



How to Answer the Telephone Mini Series

Session 3: Maintaining and
developing the phone experience in
your practice – changing culture

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The recent webinar was the last in the series of three concerning the crucial role of the telephone in veterinary practice:

1. Understanding the critical importance of the phone
2. Delivering a better telephone experience
3. Changing and evolving practice culture to maintain good telephone practise

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We have looked in the last two webinars at why the telephone is so important to your practice, and worked on helping you deliver a better customer experience to callers. Having made great progress, it's now essential to keep the momentum going, and create an environment where everyone is routinely using the same techniques and delivering the same great care.

Keeping phone skills alive

- Regular use of call coaching and reporting (free one month trial from Onswitch)
- Managers must drive a culture of change
- Team will change when they understand how and why it matters
- Putting the customer experience at the heart of induction programmes for new team members

Induction programme for new team members

Public and private sector businesses provide comprehensive induction programmes for new starters, covering every aspect of the business. Veterinary practice should be no different. A good induction programme should cover the following for all new employees, regardless of role.

- Introducing practice culture and ethos
- 'The customer matters'
- Working through the customer journey
- Making calls and listening to good calls
- Training in the '5 steps'
- Playing the Footsteps customer experience board game
- Reviewing progress one-on-one
- Coaching and mentoring from those already doing it well

To create a sustainable culture we need to understand the learning process

1. Personal and practice growth
 - a. Plan - do - review – grow
 - i. What gets measured gets better - personal and practice
 - b. Feedback is a gift
 - c. Development doesn't just 'happen', it must be managed
 - d. What is your own preferred style?
2. Key stages of growth
 - a. Change follows a predictable pattern - the Kübler-Ross change curve
 - b. Understand and spot the different steps:
 - i. Shock
 - ii. Denial
 - iii. Frustration / anger
 - iv. Depression / lack of energy
 - v. Experiment - initial engagement
 - vi. Decision - feeling more positive about working in the new situation
 - vii. Integration

Kolbs learning cycle

After a learning experience we each review and reflect on it, making conclusions about the experience before trying out what we have learned. We then review and reflect on this active experimentation and so the cycle goes on.

Handling challenging calls

There is a simple, but highly effective, tool to help us manage stressful situations, such as when an owner is frustrated, angry or upset:

KLARDOC

Keep calm	Stand up if you are on the phone. Let the owner speak
Listen	Use active listening - play the owner's words back
Acknowledge	Key stage - the owner needs to feel that you understand their issue, even if you don't agree
Refine	Ask, don't assume Use open questions to get to the detail
Define	Summarise the reasons for the problem, as felt by the owner
Overcome	Provide solutions or next steps
Close	Draw a definitive line under the situation and check that your proposals deliver what the owner expects

Call conversion is critical

We need to open a two-way communication channel with clients and demonstrate genuine interest. Then we can detail the services and products that provide best care for both owner and animal. Then we can convert the call into an appointment, and thus into revenue and happy clients.

Change can be hard, but it is crucial!

Remember that owners have choices.

You can win more owners by focusing on call management - really make the phone matter (measure, track and train)

A customer-centred culture delivers great results, and if you don't provide it, other practices will. And they will win the clients.

For more information on improving the customer experience at your practice through measurement and training, please visit www.onswitch.co.uk

Thank you, and good luck!