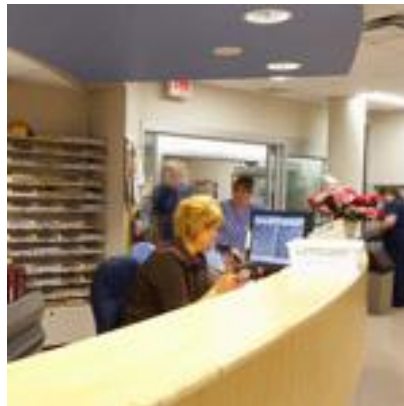




Essential Skills for Veterinary Receptionists Mini Series

Session 3: Measuring the Client Experience - You Can't Control What You Can't Measure

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This webinar is the final session of three in a series on **Measuring the customer experience and marketing activity**.

1. Understanding the role of marketing and why customer engagement really matters
2. Understanding your role in delivering the practice marketing
3. **Measuring the customer experience and marketing activity**

3. Measuring the customer experience and marketing activity

The interaction your clients have with your practice is like a journey - it starts with the owner becoming aware of you, choosing you, interacting with your team via the telephone and face-to-face contact and (hopefully) coming back to repeat the experience whilst telling their friends how great you are.

As you may know, there are four key stages to this cyclical customer journey, each with corresponding communications and marketing activity that need to be measured if we are to understand what is working:

- Getting noticed
- Filling the funnel
- Customer experience
- Word of mouth

By measuring the success of marketing activity we are able to identify where the practice budget, not to mention individual effort, is best focused. Activities that look impressive but which ultimately attract few new clients are to be avoided in future, whilst the simplest and cheapest marketing can often be the most effective. And always ensure that when you register a new client, you ask them where they heard about you. You might like to allocate a simple code against clients in the practice management system, so that you can tally exactly how many people found you as a result of the Friend-Get-friend scheme / local newspaper advert / flyer with special offer.

Let's look at what are the parameters of your marketing activities and client communications we can measure, as well as how you might go about doing it.

Getting noticed:

- Vox Pop, measuring the word on the street in your town. Understanding what potential clients think about your practice is incredibly valuable; identifying whether you have a reputation for being expensive, incompetent or offering excellent value for money. Armed with this understanding, you can then go about taking appropriate action.
- Social media. Facebook activity is very easy to track, thanks to the built in analytics you can see when are the busiest times on your page and identify what sort of person your average Facebook friend is. Horse owners are pretty much all on Facebook, so this is a very effective medium for attracting and retaining clients.

Filling the funnel:

- Index telephone customer care reporting is an accurate, impartial and cost effective way to measure the levels of customer care provided by your team over the phone. And as around 90% of initial client contact happens in this way, getting the telephone right is crucial. Every month Onswitch call every practice in the UK, equine and small animal. Callers ask a common question ("I'm getting a new puppy, what do I need?" for example) and rate the customer service they receive according to a number of standard criteria: business basics provided, quality of information relating to the query and level of engagement. Practice results can be compared with other nationally or regionally, and plotted over time in order to monitor improvements. We also record whether an appointment is offered - inviting an owner in to experience the practice's excellent care is key.

- Call conversion rates. Unless those callers are offered appointments and converted into paying clients, there is no profitable practice. Small animal practices should set a target of 40% conversion (for every 100 callers, 40 paid consults are booked), whilst in equine practice this ought to be closer to 80%. And of these initial consults, around 25% ought to progress to a procedure or investigation. Simply counting the number of appointments and working out the ratio compared to the number of incoming calls and the number of procedures and tests in an average month will show you how close to these targets your practice is.

Customer experience:

- In-house balanced scorecard audits. Ultimately, the success (or otherwise) of any business depends of four areas: finance, team, operational effectiveness and customer. Understanding how well you are performing in each of these areas is key, but when it comes to marketing the customer is the most important to get right. When we ask owners what they want from their vet, the most popular responses are always convenience, caring, friendly and professional. Owners want to be treated with respect, and as an equal.
- Client surveys. It's easy to canvass the opinion of your clients - set up a survey with a free provider such as SurveyMonkey and host it on your website, as well as emailing out to clients. Have a paper questionnaire printed out for waiting clients to complete anonymously, with a post box in the reception area. Make sure that you communicate feedback to your clients, and can show that action is being taken as a result; otherwise they will (quite rightly) feel that it is simply a PR exercise rather than a genuine desire to be better.

Word of mouth:

- Net Promoter Score (NPS). This simple model asks clients how happy they would be to recommend you, on a scale of 1 to 10. By subtracting the percentage of detractors (those scoring 6 or lower) from the percentage of promoters (those scoring 9 and 10), you are left with an NPS rating. Successful veterinary practices score above 80%, although many retailers and global brands average 60-70%. Recommendation is one of the main ways in which owners find their practice, and so understanding how likely clients are to do this gives you a strong steer as to how well you're doing. Encourage your clients to recommend you to their friends and family, via Facebook shares and also with Friend-Get-Friend schemes.
- KOL telephone research quantifies exactly what the hugely influential businesses in your area are saying about you and your competitors. You'll be able to see which practices are the most recommended, and why. This is crucial because many pet and horse owners ask for the advice of their kennel owner, feed merchant, groomer or tack shop staff so if they are being told things about your practice that are inaccurate, a local education and engagement campaign with these businesses will be very worthwhile.

Ultimately, if you're spending valuable time and money on marketing to clients, it's essential to understand whether it's working or not. That way you can do more of the bits that are, and stop doing the things that aren't, and you'll always know that your marketing is efficient, effective and talking your clients' language.