

Marketing and Advertising

By BARBARA J. GALASSO

Part of being successful in the dog world is how one markets and advertises his kennel and dogs. And with today's options, there are many ways to accomplish that. You can choose to advertise in any number of breed magazines, the Internet, a breed list group on the web, show catalogs, futurity catalogs and the National catalog. Naturally, word-of-mouth, referrals from your veterinarian or other breeders and puppy-buyers are important ways to establish your reputation.

Most important is not where you advertise, but *how* you advertise. I cannot stress this enough. If you want to be recognized by your fellow breeders and taken seriously, pay attention to how you advertise. When you write an ad for a publication, the editor will check the content of the ad and make any corrections before it's published. When you get your own website, if you can afford it, pay someone to professionally layout the pages for you, so it looks neat and organized. If you are not good with writing an ad for your dogs, pay someone who is. It's expensive to advertise. Why waste your money on an ad that no one will even notice?

When advertising, the goal should be about the dogs and their accomplishments or announcing a new litter or introducing the public to a new young "hopeful." The ad should not distract from the animals that you are trying to showcase. It's like a pretty woman who wears too much makeup: All you see is the makeup and not the face underneath. The same can be said about advertising. Let the dog shine through. Don't let him get lost by all the overly loud and distracting embellishments you have going on in that ad. Embellishments are fine when you are trying to emphasize a point, but don't overload. Make it catchy, but not ostentatious. Are you advertising the dog or the embellishments?

Equally important is the pictures you use to advertise dogs. First impressions are lasting impressions. If your dog has just won at a show and you want to advertise that win, do so – but never with a poor picture. If the picture doesn't do the dog justice, then *don't use it*. Use another and better picture, and still advertise the win – and say the win picture didn't turn out good enough to use.

Educate yourself as to how an ad should look by referring back to *The German Shepherd Quarterly*, *The GSD Review* or other dog-related magazines, and other people's websites that you admire. There's an old marketing saying, "Watch what someone else is doing who is successful and imitate it." Look at what they are doing and then bring your own uniqueness to it.

Your page heading should capture your audience to make them want to read further. It's like reading a good book. If you don't grab your reader on that first page, he's not going to want to read through the next 350 pages to get to the end. If you look through non-dog related magazines and read the advertisements in them, you will see that the best ones will always capture your attention because of a "make you stop and read" slogan or

simply a few well placed words. Think: “Got Milk.” “Just Do It.” Professional marketers and advertisers are paid millions of dollars to have you play over and over in your head one of these catchy slogans, or hum one of their songs you see on the television. It’s the art of suggestion. And it pays over and over again in repeat customers.

Know your market that you are advertising to. Example: In a popular magazine, you might find an ad saying, “Go to sleep tonight, and tomorrow wakeup with less wrinkles.” Right away, you know this ad is going to appeal to a woman who is worried about aging and that her wrinkles are showing prematurely. Or another ad might say, “Take this protein powder and have the body you only dreamed of.” Now you know this ad will appeal to a man who is concerned about the extra tire he has protruding around his mid-section. So if you have a dog that produces great shoulders, advertise him for improving this area. If he’s known to throw good hips or temperament, say so. You must appeal to the customer’s needs and give him what he’s looking for. Your goal should be to pull in as many people as you can – to read your ad and get in touch with you. Otherwise, why waste your money? Unless you just want to pay for a brag.

Another more important thing to do is be more educated on the proper structure and movement of the dog. Nothing is more disappointing than looking at a picture in a magazine or on the Internet when someone wants to introduce their dog to you and they show him or her standing there four-square with nothing going on at either end, or they’re bridged. The biggest waste of money is to put a picture showing your dog in motion and he’s reaching from the elbow or kicking up in the rear. You want to bring attention to your dog for the right reasons. You don’t want to showcase his obvious faults.

To help bring more attention to your dogs and kennel is consistency in advertising. The more your dogs are recognized, the more your kennel becomes known. Some people, who do not see results in one or two ads, give up and don’t advertise any longer. Remember, in any kind of sales, competition is tough - especially when there is a large market for the public to choose from. People will remember those who have something to advertise about and who are constantly in the public’s eye.

If you are new to the breed, of course you love your dog and you’re proud of him. Do compare him to other dog’s pictures that are winning. Does your dog look anything close to any of these animals? If not, it’s time to re-evaluate your bloodlines and the real purpose that you are in the breed. If you want to win, you’ve got to give the judges and public what they are looking for. Or it’s okay to keep the kind of animal that you love, but accept that it’s not what is winning and save yourself the advertising money. Do ask other peoples opinions and be ready for criticism. This is the only way you’ll learn.

It’s alright to like whatever type of dog that you like. But if you are looking to win, you must go with what it takes to win. If you want a show dog, then it must represent what the standard calls for in conformation and temperament. It’s no different from owning an obedience titled winner. You can’t win with a stupid dog, so you wouldn’t even try.

Keeping your name in the public's eye is very important as long as it's for the right reasons. Establish a good reputation in the breed. Listen, listen, and listen some more to those who have accomplished something in the breed. Let them be your mentors. Establish friendships with people who have a love for the breed and stay away from those people who tend to be "toxic." Not only are you marketing and advertising your dogs, but you are marketing and advertising yourself, and you only get one chance to make a good first impression. You advertise your dogs and yourself by those you choose to associate with.

Barbara Galasso can be reached at uwish@hvc.rr.com.