

CLIENT: American Humane Association
PROJECT: American Humane – Marie’s Blog
DATE: January 28, 2008
WRITER: Kate Jordan

OVERVIEW

A weekly, executive-level blog for American Humane’s web site ghostwritten for Marie Belew Wheatley. The blog will feature high-level messaging from Wheatley, the organization’s President & CEO. Themes will include relevant current events and American Humane programs, philosophies and special events. The tone is informative, conversational, and mainstream.

According to JupiterResearch, an estimated 70% of all large companies were likely to have implemented weblogs by the end of 2006. Moreover, latest trends show CEOs jumping on the page as a way to make their organizations more accessible to clients.

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL BLOG

Good content is crucial. Marie’s Blog needs to be passionate and personal. The writing should be specific and teach something new. It needs to be useful for readers to return or to subscribe. It should reflect a unique point of view: where Marie’s personality intersects with American Humane.

The weekly blog needs to share Marie’s expertise and wisdom. She’s been a leader in the nonprofit field for over two decades – what light can she shed on the field in general as well as American Humane’s specific endeavors? The blog can be used as a forum to explain and clarify American Humane’s policies, philosophies and programs. Here, Marie can make the heart of the organization more accessible by putting a “friendly face” on complicated topics.

The blog might be peppered with some of Marie’s real-life experiences. Perhaps we hear Marie’s impressions from the national conference on children that she attended. Or, we hear her reactions to something she’s recently seen or read. The Blog is the perfect place to pass on important information. What are the movers and shakers in the field thinking about? What are some new, simple, effective ways that we can help animals and children?

Readers want to hear about American Humane’s successes. They want to be inspired. They want to feel Marie’s enthusiasm about why she does what she does. Like when she describes coming to American Humane, Marie mentions that the offices felt “steeped in the history that has changed this country. Even new people can feel it.” Or, when she says that nonprofits need to be run like businesses, only “Businesses of the heart.” (Denver Business Journal, October 2007) These are great insights into American Humane, as well as Marie’s reverence for the organization and leadership style.

The blog should answer questions and make readers think. It should not be afraid to explore opposing ideas. While it can be a public relations tool, the blog should be honest enough about the company in order to maintain credibility. It needs to offer something that no other site is offering. In this case, it's a window into American Humane's efforts to serve children and animals. No other national organization has a similar mission – this is unique!

Some readers will be looking for ways to help kids and animals; others will be looking for updates on AH's legislative work. The blog should keep in mind the various subscribers' interests and goals by rotating its subject matter to be inclusive of its diverse readers.

Structurally, the Blog needs to be easy to read and digest. Posts should not be too dense. Text can be broken up with bullets, graphics, photos, video. Marie's photo and bio should be at the top.

It is better to post short specific updates more frequently, than long complex entries infrequently. Stick to one topic per post, linking to other blogs, or to other relevant sites. By tying in other related links/subjects, we are doing some of the legwork for readers and the content becomes more useful. We can offer surveys, questionnaires, and contests. We can also give away free stuff occasionally. Engaging blog visitors is critical to promote a vibrant dialogue and increase traffic. Thus, we will ask questions and solicit user feedback. Involving the readership in these ways will build a curiosity and loyalty to the site.

BLOG TOPICS

Interesting overviews of American Humane's programs (The Link®, The Front Porch Project®, Animal Humane Certified™, No Animals Were Harmed®, Getting to Zero®, Be Kind to Animals Week® and Tag Day™, Red Star Animal Emergency “Rescue Rig”)

Give visibility to the different departments by featuring stories and updates about staff, volunteers and partners on the front lines (Red Star Brigade crew, Film & TV reps on sets, animal owners whose animals have participated in No Animals Were Harmed®, trainers/educators, legislative staff, animal welfare workers)

Marie's ideas about the company, what direction it's moving in, new business ventures and programs

Upcoming timely alerts to pending legislation dates, court proceedings

Promote upcoming events like Be Kind to Animals Week®, etc

Invite a staff member to “guest blog”

Include an interview with a person from the field

Discuss new Denver Pet Partners partnership and the philosophy behind human/animal bond in general

Talk about how American Humane's grants have benefited shelters across the country

Talk about the importance of the National Center for Child Protective Services Research

Discuss general fundraising strategies, and mention success stories (like Pedigree®)

As potential volunteers will be visiting AH's web site, discuss volunteerism within the agency

Discuss some hopes/dreams for the agency, along with some of its successes and disappointments, what the agency is and isn't

Weigh in on current news events that are relevant to American Humane (Michael Vick case, etc)