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Question:

How can you tell if your marketing efforts are effective? What is the best way to measure results?

Answer:

How a veterinary practice measures results should always be the first question you ask prior to starting any marketing campaign.

Begin by identifying marketing objectives. How are market shifts and trends affecting your practice? What does your practice need for a successful return on marketing investment? How will you define success? Be specific and avoid the tendency to simply try to “get your name out there.”

Are you:

- Trying to attract a certain type of new client?
- Increase share of service per existing client?
- Increase number of new spay and neuter patients?
- Interest clients in new veterinary services?
- Increase client retention?
- Change or strengthen how clients/ the community perceive your practice?

Your objectives will determine what you need to measure and how. First establish a performance BASELINE for comparison. Then:

1. Identify measurables.

How will you know you are succeeding? An increase in the number of new clients? Perceptions of your practice versus the competitions? The number of young singles (considered to be high consumers of veterinary services) that are attracted to your practice?

2. Choose a measurement tool.

The decision of which of many measurement tools to use should be based on number two above. Chose tools that are cost effective, practical to implement and provide useable data.

- Use surveys and registration cards to profile clients.
- Purchase software to track/analyze client data.
- Conduct “blind” interviews/surveys to gain objective client perceptions.
- Interview local referral sources.
- Track incoming phone/website inquiries.
- Use mystery shoppers to test client service.
- Hold focus groups for more in-depth information.

3. Assign responsibility.

While some methodologies are best left to marketing professionals, others can be delegated to sharp office staff. Make regular reporting and updates part of the staff member's or professional's job.

4. Establish a process/timeframe.

Determine points at which data will be reviewed and interpreted. Where possible and appropriate, test the methodology to make sure you are getting the type of information you need. In some cases, answers will be more apparent; for others may take more time to see patterns and results.