



# ENTRY FORM

THE EFFIE AWARDS AOTEAROA IN ASSOCIATION WITH TVNZ – ENTRY FORM

ENTRY ID	572-A02
ENTRY TITLE	Extinguishing fireworks – for good
CLIENT	Animates
PRODUCT	The Pawprint Petition
FIRST MEDIA APPEARANCE DATE	24 Oct 2024
CAMPAIGN START DATE	24 Oct 2024
CAMPAIGN FINISH DATE	11 Nov 2024 (Paid Media finished), 28 Feb 2025 (Petition closed)
CATEGORY	A02 – Retail Etail
CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	Stores and/or websites including ecommerce.

**WORD COUNT: 2500 MAX**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY [0%]**

Give the judges an understanding of the case they are about to read by providing a brief summary for each of the items below. A one-sentence summary is recommended for each line. (Maximum: 100 words in total – not included in total word count)

The Challenge:	With the pet speciality market in a price race to the bottom, Animates' market share had fallen significantly.
The Insight:	The market was fixated on price, so we would shift the conversation back to our brand strengths, using a shared emotional moment to prove our purpose.
The Strategic Idea/Build:	Unite Animates, pet parents, and pets behind a common cause: banning public firework sales, and giving animals a voice for the first time.
Bringing the Strategy & Idea to Life:	The Animates Pawprint Petition: a world-first digital platform where pets and people signed together.
The Results:	173,152 signatures (nearly 10× the previous record), growing anti-fireworks sentiment, and a market share rebound.

Why is this entry an outstanding example for effective marketing in this Effie entry category?  
(Maximum 90 words – this is not included in total word count)

The Pawprint Petition is proof that purpose-led marketing can drive powerful commercial results.

By championing a cause that mattered deeply to customers - and pets - Animates shifted the conversation from price to purpose.

A world-first digital platform gave pets a voice, sparking a nationwide movement that reignited brand relevance, earned massive attention, and emotionally reconnected lapsed customers.

The result? Record petition engagement, a market share turnaround, and double-digit customer growth.

This was more than a feel-good idea - it was a strategic brand act that delivered measurable, business-transforming impact.

01.	<p><b>Challenge, Context &amp; Objectives [20%]</b></p> <p>This section covers your strategic business context for your marketing activity, alongside your key business challenge and objectives. Please provide the necessary context on your industry category, competitors, and brand so the judges, including those unfamiliar with your brand/category, can evaluate your entry. Outline the degree of ambition represented by your objectives. Including historical data may be useful here to provide judges with a clear picture of the situation the brand or organisation found itself in.</p>
01A	<p>Before your effort began, what was the state of the brand's/organisation's business and the overall category in which it competes? What was the strategic challenge that stemmed from this business situation? Provide context on the degree of difficulty of this challenge.</p>
<p>Animates is New Zealand's leading pet retailer. We have a simple mission that drives our business, brand and marketing strategy: To spread happiness to Aotearoa's pets, every single day.</p> <p>But by September 2024, things were looking less than happy for the business, taking hits from all sides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pet specialty competitors (Petdirect, Petstock, Pet Central) had ramped up discount activity, opening new stores and launching loyalty programs.</li> <li>• Supermarkets (Pak'n'Save, New World, Woolworths) had driven down prices, lifting category consideration by 17% over 12 months.</li> <li>• Other NZ retail giants (Bunnings, Mitre 10, The Warehouse) were ramping up efforts to chase pet spend.</li> </ul> <p>The impact on Animates had been significant.</p> <p>From Dec 2023 to Sept 2024, Animates' Pet Specialty market share had dropped significantly.</p> <p>Net customer growth had plummeted in the months preceding the campaign.</p> <p>And consideration for Animates had flatlined in the critical 'Other pet products' category (ie all pet products excluding food) - a crucial yardstick against the total pet market, with the prevalence of general retailers competing at low prices.</p> <p>(Note: all market share/customer growth/consideration numbers and charts have been redacted for public viewing).</p> <p>With broadening competition taking the price battle to new lows, the fight for share was firmly stuck in rational, cost-based territory, with the danger being a race to the bottom. It was clear that to turn market share around. a completely fresh approach was needed.</p>	
01B	<p>What were the objectives you set to address your challenge? For each objective, include: KPI, benchmarks, previous outcomes and the rationale for why it was selected. Please outline one business/organisational objective and a maximum of 3 marketing and 3 advertising/comms objectives.</p>
<p>Under heat to arrest the market share/customer decline, our business objectives were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grow consideration in 'Other pet products' by end Feb 2025.</li> <li>2. Stabilise/lift net new monthly customer growth by end Feb 2025.</li> <li>3. Most importantly - stabilise Pet Speciality market share through Oct–Dec 2024, and lift by end Feb 2025.</li> </ol> <p>(Note: all market share/customer growth/consideration objective numbers have been redacted for public viewing).</p> <p>Once the idea was in place, further campaign-related objectives were established (detailed in Results).</p>	

02.	<p><b>Insights &amp; Strategy [25%]</b></p> <p>This section covers the key building blocks of your strategy. Explain to the judges how you arrived at your strategy and clearly articulate that strategy. Focus on the thinking or insight(s) that unlocked your solution and tied it to successfully addressing your objectives.</p>
02A.	<p>Explain the thinking that led you to your strategy. Explain how any insights discovered were directly tied to your brand, your audiences behaviours and attitudes, your research and/or business situation.</p>
<p>The pet supplies market had turned into an absolute battleground of price discounting activity.</p> <p><b>Insight 1: The competitive market was fixated on price. So we would change the conversation, and turn it back towards our brand strengths.</b></p> <p>Everything we do delivers to our purpose - to spread happiness to Aotearoa’s pets, every single day. Through better pet health, through caring for pets in-store like they’re our own, and through giving customers the confidence that comes from doing right by their furry little mates, as well as through our support of 35+ animal welfare charities.</p> <p>At the same time, we were seeing clear evidence of companies achieving growth through values-driven behaviour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brands that had created “Meaningful and Authentic connections” and “improved on both Meaningful and Different metrics this year had grown...+19% ahead of expectations”. <i>Kantar Most Valuable Global Brands, 6 Aug 2024.</i></li> <li>• “Products making ESG-related claims averaged 28% cumulative growth over the past five-year period, versus 20% that made no such claims”. <i>McKinsey/NielsenIQ, 2023.</i></li> </ul> <p>We would divert our efforts into a significant purpose-related play to capture hearts and minds, and capture customers at the top of the decision funnel, positioning Animates as the genuine leader of pet care in Aotearoa.</p> <p><b>Insight 2: Past ‘traditional’ brand campaigns bringing our purpose to life had maintained brand awareness, but hadn’t driven consideration or market share gains.</b></p> <p>We needed to do something significant and tangible – to show, not just say to New Zealand, that we’re here to make pets happy, creating not just emotional connection, but emotional conviction that would translate into customer choice.</p> <p><b>Insight 3: We needed a shared, emotional moment to prove our purpose - a collective cause that aligned with our brand, and could spark a groundswell of support and get NZ talking.</b></p> <p>One cause stood out as the opposite of happy for pets. Every year, fireworks cause trauma, injuries, and even death to pets. A centuries-old event, Guy Fawkes, had become a modern-day nightmare, with the use of fireworks stretching out beyond the November sales period, and even being hoarded for New Year and beyond.</p> <p>So why do we still allow the public sale of fireworks in New Zealand?</p> <p>The only way to change that is by formally petitioning Parliament to make a law change. But previous public petitions to ban retail firework sales had failed.</p> <p><b>Insight 4, and the defining insight: Previous petitions to ban public firework sales had failed because the ones most impacted – pets - had never had a voice.</b></p> <p>It was high time to give them that voice. And by doing so, positioning Animates as the retailer that truly puts pets first.</p>	
02B.	<p>What was the Core Idea or strategic build that enabled you to reach your solution?</p> <p>(Be succinct. A maximum of 50 words.)</p>
<p><b>Unite Animates, pet parents and pets over a common cause - banning the public sale of fireworks – with a movement that would give animals a say in the debate for the first time.</b></p>	

<b>03.</b>	<b>Bringing the Strategy &amp; Idea to Life [20%]</b>
<b>03A.</b>	Describe the creative solution and how it helped the idea break out of the category and resulted in unexpected solutions.
<p>Insights had led us to the understanding that this needed to be so much more than a campaign. The creative idea was to launch a movement that gave pets a say in the debate for the first time.</p> <p>Getting pets to sign a petition would've been easier if they had opposable thumbs. But unfortunately, they don't. So, we needed to give them a new way to be part of the movement.</p> <p><b>Introducing - the Animates Pawprint Petition.</b></p> <p>At the heart of The Pawprint Petition was a <b>world-first digital platform where pet parents and their pets could sign, together</b>, to call for a ban on public firework sales. A standalone website app, which was a mobile-first, AI-powered experience that gave pets a voice in the debate - quite literally.</p> <p>Using creative tech, storytelling and a bit of AI magic, we built a <b>seamless system to turn paw photos into personalised digital signatures</b>. Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After the user snapped or uploaded a real-time paw pic, AI transformed it into a one-of-a-kind pawprint signature, with unique black-and-white prints symbolising pets' voices.</li> <li>• We trained the AI to detect paw type, orientation, colour, even species.</li> <li>• A gallery of ready-made pawprints was available for non-dogs and cats—bunnies, birds, even chooks.</li> <li>• Live counters tracked signatures in real time - people and pets.</li> <li>• Pet signatures could be shared, helping spread the word.</li> </ul> <p>Petitions can traditionally be a pretty dry affair, but we decided to have a bit of fun with our call for signatures by putting Animates' animated characters front and centre of the campaign.</p> <p>Our key image had a dog standing next to a lit firework, lifting its leg and 'extinguishing' it. And characters were used holding placards protesting against fireworks.</p> <p>This treatment really did bring to life that fact that we were giving pets a voice in the debate for the first time.</p>	
<b>03B.</b>	<p><b>WHAT WAS THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY?</b></p> <p>This section relates to the media and communications thinking and strategy that brought the creative solution to life in the most powerful and relevant way for the target audience. Include all significant touchpoints and channels in this section.</p>
<p><b>Outline the rationale behind your communications strategy.</b> Explain how the key elements worked together to drive results:</p> <p>With the idea and tech sorted, we needed to shift sentiment, fast.</p> <p>The approach to spreading the word needed to be much, much bigger than just a campaign. So, we built an integrated, omni-channel movement.</p> <p>Balancing high-reach with high-engagement, we activated across paid, owned and earned, and phased our rollout to match cultural moments—especially the fireworks calendar, but extending into Christmas and New Year.</p> <p><b>The rollout had three explosive phases:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>'Lighting the Fuse' – featuring PR and social, to expose 'the fireworks problem' and pave the way for the Petition.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was timed in the lead-up to Guy Fawkes, to ignite maximum emotion, and kicked off live on Breakfast, with our Animates CEO releasing the Petition news live on the show and engaging in robust debate about fireworks with the hosts. Throughout the morning, viewers emailed and called out a host who was against the ban, almost universally siding with the petition. A Reddit thread debating the ban added fuel to the 'fire'.</li> <li>• We reinforced this with a 4-part video series with heavy-hitting journo Paddy Gower and his dog Rocket (!). Paddy proved to be a strong advocate for pets, and gave us a highly effective method of delivering heavy info to the public in a friendly way.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	

- To drive social awareness for the petition, while avoiding scare tactics and heavy information, we strategically partnered with engaging animal influencers to educate viewers about the impact of fireworks on animals through shareable reels.
- 2. ‘Ignition’ - featuring Paid Media to maximise messaging exposure with a focus on fireworks sale zones.**
- Here’s where the advertising kicked in. Maximum visibility was achieved with tactical activity near fireworks sale zones via OOH, radio, YouTube, BVOD, & social, plus contextual digital around weather forecasts.
  - This phase included Earned Media strategy to increase exposure, with emotive coverage picked up by news outlets nationwide.
- 3. ‘Boom’ – featuring social activity to hammer home the emotive impact and drive numbers:**
- To maximise sign-ups, we ‘blew up’ real life community stories (in a good way!) keeping the emotional heat on via social.

**Engaging three key groups of stakeholders was also critical.**

This wasn't just another marketing campaign, this was a call to change a law - requiring significant engagement through our business and beyond:

- We needed to ensure the CEO and Exec were comfortable taking this initiative on contentious subject matter. Recognising the positive impact we could have on pets, the Exec jumped wholeheartedly on board, with the CEO fronting public communications.
- We needed to fully engage frontline staff, to ensure they were supportive and comfortable handling petition conversations in-store. We empowered them to answer customer questions, and kept them updated with latest messaging, figures and testimonials. Team members creatively customised in-store spaces, proudly shared Petition milestones, and proactively shared posters with community groups.
- Ultimately, we set out to change legislation, making Parliamentary engagement critical. We secured support from MP Greg Fleming, a member of the governing party and Petitions Committee, to help champion the cause and drive change in the House.

**List all supplementary communications touch points used in this campaign (the touchpoints that were not central to the campaign).**

Digital activity through owned vehicles employed a mix of three key channels:

1. Animates website:
  - A dedicated, conversion-optimised landing page, delivering a clear overview of the petition’s purpose, research behind it, instructions, and prominent calls-to-action linking to the Petition.
  - Sitewide banners to ensure the petition remained front-of-mind for all visitors.
2. Email marketing (eDMs):
  - A series of three heartfelt eDMs to our customer database, urging support for the petition.
3. Social:
  - Meta and TikTok to raise awareness and connect with kiwis across the country, using a compelling mix of static imagery and short-form video content to tell heartfelt stories of real pets affected by fireworks.

**What was the \$ Spend?** Outline the media and production spend on the campaign within the campaign period. Use actual spend rather than ratecard. In the case of donated media please list the rate card value separately from the paid media spend.

Media Spend	Actual spend redacted for public viewing.																
Outline the media spend in relation to competition and versus last year	<p>Based on comparative ratecard spend during the campaign period, Animates spent 1% less compared to the same period previous year, while the major pet speciality competitor spent 430% more YOY.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Animates</th> <th>PETStock</th> <th>PetDirect</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Oct-Nov 2024</b></td> <td>\$ 834,669</td> <td>\$ 617,071</td> <td>\$ 26,781</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Oct-Nov 2023</b></td> <td>\$ 842,863</td> <td>\$ 116,334</td> <td>\$ 1,728</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Difference YOY</td> <td>-1.0%</td> <td>430.4%</td> <td>1449.8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>All numbers here are 'ratecard' by necessity, to enable year on year and competitive comparisons. All comparisons are made against Pet Speciality competitors, as that is relevant to market share figures – and also, because media spend comparisons are not possible against general/supermarket retailers as we can't isolate their spend on the pet category.</p>		Animates	PETStock	PetDirect	<b>Oct-Nov 2024</b>	\$ 834,669	\$ 617,071	\$ 26,781	<b>Oct-Nov 2023</b>	\$ 842,863	\$ 116,334	\$ 1,728	Difference YOY	-1.0%	430.4%	1449.8%
	Animates	PETStock	PetDirect														
<b>Oct-Nov 2024</b>	\$ 834,669	\$ 617,071	\$ 26,781														
<b>Oct-Nov 2023</b>	\$ 842,863	\$ 116,334	\$ 1,728														
Difference YOY	-1.0%	430.4%	1449.8%														
Creative Production Spend	Actual spend redacted for public viewing.																



<p><b>04.</b></p>	<p><b>WHAT WERE THE RESULTS? [20% for 4A and 15% for 4B].</b>                  Outline the results achieved by the campaign against the short and long-term objectives set, provide conclusive proof that it was the campaign that drove the results.                  In this section, the judges will be looking to see a clear cause and effect between the communication activity and business performance over time. Show the compelling evidence that will convince even the most cynical finance director. <b>Please Note:</b> All results must be sourced to be judged; any unsourced results will not considered by judges.</p>
<p><b>04A</b></p>	<p><b>Overall achievement against objectives [20%].</b>                  Clear proof that the objectives established in section one have been achieved. Judges will be seeking quantified results. Successful entries ensure that results can easily be aligned against objectives established in section one. Note: Please ensure all data is sourced, and is specific to the results period outlined in the Call for Entry, and geographically isolated to Aotearoa.</p>

**In the face of market share and customer growth decline, the original business objectives were:**

1. Grow consideration in 'Other pet products' by end Feb 2025.
  2. Stabilise/lift net new monthly customer growth by end Feb 2025.
  3. Most importantly - stabilise Pet Speciality market share through Oct–Dec 2024, and lift by end Feb 2025.
- (Note: all market share/customer growth/consideration objective numbers have been redacted for public viewing).

**Once the idea was established to launch a movement to ban fireworks and give pets a voice in the debate for the first time, objectives were extended to include:**

- 50,000 signatures (nearly triple the most successful prior petition at 17,942)
- Shift public sentiment against fireworks by +5%, and accelerate the decline in fireworks sales from -1.5% (2023) to -5%+ (2024)
- The ultimate? A law change.

**The results? Explosive.**

**We lit Media up:**

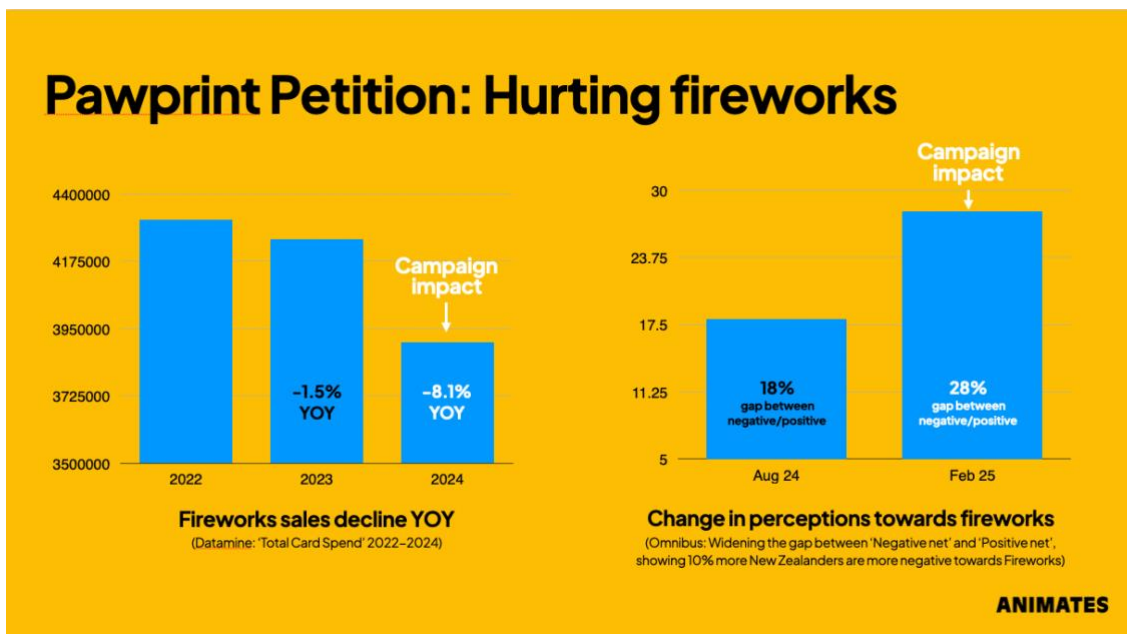
- 8 million earned impressions, with coverage across TV, radio, print and online.
- Major features on Breakfast, NZHerald, Stuff and Newstalk ZB
- Social blew up, with **widespread sharing of personalised pawprints**, fuelled by community passion and our pet profiles.

**We smashed Petition goals:**

- **173,152 total signatures**, nearly 10x the previous record of 17,942 (Source: own petition data/Parliament Petitions website)
- **Including 93,248 humans + 79,904 pets** - crushing our stretch goal of 50,000

**We hurt fireworks, big-time:**

- Sales decline deepened from **-1.5% YOY (2023)** to **-8.1% YOY (2024)** (Source: Datamine, total category card spend)
- Public sentiment against fireworks shifted **+10%** (Source: Omnibus, Aug 2024–Mar 2025)



**We've taken the movement to Parliament.**

The petition was presented to MP Greg Fleming in May 2025. Animates was requested to provide a submission, which has since been submitted to the Petitions Committee for review.

**We grew consideration in the crucial 'Other pet products' category to a new category high.**

(Note: specific numbers/charts have been redacted for public viewing).

(Source: Animates/Sapien brand tracker, March 2025)

**We recruited a significant number of new loyal customers.**

(Note: specific numbers/charts have been redacted for public viewing).

(Source: Animates internal customer numbers, 2023-2025).

**And we exceeded all business expectations by turning falling market share around, fast, with a sizeable market share gain over the campaign period.**

(Note: specific numbers/charts have been redacted for public viewing).

(Source: Animates market share data, 2023-2025).

**The Pawprint Petition delivered more than just happy pets. It delivered a happy business too.**

04B	<p><b>Convincing proof that the results were a direct result of your campaign [15%].</b> Outline other external factors that could account for the results outlined in 04A and provide compelling evidence and rationale for why these did not contribute significantly to those results. There are almost always other factors that could have affected your results, such as product changes, pricing, distribution, stock levels, competitive activity, weather, etc. You need to convince the judges that these factors were not responsible for your results, or estimate their contribution and/or demonstrate how they needed the campaign to amplify their impacts.</p>
-----	---

**Over the Oct 2024-Feb 2025 campaign period, Animates' marketing cadence and overarching activity was demonstrably the same YOY, with the fundamental difference being The Pawprint Petition. Details:****The number of days that Animates ran discounts slightly reduced year on year, with 5% fewer days 'on special'.**

Proof we didn't increase customers by 'buying the business'.

(Note: specific numbers/charts have been redacted for public viewing).

**The level of discounting remained the same, year on year.**

The standard offers of 20-25% off non-food products and 20% off food products remained in place, YOY.

**The product range remained largely the same, year on year.**

We stocked a comparable range of brands, with the same number of food brands, and no increase in SKU count.

**The weather had slight temperature variation - but not different enough to impact sales.**

NZ experienced mean temperature of 15.6degC during Oct 2023-Feb 2024, vs 15.9deg during Oct 2024-Feb 2025 campaign period.

**Animates media spend was 1% less YOY, while the nearest competitor spent 430% more YOY.****The key difference year on year was the style of activity run.**

- From Oct 2023-Feb 2024, we ran brand activity, Christmas-themed, followed by standard New Year promo activity
- From Oct 2024-Feb 2025 The Pawprint Petition replaced the Christmas theme, again followed by standard NY promo activity.

**The Pawprint Petition was the activity that drove the turnaround in market share and customer numbers.****Guidance Notes**

Please refer to the guidance notes below, to ensure your entry conforms to eligibility criteria.

Eligibility: Data presented must be isolated to Aotearoa, and work must have run between 1 June 2023 and 30 June 2025. Results may be included up to 22 July 2025. Results data that fails to isolate or identify data specific to the eligibility period and/or Aotearoa New Zealand risks low marks and/or being ineligible.

Data Sources: All data referenced in the entry requires sources (recommended as footnotes on the page referenced or at the end of the entry).

Charts and Graphs: Entrants are encouraged to display data via charts & graphs within the limits allocated in each question. Sources required for all data including charts and graphs.

	Agency names: No agencies, of any kind, are to be included in the entry.
--	--