

# Marketing Your Mission via Equipment and Services



Article by Roxanne Hawn

How to combine your pet-care passion with the wonder of science.

New equipment and new services breathe fresh air into veterinary practices. Even if you're simply replacing a piece of equipment, it's a fun and exciting time. New equipment, and often the new services that come along, also provides a nice marketing opportunity to show clients the science and technology behind everything you do.

Build any marketing about new equipment and services around your core messages; why you provide quality pet care (your mission). Use your new equipment or services as examples of that quality; of what and how you do what you do (features and processes). The selling point, as always, is why the new equipment better serves pets in your community and why you strive to improve pet care (benefits to individual animals).

Convey your passion for the mission and mechanics of veterinary medicine with visuals and even a little humor, if you can. Information and images can go a long way in our increasingly digital and interactive world.

## The Visual Advantage

Veterinary medicine is more visually interesting than you might think. Avoid anything that might look gross or upsetting to clients, but leverage what visuals you can. Photos of your veterinarians and staff using the equipment make great fodder for newsletters, emails, and social media posts.

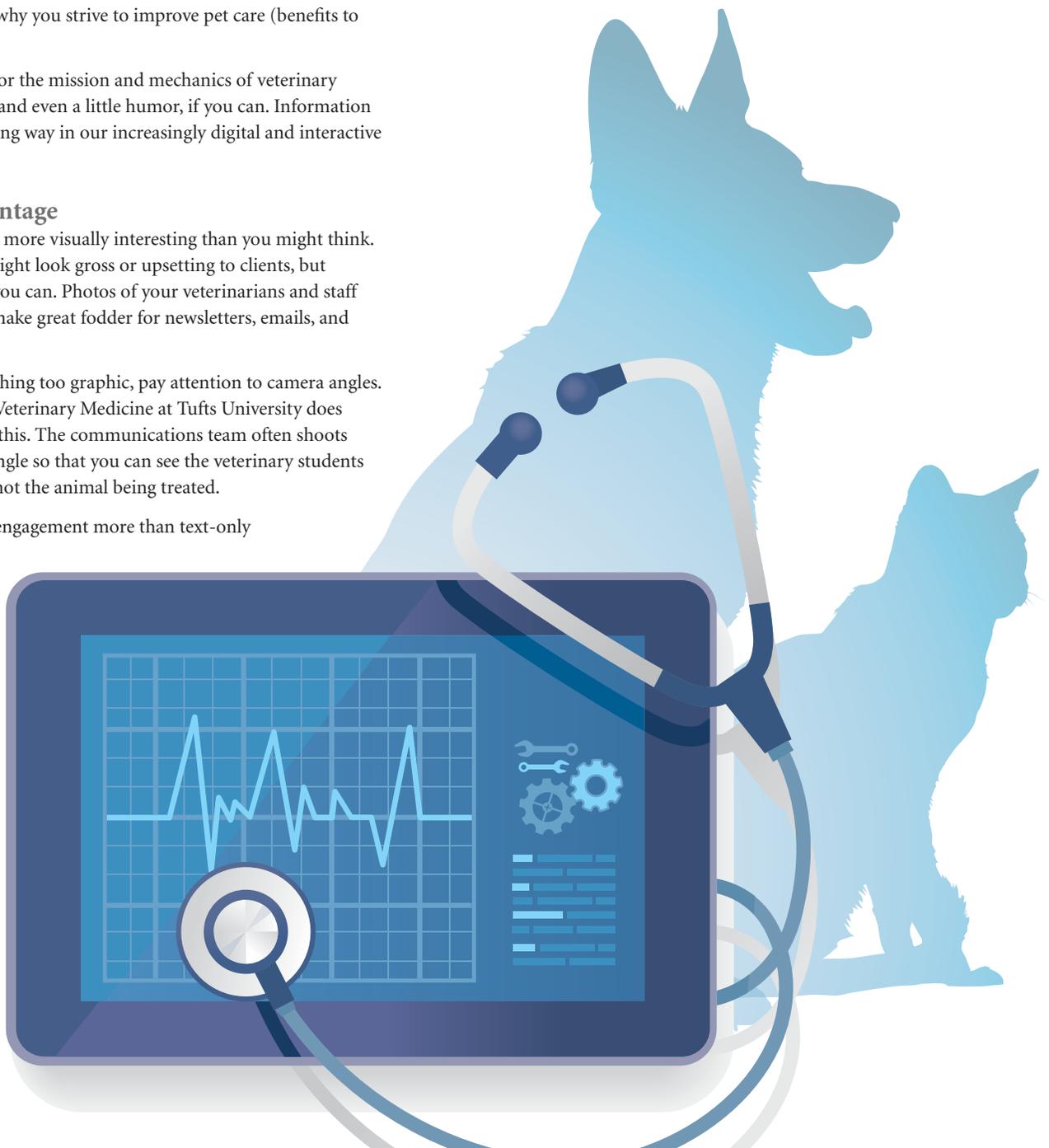
To avoid showing anything too graphic, pay attention to camera angles. Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University does a really good job with this. The communications team often shoots photos from a lower angle so that you can see the veterinary students using technology but not the animal being treated.

Photos tend to create engagement more than text-only posts on social media, so whenever you can, use visuals along with your online messages. Simple digital x-rays or EKG printouts make great visuals for use on social media. Some veterinary hospitals invite clients to play guessing games with these images. What'd this dog eat (foreign body x-ray)? Which of these heartbeats is normal (EKG)?

It's also fairly easy to label normal images as fun, online educational tools. For example, you could greatly enlarge the image from a normal EKG and label to explain what each bump in the line means.

Start your image stockpile at your next team meeting by brainstorming other visuals you already have, or could easily create. It's always better if you own the copyright to the images you share online.

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## Equipment Retirement Party

Whether you go to the trouble of hosting an actual client party or you simply take photos or short video clips of an internal equipment retirement party, it might be a funny way to say goodbye to an old piece of equipment. Maybe you wheel it out under an arch made by staff members holding tubing. Maybe you share stories of cases in which the equipment played a role.

You can send a nice message if the equipment will be refurbished and donated. You can also send a good message, if it will, instead, be dismantled and recycled rather than ending up in a landfill.

## Equipment Unveiling

Again, even if you choose not to host a full-blown client event to introduce a major new piece of equipment and the services that go with it, you can leverage online assets and tools to allow clients to experience the event virtually; on their own time. Some ideas include:

- A short video (no more than 3 minutes) explaining how you will use the equipment to take great care of pets.
- A photo slideshow that shows the equipment being moved in, installed, and used.
- An internet meme (photo with text on it) that says something clever about how the item improves pet care at your hospital.

For example, the specialty hospital I frequent bought a CT machine in 2012. The hospital's communications team shared video of the machine being lowered into place through the roof. Sure, the hospital's on-hold message still announces this new capacity to clients, and their message board in the lobby touts the addition, but getting to see just how big it is and the logistics of getting it inside were pretty neat.

Another option would be to think about super-close-up photos you can take of the new equipment's features, without giving away the secret, and share the series of photos over time on social media to build anticipation for your big announcement. Post these photos at the same time each day or each week so that clients are more likely to recognize a pattern, anticipate your posts, and engage with you about them online.

### Example Email

**Subject Line:** *X-ray machine retirement party*

**Email Body:** *Everyone at <name of practice> gathered to celebrate the retirement of <funny nickname of old equipment>. Every pet needing an x-ray in the last <number> years is familiar with <name>. Since you're part of our family, we wanted to share <these photos / this video> of <name's> retirement party.*

**Call to Action:** *Watch us bid a fond farewell to <name>.*

*Next time you're here, we'd be happy to give you a peek at our new x-ray machine. We haven't named it yet, but you can enter your idea into our Name That X-Ray Machine contest. The winner of the random drawing will receive a <dollar amount> gift certificate toward future veterinary care at <name of practice>.*

*<practice signature block, including street address, phone number, email address, and other social media addresses or links >*

### Example Social Media Posts

*<sample tweet>*

*Our new EKG machine gives us real-time information on each heartbeat. Want to see a pet's normal heartbeat? Check this out.*

*<short link to labeled image>*

*<sample Facebook post>*

*<labeled EKG image>*

*A dog's heart beats 70-160 times per minute. A cat's heart beats 160-240 per minute. Our new EKG machine creates great graphic images of each heartbeat. These images give us tons of information about how a pet's heart is working.*

## Adding Services

If the addition of equipment also means you'll be adding new services to your comprehensive care roster, create a marketing plan that spans at least six months to a year to raise awareness.

In addition to outright marketing through your website, newsletter, emails, and social media, look for ways to promote the new equipment and services:

- Banner outside the practice
- Smaller banner inside the hospital
- Computer slideshow for the lobby
- Posters in the exam rooms
- Blurbs on the bottom of invoices
- Local pet events, where you can promote the addition to a wider audience – especially if the equipment or service is on the rare side in your community

High-end equipment and services deserve more time and attention. Consider doing a webinar or real-world workshop to show off your equipment and explain how it'll be used in your practice. You can choose to invite your entire client base, or you can segment your list to include only the clients most likely to take advantage of the new services.

## Your Technology as Teammate

Think of major equipment purchases as additional members on your team. Sure, they aren't people, but they do play an important role in the care you provide and the success stories you tell. The key in including news about your equipment is to bridge the gap between the technology and the emotions having such information will impart.

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