

Ackerman Lecture Topics

Pre-Congress

The Current Veterinary Business Model

This lecture looks at how the veterinary profession got to the point at which it now finds itself. Over the last thirty years, there has been more and more emphasis on products and services that may no longer be available exclusively through veterinary channels. This lecture paints a picture of a profession with some vulnerabilities and sets the stage for a discussion of changes needed for the profession. The marketplace is evolving and veterinary practices need to be prepared to consider and implement changes to the traditional veterinary service model that will allow them to remain relevant, competitive, and profitable.

Change is Here – Why We Should Embrace It

If we are not totally satisfied with the prospects for veterinary practice today, then we need to reflect on the current veterinary business model and see where beneficial changes might be needed. Aspects of the economy make it likely that people will have to budget for non-essentials, which often includes veterinary care. This lecture explores some of these likely scenarios so that we might proactively deal with these issues before we are negatively impacted by them.

Achieving Hospital Goals Together – The Importance of Alignment

Everyone working in a veterinary clinic is committed to providing high-quality healthcare for pets, but it is also important that everyone work together in a way that meets the needs of the pet, the pet owner, the hospital, and the hospital team. This includes coupling the practice of excellent medicine in a manner that is also profitable for the hospital and rewarding for those working there. This topic focuses on the need for keeping all hospital workers aligned to common goals, since you can't run a hospital efficiently and effectively when everyone is functioning on their own, even if they have the best of intentions.

Pet-specific Care – Understanding Risk

Pet-specific Care drives opportunities for veterinarians and veterinary staff to get involved proactively, when there are not only more medical options, but also a much better chance for clients to get actively engaged in and committed to the process. This lecture discusses the value (both medically and financially) of setting up personalized and customized health care programs to address the specific issues of pets over their entire lifespans rather than waiting for pets to get ill before they benefit from veterinary intervention. Better medicine really does lead to better business outcomes!

Pet-specific Care: Standards of Care

The marketplace is evolving, and veterinary practices need to be prepared to consider and implement changes to the traditional veterinary service model that will allow them to remain relevant, competitive, and profitable. Despite the accessibility to large amounts of clinical information, it has never been more difficult for veterinary professionals and paraprofessionals to remain up-to-date, and to deliver the level of

care to clients that is possible, and expected. On the human side, physicians and medical associations have embraced this inevitable healthcare evolution, and it will be important for the veterinary profession to move in that same direction.

Appreciating the Benefits of Pet-specific Care

Hospital team members may feel comfortable discussing vaccination, parasite control, and routine surgeries, but as the focus shifts from standardized to more personalized care, there is a need to develop competence in counseling owners about other healthcare needs specific to their pet. Since most of our recommendations today may be species-specific, but not necessarily pet-specific, this will necessarily require some adjustments in practice.

Congress

Is Hospital Ownership Worthwhile?

Hospital ownership can be very rewarding, but there are several things making this difficult: veterinarians may not be taught about finance in veterinary school and may feel unprepared for the business aspects of hospital ownership; veterinarians may be averse to taking on additional financial risk, and; many veterinary clinics today are not very profitable by common business standards. The good news is that practice ownership can indeed be worthwhile for all concerned with the appropriate focus on value.

Veterinary Fees: Understanding the True Cost of Care

For most people who work in a veterinary clinic, the fees that are charged to pet owners may not seem to make intuitive sense. They may seem arbitrarily expensive and sometimes difficult to reconcile and explain to pet owners. This lecture goes through the discussion of how fees are determined based on the expenses associated with operating a veterinary clinic, making sure that all expenses are covered, clients receive appropriate value for the money spent, and that the hospital has a fair return on investment.

The Dispensing Dilemma: The Retail Side of Veterinary Practice

In most veterinary practices, dispensing is an important revenue source, but veterinary practices are vulnerable because they potentially face stiff competition from a variety of other providers, making it difficult to remain profitable while still being competitively priced. In this session, we'll examine strategies to keep dispensing profitable, while still keeping prices fair and competitive for clients. It is more challenging than it once was, but that's no reason to abandon the retail side of veterinary practice.

Improving Client Communications – It's Worth the Effort

Veterinarians are generally accomplished communicators, but there are some very subtle skills that can enhance our ability to relay medical information in a way that is often more meaningful for pet owners. It is important to realize that communication skills are not just for conversation but can be used to make sure clients have the full picture of their pet's healthcare needs and allows them to provide informed consent, and that this in turn drives client satisfaction.

Talking with Clients about the Cost of Veterinary Care

Veterinary fees are overwhelmingly paid directly by pet owners, with only a relatively small percentage of pet owners having alternate risk management strategies. Because of this, veterinarians often need to have uncomfortable discussions with pet owners when their pets develop medical issues that need to be addressed. Veterinary care may be inexpensive compared to human medical care, but pet owners often find themselves in situations where they find it difficult to come up with the money for their pet's care. This talk is about how to craft appropriate conversations with pet owners about the costs of veterinary care.

Journey to “Yes”: Gaining Client Acceptance of Recommendations

Whether someone is making a personal purchase or contemplating expenditures on veterinary care, people don't voluntarily spend money unless they are convinced of the value and there is some urgency to act now. Like all consumers, clients have their own path to giving consent for procedures, and it often has little to do with medical practices. This talk goes through the steps that pet owners need in order to be comfortable saying “yes” instead of “I'll think about it”. Accordingly, while it is important to practice excellent medicine, it is also critical to learn to communicate the value of our services and remove other obstacles that might impede clients from following our recommendations.