

Adding Value: Getting The Most Out Of Your Practice

'Price is only an issue in the absence of value'. In today's competitive environment it is essential to demonstrate to clients the value of the service you provide. Caroline Johnson BSc(Hons) makes some suggestions on adding value to your practice.

Today's environment is increasingly competitive but still full of opportunity to add value. If your clients truly understand the value of everything you do for them they are far less likely to turn to other sources of pet health-care, and they will market your practice for you! Furthermore, with the number of clients declining in many areas, it is essential for the future health of the business that the life-time value (spend) of our existing customers is increased. This is essential in staying ahead of the game since delivering a high quality service never comes cheap.

1. 'Price is only an issue in the absence of value'

If every member of staff can demonstrate the benefit of the service your practice gives its animals, and show how much they care, then you will add value to every product and service that you sell. To do this all must understand that 'price is only an issue in the absence of value' and it should become the mantra of everyone employed by you. Post this quote up on staff notice boards, at the top of emails and any other tool you adopt for internal communication. You and the whole practice team need to see it, be reminded of it, and most importantly to understand, live and breathe this statement.

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in the absence of value'**

2. Practice meetings

Practice meetings are too often bogged down in the day-to-day detail of running a busy veterinary practice, but for staff to be creative you must allow time for star-gazing. Introduce an 'added value' slot to every practice meeting – ten minutes should be sufficient – and ask representatives of all groups of staff – vets, receptionists and nurses – to come prepared with one idea which will add value to the products and services offered to clients. It is amazing how inventive your staff can be and how simple changes can make a big difference in the clients' perception of value.

3. Implement good ideas

Coming up with good ideas is one thing, but to make a difference action needs to be taken. When minutes of meetings are circulated, ask every member of staff to evaluate ideas on the basis of client benefit and ease of implementation, then vote on the best 'added value' idea. Give all ideas serious consideration or you will turn your staff off. Having agreed on the best idea, ask the team who came up with it to implement it and to give feedback on progress at the next meeting. Reward them with recognition of a job well done.



4. Client questionnaire

The best people to assess value, of course, are the clients themselves. Devise a simple questionnaire which lists some of the key aspects of the service on offer and get your staff to encourage clients to complete the questions whilst they are in the practice. List your key services and ask for a rating according to service delivery and importance. This will quickly identify those areas where you are doing a great job, and those where improvements are required. In rating services in terms of importance you will be able to channel the majority of time and resource into the areas that really matter to the client.

5. Think value in everything you do

From greeting an existing client to generating an invoice, think of the value in every single thing that you do as a practice. Try to see things through the clients' eyes and continually ask your staff for their opinions. Veterinary practices have traditionally undersold the high quality of service that they offer. The time has now come to take the light out from under the bushel and proudly shout from the mountaintops – the veterinary profession is a caring profession offering the highest quality advice and service. Bar none.

6. Go public

It is a fact of human nature that we are all more likely to achieve our objectives if we publicise them – that is an important factor in the success of Weight Watchers! If having read this, you really do want to create a practice culture where value underpins everything you do, then pin this article up on your practice notice board and ask your staff to read it. This is your starting point for change.

For more top tips on adding value in your practice, see next quarter's edition...