

## The client journey

### Monday - 8.15am

Having packed the girls off to school, it's time to sit down with a cup of tea to plan the remainder of the day. I need to leave the house at 8.25am if I'm to get to work on time and, as my husband left, as he does every day, at 7.30, this is my first chance to make a list of what's needed.

First on my list is to find a vet! We moved into this area around three months ago, complete with two teenage girls, a black Labrador and two cats and, although we haven't moved more than ten miles or so, it's just too difficult to keep going back to our old vet. In addition, what would happen if we needed the vet at night in an emergency? No, we simply do need to find a new vet!

I was walking the dog in the park last weekend and bumped into someone whose children go to the same school as mine do. She was with her dogs and she mentioned a vet that she's used, so I'm sitting here with my tea and the Yellow Pages. It's really quite a surprise what differences there appear to be between the vets and what they offer. Most say that they offer 24-hour cover and have superb facilities but I thought that all vets did that. What I really like is this one here that says that they offer the same kind, concerned attention we'd expect for the rest of the family and they say they offer punctual appointments! That would really help me, as I'll be the one trying to fit all this into my already busy day.

In the end, though, I don't know anything about any of these practices and the ads don't really help me to choose, so I'll do what we all do, and pick the one that a friend recommended. That's about the only way the Yellow Pages really can help, as a place to find the telephone number of somewhere you're already looking for. I've just a minute or two left before I have to leave so I give them a quick call only to find that they don't open until 8.30am. Aaargh!

### 1.00pm

What a morning! I work at a busy solicitor's office in the centre of town and we have three completions to do this afternoon. Still, it's lunchtime now and time to phone the vets. I do hope that this will be straightforward! After just three or four



rings the practice answered which was great but I was, straightaway, put on hold.

To be fair, the girl did apologise and ask if it would be ok but we all lead such busy lives and being put on hold is really frustrating. What makes it worse is that I can hear the sounds of the practice in the background – people's muffled voices and dogs barking – it certainly doesn't make you feel wanted as a customer! When she did come back it didn't really get much better. I still don't know who I was talking to! I'm not sure if she was a vet, a nurse or the receptionist – actually it could as easily have been another client – she didn't say. I just wanted to know about signing up with them – what their hours are and what about parking – that kind of stuff but I didn't get much information. She was really keen to tell me about their vets and all their certificates and their new operating theatre but I just wanted to know the simple, everyday stuff about getting Poppy, my Labrador, vaccinated and what I should do about one of the cats who seems to be behaving strangely. She said they do have some practice information that she'd send me but I don't hold out much hope.

### **6.15pm**

I've just got home and, like everyone else, there is a mountain of things that I have to do. I do feel frustrated though, that I haven't managed to sort out getting a new vet so I'm going to try calling another one in the hope that they will do better in winning my confidence. When I was in the office, this afternoon, I asked around with people who have pets and I do feel more comfortable using a vet that a number of other people have recommended so I'm going to give a different practice a try when I've got a minute. Ideally, I just want somewhere that I can park easily, that's not too far to travel – especially with the cats – and where the staff actually appear to be interested in my pets and me.

### **7.00pm**

What a relief! I've just phoned and everything seems just right. There was actually someone there at this time and the girl who answered the phone told me who she was, and what she did, so that was a great start! It is so much easier when you know who you're talking to. I asked about Poppy and her vaccinations and, although she did seem really knowledgeable herself, she recommended that I bring her in to see the vet. That's not normally easy for me but she was really helpful and they do an early morning clinic and two late evenings especially for people who work and can't get there easily. I can collect Poppy after work and still get there in time for an appointment. If I need to, I'll get the chance to discuss



the cat's strange behaviour with the vet too but, if I do have to take him in at some stage, they have separate waiting areas for cats and for dogs. That will be such a relief as it's so stressful taking your cat to the vet when he has to sit in his basket on the floor with half the neighbourhood's dogs poking their noses through the grille.

She asked me about fleas and worms for all the animals and made a note for the vet to talk to me about that when I go in. Do you know, she even asked me if we had Poppy insured. They don't recommend any particular policies but apparently the vets really encourage people to get their pets insured so I'll look into that too. I know I haven't been there yet but, so far so good, at least I feel that I've made the right decision in selecting this vet.

Now, let's see how everybody else's days have been!



## Checklist.

### If only every vet knew....

- It can be really hard to get home from work in time to keep an appointment. One or two late evenings (or early mornings) each week would make so much difference.
- An earlier check-in time for pets awaiting surgery would allow us to check them in properly without being late for work.
- Of course parking is difficult but, when I have a cat basket or a sick pet, it's the most important thing imaginable, being able to park. Definitely a reason to choose or lose a practice!
- We can't always have separate waiting areas for cats and dogs but dedicated cat clinics at different times really do help our pets and us.
- Please remember that I'm likely to be concerned as well as in a rush and the simplest things, like calling my pet by her name, can be reassuring and all make such a difference.
- We rely on you to tell us what is needed for our pets. Please tell me when my pet needs vaccinating or worming or if she needs to be insured. When I have the information I can make a decision but I do need you to tell me!