons, and irresistible offers so your visitors will ACT!

- Your most important information is located "above the fold" — that is, on the first screen people see when your web page shows up on their computer. Web usability expert Jakob Nielsen reports that eye-tracking studies indicate web visitors spend 80% of their time reading the information above the fold. He said, "It's as if users arrive at a page with a certain amount of fuel in their tanks. As they 'drive' down the page, they use up gas, and sooner or later they run dry." Clear enough.

And, of course, a user-friendly website avoids surprising or annoying visitors with an unexpected loud audio or video message that plays automatically every time a page is visited. (Imagine being in your office cubicle or listening to your iTunes and suddenly a loud voice comes booming off your computer screen, saying, "Hey! We offer the best blah blah blah in the world!") This is one of the biggest "pet peeves" of website visitors.

When you follow usability best practices as a competitive content strategy, you should have much more success in driving visitors to your site, delighting them when they arrive, and converting them into customers, clients and fans.

Let's look at an example of a website that offers a clear, easy and pleasing user experience:

- It offers a **very user-friendly layout** with **simple, customer-focused messages** "…you'll give your pet the best chance of coming home to you."

- The **navigation is what visitors would expect**: Our Services, How Microchipping Works, Why Pets Get Lost, etc.

- The **most important information** is in the **first screen**, answering for the visitor: What is this company? What do they do? How can they help me? Where do I go for details or to sign up?
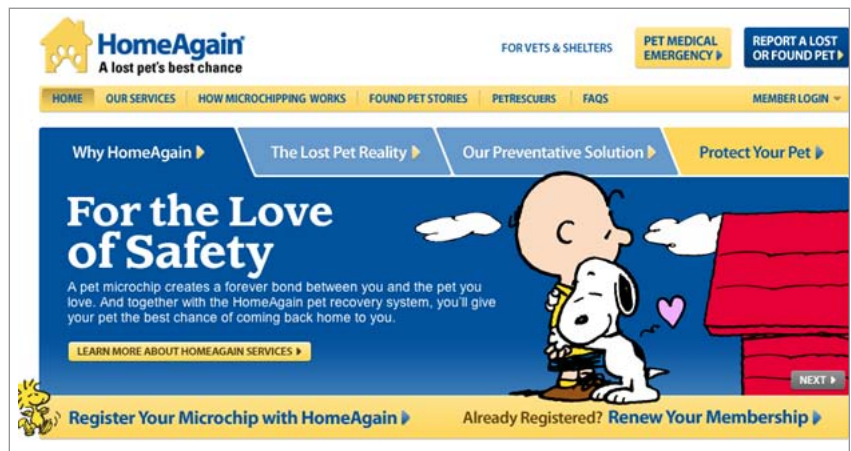
3. Clear

Clear, understandable and easy-to-follow messages support the marketing goals of your website in the strongest way possible. **Why?**

Because clear messages, presented in a user-friendly website flow, quickly answer your prospects' most common questions (as we mentioned with the previous HomeAgain® website example):

- Where am I?

- Who are you?

- What do you offer?

- How does it help me?

- How do I navigate this site?

- Where do I go next?

- How do I make a purchase, sign up for a newsletter, contact customer service, etc.?

By offering clear, relevant and appealing benefits to your visitors, your site will convert more target prospects into clients, customers, qualified leads, subscribers, or members.

One of my favorite resources that proves this statement is **MarketingExperiments.com**, the Internet's unbiased optimization research laboratory. According to their ongoing tests and studies:

- **Clear content can improve conversion rates by 69% or more** (conversion rates mean people click on a link to buy something, sign up for something, download a free trial… whatever the website was asking them to do)

- **An optimized landing page can improve conversion by 50-60%** (optimized means that it uses the right keywords for that page's topic, and it's written to drive a specific action)

- **A more effective (optimized) call-to-action can increase conversion by 150%**

Here's an example of a clear, optimized small business website for a dog daycare and grooming service.

This website's design, headline and copy flow are simple and focused on the visitor's main need. It has a clear navigation you'd expect to find on a site. And it doesn't let photos or graphics overwhelm or distract from the visitors' mission of quickly finding exactly what they need. The images complement and enhance user-friendliness, helping the visitor learn about this company and its services, and how to inquire about day care services.

Now, how can you tell if a site is following the CLEAR rule? Try this exercise with any website of your choosing.

Give yourself 10 seconds to review the home page and then answer those "**where, who, what and how**" questions listed at the beginning of this section. If you can't answer them quickly, there's room for improvement. **Now try this test with your website.** Ask a few people to take a look at it.

Can they answer those questions right away? If not, it's probably time to revise your content for total clarity.

4. **Conversion-Optimized**

This means your content is written to convert visitors into BUYERS at every opportunity, following the industry's best practices. It persuades them to buy your products, sign up for your email list, inquire about your services, etc.

To get people to take these "conversion actions," your messages need to be written to prompt clicks that lead to sign-ups, leads or sales. Every page ideally has:

- **A clear promise**
  What's in it for the reader? An easy solution to their problem? A new way to save money on pet care? The simplest cat weight-loss plan ever? Or possibly it's "Finally — a product that enables you to walk your dog in the rain without the dog's feet, legs and tummy getting wet and muddy." (Has anyone invented this product yet? I sure could use it!) There's a nice simple promise on the Iams Naturals website: "Just what your dog needs to be healthy inside."

- **Persuasive benefits**
  List the benefits of your products or services in honest, helpful messages. Bullets (lists) are often a great way to do this. Start with the benefit first ("You can enjoy this benefit!"), followed by the "how" that your product offers. Such as: Keep your cat's paws healthy with our 100% natural litter formula.

- **Proof and credibility**
  Remember to include those statistics, facts, testimonials and other examples of proof showing that real people truly HAVE enjoyed the benefits you promise. For example, the osspet.com website includes this statement from a veterinarian: "I recommend Osspet for dogs with arthritis and many other painful bone and joint conditions. Our clients frequently see quite dramatic results in as little as 1 to 4 weeks." — Dr. Judith M. Shoemaker, Always Helpful Veterinary Service, Nottingham, PA

- **Appealing, motivating offers that prompt immediate action**
  This one may be the MOST important factor in whether a visitor decides to click on your site, buy from you or use your services NOW … or file you away for another day (maybe). It could be:
  o Get a free report if you sign up by Tuesday
  o Save 50% through June 1st
  o Free shipping through Mother's Day
  o Only 12 spots open for this special puppy training class!

- **Clear calls-to-action**
  These messages tell visitors how to get your appealing offer. Effective calls-to-action include clear, helpful, direct and active phrases such as: Add to Shopping Cart; Print Your Free Coupon Now; Start Your Free Trial Account, Register for Puppy Class Here. Test after test, the most effective calls-to-action are often in a bold colorful button that stands out from other text and tells the reader exactly what to do. The more specific, the better Never use just "click here" if you can avoid it.

In the screen shot here, see how Bark Busters uses active and inviting calls-to-action that help visitors "self-select" where they want to go according to their interests:

- **FETCH a trainer**
- **Join the PACK**
- **Rate your Dog's Behavior**

- **Shop Online at Our Boutique**

Quick access to other pages via Hyperlinks to make it as easy as possible for people to get to product pages, etc., provide links within your sentences and drive them there in one easy click. The following web content uses keywords in certain hyperlinks, which is ideal.

Messages that delight and over-deliver on expectations whenever possible, offer attractive "extras" that prospects will enjoy when they buy now. You'll likely keep them coming back again and again. These include guarantees, free shipping, quick delivery, live chat help and other elements that please customers.

5. Consistent

This means your website's pages are connected across the site with a **smooth flow, logical messaging and similar look**. To ensure clear, persuasive and optimized web content across your entire site… every page should have:

- **A consistent voice**

- **An appropriate tone that matches your overall brand**

- **The same fonts and style for headlines, subheads, sentences and bullet/call outs (your information hierarchy)**

- **Similar look and style of offers and calls-to-action**

As you may know, web content will drive more traffic to your site via search engines when it's written with the most relevant keywords for your prospects, following the best practices of SEO.

And of course, the results can be very exciting when visitors arrive at your website and become engaged immediately, find attractive solutions to their needs, and take action.

So why does consistency matter when it comes to these two aspects of successful web pages?

Here are a couple of important facts about the power of consistent web content.

During Marketing Sherpa's 6th annual B2B Marketing Summit, Kenric Van Wyk from Acoustics By Design described a successful SEO program that viewed the company's entire website as a series of consistent landing pages. He reported that:

"Through smart keyword dispersal across the site, they achieved an 874% increase in search traffic."

In its report titled, B2C Success Stories: Conversion strategies that produced 30-300% gains, Marketing Experiments.com featured a web content test in which under-performing pages were optimized via the following strategies:

- **Revising headlines for continuity and clarity of value proposition (why is this site the best one to meet my needs?)**

- **Emphasizing product benefits (what can these products do for me?)**

- **Improving credibility indicators (why should I trust this website?)**

This treatment outperformed the previous content "by a relative difference of 81.87%."

I imagine you'd enjoy seeing these kinds of results for your website, yes? You can if you commit to content message and flow consistency throughout your entire website. You'll minimize or even eliminate confusion and help visitors feel completely at ease with your site.

Conclusion: Putting it All Together

As there are thousands of different websites, there are different ways to apply these 5 crucial web-content elements to your website for the best results.

Just be sure to try and apply them all for a website that's:

1. **Customer-Focused**
2. **Competitive**
3. **Clear**
4. **Conversion-Optimized**
5. **Consistent**

The end result will be very exciting as you drive more traffic to your website and boost your online sales!

About The Author
Pam Foster, PetCopywriter.com, Web-SEO content and consulting for the pet and veterinary industries
Pam has written marketing materials for pet companies and veterinary-industry companies for 15+ years. Pet-industry clients have included consumer and business-to-business companies such as LifeLearn, MyPetED, L.L. Bean dog products, IDEXX Laboratories, Pet Health Network, DirectVet Marketing, PetAmberAlert.com, and many others.