

American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine

Case Study: Member Engagement and Brand Evaluation

ABOUT THE CLIENT

The American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ACVIM) is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to improving the lives of animals and people through education and training. ACVIM is the only organization in the United States that certifies veterinarians to be specialists in the fields of large and small animal internal medicine, neurology, oncology and cardiology. Specialists have complete an internship and residency in their specialize field (an additional 3-5 years training) and pass rigorous examinations to achieve Board certification from the ACVIM. They bring a greater knowledge of the unusual, the uncommon, or rare in both large and small animals.

HISTORY

In November 2011, the ACVIM leadership team participated in a facilitated strategic planning session. One of the five strategic objectives from that session was to “engage with our membership (including Candidates).” A key aspect of engaging with members was thinking about how to strengthen the brand of ACVIM, and awareness of specialty veterinary medicine overall. This could help members to more effectively promote themselves to general veterinary practitioners and the general pet owning public. Market and brand research was the first step in reaching this objective.

Corona Insights was retained by ACVIM to conduct robust, defensible research to inform the organization’s decision making. Broadly, the goals of the market research were designed to address the following:

RESEARCH GOALS

- ➔ Understand how the ACVIM brand is perceived by various audiences.
- ➔ Determine how to better serve Diplomats and Candidates.
- ➔ Determine how JVIM (Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine) can better serve readers.
- ➔ Identify barriers to referrals from general practitioners.
- ➔ Understand the public’s knowledge of veterinary specialty medicine.
- ➔ Create a baseline assessment to measure future change against



Much like diagnosing a sick animal, while veterinarians can sometimes take an educated guess as to what needs to be done, performing the diagnostic tests to confirm and provide additional guidance can be invaluable. Corona Insights was retained by ACVIM to conduct the “tests” to understand ACVIM’s brand, member satisfaction and engagement, and external audiences’ perceptions.

In short, ACVIM needed research to understand both its member base and the evolving market for specialty medicine, and to identify opportunities for each.

CORONA’S SOLUTION

In order to achieve these goals, Corona designed a research plan to gather input from four target audiences, some of which were subdivided further for sampling and design. Those audiences were: members (Diplomats and Candidates); general practitioners (of small animals and equine); JVIM readers; and owners or other decision makers (small animal owners, equine owners and trainers).

The methodology that Corona Insights designed to address the preceding goals ensured that we were effectively sampling each target audience (so the results would be representative), utilizing the best available survey mode and appropriate survey design (to ensure accurate and unbiased results), and selecting the appropriate analysis methods. Surveys were chosen to answer the research questions because of the need to quantify results and understand the overall awareness and the prevalence of different attitudes and behaviors. Each research mode was selected based on our ability to effectively sample each audience and included mail, online, and telephone surveys.



THE OUTCOME

The Corona team presented their research findings to ACVIM via several modes to ensure each audience had the information they needed: A

“ *The key findings from the Corona report were instrumental in guiding the ACVIM’s marketing and communications strategies to increase awareness of veterinary specialty medicine to primary care veterinarians and the animal owning public.* ”

Roberta Herman
CEO, ACVIM

full report summarizing all the research, abridged reports for select audiences, webinar presentation tailored to each audience, and handouts for the annual conference with top-level findings.

Our research identified significant findings and translated the data into recommendations that ACVIM could use strategically. For example, Corona Insights found that younger general practitioners tended to refer animal owners to a specialist less. Based on that finding, we recommended ACVIM provide additional education aimed at younger general practitioners around when to refer, and perhaps where specialists can be most beneficial, may help increase referrals. We also found that among the general public, “board certification” is a title that conveys quality, even though most pet owners may not know what it entails. The “board certified” label is one of the most important credentials for specialists to communicate about themselves.

The market research conducted directly informed the subsequent communications and brand strategy for ACVIM. In 2013, a communications agency was retained by ACVIM to assist with a communications audit and to create a marketing and communications plan.

In June 2014, Corona Insights won a Gold Peak Award for Market Research from the Colorado American Marketing Association for our work with ACVIM.