

10 Ways to Make the Most of Superlatives in Your Marketing

Article by Roxanne Hawn



More than ever people rely on the opinions of others when making purchasing decisions. This includes every imaginable need that pets may have in their lifetimes—veterinary care, food, training, toys, pet tech, pet-care doodads and beyond.

“Social proof,” as it’s called in marketing circles, plays upon both the peer pressure of wanting what’s best for pets based on others’ experiences and the fear of missing out (sometimes abbreviated as FOMO).

As an example, some restaurants deliberately feature tiny lobbies so that any overflow people hoping for a table must wait outside. The idea is that passersby will see how popular the place is. Different goals require different strategies. I doubt that an over-crowded hospital is the look you want.

Online reviews and testimonials from clients remain the most obvious form of social proof that applies to veterinary practices. There are, however, other kinds of superlatives and accolades that veterinary practices can use to their advantage—depending on what key messages about your mission, values and services you want to convey.

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What is a superlative?

Essentially, a superlative is something that demonstrates your practice’s magnificence. A superlative is a way to represent your best qualities and services for providing care to a community of pets.

Marketing often starts with questions about what makes your practice different or helps you stand out from the others in your competitive landscape or community. If you’re saying the exact same things as all the other practices in your area, then you haven’t quite found the ultra-unique way to claim that difference as your very own.

What can you say that no one else can? Typical superlatives include things such as being the biggest, the oldest, the newest, still in the same family, or the only one to provide certain kinds of services or to have certain credentials within a certain geographic radius.

Every opportunity to tout additional training, certifications (individual or practice level), and other academic gains in your team’s knowledge is a fresh way to show your best side to current and future clients. At its core, veterinary medicine is about bringing your expertise to pet-care situations—wellness-focused and otherwise. Any time you can promote the growth of your expertise and services, do it.

Thanks to the proliferation of community awards and other popularity-driven voting options, veterinary practices may also have specific accolades to share. For example, if a local publication or TV station hands out awards for the “best” veterinary practice, it might be worth pursuing a nomination if you feel that your client base is big enough and active enough to drive those popular votes. These awards can be fun, but it may be more important to promote superlatives that drive home your messages of quality and expertise over popularity.

How are superlatives used?

Use these ideas to spur even more creative ideas for promoting your biggest selling points:

1. Promote your best news on your outdoor sign, if it includes a messaging feature.
2. Include your superlatives in your email signature block.
3. Find a clever way to print your big brags on receipts. (Make it stand out with a box or stars so that it doesn’t get lost in the fine print or pet care reminders. And, if that’s not possible, see idea #4.)
4. Make stickers that tout your newest superlative and put them on prescription bags or other take-home materials.
5. Hang awards and other brags in your lobby and exam rooms.
6. Feature your latest superlative in your lobby electronic message board.
7. Create graphics that are shareable on social media so that your clients can brag for you—such as “My veterinarian ranks #1 in the city!”
8. Set up a spot in your lobby that features all your latest brag-worthy news that’s perfect for pet photos or family selfies.
9. Add ribbons or badges with your latest brag on them that staff can hang from their nametags.
10. Prominently feature awards and other brags on your website and in your email marketing efforts.

How long to keep bragging?

Certain kinds of superlatives do lose their luster over time, so you’ll want to meter your promotional efforts accordingly.

If your practice prides itself on being an early adopter of new technologies and services, you'll be able to ride that first messaging for a while but, eventually, your competitors will likely catch up. That's when it's time to be first with the next big thing.

Unless you can keep winning annual "best of" awards, actively brag about the win for a year. You can keep it on a comprehensive list of accolades on your website but replace it in your main promos with something fresh.

Over time, you can add longevity brags to other superlatives such as certifications or accreditations. That keeps those brags relevant.

There are some extremely big brags that you can bank on for a long time. Think big national or state awards or recognitions. It's similar to how Academy Award winners or Olympic medalists are referred to that way the rest of their lives. Or another comparison is best sellers. Once books hit the big time, those authors use the best-seller brag to their advantage forever more.

Why and how to chase brags?

Develop a strategy for what kinds of superlatives and accolades you'll pursue. Know which ones support your key messages and target those, rather than chasing every opportunity to win a new award.

If you need help deciding which of your values and talents deserve promotion, either in your own marketing efforts or through awards and accolades, take a month—or even three months—and write down one positive thing about your practice every day. It may sound silly or tedious, but it's surprisingly empowering to consistently focus on your strengths. It helps shift your mindset away from any challenges or frustrations and, instead, focuses it toward all the ways you make daily progress on attaining goals.

Even in a moment of feeling stuck, a positive might be: "Our team is persistent." Or, perhaps you went face to face with a cranky client and remained steady. A positive for that could be: "Our team is professional and kind."

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Keep a running list of all the good things; at the end of whatever time span you pick, look for trends in the positives you noted. Those patterns can reveal how you live your practice's mission and values, and it may help you narrow down which awards and accolades you want to pursue to help provide the social proof today's veterinary clients need and expect.

Individual word-of-mouth recommendations still matter, but brag-worthy messages about your practice can help amplify those referrals.



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