

# Taking care of the brand

Your pet emergency service

Marketing Society Star Awards 2017

**Category 2: Strategic**

Sub categories entered

2.1 Brand Development

2.6 Marketing Planning – Resources, Research & Insights

Submitted by: Vets Now Emergency Ltd

with support from MadeBrave

February 2016



# 0.1

# The story so far

**Vets Now was founded in 2001 by Richard Dixon, a veterinary surgeon who understood the pressure of being on-call round the clock whilst also trying to maintain a good quality of life. His solution was Vets Now (Nights or Weekends) a dedicated out-of-hours emergency and critical care service for vets and pets.**

In the following years, Richard and his team helped revolutionise the way emergency veterinary care was provided outside of normal surgery hours, working in partnership with local veterinary practices to offer vets and their clients an out-of-hours service. At the heart of this was a team of full-time vets, vet nurses and support staff who only worked at night, over weekends and during public holidays. Growth took the form of a 'membership model' and over the years was positioned as a business to business service offer; an extension of your local practice team.

By 2015, Vets Now provided this dedicated service to more than 1000 veterinary practices across the UK, from 51 dedicated out-of-hours clinics and two 24 hour emergency and referral hospitals. Vets Now teams were treating around 100,000 small animals every year, and during seasonal holidays, like Christmas and Easter, highly-skilled staff were answering around five queries an hour from worried pet owners across the UK; stretching from Aberdeen to Belfast to Portsmouth.

Today the veterinary sector is radically different and is increasingly characterised by the emergence of large 'corporate' groups.

"Competition is now becoming fiercer than we've ever known it. Pockets of local competitors are springing up and the large corporate veterinary groups have started to do their own out-of-hours (OOH). It is no longer enough to have veterinary practices subscribe to our service; we need the general pet owning public to choose us in an OOH emergency"

**Richard Dixon, Founder & Chairman**

Consequently, the blueprint for growth by 2019 included 'becoming a consumer brand'.



0.2

# Ambitions and objectives

**The 2015 strategic blueprint outlined that Vets Now would aim to become ‘the UK Vet of choice to provide accident and emergency care trusted and valued by pet owners and the profession for its caring and quality service’. It would achieve this because:**

- Vets Now is the accident and emergency provider of choice in the eyes of the consumer – we have a consumer brand.
- Vets Now is an organisation and brand that partners are proud to be associated with.
- Our pet owner communication skills are as important as our clinical skills.

For a business-to-business company that’s a big ambition short on time, but the imperative was further driven by an aspiration to see a consumer brand launch in place for a new Hospital in Manchester and clinic in suburban London, both opening in December 2016.

# 0.2.1

# Key challenges

Five key challenges were identified:

1. The pet owner audience is large, 48% of households have pets but we know little about them.

2. As an out-of-hours emergency service we don't see clients on a regular basis nor 'own them' in the eyes of the pet owner / day practices.

3. Existing pet owner brand awareness of Vets Now was low at around 8% where clinics operate, despite 25% of UK vet practices using the service.

4. Vets Now has evolved entrepreneurially over key moments in time, creating an inconsistent and confused pet owner view with no distinct pet owner brand proposition and a range of sub brands; even uniform was not uniform.

5. The veterinary sector remains Vets Now's biggest customer pipeline: On average 81% of surveyed pet owners say they would call their daytime vet if they were experiencing a pet emergency. This is reducing and can drop to 50% among pet owners groups: A consumer brand should therefore, also leverage member practice acquisition.



# 0.3

# Strategic thinking and effective planning

Working with MadeBrave and Taylor MacKenzie from April 2016, the collective team brief was to deliver:

## **Consumer Insights**

- Engage with pet owners to drive brand direction through insight.

## **Brand Foundations**

- Audit Vets Now 'brand' to deliver a revitalised and pet owner led approach.
- Create clear pet owner positioning, architecture and hierarchies.
- Provide comprehensive brand direction encompassing guidelines, toolkits and assets.

## **Performance**

- Focus the integration of a pet owner brand at meaningful touchpoints.
- Increase brand awareness by 16% points pre and post new brand exposure.
- Trial the new brand in pet owner campaigns at Manchester and Sutton with implementation from 2017, measuring key success indicators.

# 0.3.1

# Audit and insights

## Brand Audit

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A full day brand workshop was held with the operations board and representatives from the business. Facilitated by MadeBrave this was an enlightening, though sometimes provocative as it stripped Vets Now back to its unifying core purpose.

## Key Insight

Fundamentally that Emergency and Critical Care is at the core of Vets Now and what we do. We do it because we are passionate about pets and we are passionate about clinical excellence. If emergency is our core we must resign all other existing straplines and sub brands.

Previous Vets Now brand identities being used

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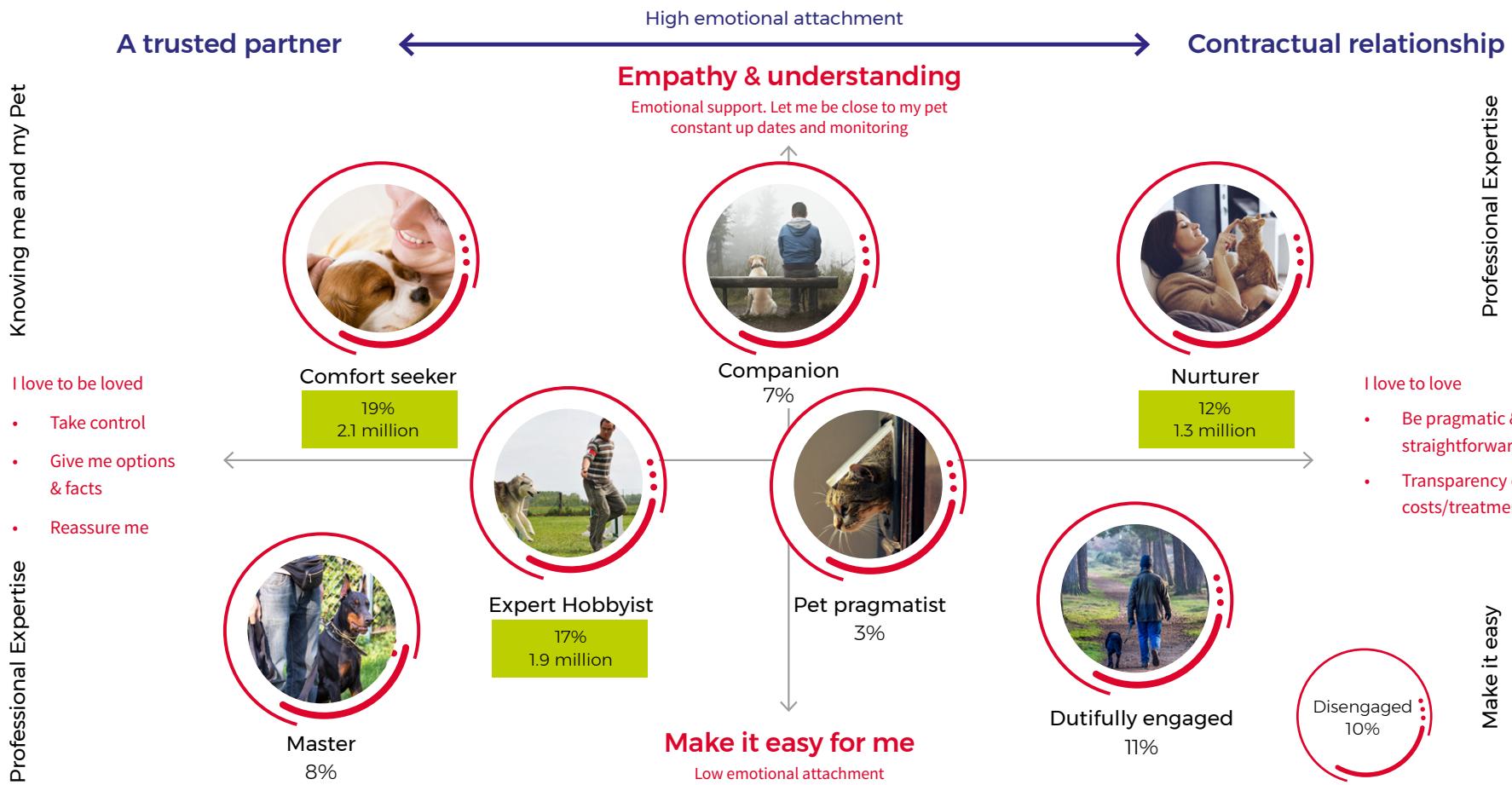


## Pet Owner

In what is believed to be the first profiling of its kind in the veterinary sector, extensive pet owner research was commissioned to better understand the pet owner, their personas, their attitude to veterinary care, their drivers of choice and as a test and learn for brand messaging. This took the form of over 1060 pet owner surveys undertaken through qualitative, quantitative and focus group research.

### Key Insight

The UK pet owner population are all one of 8 pet owner types. Their key drivers are based around attachment (high and low) and expressions of love (inner and outer directed) and while the 7 engaged pet owner type vary in dominant motivating drivers and behaviours all shared common themes of love, pack and 'me'. In short we directly translate our personality and values to pets. We live through them and believe others should treat them as we would expect to be treated.



## The Veterinary Sector

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Keen not to alienate existing business customers, focus group research was undertaken with practicing veterinary professionals to test the consumer brand approach and how it might be delivered.

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### Key Insight

The veterinary profession were comfortable with a pet owner brand position only if it was clear that Vets Now operated in the out-of-hours emergency care space; there should be no dubiety.

"If they are going to attract clients to bypass their practices that would wind up practices...some of the (brand) work doesn't say OOH it says expert care....and that doesn't specify emergency..."



## Touchpoint Mapping

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Aligned to the research was an exercise to map key customer touchpoints.

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### Key Insight

Research demonstrated there were 3 optimum pet owner brand touchpoints:

1. Search and online - Finding an emergency vet
2. Clinical - Clinic and Clinician - The service experience
3. Social space - Engaging with pet owners and online content

0.4

# Developing the Vets Now brand

Working with the insights, the team worked to manifest this to a **singular** pet owner brand proposition and new brand world.

Introducing Vets Now – **Your pet emergency service**

## Our purpose

To give people and their pets the care and support they deserve, at the time they need it most.





## Our Brand Principles

### Compassion

We always do our best to understand our clients feeling and concern and the time to appreciate how their pet emergency is affecting them.

### Integrity

Honesty and sensitively are important to us; so we act in this way even when it's not the easy thing to do.

### Dependability

By communicating clearly and behaving responsibly, we let pet owners know they can count on us in an emergency.

### Dedication

We're committed to delivering exceptional support and care, so we do whatever it takes to make pets and people as comfortable as possible in an emergency.

## **Our Architecture**

At Vets Now we're all Vets Now – we're one singular brand with 2 clear products and a clear branding convention for product growth.

Masterbrand



Sub-brands



### **Our Tone of Voice**

At Vets Now we talk in a way that is human to human.

Straightforward, friendly and transparent with a clear personality that resonates as responsive and reassuring; expert and empathetic, progressive and approachable and transparent and trustworthy.



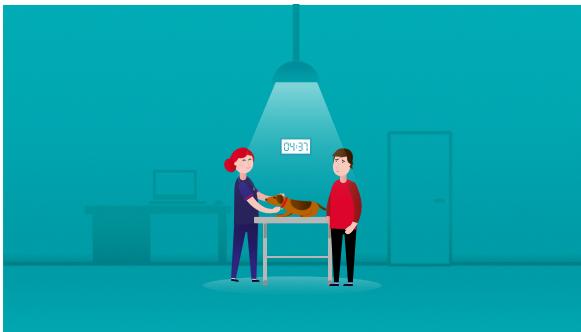
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# Brand Toolkit

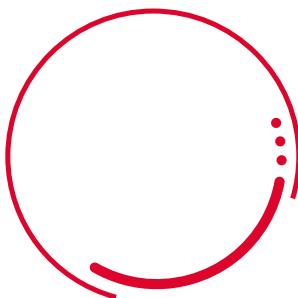
Overlaying Triangles



Illustration



Roundel Device



Photography



Colour & Typography



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Icons and Badges

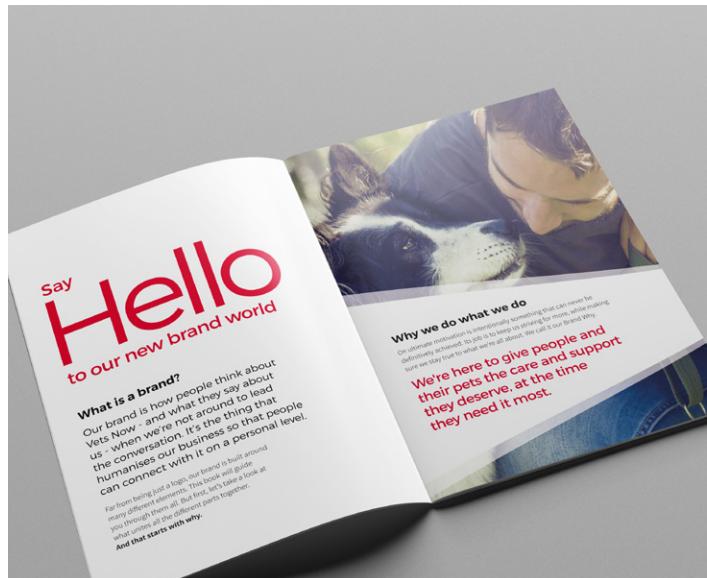


# 0.5

# Execution and implementation

## Internal Launch

Your pet emergency service was showcased and launched to all staff in November 2016, including a showcase of the new toolkit, website, the clinic pop up suite and a uniform fashion show. Importantly all staff were given a brand book and 'brand in the hand' takeaway, brand assets that are now central to our employee on-boarding strategy.



"I was blown away by the impact of the new brand world. It made hairs on the back of my neck stand up and makes me feel proud."

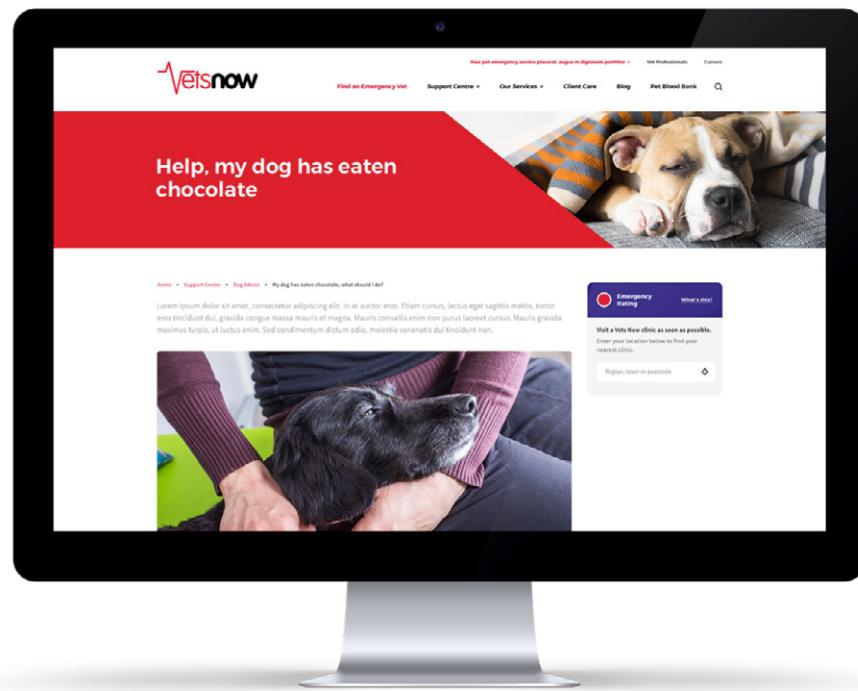
**Kirsten McLeod**, Hospital Director

"The new purpose says and does it all for me. It is what we get up (at night) for."

**Toby Birch**, District Vet

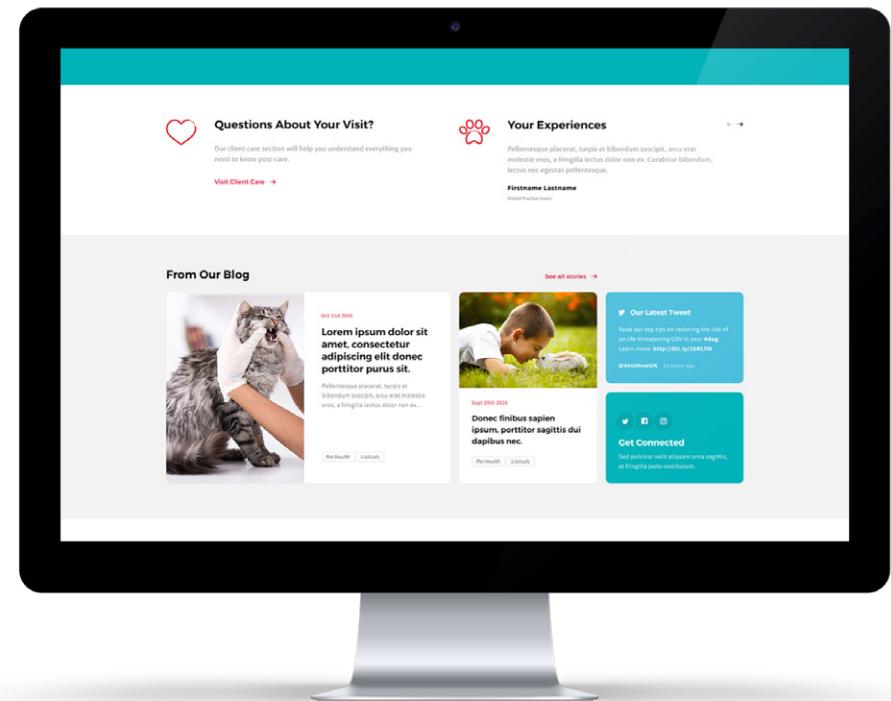
# 0.5

# Execution and implementation



## External Launch

By November 2016 the brand roll out was taking place. Planned across three phases, into 2017, early touchpoints have included:



Website

The image shows a computer monitor with a white bezel, displaying the homepage of the Vets Now website. The website has a red header bar with the Vets Now logo and social media icons. Below the header, there's a large red section containing the text "Your pet emergency service" and "Out-of-hours and 24/7 hospital care for pets". A "Play Video" button is also present. To the right of this section is a photograph of two veterinary professionals examining a brown dog. Below this, there are two main sections: "Out-of-hours clinics" and "24/7 hospitals", each with a list of bullet points and a "View all our clinics →" or "Related Links" link. The bottom half of the screen features a teal background with a cartoon illustration of a vet examining a dog on a table, the time "23:47" in a digital clock style, and a "Needling pet care advice?" section with animal icons.

Vet Professionals Careers

Vetsnow

Find An Emergency Vet Pet Care Advice Our Services Client Care Blog Pet Blood Bank UK

Your pet emergency service

Out-of-hours and 24/7 hospital care for pets

Play Video

Find an Emergency Vet

Find your nearest clinic for immediate treatment.

Enter City, Town or Postcode Use my Location Find my nearest clinic

Out-of-hours clinics

- As the UK's leading provider of pet emergency care, we treat more out-of-hours emergency cases than any other veterinary group
- Our 53 pet emergency clinics work in partnership with more than 1,000 veterinary practices to provide their out-of-hours service

View all our clinics →

24/7 hospitals

- Our three 24/7 pet emergency hospitals provide the highest level of pet emergency care when you need it most
- With our state-of-the-art facilities and specialist-led teams we deal with complex cases round the clock

Related Links: Glasgow Manchester Swindon

Needling pet care advice?

At Vets Now, we treat thousands of pet emergencies each year. Tapping into our staff's vast expertise, we've compiled some advice to keep your pet happy and healthy all year round.

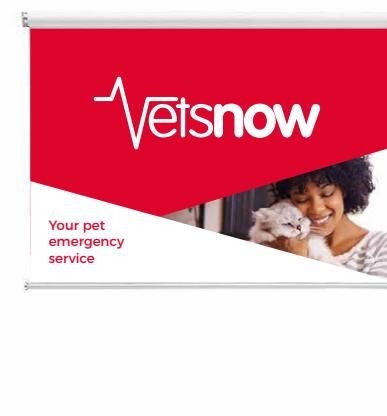
Select advice by animal

or visit Pet Care Advice →

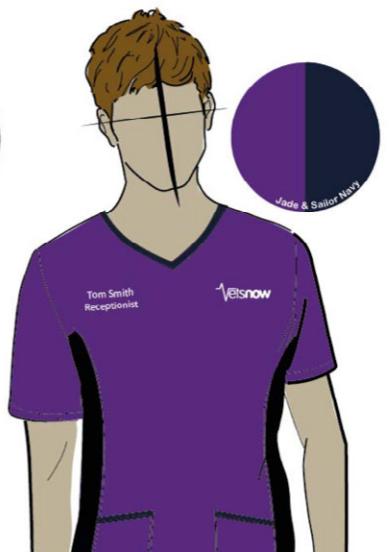
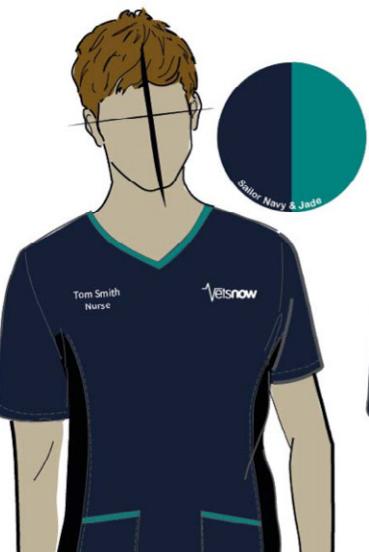
## Hospital and Clinic Brand Roll-out



## Clinic Branding (Pop Up)



## Uniforms



## Marketing Campaigns



Christmas Flyers



Christmas Advert



Digital Advert



Pet emergency plan



Christmas Poster

# 0.6 Where's the story going

## **Top three indications of positive performance**

In research conducted in Manchester, Sutton and Birmingham, **59%** of respondents had unprompted recall of 'Your pet emergency service' - a rise of **20%** points.

Propensity to use Vets Now in the same audience rose **138%** points.

The website launched on Thursday 9th February 2017 and in its first five days bounce rate showed a **23%** point improvement.

**Work continues to take care of the brand into 2017.**



Your pet emergency service

