The power of positively impacting perceptions of hard-to-place pets among potential adopters.
Purina’s Mission
To ensure every adoptable pet finds a home.

Today’s Mission
Arm you with ways to communicate hard-to-place pets to adopters in order to get more pets adopted.
Perception is reality
Objective
Learn more about adopter perceptions of hard-to-place pets and potential strategies to help more of these pets get adopted.

Methodology
- Total of 6, 90 min focus groups in Chicago, IL
- 4-6 participants in each group
- All participants looking to acquire a dog or cat in next 12 months
- All open to adopting
- Mix of current pet owners and non-owners
- Mix of demographics
What did we learn?
Adopters Define “Hard-to-Place” Pets As:

- Having behavioral and health issues

- Expensive if they have a chronic illness
  
  BUT, pets with physical problems or “special needs” that don't require frequent care or additional expense are perceived to be more adoptable.

- Older, timid pets with whom they would struggle to make an emotional connection.

*Hard to Place Pets Qualitative, Reality Check*
Adopters believe hard-to-place pets will require more time, money, and emotional investment.
The Opportunities
Our qualitative study told us...

- In order to overcome the barriers of time, money, and emotion, we need to address both the risk and reward end of the equation.

  “I’m looking for a rescue pet, not a rescue challenge.”

- We need to show prospective adopters that the rewards of adopting a hard-to-place pet are greater than the risks they anticipate to do so.

*Hard to Place Pets Qualitative, Reality Check*
Power of perceptions
For the next phase of research, we focused on two of the characteristics identified in the qualitative research:

- Age/Lifestyle
- Physical Traits
- Personality
- Behavior
- Health Issues
- Emotional Connection

*Hard to Place Pets Quantitative, Ipsos*
Objective
Better understand how shelters can positively impact the perception of hard-to-place pets through communication of individual pet profiles.

Methodology
- 601 potential adopters
- 20 minute online survey
- Planning to adopt a dog or cat in the next 12 months
- Evaluated various pet profiles among 4 different types of pets: senior dog, senior cat, chronic illness dog, chronic illness cat
- Balanced across U.S. Census geographic regions
- Mix of demographics
The approaches

- We tested 5 profiles for both senior dog and cat. Plus, 5 different profiles for dogs and cats with chronic illnesses.
- All focused on the emotional reward, but pulled at different emotional levers ranging from humor to guilt.
- Potential adopters evaluated all pet profiles on:
  - Likelihood to adopt
  - Pet characteristics such as: *would be good with kids, friendly, fit in with the family, etc.*
  - What descriptions in the profiles would make them most likely to adopt and least likely to adopt.
The outcome

SENIOR PETS

What’s working:
- The perceived loyalty and devotion of senior pets
- More open to cuddling + love
- Emphasizing positive personality characteristics

What’s not:
- Acknowledging they might not have a lot of time left (*e.g. golden years*)
- Comparing a senior pet to a grandparent

*Hard to Place Pets Quantitative, Ipsos*
The outcome

CHRONIC ILLNESS PETS

What’s working:
- Highlight that their personality can be just like every dog/cat
- Despite their illness, they can still enjoy a full life
- Emphasizing positive personality characteristics

What’s not:
- Direct language around special medical needs

*Hard to Place Pets Quantitative, Ipsos*
3 things you can do today to start changing perceptions
1. Think differently about how you define hard-to-place pets

- Keep the **time, money, emotional investment** in mind at intake for senior pets and those with chronic illnesses.

- The earlier you identify these pets and promote them accordingly, potentially improves the chances of getting them adopted more quickly.

*Hard to Place Pets Quantitative, Ipsos*
2. **Talk positively about hard-to-place pets**

- Emphasize the positive personality traits in the pet. Even traits that may be perceived as negative can be talked about in a more positive way.

  **NO** “She’s timid when you first meet her.”
  **vs.**
  **YES** “She’s a cuddler once she gets to know you.”

  **NO** “In his golden years...”
  **vs.**
  **YES** “A devoted companion.”

_Hard to Place Pets Quantitative, Ipsos_
3. **Highlight** “what’s in it for me” vs. “what’s required of me” for the owner

- Focus first on the unique bond a potential adopter can achieve by owning a hard-to-place-pet.

**NO** First line of profile: “She has a chronic illness that requires daily medication.”

**vs.**

**YES** First line of profile: “She’s a playful girl who loves to show affection.”

*Hard to Place Pets Quantitative, Ipsos*
3 Things You Can Do Today

1. Define hard-to-place pets early
2. Position them positively
3. Show what’s in it for the owner
About Baxter

Meet Baxter! Baxter is a 9 year old mixed breed with lots of love to give. In his younger years, he was once a loyal companion to a family who couldn’t take him overseas with them. But because of his past family life, we know he is good with kids, knows basic commands, is housetrained and ready for a new loving home. Once he gets to know you, he’s a big cuddle buddy. His heart is full of love and devotion for a family like yours!
Questions?