



Simple Ways for Improving Client Satisfaction

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Client satisfaction is an important performance metric for any business and, perhaps, even more so when it comes to a veterinary practice. People take pet healthcare very seriously, and the quality of their pet's treatment has a major impact on their satisfaction rates, referrals, reviews and, ultimately, choice in veterinary practices. Here are some key areas where you can make your practice's client experience stand out:

Care. It's all about how you make a patient—and in this case—the client, feel. People often complain about being rushed through exams, diagnosing, and recommended treatments. Smiling, listening and interacting are core ways to make clients feel cared for. A few extra minutes spent with a client can make a big difference. Making that

person and their pet the center of your attention during the appointment can make an even bigger difference.

Efficiency. One of the top complaints of clients is waiting to be seen. By improving the efficiency of your practice, you can help reduce long wait times both for scheduling appointments and wait times. Ensure you are using the most efficient systems to help and support these key functions. This could mean a process audit and overhaul, which could include implementing new systems to increase efficiencies. Practice Management Systems can automate scheduling, reminders, birthday messages and client feedback. Payment systems should reduce paperwork and collection efforts. They can greatly increase efficiencies and

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client satisfaction, but you have to ask yourself some major questions before implementing any system or process. Is it cost effective? Could it open new revenue sources? Will it help your practice run more efficiently? Is it user friendly and easily implemented? Can it be integrated smoothly with legacy technology? But most importantly: will you actually use it?

Cost. There are a few key facets of this important category:

- **Clear communication** – It is essential to clearly explain what is covered by insurance and what isn't and to help clients understand their part of the payment so that they can plan accordingly. Be sure your team is able to review a financial plan and accept all in-person payment options (cash, check, credit card, debit card). Some veterinarians decline to offer clients a payment plan, but if that is the best option for a specific client, it is a great way to work together to pay off a large amount. You can set up automated, recurring payments and have the client sign an agreement. Just make sure your current credit card vendor and/or software allows for recurring payments.
- **Tracking and managing accounts receivable** – Review past due accounts and send notices to anyone 60 and 90 days overdue. Some practices report a 50 percent response rate for the first past-due notice.¹ The second notice, which should mention the possibility of being sent to collections, usually resolves most other overdue accounts.

One option to consider is contacting clients via email or text and offering an online payment option. Online payment availability has increased 24 percent on average

each year and studies show that people likely pay faster when they can do so online.² If you're a veterinarian who visits animals outside of the practice, consider taking payments from your mobile device if you aren't already doing so. Mobile options are becoming the norm and offer clients a convenient experience and help you accept payments right at the time of service.

Technology. Adopting a new technology can help broaden and enhance the range of services you provide and increase your clients' satisfaction level. It's important to stay up to speed on advances in diagnostic equipment, as well as therapeutics. Telemedicine will have a greater impact in the near future, and wearable technology such as "Fitbits for dogs" will be increasingly useful for monitoring health. Lastly, technology is also starting to have an impact on workload management at veterinary clinics, creating efficiencies and improved service for pet owners.

For the long-term success of your practice, it is important to understand the entire client experience and what it takes to increase client satisfaction every step of the way. This understanding will allow you to establish and nurture a culture of continuous improvement that will help you build lasting relationships with your team, your clients and patients.

References:

¹ "DVM360", dvm360.com staff writer, <http://veterinarybusiness.dvm360.com/dun-deal-collect-past-due-accounts>

² "Online and mobile payment statistics", Jamie Gonzalez-Garcia, <https://www.creditcards.com/credit-card-news/online-payment-statistics-1276.php>

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