



Best Friends Animal Society

Promoting Responsible Pet Ownership

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Executive Summary

Best Friends Animal Society was established in 1984 by a group of friends committed to animal rescue efforts. The organization began with nearly 200 animals, including dogs, cats, rabbits, and donkeys (“Foundation Partners,” n.d.). Today, it operates the largest sanctuary in Utah, offering a safe haven for animals for their entire lives. Best Friends advocates for a no-kill movement nationwide, aiming to eliminate the euthanasia of homeless pets in shelters and communities by 2025. The organization relies on volunteers, fostering caregivers, and partnerships with other animal welfare organizations to save lives and ensure that every animal enjoys a healthy and happy life (“Foundation Partners,” n.d.).

Despite significant progress, challenges remain. According to Best Friends, from the 4.76 million cats and dogs who entered shelters in 2023, 3.97 million were rescued (Best Friends, n.d.). However, there is a pressing need to address shelter overpopulation and the rising numbers of animals being abandoned, abused, and euthanized. Over 6.5 million animals are surrendered to shelters annually, and nearly 10 million animals in the U.S. suffer death from abuse or cruelty (“Pet Statistics,” n.d.; McGinley & Sleight, 2024).

The Promoting Responsible Pet Ownership campaign seeks to tackle these challenges by educating communities about spay/neuter initiatives, the importance of adopting rather than buying pets, and the resources available to assist pet owners. The campaign targets school-aged children, their families, and current pet owners. Secondary audiences include educators, community leaders, and policymakers. By addressing key challenges, the campaign supports Best Friends Animal Society's mission to save lives and create a future where every animal can thrive.

Situation Analysis

Company Background

Mission

For four decades, Best Friends Animal Society has committed itself to ending the euthanasia of shelter animals throughout the United States. Their mission aims to create a future where “there are no homeless pets” (“Our Mission,” n.d.b). To achieve this, the nonprofit collaborates with communities, shelters, and rescue organizations to develop programs that assist animals in finding homes. This partnership promotes adoption and foster care for families. Its goal is to achieve a nationwide no-kill status for shelters by 2025 (“Our Mission,” n.d.b)

Vision

Best Friends Animal Society’s vision is to create a world where every pet has a safe home. They believe in working together to save all animals through community programs and partnerships nationwide (“Our Mission,” n.d.b). Their vision is grounded in critical principles: respecting all living beings as they wish to be treated, showing compassion for every creature, and defining success by the number of lives saved and enhanced. They aim to set an example by creating, advocating for, and sharing innovative ideas and programs that support animals. Best Friends is dedicated to keeping their promises while ensuring transparency and honesty in all their interactions (“Our Mission,” n.d.b).

No-Kill Initiatives

Best Friends Animal Society has taken the initiative to lead the no-kill movement across the U.S. by forming partnerships and launching various programs. This nonprofit has significantly reduced the annual euthanasia rate of animals from around 17 million to approximately 378,000 (Stember, 2023). In 2024, its impactful efforts in the no-kill initiative

were recognized with a platinum rating from GuideStar (Candid, n.d.). Since pledging to the no-kill 2025 commitment, the number of animals saved has risen by 12% nationwide from 2016 to 2024 (“Here’s What’s,” n.d.). This increase is attributed to life-saving programs and collaborations with shelters and rescues.

Programs and Services

Best Friends partners with more than 5,000 animal welfare organizations across the country (“Our Partners”, n.d.). The Best Friends Network supplies shelters, spay/neuter groups, rescue operations, and other animal welfare entities with critical resources to help save homeless pets. The collaboration allows organizations to share essential information and adopt effective strategies from each other (“Our Purpose,” n.d.). Best Friends also directly supports participating organizations with operational assessments and data to develop programs tailored to community needs. Similarly, the organization assists and trains animal service agencies through support for national shelters. This support backs the agency’s animal control and shelter services while training leaders and managers, equipping them with tools for fostering a positive team environment (“Our Purpose,” n.d.). In addition, Best Friends delivers training from industry experts to help implement new programs and strategies, with free educational resources available across various areas.

Moreover, animal welfare organizations can network with peers through the Best Friends Network (“Our Purpose,” n.d.). Finally, agencies in this network can access millions in program grants to meet their needs, as provided by the Best Friends Network. The network also assists in project management, budgeting, free fundraising resources, and training opportunities (“Our Purpose,” n.d.).

Partnerships

Best Friends Animal Society collaborates with various shelters, rescue groups, and communities nationwide. Through its Best Friends Network, the nonprofit reaches out to local veterinarians and clinics to offer low-cost medical services, which are crucial to poor pet owners and rescuers. Equally important, Best Friends works hand in hand with city governments to craft special spay/neuter programs and education efforts that will reduce shelter intake (“Our Purpose,” n.d.). Finally, Best Friends also works with national organizations such as PetSmart Charities and Petco Foundation to expand its reach (“Foundation Partners,” n.d.). By working with many committed partners, the organization can mobilize many advocates and achieve significant milestones toward its no-kill goal.

Industry Placement

Best Friends Animal Society earned the highest rating from Charity Navigator in 2023 (“About Us,” n.d.). Charity Navigator is a respected nonprofit evaluator that reviews registered charities by assessing their financial health, accountability, transparency, and effectiveness. This accreditation demonstrates that Best Friends efficiently and effectively uses donated dollars to end the killing of dogs and cats in shelters (“About Us,” n.d.).

Furthermore, Charity Navigator accredited Best Friends as the "Great Nonprofit " in 2024, recognizing its vast impact and high reputation nationwide. The rating reflects client, donor, and partner feedback and showcases Best Friends' status as a leader and trusted partner among the public and professionals (Best Friends, n.d.). Best Friends' respected position is shown by the more than 3,500 partnerships with shelters, rescues, and advocacy groups nationwide (Best Friends, n.d.). The organization fosters connections to advance its no-kill mission, assisting shelters in adopting effective practices via educational resources, training, and

funding. These partnerships unite communities and organizations, creating a cohesive national movement aimed at decreasing shelter euthanasia and enhancing animal welfare standards (Best Friends, n.d.). Moreover, Best Friends works to get funds from an industry with limited donor funds and public attention. Nonetheless, the nonprofit's consistent achievement of top ratings as a trusted organization positions Best Friend as a significant entity in the animal welfare arena.

Competitors

Best Friends Animal Society's key competitors include the ASPCA, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and PetSmart Charities. While all these organizations champion animal welfare, they each highlight different priorities. The ASPCA is dedicated to preventing cruelty, HSUS focuses on legislative efforts, and PetSmart Charities provides funding for shelter initiatives (“Our Mission,” n.d..a ; “Mission,” n.d.; “Partners,” n.d.).

ASPCA

The ASPCA is a nonprofit organization founded in 1866 that prevents animal cruelty and ensures that animals are treated well across the United States. Its mission focuses on several key areas, from operating shelters and rescue services to taking care of animals, especially those rescued from abusive situations and natural catastrophes (“Mission,” n.d.). It also actively supports increased animal protection laws locally, at the state level, and nationally. The organization provides educational resources regarding responsible pet ownership, animal behavior, and the need for spaying/neutering to fight overpopulation. Accordingly, the ASPCA also has a community program that provides low-income pet owners with discounted veterinary care (“Mission,” n.d.).

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)

The Humane Society of the United States is a nonprofit organization founded in 1954.

The agency protects animals from cruelty, abuse, and neglect through advocacy, education, and direct action. HSUS works to impact animal welfare legislation at the local, state, and federal levels (“Our Mission,” n.d.c). Its goal is to create laws protecting animals in various industries, such as agriculture and research.

Further, the agency educates the public through humane educational programs in schools and community outreach. HSUS has campaigns to raise awareness about puppy mills and the spaying/neutering of pets. Similarly, it provides resources, supports animal shelters and rescue groups, and has a disaster response animal rescue (“Our Mission,” n.d.c).

PetSmart Charities

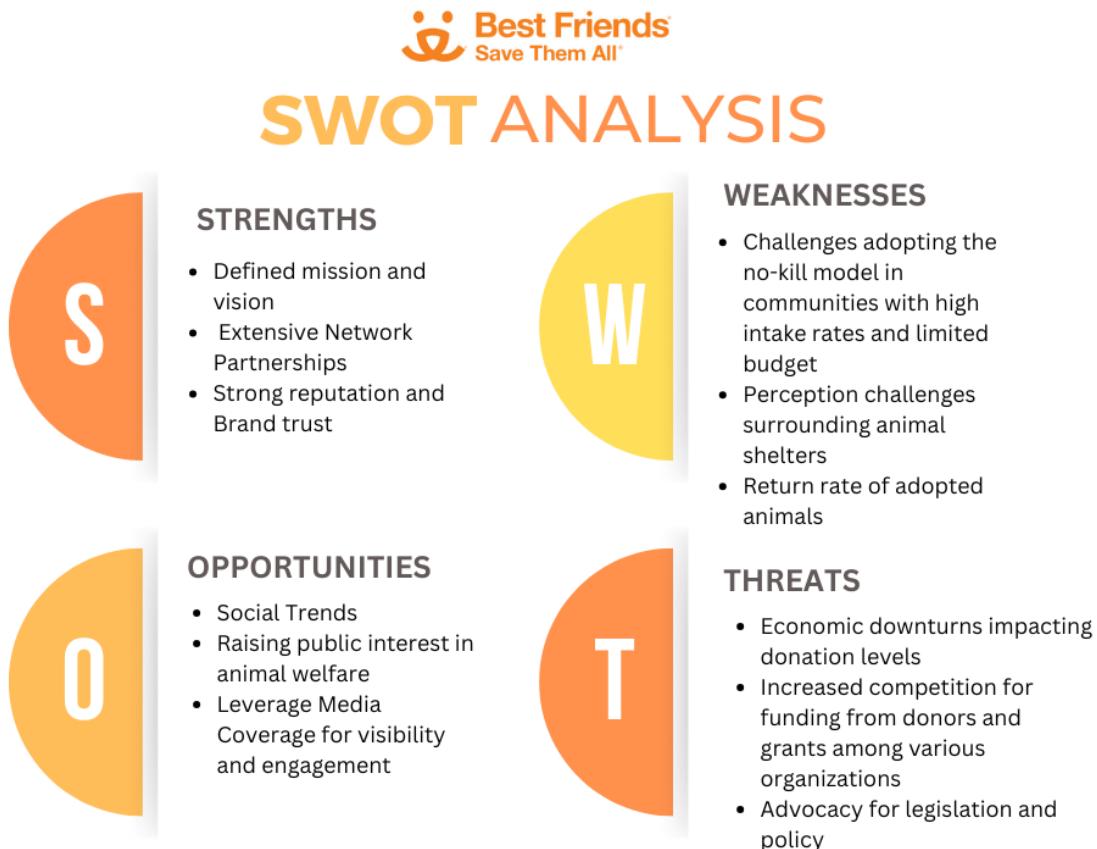
PetSmart Charities is a nonprofit organization established in 1994. Its mission is to save and improve the lives of pets and their owners (“Our Mission,” n.d.a). The agency is part of PetSmart and focuses on several initiatives to support animal welfare through collaborations with local animal welfare organizations. PetSmart Charities seeks to end pet homelessness by providing grants for spay/neuter programs, adoption events, and community outreach projects promoting responsible pet ownership. Equally important, the institution funds disaster-relief efforts to help pets and their owners affected by emergencies and natural disasters (“Partners,” n.d.).

While organizations like the ASPCA, Humane Society of the United States, and PetSmart Charities may compete, Best Friends actively collaborates on various animal welfare issues. This partnership enables the sharing of resources, expertise, and outreach for specific nationwide events, including adoption drives and disaster response efforts (“Partners,” n.d.).

Examine the Problem's Circumstances

Figure 1

SWOT Analysis



Note: The chart outlines Best Friends Animal Society's SWOT

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Best Friends Animal Society has many strengths, as shown in Figure 1. For starters, it has a clear and specific mission. The nonprofit strives to eliminate the end of the killing of animals in shelters, which aligns with their vision of a future without homeless pets across the country. Best Friends has built a strong reputation within the animal welfare community for many years. As

cited above, the nonprofit obtained a platinum rating from GuideStar because of its transparency, initiatives, and impact (“About Us,” n.d.). Additionally, Best Friends’ no-kill movement further supports its dedication to transforming the future for shelter pets. This mission has formed over 3,500 nationwide partnerships, from shelters to advocacy groups (“Our Mission,” n.d.a).

Similarly, the Best Friends Network offers education and training to all organizations within the network to support them in spay/neuter programs, help lower shelter intake rates, and provide resources for pet ownership (“Our Purpose,” n.d.). Ultimately, the network is also a valuable resource with which animal welfare organizations can connect. These organization can share their strategies and work together to reduce overcrowding in animal shelters.

Weaknesses

Despite its strengths, Best Friends has some weaknesses. One of these is using a no-kill model in communities with high admission rates and low shelter budgets. These underserved communities also lack resources for their pets, such as affordable veterinary and pet wellness services, limited access to spay/neuter services, and low donation and staffing shortages (Reese & Li, 2023). Therefore, limited resources may affect Best Friends’ mission of spreading no-kill policies nationwide. Another challenge is the public’s misconception about animal adoption. Data shows that about 14% of people will not adopt because they are concerned about behavioral issues (“Debunking Common,” n.d.). They also believe animal shelters are unhealthy, and rescues are more challenging to train and settle in a new home (“Debunking Common,” n.d.). Lastly, there is a high intake of returned adopted pets. According to Orvis and Sports Organization, 20% of pets are returned to the original shelter after adoption (Meyer, 2024). Several factors contribute to the high return rate of adopted pets, including housing changes, unrealistic expectations from the adopters, the owner’s financial situation, and lack of time

commitment (Hawes et al., 2020). These challenges contribute to the overcrowding of animal shelters and undermine Best Friends' no-kill initiative.

Opportunities

Best Friends Animal Society can use social trends to advance its mission and engagement. There is a growing demand for authentic storytelling. New research found that half of consumers prioritize authenticity (Schieren, 2024). Best Friends can use this opportunity to share inspiring rescue-to-adoption stories through short-form videos on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. For example, emotional pet profiles can foster connections or showcase a series of "Before and after" transformations of rehabilitated pets. Data shows that social media platforms have a positive impact. According to ASPCA, a survey found that organizations raised general awareness by 86%, while pet adoption increased by 66% and a 55 % increase in adoption in senior pets and those with medical issues ("New Research," 2018). This suggests that increasing public awareness of animal welfare increases sensitivity to animal rights protection. As interest in this animal welfare issue increases through social media, it creates opportunities to boost the number of volunteers, advocates, and staff at animal shelters. It also builds more support for the nonprofit, increasing donations and program improvement.

Additionally, advocacy through influencers offers a chance to partner with local influencers or pet bloggers to share adoption stories, run campaigns like #AdoptDontShop, and feature adopter testimonials to build trust and relatability ("What is Influencer," 2024). Together, these strategies position Best Friends Animal Society to engage modern audiences while driving progress toward its no-kill mission. Finally, Best Friends can leverage local and national media outlets to run stories on the organization's initiatives, success stories, and the broader no-kill movement. For example, they can pitch stories showcasing the transformative effects of adoption

on families and pets or raise awareness of their mission, resources available in the community, and benefits of adoption and fostering.

Threats

Best Friends Animal Society faces a significant threat from the rising number of animals entering shelters, including strays, abandoned pets, and those rescued from abusive situations—nearly 6.3 million animals are taken to animal shelters nationwide (“Pet Statistics,” n.d.).

Advocates have said the reasons might vary, but it strains resources and intensifies shelter overcrowding. An economic downturn is another serious threat because it can reduce overall donation levels (“Giving USA,” 2023). Giving USA reported a decline in charitable donations in 2022, negatively impacting nonprofit organizations. The foundation said the decline was due to growing costs of goods and high inflation through 2022 (“Giving USA,” 2023). Therefore, as donors have less disposable income, nonprofits such as Best Friends may face funding shortages for expanding services to help high-need shelters nationwide. Lastly, another issue is the competition to raise funds. Major organizations, such as ASPCA, receive contributions and grants from the same donors, making getting more donations challenging. However, Best Friends Animal Society can advocate its mission to lawmakers to create legislation and policy changes in animal welfare. For example, animal welfare advocacy groups worked with California legislators to pass the Farmed Animal Confinement Initiative to improve the living conditions of certain farm animals (“The Effect,” 2024).

Survey the Problem's Causes and Solutions

Solutions to Weaknesses

To strengthen its efforts to reduce shelter intake, Best Friends could prioritize advocacy for legislation that funds and expands access to low-cost spay/ neuter programs, vaccination clinics, and essential pet wellness services. By implementing these initiatives at the state and local levels, the non-profit can address two core contributors to overpopulation: unplanned breeding and the lack of affordable pet healthcare. Studies have found the top reasons pet owners returned their animals were housing changes, job changes, and pet costs (Deen, 2023). Best Friends should strengthen its collaborations with the local government, veterinarians, and other nonprofits to build more comprehensive support for responsible pet ownership in underserved communities.

In addition to these initiatives, Best Friends can implement education campaigns to overcome misconceptions about shelter animals. According to the Animal Humane Society, more than 14% of people will not adopt an animal shelter because they are concerned the animal has a behavior challenge (“Debunking Common,” n.d.). The organization also found that people believe shelter animals are unhealthy or that the adoption process takes a long time (“Debunking Common,” n.d.). The educational toolkit can debunk the common myths, promote adoption, and offer support through post-adoption counseling, training resources, and affordable support services. This would reduce the likelihood of animals being returned due to behavioral issues and pet ownership challenges. Furthermore, these programs would increase community awareness about shelter animals while promoting Best Friends’ mission of a future of no-kill shelters.

Solutions to Threats

Best Friends must develop a varied funding strategy to tackle the aforementioned financial challenges. A recent study, *Funding Strategies for Nonprofit Animal Shelter Leaders*, highlighted a recurring theme among nonprofits regarding funding: ineffective time management, lack of diversification of funding sources, and the need to establish a strong relationship with the public (Reeder, 2021). Interviewees expressed concerns about time costs, which resulted in understaffing at animal shelters. Leaders noted that they were constrained by limited services, with the sentiment that “time is money” (Reeder, 2021). They also pointed out the challenge of having insufficient time to organize funding events while managing other responsibilities (Reeder, 2021).

Comparatively, a suggested solution was to evaluate the risks of the nonprofit’s approach over the long term and consider if tough decisions need to be made, such as discontinuing a program that fails to generate adequate funding to redirect that effort elsewhere (Reeder, 2021). For example, if Best Friends Animal Society runs a low-cost spay/neuter program that struggles to secure ongoing funding, it might need to reevaluate the program’s sustainability. To maximize impact, they may decide to discontinue it and redirect resources toward a more effective educational outreach program on responsible pet ownership.

Furthermore, researchers discovered diversifying funding sources decreased reliance on specific donors in a competitive and unpredictable industry (Reeder, 2021). For instance, leaders noted using a marketing mix to secure funding. They leveraged social media to enhance their brand, increase awareness, conduct online fundraising along with grants and contracts, and organize events for campaigning (Reeder, 2021). Finally, nonprofits must build a positive relationship among donors, staff, and volunteers. The same study revealed that open

communication, transparency, and appreciation helped nonprofits with a strong reputation secure funding and contributions (Reeder, 2021).

To address the insufficient legal protections contributing to animal welfare challenges, Best Friends Animal Society can actively advocate for its mission to lawmakers and policymakers to promote legislative and policy changes. The nonprofit can advocate for initiatives to improve animal welfare laws at the state and federal levels. For example, Best Friends can advocate for laws that require spaying and neutering, regulate breeding practices, and increase penalties for animal cruelty. Additionally, the organization can rally public support through petitions, educational campaigns, and partnerships with other advocacy groups to ensure these policies are prioritized. Thus, carrying out the steps outlined earlier would address the threats identified in the SWOT analysis.

Target Audience

The campaign targets various groups, from community members to elected officials. The primary audience is Millennials. Research shows they are the largest demographic of current pet owners, followed by Gen X and Baby Boomers (Megna, 2024). Therefore, the campaign toolkit would be at schools, community centers, and local animal shelters and veterinarians to promote responsible pet ownership, adoption, and support for the no-kill mission. Additionally, the campaign targets community leaders who serve and impact the community because they can help distribute the toolkit and spread the message. This action is essential in underserved communities that lack access to affordable pet services and care, where shelter access issues are more likely to occur.

Equally important, leaders can use the toolkit to emphasize what future pet owners should consider when adopting and the responsibilities of owning a pet. Lawmakers are essential to get

involved in advocating for humane policies and legislation for animals. They can support the toolkit by supporting legislation changes and funding animal resources for the communities. Overall, the campaign aims to educate a broad audience and create a supportive environment where homeless pets can find their forever homes and communities have the resources they need to help animal shelters thrive.

Situation Addressed by the Campaign

The New Media Marketing campaign tackles the ongoing problem of pet overpopulation in shelters. Although Best Friends Animal Society is nearing its target, the nonprofit continues encountering obstacles. Numerous underprivileged communities lack the necessary resources to assist families with pet care. Additionally, more education is needed regarding spay/neuter practices, the advantages of adoption, and the resources available within the community. The campaign can reduce shelter overpopulation by confronting these challenges, promoting a no-kill movement, and encouraging more adoptions.

Challenges to Campaign Strategy

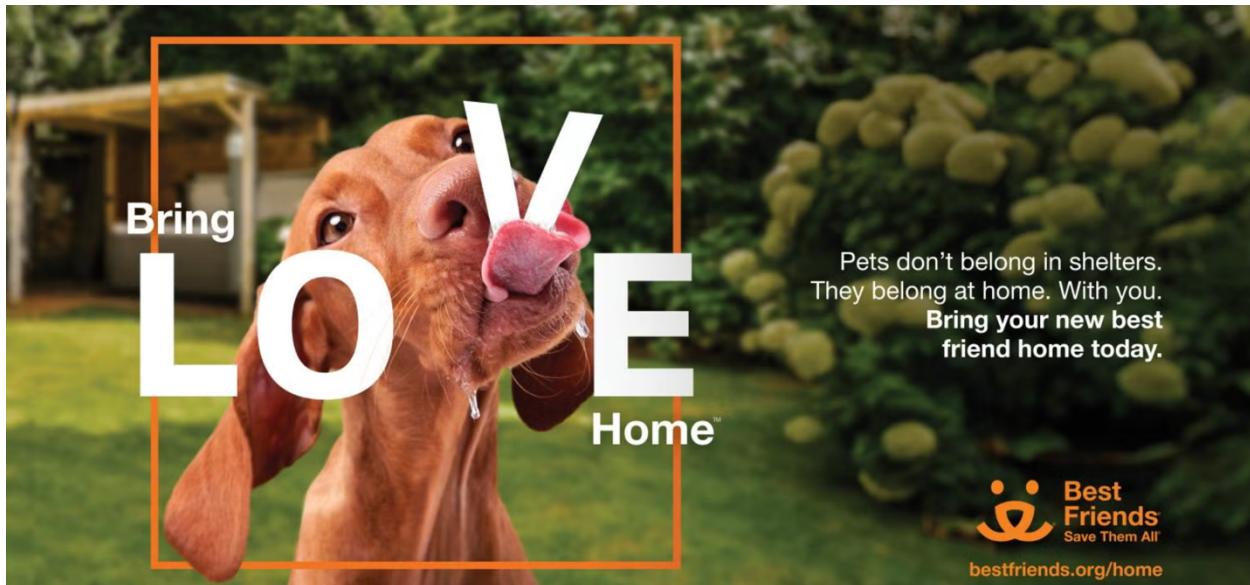
One of the campaign's challenges is combating the yearly intake of pets into shelters. According to Best Friends, since 2020, animal shelters have reported increased animal intake and deaths. The non-profit has seen a trend of pet intake starting to return to pre-pandemic levels (“2023 National Data,” 2023). Another challenge is funding for the educational toolkits to be distributed in communities. As mentioned above, funds are limited for pet welfare agencies. The annual report from Best Friends shows that donations in some areas decreased between 2022 and 2023 while expenses increased (Best Friend, n.d.). In addition, collaborating with local veterinarians and shelters to lower pet care expenses in low-income areas will be another significant hurdle. Lastly, another challenge is differentiating the campaign from other nonprofits

or past campaigns from Best Friends Animal Society—including promoting on social media, television, and billboards.

Past/Existing Marketing Plans

Figure 2

Bring Love Home



Note: Photograph of “*Bring Love Home Campaign*”. From Best Friends Animal Society. By Unknown n.d., <https://bestfriends.org/about/media/best-friends-animal-society-launches-bring-love-home-national-campaign-help-boost-us>

Bring Love Home

The “Bring Love Home” National Campaign, seen in Figure 2, was launched this year to inspire people to adopt pets from rescues. Its goal is to eliminate the killing of pets by 2025. The campaign emphasizes the positive impact of pet adoption. Several impactful videos were broadcast on television and digital platforms, featuring compelling messages (“Bring Love,” 2024). Although the message is clear, powerful, and emotional, it may come across as repetitive, which can lead to disengagement from viewers.

Moreover, the focus is primarily on future pet adopters or animal enthusiasts, which overlooks a broader audience that could contribute through advocacy or funding efforts. The broader audience could include those who may not be actively considering pet adoption but are passionate about animal welfare. Instead of adoption, this group may be interested in supporting no-kill shelters through donations, volunteering, or advocacy efforts. Comparatively, the campaign could appeal to corporate sponsors, local businesses, or philanthropic organizations that may be willing to fund initiatives or partner in community outreach. By broadening the audience, Best Friends can go beyond potential adopters and include diverse supporters to achieve its mission more effectively.

Key strategies

This campaign is successful because of several strategies: emotional storytelling, digital and social media marketing, partnerships with local shelters, adoption events, and fee waivers. Best Friends highlights heartwarming stories of pet adoptions and showcases the unique bond that forms between the pets and their new families. Through the success stories of the adopters and their pets, the campaign emphasizes the joy of adoption and brings empathy toward shelter animals. Furthermore, Best Friends uses social media to share stories about animals in need, successful adoptions, and events encouraging viewers to consider adopting. The non-profit uses hashtags such as #BringLoveHome to help create a sense of community around the campaign and make it easy to share these stories. The campaign works closely with local shelters to expand its reach nationwide. In addition, they promote specific animals depending on the needs of the local shelters and encourage local engagement through community events and adoption fairs. During these adoption events, “Bring Love Home” aims to increase adoption rates, reduce the

overpopulation of animal shelters, and help more pets find homes. Therefore, the non-profit encourages discounted or waived fees to promote future adoptions.

Publics

The campaign targets two groups. Potential pet adopters and current pet owners are the primary audience. Through the “Bring Love Home” campaign, Best Friends hopes to inspire them by showcasing the impact of bringing a pet home. It seeks to engage current pet owners in adopting or fostering another animal or advocating for adoption. The secondary group comprises shelter and rescue organizations, volunteers, and animal advocates. Shelters and rescue organizations are essential to the campaign for facilitating adoptions, hosting events, and sharing resources. Meanwhile, community volunteers and animal advocates are crucial for promoting the message and encouraging the adoption or fostering of shelter animals.

Challenges

While the campaign has many essential strategies to promote adoption, it also has some challenges. Unfortunately, there are social and cultural barriers within communities. Some potential adopters may have concerns about breed stereotypes, health issues, or behavioral challenges (Reeder, 2021). Moreover, a large population prefers purebred animals because certain animals are considered “designer” breeds. Some people prefer to buy from those breeders rather than go to animal shelters, where they can also adopt the breed they seek.

Furthermore, Best Friends has other competitors running similar adoption campaigns. As mentioned above, some large competitors include the ASPCA, the Humane Society of the United States, and PetSmart Charities. This competition makes it difficult for “Bring Love Home” to stand out and receive donor support and public attention. Best Friends must also compete for donors’ financial support to promote the nationwide campaign.

Lastly, animal shelters frequently face resource constraints. Some may not have enough staff to handle substantial adoption events and high numbers of adopters. As a result, overcrowding and insufficient staffing can create bottlenecks that hinder the campaign's success in facilitating adoption goals.

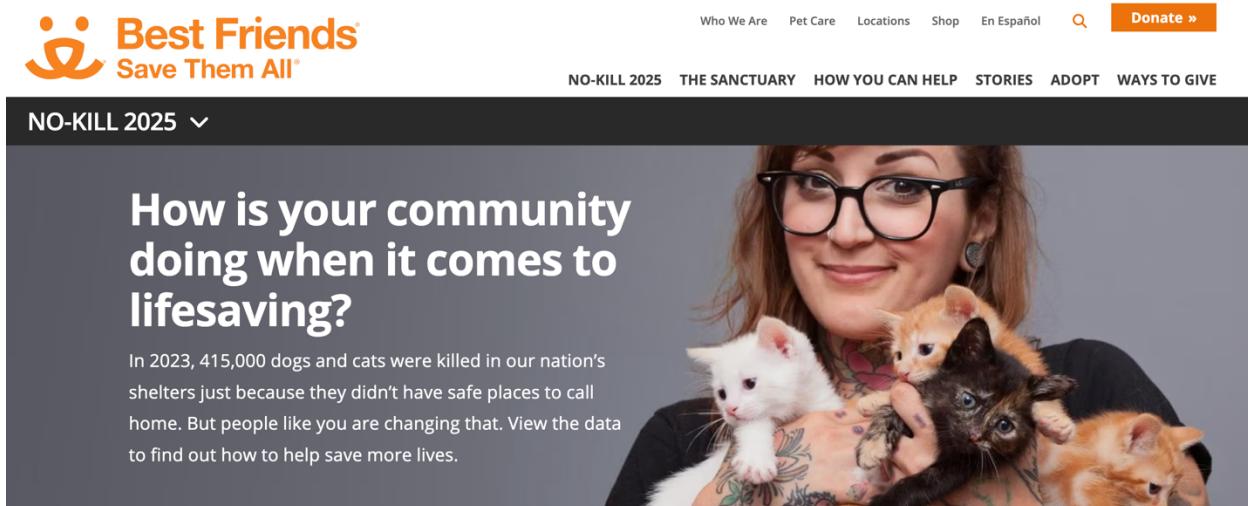
Opportunities

Best Friends has an opportunity to increase adoption and fostering by showcasing the impact it has on animals. While adoption may not fit everyone, Best Friends can capitalize on fostering. A study found that foster care has a significant effect on animals. It can help improve the quality of life for pets. For example, dogs with foster families were less stressed, improved their behavior, were friendlier to people, and were more confident than dogs in shelters (“Research Study,” 2023). Best Friends can use this to appeal to animal advocates and animal lovers and help reduce the stigma surrounding animal shelters.

The organization could collaborate with influencers, celebrities, and prominent animal advocates to broaden its reach further. This approach would amplify its message and expand the visibility of campaigns like “Bring Love Home,” which effectively utilizes emotional storytelling to inspire pet adoption and build community engagement. Despite the challenges, Best Friends employs many strategies to reduce shelter populations and significantly help people find loving homes.

Figure 3

No-Kill 2025



Note: Photograph from No-Kill 2025. From Best Friends Animal Society. By Unknown n.d.,

<https://bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025>

No-Kill 2025

The “No-Kill 2025” initiative, as shown in Figure 3, gained strength in 2023 to raise awareness of animal shelters killing pets because they do not have a home. “No-Kill 2025” encourages community members to adopt, foster, and donate, providing straightforward ways to get involved and support the no-kill goal. Best Friends Animal Society utilizes a well-designed website, active social media channels, and email newsletters to keep supporters engaged (“What Does,” n.d.). However, the campaign risks the public losing interest if the updates remain similar over time. Best Friends also depends on solid partnerships and resources to apply the no-kill principles to animal shelters. Underserved communities may not fare as well due to a lack of support or education. To succeed, Best Friends must work with the community and government to provide shelters with the support they need to succeed (“What Does,” n.d.).

Key strategies

This campaign has several robust strategies to reach its goal of no-kill shelters by 2025. “No-Kill 2025” aims to build nationwide partnerships with shelters, rescue organizations, and animal welfare groups. They work together to reduce shelter euthanasia rates and increase the number of animals adopted into homes. The campaign also emphasizes community engagement and awareness about spay/neuter practices, responsible pet ownership, and adoption over buying pets. They provide educational resources through their website and work to empower communities to support their local shelters. Best Friends uses social media to advocate for the no-kill mission. The nonprofit shares success stories and highlights shelter animals. Additionally, the organization uses targeted email campaigns to mobilize supporters and raise funds for their initiatives.

Publics

The campaign targets several groups. Pet owners, potential adopters, local community members, and no-kill advocates make up the primary audience for this campaign. The no-kill mission directly impacts these groups because they are essential in reducing shelter populations and promoting responsible pet ownership. The secondary group includes lawmakers, veterinarians, and animal welfare organizations. Their role is crucial for advocating and implementing the campaign’s objectives.

Challenges

Two challenges impact the “No-Kill 2025” campaign: political and regulatory. Animal welfare policies vary by state and local government, which can affect certain areas. For example, some states have laws protecting companion animals, while others have wildlife protection laws.

Local governments enforce broader regulations that may include issues like hoarding, abuse, and killing. However, these regulations often overlap with federal law ("Federal," 2017).

Additionally, politicians can impact the success of "No-Kill 2025." Some legislators prioritize and support animal welfare, but others do not. Therefore, political shifts may affect the availability of grants or support for no-kill programs, affecting the campaign's sustainability. Other challenges are like the "Bring Love Home" campaign, which includes competition and the stigma around animal shelters that were mentioned above.

Opportunities

Best Friends can leverage the growing support for humane animal treatment to benefit its "No-Kill 2025" movement. The nonprofit can use this sentiment to help the campaign rally more advocates and volunteers, increase community engagement, and engage in activism (Lang, 2024). Additionally, Best Friends could partner with schools, universities, and community centers. Together, they can increase public awareness about the no-kill mission and responsible pet ownership. This can help shape positive behaviors in younger generations and cultivate future animal welfare supporters.

Social Media, Email and Website

Best Friends leverages social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to promote success stories, updates, and adoption events. Although TikTok and YouTube show average engagement rates, Instagram's performance is below the nonprofit sector average. Specifically, Instagram posts are not reaching the level of interaction expected compared to similar organizations, which could indicate the need for more targeted content or engagement strategies. According to Hootsuite, TikTok has a typical engagement rate of 5.6% (Mikolajczyk & Hu, 2024). The organization's social media engagement varies: 8.83% for YouTube, 0.18%

for Instagram, and 8.11% for TikTok (“100% AI-powered,” n.d.). This presents an opportunity for Best Friends to optimize its Instagram strategy to capture its audience’s attention better and leverage visual storytelling to improve interaction rates. In addition to those platforms, Best Friends leverages email campaigns with updates and calls to action for donations, fostering, and adoptions. The nonprofit’s website also provides extensive resources with educational articles, donation options, and detailed information about its initiatives. However, the website can feel daunting due to the information and images (Best Friends, n.d.). Best Friends Animal Society’s past and existing campaigns have successfully promoted the no-kill mission, driven by strong visuals, clear messaging, and robust digital presence. Tackling message fatigue, expanding audience outreach, and revitalizing their digital strategy may improve future campaigns, mainly aimed at the upcoming generation of advocates and communities less engaged with digital platforms.

Assess Problem-Related Needs

According to the SWOT analysis, several critical needs must be addressed to support Best Friends Animal Society’s mission of achieving a no-kill nation. First, there is a need to help underserved communities where crowding is higher because of increased intake and lack of access to pet-related services, including low-cost spay/neuter programs. This can be a reason why many families do not have access to affordable veterinary services, which can continue the overpopulation and euthanasia problems in animal shelters. Outreach efforts and partnerships must be expanded to provide these communities with accessible pet care services, education, and support.

There is also a severe need to combat the misconception surrounding shelter animals. As mentioned above, many people believe that these animals are unhealthy, have behavioral issues,

and are hard to treat. This contributes to lower pet adoption rates and overpopulation in shelters. Best Friends should focus more of its educational campaigns on myths versus realities and the benefits derived from shelter adoptions.

To achieve this, targeted communication strategies and outreach through both digital and community channels are essential to change public perceptions. For example, Best Friends can share the story of adopters Kim Diehl and Jason Reding, who welcomed a three-legged puppy named Bella into their home. Although they faced challenges during her adjustment period—such as Bella's tendency to chew on household items and her high energy levels—they emphasize that she has become a cherished family member after their senior dog's passing (Thornton, 2022). Testimonials from Kim and Jason provide valuable insights for potential adopters, illustrating the positives of adoption while also acknowledging the challenges for both families and their pets.

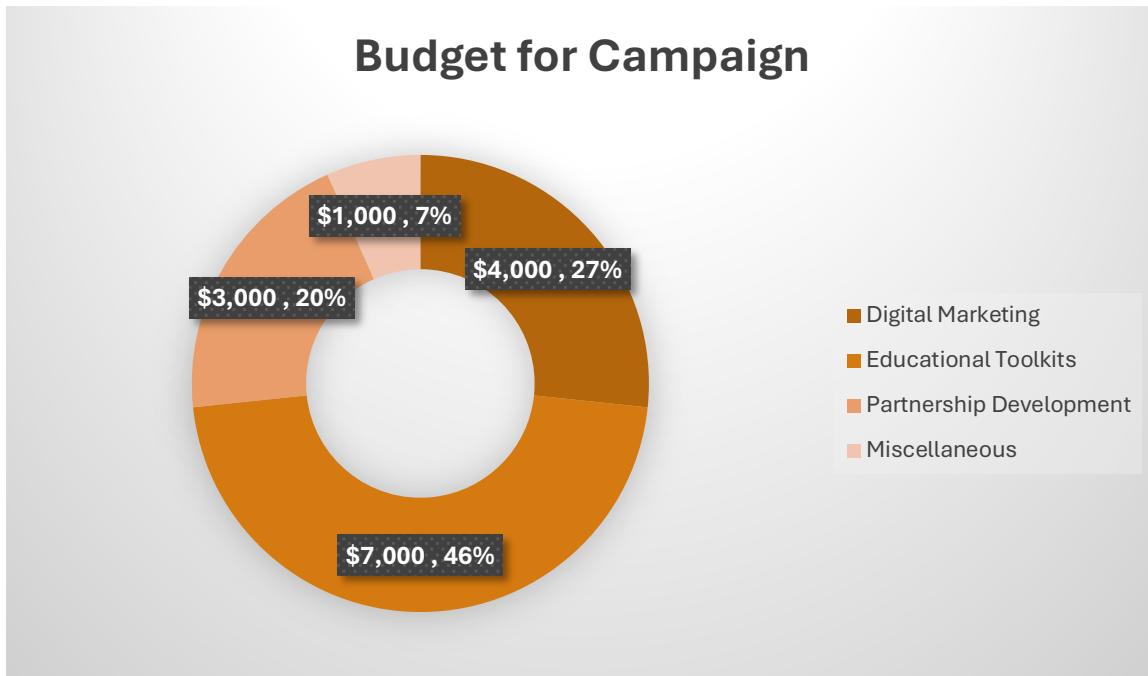
Another critical need is a high rate of pets returned after adoption because adopters were unaware of the high responsibilities of pet ownership or the financial challenges in caring for their new pets. Research called *Returning a Shelter Dog: The Role of Owner Expectations and Dog Behavior* found that 15% of all adoptions resulted in animals being returned to the shelter (Powell et al., 2022). Some common factors that led to the returned options were the animal's behavioral problems, owners underestimating the responsibilities, and families' incompatibility with the pet (Powell et al., 2022). Best Friends should provide comprehensive post-adoption support to adopters on pet behavior, resource access, and continuous adopter education to minimize returns and ensure better retention of pets. Lastly, donor funding and resources in the industry are limited because of the number of animal welfare organizations. Best Friends should enhance its fundraising strategies, which include leveraging digital platforms to engage younger

generations and socially conscious donors and seeking legislative support for the organization's mission of securing sustainable funding. Building these areas will expand the reach of the no-kill movement, sustain its momentum, and save more lives.

Campaign Goals and Objectives

The New Media Marketing campaign aims to increase awareness of the responsibilities and resources necessary for pet ownership, especially in needy communities and the younger generation. It will also highlight efforts to end pet killing and encourage communities to get involved in the movement. Additionally, the campaign will encourage initiatives like spaying/neutering and affordable pet care. Lastly, the campaign highlights the importance of adoption over buying pets.

The campaign aims to distribute to dozens of schools and community centers in the first six months. It also aims to achieve a minimum of 5,000 engagements on digital platforms to spread its message. Third, the campaign will partner with at least five local businesses or veterinary clinics to provide accessible resources for pet necessities, aiming to aid at least 1,000 families within the first year. These objectives highlight the campaign while emphasizing education, community participation, and resource accessibility to reduce shelter overpopulation and foster support for the no-kill movement.

Figure 4*Proposed Budget*

Note: The pie chart shows the proposed budget for the campaign

Proposed Budget

The overall budget, as shown in Figure 4, for the Best Friends Animal Society campaign is estimated at \$15,000, which covers components such as production, distribution, digital outreach, and partnership development. Approximately \$7,000 will be allocated to the design, printing, and initial distribution of educational toolkits at schools and community centers. The campaign toolkits are crucial to help spread awareness and educate the community on responsible pet ownership, the no-kill movement, and available resources.

In addition, \$4,000 will be dedicated to digital marketing efforts, including social media ads, video content production, and online community engagement, to maximize outreach and engagement. Another \$3,000 will support partnership development with local shelters, pet supply stores, and veterinary clinics, enabling collaborative events and resources to reach underserved

areas. The remaining \$1,000 will cover miscellaneous costs, such as additional outreach opportunities or logistical needs.

Promoting Responsible Pet Ownership

Campaign Proposal

This proposal primarily aims to enhance awareness about the responsibilities and resources involved in pet ownership. It will target underserved communities and younger individuals. Additionally, it seeks to encourage community participation in the no-kill movement while promoting initiatives such as spaying/neutering, affordable pet care, and advocating for the adoption of pets instead of purchasing them. Moreover, the campaign plans to distribute educational toolkits to numerous schools and community centers within the first six months, achieve at least 5,000 interactions on digital platforms to disseminate its message, and collaborate with a minimum of five local businesses or veterinary clinics to offer accessible resources for pet essentials, to support at least 1,000 families in the first year. These objectives highlight the campaign's emphasis on education, resource accessibility, and community involvement to help mitigate shelter overpopulation and promote the no-kill mission.

Target Audience

As its primary audience, the campaign proposal targets school-age children and their families, current pet owners, and local community members. Engaging children is essential because instilling values of responsible pet ownership at a young age can create lasting behavioral changes within households. Research shows that children influence a family's decision-making. As reported by *Parents on Board*, 64% of Millennial Parents indicated that both they and their children impact activity choices during family time. ("For 60% of Millennial", 2023). In contrast, 45% stated that they jointly make decisions on significant

purchases, while 62% mentioned that both play a role in choosing vacation destinations (“For 60% of Millennial”, 2023). Therefore, this group is crucial for the campaign.

Additionally, pet owners are essential to addressing shelter overpopulation. An animal welfare study found that fewer than 35% of pet owners choose to adopt from shelters, 34% of dogs were purchased from breeders, and around 3% of cats (“Pet Statistics,” n.d.). Lastly, targeting local community members is vital for creating a supportive culture around the no-kill movement. People are more likely to advocate for a positive change when informed about local issues. By creating a community that values animal welfare, the campaign fosters an environment where responsible pet ownership and no-kill principles are the norm (“Section 2,” n.d.).

The secondary audience includes teachers, community leaders, policymakers, veterinarians, and animal welfare organizations. Teachers are crucial for shaping the future generation; therefore, the campaign’s education materials could be integrated into school curriculums to promote responsible pet ownership. A study showed that students in a classroom focused on "active learning"—through discussion and problem-solving—retain more information. (Reuell, 2019). It shows how teachers advocating for the campaign could affect outreach to families. Moreover, community leader can highly influence their communities. Studies reveal that word-of-mouth recommendations from someone trustworthy are the most influential (“Under the Influence,” 2013).

That said, lawmakers will also be targeted because of their impact on the local community. Local and state legislators can influence policies around spay/neuter mandates, animal welfare program funding, or puppy mill restrictions. They can work with veterinarians and animal welfare organizations to tailor legislation that best fits each community.

Policymakers can also advocate for community programs that provide free or low-cost spay/neuter services and incentives for adoption over buying pets. The campaign will work by tailoring messages to each group. The campaign can create a ripple effect by equipping these groups with knowledge and resources, thus influencing direct and indirect stakeholders to support the no-kill mission.

Marketing and New Media Strategies and Tactics

The campaign will adopt several marketing and new media strategies to address shelter overpopulation and encourage responsible pet ownership. The first strategy focuses on education and community outreach, which includes distributing toolkits containing vital information on spay/neuter programs, the benefits of adoption, and available resources to schools and community centers. Secondly, a digital marketing strategy utilizing social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to share engaging video content, adoption success stories, and interactive posts featuring hashtags like #AdoptDontShop. Thirdly, collaborations with local shelters, veterinary clinics, and pet stores will facilitate joint events, such as adoption fairs and free pet care workshops. The campaign seeks to educate, inspire action, and build enduring support for the no-kill mission by blending traditional outreach, online engagement, and strategic partnerships.

Community-Based Educational Tactics

The central aspect of the campaign is the distribution of educational tools in schools, community centers, and shelters. Educators, community leaders, and animal welfare organizations are crucial in this campaign. The material will cover several topics, including information on the no-kill movement, local resources for pet necessities, and tips for adoption and transitioning rescue pets into their new homes. For example, infographics with the number of

sheltered pets in the region that need a home with a slogan: "Bring love home today and save a life." In addition, the toolkit will have activity sheets for children and comprehensive guides for adults to cater to the diverse audience needs. Schools can incorporate the toolkits into lessons, especially during the holidays when pets are often asked about or considered a gift. A survey found that 39% of pet owners said they had given someone else a pet as a holiday gift (Sofi, 2023). During the holiday season, Best Friends Animal Society could launch a campaign called Gift a Life. The campaign will focus on commitments associated with gifting pets on the holiday and educating future pet owners about the responsibility of owning an animal.

Meanwhile, shelters can utilize these kits during adoption fairs or workshops to enhance pet owner education. Similarly, the message for current and potential owners will highlight responsible pet ownership's practical benefits and responsibilities. Statements like "Spay and neuter your pets to help reduce shelter overpopulation" will be supported with accessible resources, such as information on affordable spay/neuter programs. Educational toolkits will also provide actionable advice on caring for pets, emphasizing that pet ownership is a lifelong commitment.

Partnership Strategies

Partnering with local shelters, rescues, and other animal welfare agencies is another strategy for the campaign. Best Friends will integrate the educational toolkits in key areas such as spay/neuter clinics, workshops, and adoption drives. This will ensure that attendees receive valuable resources. In addition, Best Friends can collaborate with state and local leaders to attend these events to strengthen the no-kill mission and advocate for animal rights. For instance, advocating pet stores must host adoption days and prominently display campaign posters, while

veterinarians should distribute materials and advocate for preventative care initiatives. These strategic partnerships will drive a broader and more significant impact on the community.

Digital Marketing Strategies

The partnership and community events will be promoted on social media to expand the reach. Since 75% of users watch short-form videos on their cell phones, the campaign will focus on creating dynamic video content and shareable visuals (Bump, 2024). TikTok and Instagram Reels will feature heartwarming adoption stories, quick tips for responsible pet ownership, and highlights of successful no-kill initiatives. With that said, 83% of marketers suggest videos should be under 60 seconds because consumers prefer short-form content (Bump, 2024). Infographics and engaging stories will educate followers on the benefits of adoption and spay/neuter programs. At the same time, interactive elements like polls, challenges, and Q&A sessions will foster user participation under hashtags like #AdoptDontShop and #NoKillNation.

Targeted Digital Advertising

Social media advertising effectively engages both new and existing audiences. Paid social ads target specific demographics to boost awareness, drive traffic, and enhance conversion rates. For example, Best Friends can monitor the success of an ongoing campaign and modify the strategy if results are unsatisfactory. Furthermore, the immediate feedback enables the nonprofit to reallocate its budget and refine its tactics. Additionally, social media advertising is accessible on various platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Each platform provides the tools to promote an ad, including images, videos, and reels (Newberry & Bruce-Kotey, 2024).

New Media Tactics

One new media tactic that has been growing for the past couple of years is the incorporation of influencer partnerships. More than 80% of marketers said that influencers are

essential to the overall social media strategy, according to Q3 Sprout Pulse Survey ("What is Influencer," 2024). Therefore, this new tactic is crucial in amplifying the campaign's message and engaging a broader audience. The type of influencer will depend on the reach Best Friends chooses to target. For instance, Best Friend could partner with Juniper the Fox (@juniperfoxx) to share an educational post about adoptable pets or a heartwarming adoption story ("The Most Popular," 2024). This account is from a rescued and adopted fox with an average engagement of 3.4% ("The Most Popular, "2024). The partnership would be ideal since the account has a mix of content about animal rescue, and the fox's adventure. Moreover, Juniper's followers would likely feel inspired to get involved through adoption, fostering, or donating. Additionally, their reach and credibility within their communities will help foster a deeper connection with the campaign's target audiences.

Traditional Marketing Strategies

Finally, traditional marketing strategies include email marketing, posters, and community events. Email marketing builds customer relationships, promotes products and services, and increases brand awareness. 87% of marketers said this strategy is critical for businesses (Santiago, 2024). In addition, according to the marketing trends survey, it is the most effective marketing channel. Community events such as speaking at engagements are a great way to target audience and expand brand awareness. A survey found that 68% of brands said it generated leads and effectively connected with customers ("12 Traditional," 2022). Finally, print advertisements continue to be a reliable option for consumers. Best Friends can promote their campaign through newspapers, magazines, and direct mail. A Nielsen survey indicates that these channels are among the top 10 trusted formats for consumer advertising (Morse, 2024).

Timeline

Figure 5

Campaign Timeline



Note: The photo illustrates the campaign's timeline

Month 1: Planning and Content Creation

The campaign will be executed over six months, as shown in Figure 5. During the first month, the focus will be on planning and content creation. This includes finalizing campaign strategies, developing educational toolkits for schools and community centers, and brainstorming key messages for digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Traditional marketing material will also be prepared along with securing future partnerships. During this time, reaching out to

local shelters, veterinarian policymakers, influencers, and pet stores will be critical to amplify the campaign's reach. This phase will conclude the logistical preparations for community events like adoption fairs and workshops (Bukhari, 2024).

Month 2: Pre-Launch Awareness

The second month will involve pre-launch activities to build awareness and excitement. Educational toolkits will be distributed and targeted to schools, shelters, and community centers, with tailored content for each audience. Next, social media campaigns will launch with teaser content featuring heartwarming adoption stories and informative infographics outlining the advantages of spaying and neutering. Then, traditional marketing initiatives will roll out with posters strategically placed in high-traffic locations and email campaigns directed at local communities. Additionally, influencers will share teaser posts to generate interest and prepare their followers before the full campaign launch (Bukhari, 2024).

Months 3 and 4: Full Campaign Implementation

The next phase involves executing all marketing strategies. During months three and four, Best Friends will participate in community-based events like adoption fairs, spay/neuter clinics, and pet care workshops. These events will also be promoted through digital platforms. At the same time, Best Friends will live-stream segments to engage online audiences. Influencers will also actively share content and highlight the campaign's mission and activities during this promotion and engagement (Bukhari, 2024).

Month 5: Ongoing Engagement and Feedback

During the fifth month, Best Friends will monitor engagement and gather feedback on the campaign. The nonprofit will continue rolling out fresh social media content, including testimonials from adopters and shelter staff and behind-the-scenes videos. Online surveys and

feedback forms distributed during events will help evaluate the effectiveness of educational toolkits and digital content. In this phase, Best Friends can adjust the campaign based on performance analytics and test new strategies to continue improving (Bukhari, 2024).

Month 6: Campaign Wrap-Up and Evaluation

In the sixth month, the campaign will wrap up with a major adoption fair or volunteer appreciation day to honor its successes. A summary report detailing results will be published, including metrics like social media interaction, adoption rates, and event turnout. In addition, a final video content will highlight the campaign's effects and showcase before-and-after stories of rescued animals finding homes. Finally, insights and suggestions for future campaigns will be compiled to ensure the no-kill movement's sustainability and ongoing success (Bukhari, 2024).

Cost

The overall budget for the Best Friends Animal Society campaign is set at \$15,000. A significant portion, \$7,000, will be used to produce and distribute educational toolkits. For example, these toolkits will include visually engaging brochures, activity sheets for children, and guides on topics such as spay/neuter programs, pet adoption, and the no-kill movement. These resources will be distributed to schools for classroom activities, community centers for workshops, and local shelters for use during adoption events. For example, a toolkit might include a checklist for first-time adopters or an infographic explaining the benefits of adopting pets instead of purchasing them.

Digital marketing efforts, funded at \$4,000, will focus on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. Examples include producing short video content, such as adoption success stories, and running targeted ads to reach specific demographics. For instance, a TikTok campaign might feature influencers sharing their rescue pet stories using a branded AR filter that

overlays an adoptable pet into the user's video. Additionally, sponsored Instagram posts might include an emotional call to action with a photo of a shelter animal and captions like, "Give pets like Max a second chance. Adopt today!"

Another \$3,000 will support partnership development with local organizations. For example, shelters could host adoption fairs where the campaign provides educational materials, and veterinary clinics could offer discounted spay/neuter services promoted through the campaign. Partnerships with pet stores might involve adoption days where promotional posters and toolkit materials are displayed. Finally, \$1,000 will be set aside for miscellaneous expenses. This allocation will enable the campaign to respond to unexpected opportunities or obstacles.

Evaluation Process

Qualitative and quantitative methods will assess the campaign's effectiveness and impact on awareness, community engagement, and goal attainment. A primary method will be tracking social media metrics using analytics tools on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Best Friends Animal Society's campaign reach and influence will be measured by impressions, likes, shares, comments, and follower growth. Other criteria, such as video views and engagement ratings, will provide deeper insight into the campaign and increase interaction in the first three months (Noble Predictive, 2024).

Furthermore, community engagement will be examined through attendance at adoption fairs, workshops, and spay/neuter clinics. The number of attendees and participant surveys will evaluate the effectiveness of our in-person outreach, targeting a 20% increase in attendance at adoption fairs compared to past events (Noble Predictive, 2024). Partnership outcomes will also be a crucial metric, assessed by the number of joint events with shelters, veterinary clinics, pet stores, and partner feedback. A potential goal could be hosting five collaborative events during

the campaign period. In addition, traditional marketing strategies will be measured through key performance indicators like the number of mentions and audience reach to measure their visibility. Finally, surveys and feedback will provide valuable qualitative insights into the campaign's impact. Surveys will be conducted before and after the campaign to measure changes in knowledge (Noble Predictive, 2024). Overall, the feedback will be used to analyze what worked and what did not in the campaigns to ensure future improvements.

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