



Animal Hospitals on Facebook: Who Are You Like?

See how you stack up against fellow Facebookers

by Jorge Salazar, Esq.

ANIMAL HOSPITAL Facebook Benchmark Study

Note: This is the first of a three-part series providing insight into the industry's current state regarding Facebook and how to maximize the effectiveness of your practice's page. The second article will discuss the importance of posting frequency in more depth and tools that will increase your team's efficiency. The third article will present data on animal hospitals' engagement rates and offer advice on the types of content that will yield high engagement rates.

The Yellow Pages does not cut it anymore. We are in the digital age. To effectively connect with today's pet owners, digital marketing is a must. Today, the average American spends 19.6 hours per week online.¹ More than 22% of that time online is spent on social media.² Thus, the average American uses social media 37 minutes each day!

While there are many channels that comprise the social media space, there is one clear top dog—Facebook. Its dominance is impressive; Americans spend about 50 times more time on Facebook than the next most popular social media site.³ Facebook also boasts more than 1 billion monthly active users,⁴ while Twitter and Google+ rank second and third with more than 555 million and 170 million monthly active users, respectively.⁵



To grow your audience on Facebook you must not only attract users to your page, but also have them like it.

The vast opportunity presented by Facebook has not gone unnoticed by the veterinary industry. Hundreds of animal hospitals have created Facebook pages to connect with their clients and community.

But many of these animal hospitals are not optimizing this opportunity, which raises the following questions: What are they doing after creating a Facebook page? How many fans have they been able to amass? Are they optimizing their Facebook pages in the setup process? How active are their Facebook pages?

Consulting firm Get U Social recently conducted a study of 900 American animal hospitals' Facebook pages to



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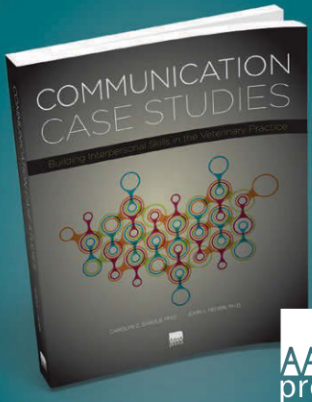
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answer these questions and determine what the average page of an animal hospital looks like.

The goal of this study and this three-part article series is to provide data that (1) enables animal hospitals to evaluate their Facebook pages' performance through industry comparison, (2) highlights the opportunity Facebook supplies animal hospitals and (3) offers recommendations to assist animal hospitals that want to maximize this opportunity.

Profiles in success

To appreciate the opportunity Facebook makes available to animal hospitals, it is necessary to understand the average Facebook user's profile. With more than 189 million users in North America, more than half of the people you know have a Facebook profile.⁶

A person's Facebook profile has, on average, 190 friends.⁷ Every profile then has the potential of connecting you to at least 190 other Facebook profiles with the click of a "Like." This does not take into account the exponential factor of friends of friends—meaning, each of those 190 friends also has 190 friends.

Furthermore, you are frequently presented with the opportunity to have fans and friends engage, with more than half of Facebook users logging into their profiles at least once per day.⁸ Given these statistics, it is certain that your clients are not just on Facebook; they are on Facebook habitually, many times while inside your practice, and are just a click away from introducing your hospital to many potential clients.

Your business presence

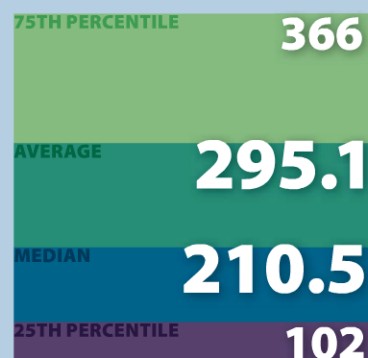
When analyzing a business on social media, it is fundamental to begin with its presence, and specifically look at how many people the business is converting into its audience. Businesses have a Facebook "page," instead of a user "profile," and their audience members are called "fans."

A fan is a Facebook user who has "liked" a page—that is, they have clicked

the "Like" icon on your page. Therefore, to grow your audience on Facebook you must not only attract users to your page, but also have them like it.

Our study reveals that the average animal hospital's page has 295.1 fans (see Table 1). This affords them the chance not only to communicate on a daily basis with 295 fans, all of whom are likely clients or potential clients, but also the potential to reach their 56,000 friends and convert them into fans and clients. This opportunity has no comparison. No website, print marketing campaign or other marketing outlet offers this exponential opportunity.

Table 1: Page Likes (Fans)



Customize!

When setting up your animal hospital's page, there are many things that can be done to maximize its exposure and effectiveness. Page managers should set the page's first category to "Local Businesses," second category to "Pet Services" and appropriate "Place Sub-categories" such as "Veterinarian" and "Pet Service." As a local business with a street address listed, visitors of your animal hospital can "Check-In," telling their friends they visited your business.

Although setting the appropriate categories and sub-categories, along with contact information and hours of operation, are important, customizing your page's URL is the most significant thing you can do for the success of your page.

Your clients and potential clients are on Facebook.



of the people you know
have a Facebook profile

The potential of an average animal hospital is enormous.

295.1 + **56,000**

average animal hospital Facebook page fans

Friends of fans who can be reached every day

Only **46.4%**

of animal hospitals customize
their Facebook page URL

**Check your page URL
today and customize it.**

On average, animal
hospitals are only
posting 12.4 posts
per 30 days, or...

1 post every
2.5 days

**You are not posting enough.
Your goal should be to post
at least once per day.**

Facebook assigns new pages a default URL that consists of a series of numbers, for example www.facebook.com/pages/XYZ-Animal-Hospital/169232336420727. Sharing this URL with a client is not effective. It is too long and complicated to remember. Instead, animal hospitals should customize their page's URLs to mirror their business names or websites, for example www.facebook.com/XYZAnimalHospital.

This URL can easily be promoted in marketing material and remembered by people who want to become fans, which will ultimately lead to more fans. It also leverages Facebook's text-to-like functionality, where a text can be sent with the page's simplified URL to like the page.

In spite of these clear benefits, only 46.4% of animal hospitals in the study customize their URL. If you are part of the majority, customize your page URL today! Log in to Facebook with a page manager's profile, navigate to your page,

click "Edit Page" at the top of the "Admin Panel" and select the "Update Info" that directs you to your "Basic Information" page.

Now locate "Username," which should be the third or fourth item, just above "Address," and click "Change Username." Next, you will be directed to a page that allows you to enter your desired username and check its availability.

If the username is available, Facebook will ask you to confirm that you would like to set the available username as your page's username, which corresponds to the page's URL. Before confirming, be sure that you are happy with the selected username, as Facebook will only allow you to change your page's username twice. After clicking "Confirm," your new username is set and you can begin sharing it with potential fans. It is important to note that Facebook may not allow you to change your username if your page has less than 25 fans.

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BRIEF SUMMARY:

See package insert for full prescribing information.

CAUTION:

US Federal law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

INDICATIONS:

Revolution is recommended for use in dogs six weeks of age or older and cats eight weeks of age and older for the following parasites and indications:

Dogs:

Revolution kills adult fleas and prevents flea eggs from hatching for one month and is indicated for the prevention and control of flea infestations (*Ctenocephalides felis*), prevention of heartworm disease caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*, and the treatment and control of ear mite (*Otodectes cynotis*) infestations. Revolution also is indicated for the treatment and control of sarcoptic mange (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) and for the control of tick infestations due to *Dermacentor variabilis*.

Cats:

Revolution kills adult fleas and prevents flea eggs from hatching for one month and is indicated for the prevention and control of flea infestations (*Ctenocephalides felis*), prevention of heartworm disease caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*, and the treatment and control of ear mite (*Otodectes cynotis*) infestations. Revolution is also indicated for the treatment and control of roundworm (*Toxocara cati*) and intestinal hookworm (*Ancylostoma tubaeforme*) infections in cats.

WARNINGS:

Not for human use. Keep out of the reach of children.

In humans, Revolution may be irritating to skin and eyes. Reactions such as hives, itching and skin redness have been reported in humans in rare instances. Individuals with known hypersensitivity to Revolution should use the product with caution or consult a health care professional. Revolution contains isopropyl alcohol and the preservative butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT). Wash hands after use and wash off any product in contact with the skin immediately with soap and water. If contact with eyes occurs, then flush eyes copiously with water. In case of ingestion by a human, contact a physician immediately. The material safety data sheet (MSDS) provides more detailed occupational safety information. For a copy of the MSDS or to report adverse reactions attributable to exposure to this product, call 1-800-366-5288.

Flammable—Keep away from heat, sparks, open flames or other sources of ignition.

Do not use in sick, debilitated or underweight animals. (see SAFETY)

PRECAUTIONS:

Prior to administration of Revolution, dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infections. At the discretion of the veterinarian, infected dogs should be treated to remove adult heartworms. Revolution is not effective against adult *D. immitis* and, while the number of circulating microfilariae may decrease following treatment, Revolution is not effective for microfilariae clearance.

Hypersensitivity reactions have not been observed in dogs with patent heartworm infections administered three times the recommended dose of Revolution. Higher doses were not tested.

ADVERSE REACTIONS:

Pre-approval clinical trials:

Following treatment with Revolution, transient localized alopecia with or without inflammation at or near the site of application was observed in approximately 1% of 691 treated cats. Other signs observed rarely (<0.5% of 1743 treated cats and dogs) included vomiting, loose stool or diarrhea with or without blood, anorexia, lethargy, salivation, tachypnea, and muscle tremors.

Post-approval experience:

In addition to the aforementioned clinical signs that were reported in pre-approval clinical trials, there have been reports of pruritus, urticaria, erythema, ataxia, fever and rare reports of death. There have also been rare reports of seizures in dogs. (see **WARNINGS**)

SAFETY:

Revolution has been tested safe in over 100 different pure and mixed breeds of healthy dogs and over 15 different pure and mixed breeds of healthy cats, including pregnant and lactating females, breeding males and females, puppies six weeks of age and older, kittens eight weeks of age and older, and avertectin-sensitive collies. A kitten, estimated to be 5–6 weeks old (0.3 kg), died 1 1/2 hours after receiving a single treatment of Revolution at the recommended dosage. The kitten displayed clinical signs which included muscle spasms, salivation and neurological signs. The kitten was a stray with an unknown history and was malnourished and underweight (see **WARNINGS**).

DOGS: In safety studies, Revolution was administered at 1, 3, 5, and 10 times the recommended dose to six-week-old puppies, and no adverse reactions were observed. The safety of Revolution administered orally also was tested in case of accidental oral ingestion. Oral administration of Revolution at the recommended topical dose in 5- to 8-month-old beagles did not cause any adverse reactions. In a pre-clinical study selamectin was dosed orally to ivermectin-sensitive collies. Oral administration of 2.5, 10, and 15 mg/kg in this dose escalating study did not cause any adverse reactions; however, eight hours after receiving 5 mg/kg orally, one ivermectin-sensitive collie became ataxic for several hours, but did not show any other adverse reactions after receiving subsequent doses of 10 and 15 mg/kg orally. In a topical safety study conducted with avertectin-sensitive collies at 1, 3 and 5 times the recommended dose of Revolution, salivation was observed in all treatment groups, including the vehicle control. Revolution also was administered at 3 times the recommended dose to heartworm infected dogs, and no adverse effects were observed.

CATS: In safety studies, Revolution was applied at 1, 3, 5, and 10 times the recommended dose to six-week-old kittens. No adverse reactions were observed. The safety of Revolution administered orally also was tested in case of accidental oral ingestion. Oral administration of the recommended topical dose of Revolution to cats caused salivation and intermittent vomiting. Revolution also was applied at 4 times the recommended dose to patent heartworm infected cats, and no adverse reactions were observed.

In well-controlled clinical studies, Revolution was used safely in animals receiving other frequently used veterinary products such as vaccines, anthelmintics, antiparasitics, antibiotics, steroids, collars, shampoos and dips.

STORAGE CONDITIONS:

Store below 30°C (86°F).

HOW SUPPLIED: Available in eight separate dose strengths for dogs and cats of different weights. Revolution for puppies and kittens is available in cartons containing 3 single dose tubes. Revolution for cats and dogs is available in cartons containing 3 or 6 single dose tubes.

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You have to follow through

After setting up your page, it is time to connect with your audience through content posts. But how often should you post?

Think of your page as a TV channel. What happens if your fans turn to your channel today and see the same show they saw yesterday, or the same show that has been on the entire week, or worse yet, the entire month? It is very likely that those fans will have a negative association with your page and may not tune in again.

While there are other compelling reasons to post with frequency, which will be discussed in the next article in this series, this reason alone warrants at least one post per day. However, our study found that, on average, animal hospitals are only providing 12.4 posts per 30 days, or one post every 2.5 days (see Table 2).

Consequently, the majority of Facebook users, who login into their profile at least once per day, typically see the same content on animal hospitals' pages at least three times before new content is posted. Animal hospitals need to post more often to realize the great possibilities Facebook offers.

Our study's results confirmed our belief that animal hospitals have a vast, untapped potential on Facebook.

Animal hospitals have an opportunity to increase client retention by enhancing the client experience via in-practice posts highlighting their amazing patients, extending client communication beyond the practice's walls and providing behind-the-scenes access that conveys the commitment and compassion of the practice.

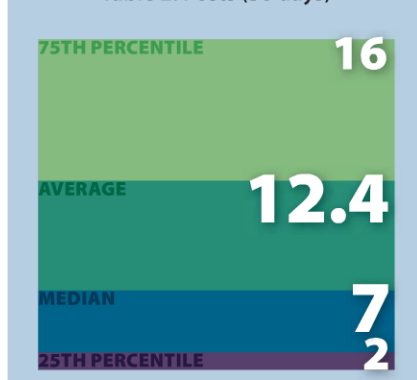
Moreover, Facebook can assist you with educating your audience on your practice initiatives, such as dentistry or acupuncture, and in attracting new clients through the modern-day word-of-mouth. This is when potential clients see a friend or existing client say something positive about their experience at your practice on Facebook.

Although it is encouraging that animal hospitals have identified this opportunity and are on Facebook, as an industry we still have much to learn about how to best use Facebook to enhance the quality of pets' lives, strengthen the human-animal bond and improve the health of our practice.

Stay social! ■

Jorge Salazar, Esq., is managing partner at Get U Social. He spends his time with Get U Social and Veterinary Consultation Services, helping animal hospitals execute their social media campaigns, develop their dental departments and raise their quality of care through practice management initiatives. Salazar loves to connect with veterinary professionals on Twitter (@salazarjorgeh) and LinkedIn (linkedin.com/in/salazarjorgeh).

Table 2: Posts (30 days)



1. Forrester - <http://allthingsd.com/20121017/nobody-goes-online-anymore/>
2. Nielsen - <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/social/>
3. Nielsen - <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/social/>
4. <http://newsroom.fb.com/imagelibrary/downloadmedia.ashx?MediaDetailsID=4227&SizeID=1>
5. Go-Gulf.com - <http://www.go-gulf.com/blog/social-networking-user>
6. Facebook - <http://www.statista.com/statistics/247614/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>
7. <https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-data-team/anatomy-of-facebook/10150388519243859>
8. YouGov - <http://www.statista.com/statistics/198542/frequency-of-reading-content-in-social-networks-in-the-us/>

Trends magazine, July 2013