ACVIM Member Engagement and Brand Assessment Survey
Executive Summary June 2013
MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND BRAND ASSESSMENT

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY INTERNAL MEDICINE

WELCOME

In November 2011, the ACVIM Board of Regents and ACVIM Foundation Board President participated in a facilitated strategic planning session. One of the five strategic objectives arising from that session was to “engage with our membership (including Candidates).” This research was a first step in reaching this objective.

Much like a diagnosing a patient, while you can sometimes take an educated guess as to what needs to be done, performing the 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. This report contains the cumulative findings from Corona Insights’ research to that end.

Research goals includes: examining satisfaction, expectations, brand perceptions, awareness, and resources. This research included audiences beyond ACVIM’s direct membership base to better assess awareness, brand perceptions, and satisfaction among external groups.

When researching an organization’s brand, it is important to keep in mind that the brand is defined by individuals. It could be described as a gut feeling or perception one has towards the organization. Furthermore, the brand is made up of the collective gut feelings of its many audiences and therefore can only be properly evaluated by collecting feedback from these various audiences. For this particular study, Corona Insights gathered feedback from the following groups to help us better understand ACVIM’s brand: ACVIM Diplomates and Candidates, JVIM readers, general practitioners, small animal owners, equine owners, and equine trainers.

This study serves as a baseline and assessment with an eye towards next steps. We hope these findings provide the guidance ACVIM needs in moving forward with its strategic plan.

We would like to thank the many individuals and groups who assisted with this research, including ACVIM Board and staff, JVIM staff, AVMA, AAEP, and all the survey participants. Without their cooperation, this research would not have been possible.

Sincerely,

David Kennedy
Director

Beth Mulligan, PhD
Director
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corona Insights, a Denver-based market research and strategic consulting firm, was retained to conduct market research with ACVIM’s various audiences, both internal and external. Specific audiences included ACVIM Diplomates and Candidates, JVIM readers, general practitioners, small animal owners, equine owners, and equine trainers. Research was completed via a series of surveys conducted online and by telephone in the case of the small animal owners. These surveys were conducted from November, 2012 through February, 2013. To maximize comparisons between groups, similar questions were asked on each survey, where appropriate.

KEY FINDINGS

Key findings presented here are a top-level summary of all research findings and are organized by the original research questions. Recommendations, where possible based largely on the research alone, are also included.

WHAT IS ACVIM’S BRAND?

➤ Overall, the impressions of and associations with ACVIM among its various audiences are positive. These are strongest with Diplomates, JVIM readers, and general practitioners.

➤ ACVIM is strongly associated with education, including continuing education, the Forum, residency training and certification, and JVIM. These associations are strong and consistent across most veterinary audiences with little fragmentation.

➤ ACVIM's brand is largely benefit-driven by delivering continuing education (e.g., Forum, JVIM), overseeing board certification, and contributing to the dissemination of research. ACVIM is largely seen as providing these reliably and with consistently good quality, suggesting a reliability and quality leader position.

Recommendation: This research provides a summary and baseline of the current state of the ACVIM brand. It does not mean this is the brand and position that ACVIM has to have going forward. While it is up to ACVIM to determine its preferred brand strategy, we do recommend recognizing the strong role education plays in the current brand. When developing a future direction, it is important that the brand is not only forward looking (i.e., what does ACVIM want to be in the future?), but also grounded in what people see the brand as today. This is important so the brand remains relevant and credible in the minds of your audiences.

➤ The top benefits of ACVIM can be seen as continuing education (including the Forum and to a lesser extent JVIM), serving as the certifying body, and research. On a personal level, ACVIM provides benefits to members’ careers (e.g., knowledge, marketability) and the personal status and appeal of being a Diplomate.

➤ Top attributes of the ACVIM brand include: reliable, knowledge, quality, not-flashy, high-end,
selective, and community.

- The greatest strength of ACVIM, especially among members, is continuing education, followed by certification/residency training; the greatest weakness was seen as marketing and promoting the specialty.

Recommendation: Education is currently largely associated with continuing education, research, and certification in the veterinary world. The umbrella of education could be expanded to include, “educating external audiences (e.g., animal owners) about specialty medicine.” Similarly, related topics such as business and/or marketing training could be included (discussed further in the report under member benefits).

ARE MEMBERS SATISFIED WITH THEIR MEMBERSHIP?

- Satisfaction among owners (small animal and equine) and equine trainers is high overall. Seventy percent or more gave a “top-two box” score (i.e., 9 or 10 on a scale of 0 to 10) when asked their satisfaction with their experiences with specialists. Reasons for their satisfaction commonly included the overall positive experience and/or the specialist’s training/knowledge.

- Satisfaction with ACVIM Diplomates was also high among general practitioners. Eighty-eight percent indicated they were “moderately” or “extremely” satisfied. Reasons commonly included knowledge/skills/competency, being helpful/collaborative/practical, and/or professional/good communication.

- Satisfaction among ACVIM members was similarly high. Seventy seven percent indicated they were “moderately” or “extremely” satisfied with ACVIM and 45 percent reported ACVIM was exceeding their expectations. While satisfaction was high among all segments, Diplomates were more likely than Candidates to report satisfaction, as well as to report that ACVIM is exceeding expectations. Among the five specialties, SAIM members reported the highest satisfaction and “meeting or exceeding” expectations, and LAIM reported the lowest.

- Reasons for high satisfaction and exceeding expectations often involved education (e.g., continuing education, etc.). Reasons for lower satisfaction often revolved around lack of marketing support or promoting specialty medicine to the public.

Recommendation: As noted before, promoting the profession and conducting public outreach and education were seen as primary areas in which ACVIM could improve. Although this primarily suggests greater focus should be placed on promoting the profession, it could also mean, that to the extent ACVIM is already engaged in such activities, that these efforts need to be communicated better to members.
WHAT BENEFITS ARE VALUABLE TO MEMBERS?

→ Among ACVIM members, “Status associated with certification,” the “Annual ACVIM Forum,” and “JVIM” were considered most valuable (in that order), both when independently rated and when asked to choose the “most valuable” service.

See the JVIM and Forum sections for additional information on these top benefits.

→ The inclusion in “Search for a Specialist,” the ACVIM website overall, and research resources were rated less valuable relatively speaking, though the majority still believed these were at least “slightly valuable.” Nine percent of respondents also indicated “Listserv, communication, networking” as the most valuable benefit, even though it wasn’t listed as an option.

→ The majority of members seemed to be at least aware of each listed benefit. The benefits with the lowest awareness were research resources (13 percent unaware) and the “Search for a Specialist” feature on the website (6 percent unaware).

→ When asked about future potential member benefits, job market/industry tracking was seen as the most valuable benefit followed by co-branding. Marketing training and business training, while still seen as valuable, were seen as relatively less valuable in comparison. While both groups generally saw value in each potential future benefit, private practice Diplomates were more likely to see each potential service as “very valuable” and academic Diplomates were more likely to see each as “not at all valuable.”

→ Regarding interest in specific types of business and marketing training, marketing to the general public was the most noted training overall and among Diplomates, while practice management was the second most noted training overall and most frequently among Candidates. In fact, Diplomates consistently indicated types of marketing training more often than Candidates whereas Candidates were more likely to show interest in business training more often than Diplomates.

Recommendation: ACVIM seems to be performing well in its key roles of continuing education and benefits related to a member’s veterinary knowledge. As already noted, the greatest areas for increasing services to members are those that may be viewed as in the periphery to actually providing medical care—marketing, business, and the job market.

ARE MEMBERS SATISFIED WITH THE FORUM?

→ Satisfaction with the Forum is high among members. Eighty nine percent of members would either be “moderately” or “extremely” likely to recommend the Forum to a colleague, and 83 percent were “moderately” or “extremely” satisfied with the most recent Forum they had attended. Satisfaction largely stems from the comprehensiveness and quality of lectures and workshops.

→ Oncology members, while more likely to be satisfied than not, seem to be less satisfied than the other
ACVIM specialties in terms of their likeliness to recommend and satisfaction with the most recent Forum.

Work commitments were the primary reason why members cannot attend a Forum. Costs, dates, and location were also common reasons. Reasons related to Forum quality, including value, past experience, and topics were mentioned less frequently as reasons for not attending. Costs were a larger factor for Candidates, Diplomates under age 35, and international members.

**Recommendation:** While price and costs are commonly cited reasons, this does not necessarily mean cutting costs is the best strategy to increase attendance. Though offering ways to minimize travel costs could help reduce that barrier, lower Forum registration cost may have inadvertent effects, such as lowering the perception of quality that is often tied to pricing. Focusing on the value and return on investment (ROI) an attendee can gain as a result of their investment in attending (as opposed to a cost of attending) can help change the perception of cost. The one exception to this may be offering discounts or other pricing options for Candidates and/or new Diplomates who have indicated costs as a reason more frequently. A short-term discount may not only lower the barrier of costs, it also may create a more immediate incentive to attend earlier in their career while they receive a discount.

Continuing education/trainings and knowledge gained through research findings were the top two benefits associated with the Forum, both for the overall veterinary community and individual members. Networking opportunities and clinical skills were a close third and fourth, on average, and service opportunities and the opportunity to see exhibitors’ products and services were ranked fifth and sixth (out of six).

Member expectations were largely met or exceeded for each benefit of the Forum. The majority of members indicated their needs were being met for each benefit, while for each benefit the proportion of members indicating their expectations were exceeded was larger than the proportion who said that performance fell short of their expectations. The one exception to this was gaining “clinical skills” where 24 percent overall indicated Forum performance fell short of expectations compared to six percent who said it exceeded their expectations (71 percent said their expectations were met). The two most important individual benefits, continuing education and research findings, were also the benefits where members’ expectations were most likely to be exceeded.

**Recommendation:** Even with continuing education and research findings being the two areas where members’ expectations are most likely to be exceeded, there should still be focus on maintaining and improving these benefits given their importance to members. Clinical skills and networking are the two areas that demonstrate the greatest room for improvement (recognizing that most members are, in fact, satisfied).
WHAT ARE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING IN THE JOB MARKET (E.G., EASE OF HIRING, FINDING A JOB, PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PROFESSION, ETC.)?

Perceptions of the job market for ACVIM specialists varied by specialty. LAIM was seen as the weakest job market overall (majority viewed as weak) and neurology was seen as the strongest (majority viewed as strong). SAIM, while not as bad as LAIM, was perceived as the next weakest job market and cardiology and oncology were similarly more likely to be viewed as strong as opposed to weak. Younger Diplomates (under 35) typically had more pessimistic views of job markets for all specialties.

Similarly, LAIM Diplomates were significantly more likely to report difficulty in finding a job (49 percent somewhat or very difficult) and had the fewest job opportunities on average (2.1). All other ACVIM specialties had a majority (69 to 80 percent) of their respondents indicate finding a job was not difficult. Average number of job offers for the other specialties ranged from 2.6 to 2.8.

Difficulty in finding a job has increased in recent years. Younger Diplomates are significantly more likely to indicate difficulty (50 percent of those under 35 compared to no more than 27 percent for any other age bracket), as were Diplomates boarded since 2009 (44 percent or higher had difficulty). (There is, of course, significant overlap between these two groups.)

A majority of all members somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement, “I would recommend the pursuit of residency in my specialty field to a recently graduated veterinarian or intern.” This held true across specialties, except for LAIM Diplomates and Candidates, who were the least likely to indicate “somewhat” or “strongly agree.”

Across all specialties, respondents largely believed the current number of residencies would produce more than enough specialists to meet needs (74 percent of all members). Diplomates, private practice Diplomates, and younger Diplomates were more likely to respond “more than enough.”

**Recommendation:** While Corona cannot give specific recommendations as to a remedy for a tighter job market, there does seem to be increasing pain felt by members, and in particular LAIM members. This data suggests a turning point occurred in the job market in the past five years.

Keeping ongoing statistics on each year’s residency classes (e.g., job offers, time to find employment, starting pay, etc.) may help in tracking the market going forward. Job market/industry tracking was seen as the most valuable potential benefit by members.

ACVIM members were also asked whether their training had prepared them (Diplomates), or is preparing them (Candidates), for their employment. Most Diplomates overall responded, “yes, adequately trained” (51 percent) as did nearly half of Candidates (44 percent). Diplomates and Candidates in neurology, cardiology, and oncology were the most likely to indicate “adequately trained.” LAIM Diplomates and Candidates were the least likely to respond “yes, adequately trained” and both were the most likely to respond, “no.” Additional training needed varied significantly by specialty, from ultrasound for SAIM, to lameness for LAIM, and general business training for oncology.
Recommendation: There is potential for additional training offered either in residency programs or from ACVIM directly, though the needs are highly dependent on the specialty. Beyond skills related to veterinary medicine, there also appears to be a need for more business training, (seen here as well as in the member benefits section).

Members generally felt that the animal-owning public had little knowledge of specialty medicine, from the skills and training, to understanding board certification, and the term “Internist.” In terms of general practitioners’ knowledge, members did have a more favorable view of general practitioners’ awareness of the skills and training in their fields. However, a majority of members (78 percent) believed general practitioners keep cases that a specialist in their field should be seeing.

Recommendation: As has already been mentioned, and is mentioned again below, promoting specialty medicine to the public (animal owners, specifically) may be beneficial. Reversing the lack of awareness of specialty medicine can create a larger potential market. (See additional recommendations under general practitioner key findings for information on referrals.)

IS THERE A PREFERENCE FOR A NEW SPECIALTY TITLE FOR LAIM?

Among small animal and equine owners, more respondents had not heard the term “Internist” (in relation to veterinary medicine) than those who had. This was especially true for small animal owners (67 percent had not heard the term). A majority of equine trainers had heard the term (63 percent). However, most respondents, owners and trainers, did not properly associate the term “Internist” with internal medicine or specialty medicine.

Among LAIM members, there appears to be an overall preference for a new title as few indicated the current title does not need to be changed. Among the five options presented, “Large Animal Internal Medicine Specialist” was the most preferred overall. “Board Certified Internal Medicine Specialist” and “Large Animal Medicine Specialist” were the second and third highest ranked options and were ranked closely among all groups with the former holding a slightly higher rank overall.

Recommendation: Given the overwhelming support for a new title, and the lack of awareness of the term “Internist” among your target audiences, a title change seems to be appropriate and supported. While there was a “top ranked” option, any of the top three would likely be acceptable given their close rankings.

Given the market’s low awareness of the term “Internist,” options containing that term may lead to additional confusion and should be avoided.
ARE RESPONDENTS AWARE OF THE ACVIM FOUNDATION? WHAT IS THEIR AWARENESS OF ANY ANIMAL RELATED FOUNDATIONS OR CHARITIES?

➤ The Humane Society (local or national), The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), and SPCA (local) were the most common top-of-mind responses given by owners and trainers when asked to name charities or foundations that benefit animals. Ten percent or fewer respondents reported having been aware of the ACVIM Foundation when specifically prompted.

➤ Awareness of the ACVIM Foundation was significantly higher among ACVIM members, with most Diplomates (96 percent) aware and nearly 50 percent of Candidates aware. Sixteen percent of general practitioners overall were aware of the ACVIM Foundation; this was highest among practitioners at specialty practices or in academia.

Approximately half of the individuals who were aware of the Foundation were also aware of the Foundation’s Memorial Program.

➤ A majority of respondents reported giving to a nonprofit or a cause that supports animal welfare for a multitude of reasons from overall wellness of animals, to personal connections, desire to give back, the need, and many other reasons.

Recommendation: Given the relatively low awareness of the Foundation by groups other than Diplomates, the first step is building awareness. For Candidates, this awareness will likely come with time and they have more opportunities for exposure. For general practitioners, and especially those in private practices, more specific efforts to target these individuals will be needed as they are unlikely to be exposed otherwise.

For the general animal-owning public, a larger branding and information campaign to differentiate ACVIM’s Foundation from other more well known nonprofits will be needed if broad awareness is the goal. Fortunately, the most top-of-mind nonprofits have different missions than ACVIM’s Foundation so differentiating may not be as large a challenge. Focusing on owners with some type of exposure to specialty medicine would likely be more fruitful than a broader campaign – as well as targeting them through their veterinarians – though specific tactical recommendations are beyond the scope of this research.

WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION AND PERCEIVED VALUE OF JVIM?

➤ Readers were overwhelming satisfied with JVIM overall (89 percent extremely or moderately satisfied), primarily due to the journal’s high quality and interesting content. Two percent of readers reported dissatisfaction; the most common reason cited was lack of relevance (i.e., not practical, not clinically applicable) followed by problems with the manuscript review process.

➤ Review articles, consensus statements, and research articles were consistently rated higher in value and quality than other content types. Readers would like to see more review articles, consensus statements,
Letters to the editor were of lowest value compared to other content types.

- Satisfaction with journal features (e.g., frequency, credibility, comprehensiveness, accessibility) was high, although many readers still see room for improvement in online accessibility and in other areas.

**HOW DOREADERS ACCESS THE JOURNAL?**

- Subscribers use *JVIM* most commonly in professional settings, but also to generally keep informed and to dive deeper into a specific topic. Fewer than ten percent reported using *JVIM* for school or for community work. Readers primarily search for content by reading individual issues or by using a non-*JVIM* search engine. They access online content through university libraries and association memberships.

- Most respondents primarily read from a hard copy, which was also the most preferred mode. Frustration with accessing online content and habit were the most common reasons subscribers did not read *JVIM* in their preferred mode.

- Beyond *JVIM*, the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* and the *American Journal of Veterinary Research* were more likely to be read at least once a year by *JVIM* readers than the other veterinary publications listed on the survey.

**Recommendation:** Overall, readers are very satisfied and *JVIM* appears to be on the right track. The area most ripe for improvement would be improving the experience of online (and likely mobile) interfaces.

**WHAT ARE GENERAL PRACTITIONERS’ VIEWS OF SPECIALTY MEDICINE AND ACVIM?**

- Perceptions of specialty medicine often included its expense, though other descriptors such as advanced, knowledge, and diagnostics were also common. Overall, the sentiment of top-of-mind associations was positive with few strictly negative associations.

- When speaking to recent interactions and client feedback, the majority said their last interaction with an ACVIM Diplomate was “perfectly acceptable” and more than a third said it was “truly outstanding.” The majority of general practitioners were also likely to agree that owners appreciate being offered a referral to a specialist and that they receive good feedback from owners after they have seen a specialist.

- Three quarters of general practitioners are referring about the same amount of cases as they were a year prior. Eleven percent of all general practitioners were referring more and 14 percent reported referring less.

- General practitioners most commonly refer a case based on their clinic’s capabilities and equipment (85 percent). Certain types of cases, the owner’s request, and when a case reaches a critical point were the
second through fourth most common reasons.

“Owners not able to pay” was the most common reason cited by general practitioners as to what has prevented them from referring a specialty case (greater than 90 percent). Their ability to diagnose and/or treat were the second and third most common reasons (approximately 50 percent each).

**Recommendation:** A clinic’s capabilities and equipment appear to be the greatest threat facing referral business. Currently, it appears to be a common reason for referring (i.e., not having the capability or equipment in-house) as well as a common reason for not referring (i.e., when they are able to diagnose and/or treat), but if clinics increase their capabilities or equipment, a primary barrier to keeping the case will have been removed. Further differentiating specialists as experts and focusing the benefit on knowledge as opposed to equipment or facilities can help reduce this as the primary barrier to keeping cases instead of referring them. Increasing partnerships and relationships with general practitioners (see communications below) may also help.

**Recommendation:** Promoting through general practitioners is a “push” strategy, relying on the general practitioner to promote specialty medicine and make a referral. Considering a “pull” strategy may also be appropriate. Under a “pull” strategy, you try to increase the number of clients requesting specialty medicine services, either through their current veterinarian or perhaps directly through a specialty clinic. We already see some evidence of this working – 62 percent of general practitioners indicated that they refer cases at the request of the owner. However, only one percent said this is the most common reason for referring cases. This suggests general practitioners will refer cases when requested, but are not receiving many requests.

Younger general practitioners are more likely to wait before referring case. As general practitioner age increases, so too does the proportion who responded, “certain types of cases get referred immediately.” Similarly, as age of general practitioners decreases, the proportion who indicated any of the following as the point in which they refer a case increased: “after we have exhausted all possible diagnoses,” “after we have exhausted all possible treatments,” and “the severity of the case reaches a critical point.”

**Recommendation:** Additional education aimed at younger general practitioners around when to refer, and perhaps where specialists can be most beneficial, may help increase referrals, or at least how quickly they are made, among younger general practitioners. As for other specific reasons for why they may wait to refer, additional investigation may first be needed.
HOW CAN SPECIALISTS BE OF BETTER SERVICE TO GENERAL PRACTITIONERS?

When asked how ACVIM the organization, and ACVIM Diplomates, could be of better service, communication was the most common theme in open-ended responses (noted by 30 percent of respondents). When asked how communication could be improved, responses were specific to the respondent and overall diverse.

**Recommendation:** Given the variety of communication preferences, and that there was no overarching theme in respondents’ preferences (except that they do want good communication), the best way to ensure communication needs are being met is to – communicate. Diplomates being proactive in their communications to understand expectations with individual general practitioners is the best way to better communication and therefore service.

Many of the responses echoed other findings as well. For example, a desire for additional continuing education was noted by 14 percent of general practitioners; providing cost effective solutions was noted by 12 percent; and increasing public education and awareness was noted by 8 percent.

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC’S AWARENESS OF SPECIALTY MEDICINE, INCLUDING SPECIFIC SPECIALTIES? AMONG EQUINE TRAINERS?

Small animal owners were much less familiar with specialty medicine than horse owners or horse trainers. Approximately one third had not heard of veterinary specialists compared to less than 10 percent among horse owners.

Nearly half of small animal owners and 40 percent of horse owners who had seen or heard of specialists could not name any specialty areas. Among small animal owners oncology was the most frequently named specialty (14 percent), followed by cardiology (11 percent). Among horse owners dentistry was the most frequently named specialty (17 percent), followed by surgery (14 percent). Among horse trainers, 12 percent could not name any specialties and the most commonly named specialties were surgery (37 percent) and dentistry (21 percent).

Owners most frequently learned about veterinary specialists from veterinarian referrals (40 percent of small animal owners and 35 percent of horse owners) and friends and family (35 percent of small animal owners and 24 percent of horse owners). Horse trainers most frequently learned about specialists from veterinary referrals (54 percent) and other trainers (25 percent).

Awareness of ACVIM is very low among small animal (12 percent) and horse owners (25 percent), and fairly low among horse trainers (38 percent). Likewise, fewer than half of respondents in each group had heard of the term “Internist” in relation to veterinary medicine.

When asked how important each of several factors were to them when searching for a veterinary specialist, the factor most often said to be “very important” is having a referral from your regular veterinarian. Knowing the specialist is board certified was also very important to most respondents.
However, most small animal owners were not aware that veterinary specialists had to pass an exam for board certification, and only about half to two-thirds of each group indicated understanding the type of training as "very important," and only about one-third indicated knowing which organization provided the training was "very important."

**Recommendation:** These findings suggest that the concept of "board certification" is a title that conveys quality to people even though they don’t necessarily know (or care) about what it takes to get certified or who does the certification. The "board certified" label may be the most important feature for specialists to promote about themselves, at least in comparison to the training or certifying organization.

**WHO IS THE PRIMARY DECISION MAKER FOR EQUINE CASES?**

- Horse owners were approximately two-thirds of primary decision makers. This was true among Diplomates, equine general practitioners, and equine trainers. Trainers were the decision makers in about 16 percent of LAIM Diplomates’ cases, 21 percent of equine general practitioners’ cases, and 26 percent of equine trainers’ cases. Stable or barn managers were the decision makers in 11 percent or fewer cases. In rural areas, horse owners and breeders were increasingly likely to be the primary medical decision maker for horses, whereas in major metro areas trainers are more likely to be the primary medical decision maker.

**WHAT ARE THE COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES OF VETERINARIANS (ACVIM MEMBERS AND GENERAL PRACTITIONERS)?**

- Diplomates and Candidates showed little difference in communication method preference and overwhelmingly would like to receive communication via email.

- Younger Diplomates and general practitioners were more likely to prefer communication through multiple channels than older Diplomates and other groups, respectively.

- General practitioners working in metro areas are more likely to prefer to receive communication at conferences than those practicing in mid-sized towns or rural areas. Small animal general practitioners indicated a significantly stronger desire to receive communication through the VIN.com website than equine practitioners.
Recommendation: While respondents chose several preferred communication sources, email was consistently the most popular. However, multiple channels and touch points will result in the highest reach and satisfaction. Furthermore, while social media and mobile may be smaller proportionally, we do not recommend ignoring them altogether. Finding ways to have social and mobile integrated into your other sources (e.g., mobile friendly websites, using social media to drive traffic to your website, etc.) may provide even greater benefit. Also, these are growing in usage (as can be seen in part from the JVIM results) and likely will be of greater importance in the future.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

In addition to the above findings and recommendations, we offer the following:

- When refining the brand, and developing plans and messaging, consistency in message is critical. To aid this, ensure the brand strategy and position is first established, and then core message, and finally specific messages and tactics. This provides for more of a top-down approach that creates more consistency, rather than starting with trying to determine the ideal message for each audience. This will aid in not only messaging, but other tactics such as co-branding.

- Where possible, communicate to members not only the results of this research, but also changes being made or at least considered as a result. Doing so can help further member engagement and encourage future feedback, whether via surveys or other means. Many members noted in the additional comments on the survey how much they appreciated the chance to take the survey and were happy ACVIM was conducting this study.

- Promote to Candidates the full benefits of the organization to get on their radar as more than just a certifying body. Increasing satisfaction among Candidates will likely translate in them being more satisfied and engaged Diplomates when they make the transition.

- When promoting ACVIM, the overall college and organization, and the ACVIM Foundation, care should be taken to properly differentiate these two in the public’s mind (should both be promoted to the animal-owning public). With low familiarity and awareness of both currently, confusion could be more easily caused if the two are not clearly differentiated.

- In terms of future research:
  - This report creates a baseline for ACVIM on a variety of topics. Future research can help measure changes against this baseline and continue to assess member needs and how they are changing. The interval between surveys will depend on several factors, but Corona generally recommends that large studies are conducted once every three to five years. For ACVIM, spacing surveys at three year intervals or more would also allow for a fresh sample of Candidates to be surveyed each time. More frequent is possible, but if so, shorter surveys would be recommended so as to not burn out members on surveys.
  - To better understand satisfaction with the Forum specifically, surveys conducted immediately after the Forum will be the best way to gauge satisfaction and gain feedback while still fresh in attendee’s minds.