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Social petworking

Constantly chasing the next best furry thing



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Dogs are beginning to gain popularity on social media websites. (Fotolia)

Pop culture has gone to the dogs – and cats. Whether sharing pictures and videos or following Twitter accounts, we are obsessed with every box and inbox these creatures climb into. So what's behind all of this *petworking*?

Take cats for instance. Even non-people gravitate toward their online personas. Some months back, Google and Stanford University researchers connected 1000 computers to 10 million YouTube images.

Then, without instruction, the computers searched for exactly what you search for at your office desk: Cats (and also humans).

Some see this as kitty revenge, arguing that dogs' lives have always been flaunted in public, and now the net is a public cat park. Time.com has its pussy theory, “ ... there's something about watching a normally proud animal thrust into a humiliating situation that's especially funny ... ”

Were that the case, we'd only have to people-watch.

With the rise of social media, we also can't ignore the rise of the dog on social media websites. While many pundits think that Maru, the cat with the talent to get stuck in boxes, is YouTube's most popular pet with over 190 million channel views, others would argue that Mishka, the Siberian husky who says “I love you,” has the title. It has over 340 million channel views. She can also now say, “I'm rery rich.”

And while Simon, a 6-month-old lab-mix, and Daisy, an 8-week-old puppy, may not have Mishka's star power, they have the viral chops. Millions of us recently watched Simon patiently and lovingly teach Daisy how to go down a set of stairs.



“If only humans could be so kind!!” writes Linda Simms in the video’s comments. Other people commenting declared it as the cutest thing ever, or wrote about how it brought tears to their eyes.

So, yes, in this person-eat-person world, we aspire to the purity of our furry friends’ spirit. But we also love attention.

As much as I’d love to blame cats for the Grumpy Cat memes littering my newsfeeds, it wouldn’t be fair. If one in 10 social networking accounts belong to a cat or dog, then one in 10 of us are pretending to be one of them. Oh, the freedom and joy to be anonymous yet recognized.

Still, perhaps an entirely overlooked reason behind our draw to this stalwart of our pop culture comes from our ability to put the pop in our culture.

In an earlier column on Internet fame, I quoted YouTube trends manager Kevin Allocca, who explained that we become part of the phenomenon by spreading it or doing something new with it, noting, “ ... we all now feel some ownership in our own pop culture.”

So, sure, pop culture may have gone to the dogs and cats, but it doesn’t seem us humans have any bones to pick with that.

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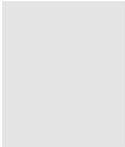
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