# Time Is Money:

## Making Your Hospital More Effective

Session 2: Discover fun and easy ways to adjust your hospital's daily operation to make compliance happen. Learn about tips from the trenches; what has worked in other practices and how you can implement the same techniques in your own practice. Find out the key areas where your focused efforts will make all the difference.

Your patients and clients deserve the best and your team deserves to have the leadership, motivation and tools to be successful. Time is Money, so let us look at the compliance issue from an operational effectiveness point of view.

As the leader in your practice you have identified some key areas that you would like to improve. You have done your research, you know there is a need, and you are ready to get moving – times a wasting and time is money.

You have probably learned by now that standing up in front of your team and announcing that everyone will begin doing "A" as soon as the meeting ends has not resulted in the performance you had hoped for or expected. Why won't they just do it? Everyone says they want the best for the pets and clients. Yes, getting compliance is not easy, but there are some things you can do to help the process along.

Leadership: It is important, but you do not have to be the only one leading and doing everything. Why not assemble a team of individuals who are passionate about the very same subject you are trying to get started? It will take some thought on your part to identify members of your culture who understand the organization's vision and goals, and who can work with others at problem solving and improving the organization's performance. Teams don't just form and start functioning without guidance from a leader. You will need to play a role in the team's function. Remember not to micromanage. Buy in must happen early in the process. Implementation is almost impossible without buy in.

Give the team a name (e.g. Senior Pet Care Team), develop their mission, discuss their goals and activities, settle on what sales numbers you will track to monitor their progress, empower them to train the other members of your veterinary practice and lastly, connect them with the manager or owner that they will have to report to. You will want to encourage your newly formed team to brainstorm, develop check sheets and flowcharts, investigate cause-and-effect, prioritize activities and formulate training for everyone else. The team should have regularly scheduled meetings with a leader (i.e. someone in charge of the business such as an owner or practice manager) to report on their progress and get approval for their budget. Yes, you must budget both time and dollars to be successful.

This team can work at gaining buy-in from the rest of the staff. It will be easier to gain this alignment if the leaders of the practice are in full support of the compliance team. AAHA's Six Steps to Higher-Quality Patient Care outlines the importance of buy-in and protocols. Your team can play a role in developing those necessary protocols and then communicate the benefits to everyone else. Your team can educate the whole group on how to prepare charts for upcoming visits, and how to communicate the new service message to clients. Perhaps your team will develop a list of questions to be asked when a client brings in their pet; maybe a check off sticker can be developed for the medical chart or a packet of information for easy distribution to clients. The team will want to explore all the possibilities for helping their teammates to communicate better with the clients – and they will want to investigate what is working and what is not.


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While the special compliance team is working on their project, the other leaders in your practice will want to be on the lookout for compliance killers. You have a top-notch group working on promoting your new service and getting your team on the same page so they can educate and inform clients about taking care of their pet. However, there may be some "issues" that need attention, issues that prevent compliance from occurring.

The rest of the team – are they nay-sayers? Do they complain about change? Do some of them claim they don't have the time to talk to clients because you are so busy? Perhaps these individuals should be identified and involved in a discussion with the team and leaders. They may present some snags that can be easily corrected. Dr. Nan Boss (owner of Best Friends Veterinary Center in Grafton, WI.) says when she implements a new idea or policy her team have four choices. One is to be its cheer leader or champion, to believe it and promote it. Second is to not necessarily believe in it but to promote it because you are a member of the team and it's the right thing to do. Third is to disagree but keep your mouth shut. Any of these three are s OK, though when it comes to performance evaluation time number three won't get you as far. Four is to fight the decision or change – argue, undermine, sabotage, refuse to do it. Four is never acceptable.

In any team there are group dynamics. Realize that there may be personality conflicts or communication snags within your special team as well. Team malfunction can occur when the team loses focus on their mission and goals, or they aren't getting or using tools that are available to them, or they have set too many goals, or there is a lack of leadership and accountability. Support from management and quality leadership will be necessary to keep the team on track.

Sometimes the plan doesn't work because there a problem with your flow and customer service. Are your clients waiting too long to be seen? Is your team on overloaded from multi-tasking too many things? Are you limited by the physical aspects of your building? Take a look at how easy your practice is to do business with. Is it a simple and pleasant experience? Or are your clients faced with objections, rudeness, or lack of personnel to address their pet's needs? Client service is an important part of the entire client experience.

Think about some 5-star companies (Nordstrom or Enterprise Rent-a-Car). How do they make doing business with them so pleasant and easy? Review your client encounters in a step-by-step fashion. Are the charts prepared prior to the client's arrival? Do you have a CSR or greeter who has been prepped on what clients are due in today so they can greet the client by name? Is your exam room technician team prepared on the needs of the pets based on compliance standards your practice has established? How is your practice flow organized? Perhaps color coding cases (based on doctor, or critical care status, or procedure required) will help your team track the pet's treatment progress through the hospital – so that nothing gets missed or lost.

Other factors are communication and learning styles. People communicate and learn differently. Many studies have been published touting the importance of body language and tone of voice when communicating a message. Perhaps you should record each other to see if there are unrecognized barriers in your communications with clients. clients learn differently too. There are those who prefer to read, others to be told, others to touch and do. Perhaps you need to look at the materials you are using in your training and exam room presentations to see if you are missing an important aspect of learning that isn't important to your own style. You cannot teach and train everyone the same way. You need to throw out that one-size-fits-all mindset. Researchers such as Howard Gardner have found that people learn in various styles, so when you are training your team members, it's important to teach in a manner that each


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individual understands. To properly train your team, you must address all of these styles and provide tools for each:

- Active Learner (Tactile)
- Reflective Learner (Thinker)
- Sensing Learner (Factual)
- Visual Learner
- Intuitive Learner (Investigative)
- Verbal Learner (Auditory)
- Sequential Learner (Step by Step)
- Global Learner (Big Ideas)

In October of 2008 JAVMA published a report on client communication. Anmportant point you should be considering is that clients prefer having choices and participating in 2-way communication. Clients want information and they want it in different forms. What's in your brochures and packets? Clients like to have options and be involved in the decision making process. Are you involving them in discussions about their pet and how your new service will benefit their pet? Are your clients having a positive or a negative experience in your exam room?

Time is money. Look at your practice for areas of inefficiency and start working smarter, not harder. Remember your patients deserve the best, your clients trust you and your team, and they depend on the success of your business.





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