

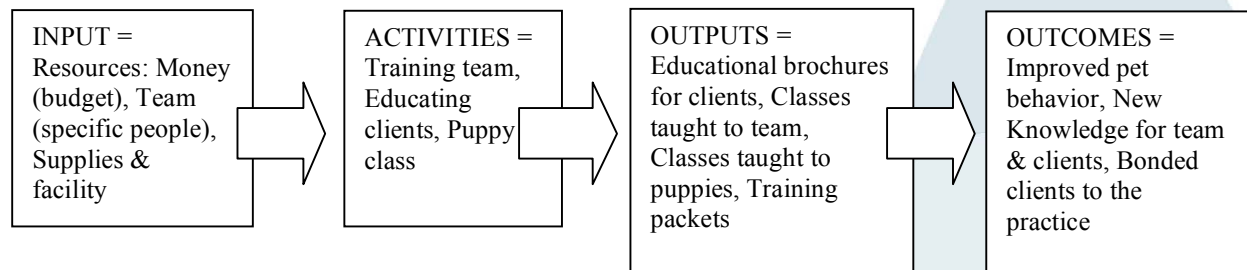
How Do You Know It's Working: Increasing Compliance

Measuring your compliance is as important as getting a plan setup and started. Use measurements to celebrate successes and to revamp your plan if it is not working. Find out what and how to track using score carding and open book management techniques. We will share some of the key compliance measurements from successful hospitals.

Let's say you have grabbed the bull by the horns and identified some areas in your practice that need attention. You arranged teams, designated your point people to head up certain projects, and got the teams synchronized, trained, budgeted, praised and guided. Is your work over? Not just yet! Now comes the time to see if all the effort is paying off.

One problem with knowing if the effort is working can be determining your ROI – Return on Investment. ROI is very difficult to pin down with certain initiatives. Can you measure customer satisfaction? Does puppy socialization class really pay off in the long run? Does team training on how to communicate better make a difference to the bottom line? The other problem is time – it is often time-consuming trying to sort through various forms of information to determine if any of it makes a bit of sense. So where do you begin?

You need to start by asking what results you expect from your initiatives. Your mission should list results you are seeking. Next you need to decide the list of outcomes important to the mission, such as minimizing complaints or improving delivery of services or producing benefits to pet care. Perhaps a logic model from "Performance Measurement" by Harry P. Hatry will help. Take a look at puppy socialization classes as an example:



Once you organize your program, you have some ideas on things to monitor and change.

Use your practice management software. Get a baseline and start improving from there. Some of your initiatives may involve doing more diagnostic tests, such as the senior wellness program. Use your practice management software to calculate the numerical measurements (% of..., ratios of..., proportion of....) that you chose earlier when identifying outcomes. Going back to puppy class – how about bonding rate or spending habits of clients who attended?

Create codes to match recommendations. If you recommended a dental, code it, enter it into the computer. Later, you can call up all clients who had the dental recommended code and compare it to everyone that had a dental. Diagnostic codes that you have been entering have a double bonus. For one, you can find out

how many pets coming to you have a particular condition and the other bonus is that you can get an idea of outcomes you want to monitor by studying their medical care.

Compare numbers on your financial program. Compare last year or last month. Use Open Book Management to access key performance indicators you want to watch. There are plenty of resources to find recommended benchmarks for the veterinary industry.

Review your medical records. Once you have some numbers you can dig a little deeper and audit the medical charts to see if the services are even being offered. Are they being declined? Why are they being declined? Review the care your patients are receiving and what options are being offered to the clients. Create a Patient Care Scorecard and check the progress with every visit (was the puppy or kitten vaccine series completed, is there regular fecal testing, was a specific handout given, etc). Can you see evidence of every pet, every chart, every time? Some practices get the authorization to audio/video tape a visit and then review how the communication between client and team members progressed. Was the recommendation explained? Was it recorded? How was the communication back and forth? Physical observation, especially by a trained observer, can give insight into how your compliance team is presenting the material and how your clients are responding.

Talk to your clients. Ask your clients for feedback. It can be as simple as the “quick question” asked at check out. Survey your clients via surveymonkey.com or simply ask a few questions when performing your routine callbacks. Set up a client advisory board and meet with them a few times a year to get their input. Find out what type of experience your clients are having at your practice. Do you know your client base? What age, how many pets, ages of those pets, frequency of visits – demographics can give you some insight into the people walking through your front doors and thus enable you to take a hard look at your practice and what services you are offering.

Talk to your team – both your project team and your entire staff. Set up team meetings that address your findings. What is the practice management software showing? What are the numbers from the financial reports showing? What did you discover when you audited the medical records? What is the report from your clients? The team can review the information and give feedback or troubleshoot. Snags can then be worked out, the team can help each other with any problems they are running into, encouragement can be given and successes can be celebrated. Use PowerPoint slides to report and then discuss each area. At one of my client’s practice we decide to track fecal compliance. We found that we were doing 500 more fecals than we were getting paid for and we were performing fecals on less than 20 percent of our active clients. Once the team was aware of it and made changes, we now are paid for 95% of the fecals and are up to over 50% compliance. Is it perfect? No. Is it better? Yes. Will we continue to improve? Absolutely!

Successful change is not easy. You have the difficult task of identifying needs of the business and of the patients – and then communicating them to employees and clients. There will be many roadblocks along the way to success. Take some advice from a Penguin (“Our Iceberg is Melting” by John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber).

Set the Stage: You have to help others in your practice see the need, see the urgency. You can then put together a top-notch Compliance Team to spearhead the project.

Develop the Vision: Clarify a strategy, work out the “Who/what/where/when/why” and what outcomes you hope to produce.

Make it Happen: Communicate the vision and the strategy, remove barriers and empower your team to take action, celebrate wins along the way and continue to tackle the barriers that pop up and block your success.

Create a new culture: Monitor the changes you are seeing from your change initiative and continue to watch certain numbers or responses until it becomes a part of the group's culture.

So many of us have been trying and successfully have grown our businesses. There are four components to lasting and to enduring change.

- 1. Remember your mistakes and understand how you can avoid repeating them.** Let's say you did a search in your client database of senior pets and you sent them a letter saying it was time for them to come in and begin their senior program. This mailing might cost you around \$300. But what if the letter didn't make your clients with senior pets come running through your doors? Then clearly this marketing method was not the right way to promote that program, or the right choice for that group of clients. And now Dental Month comes along and you do another search and you send another letter to your clients, and you get the same unproductive results. At this point, you should be reevaluating the marketing method you're using and make a change. Simply sending letters that don't get a response is a waste of time. You need to sit down and figure out another method of contacting your clients (i.e. sending postcards or e-mails), or work on a new design for your letter to catch your reader's eye.
- 2. Be "conservative" about change.** You can't change everything all at once, you need to decide what you want to change and prioritize it.
- 3. Know your customers and what they want.** You need to know your clients and what they want for their pets. You need to know how your client is bonded to their animal, and you can't communicate to all clients the same way. You need to take the time to note which of your client's animals are guide dogs, which are tried and true members of the family, and which live out in the barn. With this information, you will be a success at providing the best care for *every patient, every client, every record, every time* at that practice.
- 4. Manage your growth and leverage your assets.** We all have limited time and financial resources, so once you've prioritized and set your change at a reasonable level, look at your assets and your resources (aka time, energy and money) and find the best way to grow from there.

When you are tracking and sharing the results this will give you and your team a chance to celebrate the successes and when you see it is not working. You can come up with a revised plan.

Remember to use the Open Book management methodology and principles with your compliance.

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