

Ten Summer Marketing Ideas

By implementing these simple, yet effective marketing tactics, pet retailers are sure to attract spring crowds.

By Eric Cohen & Joyce Shulman

Spring is in the air and summer is around the corner. What a perfect time to breathe a breath of fresh air into a store's marketing plan. What follows are ten summertime marketing ideas...

1. Throw open the doors. Literally. A retailer may be surprised to see an increase in foot traffic as a result of nothing more than making the store as welcoming as possible. A bowl of treats on an attractive table will also help.

2. Host a dog walk. It takes planning and commitment, but it could be an event worth its weight in marketing exposure. Choose a date, clear it with the town, send press releases to local papers, put flyers in every shopping bag and hang posters around town. Ask suppliers for samples and giveaways. Take photographs to send to customers...and to the local paper.

3. Promote summer fun. Create a summer-fun endcap display with fun, bright-colored toys and treats.

4. Go to camp. Families are key targets, and families send their kids to camp. Call local camps to ask about coming in to talk about... anything—reptiles, dog agility, fish. Kids love animals.

5. Sponsor the local Little League. This is great exposure at a great price. But don't just buy the uniforms—embrace the team. Attend games, host an end-of-season party and hang a picture of the team in the store window.

6. Hit the streets. Participate in local street fairs and summer festivals. These are opportunities to generate immediate sales and, more importantly, spread the word and build a customer base. Summer fairs and festivals let a retailer meet lots of people in an informal setting. Capture

names for a mailing list and contact suppliers for freebies.

7. The search is on. Looking for a spokes-dog, cat or lizard? Hold a pet model search. This is something that can only be done in the warm weather, because people come from all over and will line up on the sidewalk to wait their turn. Hire a professional (or a semi-professional) photographer and promote the event with a press release, bag stuffers and posters. The winner can be the store's spokes-animal for the year (until next summer's search). Send thank-you notes and photos to everyone who participates.

8. Go green. Retailers can reap marketing benefits from turning stores green and offering natural products, and summer is the ideal time to do that.

9. Take a whiff. When spring-cleaning, pay attention to the store's smell. While a retailer is accustomed to the smell of their store, it's one of the first things customers notice. Start by cleaning nooks and crannies with a good-quality, natural cleaning product. Then identify areas that are causing an unpleasant odor. Finally, invest in a good, high-quality air freshener that is unobtrusive and pleasant.

10. Throw a party. A beach party or luau is sure to get attention, especially if a store isn't located near the beach. Send invitations to the entire mailing list and party away.

Summer is a time of renewal. So go ahead and use this time to refresh marketing strategies. **PB**

The husband and wife team of Eric Cohen and Joyce Shulman is the force behind the Ignition Team, a marketing and business consulting group with a specialty in the pet industry.

