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What It Takes: Effective Communication To Help Your Clients Say Yes

Description: Attend this fast-paced, interactive session to find out the key ways to communicate your compliance message to your team and clients so everyone benefits. Discover the methods that work to lead, motivate and teach your team about compliance. Learn what your team and your clients need to know to help more patients (because the client says yes). You will leave with real take home knowledge you will use to take your compliance to the next level.

Have you ever found yourself wondering, “What will it take to get these people doing what I want them to do?” Do you find yourself saying this about your kennel team? Your technicians? Your clients? Your doctors? In most cases you find yourself saying this about every person within the walls of the veterinary practice (even the customer service representatives are included). Just what does it take to get compliance with your message? Let’s take a step back and look at your practice. Do you trust yourself to say in our hospital “that every patient, every client, ever record, every time”.

Jim Harris, in his book “Getting Employees to Fall in Love with Your Company,” highlighted 5 steps to building your dream team. 1) Capture the heart with a compelling vision, 2) Have open communication and 2-way interaction, 3) Create partnerships, 4) Drive learning, and 5) Emancipate action. As you read through the following paragraphs, think of it as an internal audit of your practice’s culture. You will see that Harris’s 5 points play an important role in building your very own Compliance Team.

Who are the leaders in your practice? We are not just looking at the owners and managers, we are also looking at those individuals who will seize an opportunity and orchestrate order from chaos. More than likely, you can identify individuals who are passionate about pet care and are willing to discuss difficult topics and think of ways to create value for clients and team members alike. Do you have your list of names? Good, now let’s first start with the obvious – the practice owners.

Practice owners and doctors by default, are considered leaders in their business. Unfortunately, the title alone is not good enough. Practice owners must realize that if they do not demonstrate leadership attributes, your team may decide to ignore you and follow someone else. Take some time to put your vision into words (Harris’ point #1) – and then explain your vision to your team. Create a picture of what you see the practice doing, what the purpose of unlocking the doors every day is really about. What are your core values that play the important role in servicing the pets and the clients? What attitude do you demonstrate on a daily basis? Others are watching you – and they will imitate what they see!!

Once the practice owners know themselves and what drives them, they can expand their leadership circle to include the managers or core team. . Let the managers in on your sense of purpose; explain your vision, your mission and goals (Harris’ point #3). They need to be the hospital vision as their vision. Think of ways to replace the traditional hierarchy by allowing leadership responsibilities to flow to others – drawing on their intelligence and innovative ideas (HBR, July/Aug 2009). Getting managers involved in leadership roles helps to free you up to get the creative juices flowing, to tackle new tasks, and to motivate others. This is how you will be able to drive your practice to new heights.

The leadership responsibility does not stop with the core team of managers. There are others in the practice that is passionate and committed too. They need to be in on the vision and mission also – becoming partners in your compliance effort. Just think how things might be if others in the practice acted as if they had an investment in the business. Perhaps, having others feel as if they too owned a part of the business success would encourage them to come up with ideas and take the lead. Creating happy, motivated and successful teams comes from being open and honest, showing them you trust and value them.

Of course, all of this is not as easy as it sounds. Much effort is going to be needed to expand on your vision and mission by creating standards and protocols for everyone to espouse. It isn't enough to simply "tell" your team what they should be doing; you need to explain the hows and the whys so that everyone understands the importance of a standard or recommendation. Is your team "in the tell" or are they "in the know" when they interact with a client? Here is an example (taking into account Harris' points #2 and #4): You want everyone to offer your newly created senior blood panel to every client who comes in with a pet that is over 7 years old. Why? How will it benefit the patient? What's in it for the team? What's in it for the client? What is your "real" reason for coming up with this new service packet?

Harvard Business Review reported that customers are interested in businesses whose employees are knowledgeable, and who address their needs and treat the client as if they value their business. Have you given your team what they need to shine in your client's eyes? Very often, the way the business owner treats the team is how the team treats the client. Let's go back to that senior blood panel for a moment.

Your job as a leader is to first set your goal for your particular business – perhaps it is encouraging senior pets to make regular visits, or improve your diagnostic methods to catch disease conditions sooner. Understand your vision and review your practice management software for your trends. Develop your new service. Now you can go to your team to teach and to motivate, armed with information and tools to get them "in the know." You, as leader, can prepare your team for the client visit, how to inform the client, how to create a sense of urgency, how to show the client how this service will improve their pet's healthcare. Remember the client is thinking "what in it for me of WIIFT. Your team can then become leaders in the exam room because you were able to drive the learning and create the freedom for action (Harris' points #4 and #5). Remember it is like a well orchestrated dance.

Your team will be "in the know" and will be able to address the client's needs and concerns because you will have informed your team and involved them in the development of this new service. Utilizing other team leaders will help communicate the message. One attribute of leadership is seeing things in other people, seeing their passion and helping them grow their passion. When team members help each other, encourage each other, review each other's charts, and help each other out with talking points and phrases everyone will benefit.

Communicating the compliance message (i.e. senior blood screening) can't be left to assumptions. You can't assume your team has the same vision for patient care as you do. You can't assume they will discuss the service with a client, much less mention it in passing while they take the rectal temperature. You can't assume the client will simply do whatever you say in the exam room. You can't leave something so important up to chance. Your commitment to compliance must involve building your team and monitoring for results.

Begin the compliance project with the leaders in your practice, develop team training and involve the team in creating innovative ways to educate each other, as well as the clients. Inform your team about the progress they are making – what doesn't get measured, doesn't improve. You can create a sense of urgency for change by simply trying to improve on measurements from one month to the next. A success story of a pet that was diagnosed in early stages of a condition and how grateful the client was will boost morale and encourage more team participation – share the stories.

Initiating compliance starts with you. Be a leader, make the commitment. Every practice regardless of size can build a Compliance Team to provide quality care to every patient, better understanding to every client, And a complete record every time.

"Together we will make your practice team soar."

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