



Digitize Your Veterinary Practice

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Engage with your client base and boost your bottom line.

The effects of an increasingly digitized world reach into every corner of our lives. As a result, consumers demand greater connectivity and faster, more powerful technology. This consumer base includes veterinary clients. Digitalization, specifically digital technology, can yield key benefits to your practice, such as increased efficiency, more convenience for clients and greater business profitability.

What is digitalization?

Digitalization provides connectivity to information, anywhere, at any time. It also provides tools for analyzing and leveraging digital data in new ways.

Digital technology by generation

Needs of your clients can differ based on age and personal experience. According to *The Pew Charitable Trust*¹, today's generations can be grouped into the following categories:

- **Baby Boomers:** Born between 1946 and 1964
- **Generation X:** Born between 1965 and 1980
- **Millennials:** Born between 1981 and 1997
- **Generation Z:** Born between 1998 and 2016

Your practice can benefit by catering communications, appointment reminders, and even payment options to each generation's comfort level or preference with technology.

Baby Boomers. Research from a *Pew Charitable Trust Report*¹ revealed that more than 75 percent of Baby Boomers are regular internet users and, although they prefer cash, they are increasingly comfortable with digital payments. Clients in this category blend old and new technologies, but are also the only age group keeping paper checks in regular circulation. That is why offering them a variety of payment solutions is beneficial.

Generation X. *The Pew Charitable Trust Report* indicates that 80 percent of Gen Xers own smartphones, and are the second-highest group comfortable with the adoption

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of mobile payments, after Millennials. This segment of your client base prefers the ability to use credit and debit payment options.

Millennials. Millennials carry an expectation of convenience and personalization from the businesses they support. They value rewards, customized experiences and prefer accessibility via social media. This group is not partial to a single payment method, but emphasis should be placed on consistent, trustworthy client interaction through social media and email. Xennials are said to be the micro-generation of people on the cusp of the Generation X and Millennial demographic. Described as having had an analog childhood and a digital adulthood, they will have similar expectations to those in these generation categories.

Generation Z. Generation Z is the most comfortable with mobile and contactless payment platforms, and has fewer concerns over data security. They will make up 40 percent of all consumers by 2020, and predictions indicate that they will be the biggest supporters of cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

Why is digitalization important?

Gone are the days of searching through the Yellow Pages to find a phone number. It's now imperative to have an informative, easy-to-navigate online presence for both new and existing clients to find you and information about your practice.

What's more, today's always-on, digital society heightens expectations on how quickly responses are received. So, it's important to ensure communication is convenient for your clients and manageable for your staff. Consider opening new channels like "Make an Appointment" functions on your website or social media.

Adapting your practice

There are several things you can do to use technological growth to your advantage.

1. Ensure your practice has an online presence.

Even the simplest website with contact information can

give prospective clients the ability to find your practice. An online payment button or link is also a great way for clients to use their credit or debit cards to pay full or existing balances at their own convenience.

2. Offer your clients multiple payment options.

Various studies have shown that clients pay their bills faster when given the opportunity to pay online. Considering that clients from all generations are using credit cards, your practice should be accepting credit and debit payments, both in person and online.

3. Use electronic communication to your advantage.

Communicating with your clients via email is an effective way to keep in touch for payment and appointment reminders. You may choose to extend this communication to text messaging or social media if your practice includes a substantial number of younger clients.

4. Embrace digitalization.

By embracing these tech changes, you can boost productivity and improve your overall client experience. By implementing processes to improve efficiencies in your office, staff will have more time to complete daily tasks.

How fast things will change is hard to predict, but it's not difficult to see that our world will function quite differently in the years to come. Navigating technology advances begins with awareness of the shifts to come and how you can leverage digitalization in the future.

References:

¹The Pew Charitable Trust Report, "Technology Adaptation by Baby Boomers (and Everyone Else)." 2016. <https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/generations-and-age/>

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