

M. O. N. E. Y. ! Why you need it

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Of course, money is one representation of success. "Money makes the world go around," the saying goes. But that is not what we are talking about at all. What we mean is that what you need to do in order to be successful in practice is:

M= Marketing

O= Outstanding service and value to clients

N = eNged staff

E = Enthusiasm

Y = Why

! = Do things systematically

Marketing

In the twenty-first century, you cannot afford to avoid treating marketing as you do any clinical area in your practice. In recent times, marketing has evolved from in-your-face reminders to ongoing client education, from features to benefits, from disconnected to relationship-building, and from generic to unique. Additionally, savvy practices have shifted their focus from trying to capture everybody and herd them into the practice, to identifying the prototypical client for their practice, engage and enchant them and do everything possible to never let them go.

Outstanding service and value to clients

In an era when the value of everything is being called into question; when clients consult Dr. Google and the whole world before taking their pets in, and when so many clients purchase OTC and prescriptions online, a real differentiator is the

level of service provided and the perceived value to the consumer. In many ways, service and value are the new marketing, as satisfied clients act as cheerleaders for practices that have pleased them, and severe critics for those that have displeased them.

Veterinary medicine is more a service than a medical profession. As such, you cannot distinguish yourself by the injections you give, the diagnoses you make and the surgeries you perform. Even your shiny new toy does not leave a memorable impression on your clients. You and your staff must be engaging, charming, caring and focused on doing everything to exceed clients' expectations with every interaction.

eNged staff

Reports indicate that only about one third of all US employees are truly engaged with their job. This means that only one third of workers come to work looking to make a difference in the job where they work, the people they work with, the management they work for and the consumers who support their business. The other two thirds of workers come to work to get a paycheck.

In the veterinary profession, where the client service and the team are so integral to the success of the practice and the well-being of patients, disengaged staff are a liability financially and from a malpractice standpoint.

Staff engagement comes from choosing the right people who want to work at the practice for the right reasons, and then training them sufficiently, showing them respect, giving them recognition and responsibilities that allow them to learn and grow on the job.

Enthusiasm

As we in practice deal with people all the time; staff and clients, our ability to motivate them to do the right things depends on how able we are to instill enthusiasm in them. Enthusiasm is contagious, as is apathy, by the way. We tend to make decisions based on the other person's emotional energy. When we speak to others with enthusiasm, the other person becomes enthusiastic as well and this builds trust. It changes the "you are here and I am there," to "let's work on this together."

To be enthusiastic, you need to trust that what you are saying is true; that it is a win-win situation for you and the other person. You also need to feel trusted and supported by the management and that when you achieve the desired outcome, you will be appreciated and recognized.

Why

This component of your practice success is connected to the previous one. An essential factor in tapping into enthusiasm is to understand the 'why' of what you are talking about. The 'why' is connected with your values and the values of the practice. The better the match, the more you know why you are saying what you are saying, and the more enthusiastic you will be.

When speaking with clients, if you can identify their value about their pets, veterinary care and human interactions, you will be able to connect with their 'why' and thus generate enthusiasm in working together to solve their pets' problems. In addition, if you can demonstrate your values and show them how they match with theirs, you will win their trust and loyalty.

Just like you need to know why you are saying what you are saying, so do your clients need to understand why it is important for them to approve the service. The most common question in the exam room is not "how much does it cost?," but "is it really necessary?." Most clients do not ask this question, but it is always there. You therefore should always address it by explaining why the service is important for their pets and for themselves before telling them how much it will cost.

Do things systematically

Can you picture a client receiving enthusiastic service from one team member, only to get a cold shoulder from another person on the team the next time they come in? What do you think their reaction is going to be? Most likely they conclude they cannot trust the team. This would annul all the hard work you have put into building trust with that client. Now imagine this happening with every interaction you have with your clients and imagine it happening every day of the year. Can you begin to appreciate how expensive lack of consistency in client service is?

The way you can achieve consistency in all your interactions with your clients is for everyone to be reading from the same page. This means that everyone knows exactly what to say and how before they say it and that they do it consistently. This can only happen if the team has a common goal and values and if these have been translated into desired outcomes from every interaction. Then the steps to achieve the desired outcomes are translated into action steps and team members are trained to perform them to perfection by ongoing training. Focusing on the desired outcomes from every department in the practice and from every interaction with clients and monitoring results, will dramatically increase the likelihood of achieving them.

All these ingredients are essential for growth and fulfillment in the veterinary profession.