



Adding Value to the Phone Around Quote

In the first of a series of 'top tips' for practice managers, Caroline Johnson offers advice how to handle potential clients who are phoning the practice for a quote.

In the increasingly competitive world in which we live, clients ringing around and asking for quotes is commonplace but how often are these quotes handled in the most professional manner and in a way which demonstrates the value of what we do versus our competitors? How many times do we assume that the person at the end of the phone is looking for the cheapest price when actually they will ultimately choose the best value – and that may be the most expensive! Do clients simply want to know how much money to bring, and the opportunity to reinforce the bond with your practice is lost? If you think you could do better in this area, then read on.

Build Rapport

When a client rings and asks for a quote, build rapport by asking one or two short questions. For example: "Yes, I'll just look up the price for that procedure. What kind of dog is he?"

Oh, a mongrel, we have lots in here; they make super pets, don't they?" This takes less than a minute but it helps create or reinforce a bond with the person at the end of the phone.

Itemise the Procedure or Service

For example, if neutering a bitch involves a pre-op examination, general anaesthesia, the surgery itself and analgesia, then summarise everything that is included, then, and only then, give the price. Again this takes less than one minute but it adds value to the service being offered. Some practices merely spey the bitch!



Protocols

When giving a professional service it is imperative to have written protocols; this ensures the consistency of the message regardless of who is on reception and takes the request for a quote. Develop and implement protocols for the most commonly requested quotes with the help of reception, nursing and veterinary staff. Use them and you convey knowledge and professionalism, always. (For more information about protocols please see the opposite page.)

Follow Up

For the most common requests e.g. vaccination and neutering, pre-prepare standard letters which thank the client for the quote and reiterate what has been said at the time of the phone call. At the end of the phone message you can then ask the client for their name and address and send them a written quote and a practice brochure. This reinforces the verbal message, re-emphasizes the quality and value of your service, looks professional and gives you a 'second bite at the cherry'.

Keep an Open Eye and Ear

Regularly review your quote handling procedures and protocols to keep them up to date and to make improvements where possible. Next time you ask someone else's business for a quote, think about what impresses you and what doesn't, and incorporate what you learn into your practice. The best ideas often come from outside the environment we are familiar with and they can make a very positive difference.