3 Proven Strategies for a Thriving Veterinary Clinic

erexpress

Introduction

In animal emergency clinics, the front desk staff plays a pivotal role in managing patient flow, client communication, and expectations while ensuring the clinic runs smoothly. However, the demanding nature of the job often leads to high staff turnover and burnout, which can impact patient care, client satisfaction, and clinic efficiency.

Organizations aiming to progress and expand their operations must tackle employee burnout as an essential step. After all, attaining growth objectives depends on having a content and dedicated workforce that provides a promising patient experience. In this eBook, we will take the time to understand burnout and staff turnover and explore possible solutions to help minimize staff burnout.

Understanding Front Desk Burnout and Turnover

Front desk staff have faced numerous challenges since the start of the pandemic. During demanding and understaffed shifts, they've had to contend with COVID-19 protocols, screening intake, coordinating patient visits, and managing client inquiries through phone and email. According to the American Pet Products Association (APPA) about 66% of Unites States households (86.9 Million homes) own a pet. This percentage means there is a great need for pet care, leaving veterinary clinics booked, busy, and burnt out.

This workload can be overwhelming. Ensuring your team doesn't succumb to burnout is of utmost importance. This involves recognizing signs of burnout and implementing measures to prevent or reduce it within your veterinary practice.

Recognizing Burnout

Regular communication with your employees is essential to understand what a good versus a bad day looks like. From there, you'll be able to determine a baseline and know when something in the clinic is not going well.

Some signs to look for when recognizing burnout:

• A decrease in productivity
• Loss or lack of interest or excitement about work
• An increase in absence
• Underperforming on day-to-day activities

While these are just a few signs, staying close to your employees and understanding their victories and losses will help you recognize burnout, and hopefully implement changes to improve their work life.

Burnout Leads to Turnover

According to the American Aminal Hospital Association's (AAHA) 2020 Compensation and Benefits Survey, receptionists experience a 32.5% turnover rate at animal health facilities. So why does this matter? The Center for American Progress calculates the cost of turnover to be 20% of each employee's annual salary for workers earning less than $50,000. That comes to an average price of up to $10,000 to replace a staff member, ultimately impacting your revenue and resources to train a new employee.

Typically, businesses believe they can alleviate employee burnout through increased compensation, a change in job title, or enhanced benefits. While this approach may offer temporary relief, it fails to address the underlying problem, ultimately allowing the issue to resurface in the long run. What can you do to alleviate the burnout? Supply your employees with tools and resources that help improve day-to-day operations.

A Solution for Animal Emergency Clinics

Implementing waitlist and communication software enables emergency clinics to optimize patient flow, improve client communication, and alleviate staff burden.

In the following sections, we will break down the features, functionality, and benefits of using software to help streamline patient flow, client communication and minimize staff burden.

Features and Functionality

- Patient Queuing
- Digital Registration
- Client Communication

Pateint Queuing

Patient queuing, often referred to as "waitlist management software," is a system or process that manages the flow of patients in a healthcare setting or a similar environment. The primary purpose of patient queuing in the animal emergency space is to optimize and streamline the patient and client experience while ensuring that veterinarians and technical staff can efficiently deliver care or services in a timely manner.

In a patient queuing system, patients are assigned a place in a queue or line, and their movement through the process is coordinated to minimize wait times, improve client satisfaction, and enhance overall operational efficiency.

Patient queuing software can benefit front desk staff in an emergency veterinary facility by streamlining and improving various aspects of their work. Here are several ways in which patient queuing software can help front desk staff:

Efficient Patient Management: Patient queuing software helps front desk staff manage patient appointments, check-ins, and walk-ins more efficiently. It provides a clear overview of the patient queue dashboard, allowing staff to assign and track patient arrivals, status and departures.

Reduced Wait Times: The software optimizes patient flow, ensuring that patients are seen in a timely manner. This helps reduce wait times, enhancing client satisfaction and minimizing frustrations.

Real-Time Updates: Front desk staff can provide patients with real-time updates on their queue status, estimated wait times, and any delays. This improves communication and transparency, leading to a more positive experience.

Prioritization and Triage: The software allows front desk staff to prioritize patients based on their needs or urgency, ensuring that critical cases are addressed promptly. This is particularly important in an emergency setting.

Reduced Administrative Burden: Allowing clients to join the queue themselves, frees up phone calls and long registration processes, allowing staff to focus more on other clients interactions and patient care coordination.

The critical goals of patient queuing are to reduce waiting times, maintain orderly patient flow, and ensure that medical teams can attend to patients in a systematic and timely manner. This can lead to improved patient outcomes, reduced stress for clients and staff, and a more efficient use of resources within the emergency veterinarian facility.

Digital Intake

Digital intake forms in emergency veterinary medicine offer numerous benefits for both veterinary clinics and pet owners. Digital intake allows clients to digitally submit information about their pet, and sign any consent forms. Some of the advantages include:

Efficiency: Digital intake forms streamline the check-in process, saving time for both veterinary staff and pet owners. It reduces the need for manual data entry and paperwork, enabling quicker patient evaluation and treatment.

Accessibility: Pet owners can access and complete digital forms remotely before arriving at the veterinary clinic, allowing for a smoother and faster check-in process.

Accuracy: Digital forms reduce the risk of errors associated with handwritten forms, ensuring that the information provided is accurate and legible. This is especially crucial in emergency situations where every detail matters.

Comprehensive Information: Digital intake forms can be designed to collect comprehensive patient information, including medical history, symptoms, and contact details. This information is vital for diagnosing and treating the pet effectively.

Emergency Contact Information: The forms can include sections for emergency contact information, making it easier for veterinary staff to reach out to pet owners if necessary, or to obtain consent for specific procedures.

Data Integration: Many digital intake systems can integrate with the clinic's Pateint Information Management System (PIMS), enabling seamless transfer of information. This facilitates coordination among staff and keeps all patient data in one place.

Consent and Legal Documentation: Digital intake forms can include electronic signatures for consent, which is legally binding. This ensures pet owners understand and agree to the proposed treatments or procedures.

Improved Communication: With digital intake forms, veterinarians and support staff can receive critical patient information more promptly, enhancing communication and decision-making during emergency situations.

Cost Savings: Over time, using digital forms can reduce expenses associated with printing, storage, and administrative work, contributing to cost savings for the veterinary clinic.

Enhanced Customer Experience: Digital intake forms demonstrate that the clinic values the convenience of pet owners. This can contribute to a positive perception of the clinic and improved customer satisfaction.

In emergency veterinary medicine, where time is often of the essence, digital intake forms can make a substantial difference in the speed and accuracy of patient assessment and care, ultimately leading to better outcomes for pets in distress.
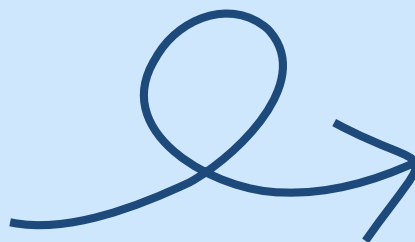
Client Communication

Client communication is crucial for veterinary emergency clinics as it plays a significant role in providing quality care and ensuring a positive experience for pet owners. Communicating with pet parents is one of the most time and energy consuming tasks that is required of front desk employees.

Below are the features of effective client communication for veterinary emergency clinics:

Multichannel Communication: Veterinary emergency clinics should offer multiple communication channels, including phone, email, text messaging, and online portals, to accommodate various client preferences.

Appointment Scheduling: Clients should have the option to schedule appointments, check availability, or inquire about wait times through online systems or over the phone.

Automated Reminders: These systems can send automated appointment reminders, medication refills, and follow-up care instructions, reducing the likelihood of missed appointments or medications.

Text Alerts: Send real-time updates to clients about their pet's condition, test results, and estimated treatment timelines.

Now that you understand the features and functionality that are key for client communication, we will discuss the benefits associated with client communication in veterinary emergency clinics:

Improved Client Experience: Effective communication enhances the overall experience for clients by providing them with information and support when they need it most.

Increased Trust: Transparent communication fosters trust between clients and veterinary staff, making clients feel more confident in the care their pets are receiving.

Timely Care: Rapid communication ensures that clients can access emergency care promptly, potentially saving pets' lives in critical situations.

Efficient Operations: Efficient communication streamlines administrative processes, reduces wait times, and ensures that appointments are well-coordinated.

Client Loyalty: Positive communication experiences lead to client loyalty and repeat business, which is essential for the clinic's success.

Brand Reputation: Effective communication contributes to a positive brand reputation and word-of-mouth referrals, attracting new clients to the clinic.

Client communication in veterinary emergency clinics is essential for providing high-quality care, ensuring timely responses, building trust, and enhancing the overall client experience. It is a key component of a successful and compassionate veterinary practice.

Introducing ER Express

ER Express is a waitlist, client communication, and intake platform that allows pet owners to add their pets to a virtual queue, receive updates about their wait time and visit status, and complete digital registration and consent paperwork.

Customer satisfaction and feedback are essential for ER Express's direction and success. Both positive and negative customer feedback provides invaluable insights into areas that require improvement or optimization. ER Express uses this feedback to fine-tune our products and services, enhance our customer experience, and adapt to changing market demands. By actively listening to their customers and incorporating their feedback into their strategies, businesses can stay competitive, innovate, and ultimately thrive in the long run.

In the following sections, we will discuss how ER Express helps support emergency veterinary clinics, and the how it impacts day-to-day operations for staff and clients.

The Impact of ER Express on Staff Well-being

ER Express provides the features and functionality needed to help alleviate the stress of long wait times, client intake, and communication.

Patient Queue

ER Express' patient queue gives clients the convenient experience they expect by allowing them to get in line from home, on-the-go, or in your lobby, via mobile device. Once a patient is added to the queue, staff can better understand the caseload that is coming in, and see patients in a timely manner based on the severity of the patient.

We surveyed our clients to better understand how our solutions impact the day-to-day activites for front desk personnel and found that 77% of our users state that the patient queue helps manage the flow of their clinic. Steamlining clinic flow helps aleviate crowded and busy lobbies and minimze long wait times, while helping front desk staff manage the amount of patients a clinic can care for.

Overall, patient queuing software empowers front desk staff to deliver a better client experience, streamline operations, and make more informed decisions about resource allocation and patient care.

Digital Intake

We make the intake process convenient, by converting your exsiting paper forms into a user-friendly digital form that is sent to clients for them to complete using their own devices. With digital intake forms your staff will no longer have to spend time deciphering handwriting and printing or scanning paperwork, which enables them to save time and focus on patient and client care.

Allowing your clients to complete forms digitally eliminates one less time consuming task for your staff. With more time to focus on other efforts, staff are less likely to become burnout with repetitive and tedius paperwork that is associated with a patient visit.

Client Communication

With ER Express staff has the option to keep clients informed by sending progress and status text updates during a patient's visit. This ensures clients feel supported and informed while waiting, making interaction with clients that much smoother.

When asked if ER Express improves the client communication process, 81% of our clients stated that it did. With ER Express, clients are sent automatic triggered texts based on the status of their pets visit and where the pet falls on the patient queue dashboard. Additionally, they are able to communicate via two-way texting to relay any wait time delays, or updates on their pets treatment. The two-way texting functionality helps to eliminate long phone calls for staff, and frees up time to focus on getting other patients seen.

How it works

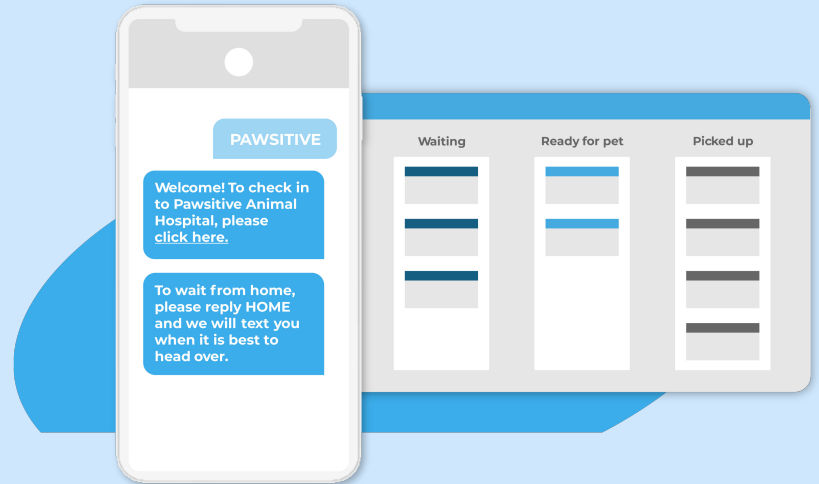## 1 Clients join the waitlist

Pet owners can check in via mobile device, your website, or onsite to be added to your virtual queue. While they wait, clients can complete intake and consent forms digitally.

2 Keep clients in the loop

While clients wait, keep them informed through every step of their visit via customized, automated SMS alerts and two-way texts from your staff. Grab their feedback afterwards with a quick automated follow-up text survey and encourage them to write your practice an online review.

3 Staff manage patient queue

Once pet is added to the queue, staff has access to view patient information, case severity, and determine who will be seen next.


PAWSITIVE

Welcome! To check in to Pawsitive Animal Hospital, please click here.

To wait from home, please reply HOME and we will text you when it is best to head over.

Waiting | Ready for pet | Picked up

About ER Express

Emergency and urgent care veterinary clinics around the United States and Canada use ER Express to assist staff in optimizing workflow, managing client communication and expectations, while providing timely and transparent care. With ER Express' all in one patient queuing, digital registration and communication platform improves the client experience, automates communication, streamlines throughput and minimizes staff workload.

What our clients say

"We're reducing staff time. In our world, in our workflow, we have the client filling out the medical history. So, we are putting it back on the client, which help saves manpower on our end, creates a more efficient process and it really puts the client in a position where they're able to feel they're advocating for their pet."

Claire Allen, Hospital Manager
Animal Emergency Hospital -
Grand Rapids
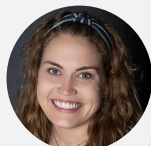
"ER Express has helped us to control the chaos of our ER so we can continue to be available to all of the patients who need us! ER Express also gives us the option to have owners with stable emergencies to wait to be seen in the comfort of their home. Being able to text owners has been a complete GAME CHANGER and the owners love all the updates from the doctors and staff. We love ER Express!!"

Tracy Walters, DVM
Care Center, Dayton

Conclusion

The time demands on veterinary professionals have reached unprecedented levels, presenting new challenges. A combination of lower pay, rising training costs, and constant client expectations has turned the veterinary profession into one of the most stressful in the country. Yet, with the right support and strategic awareness, both veterinarians and their team members can maintain a sense of composure and focus. This eBook provides valuable insights, enabling veterinary professionals not only to navigate the challenges of their demanding industry but also to rediscover their passion and purpose. By harnessing their innate empathy and compassion, they can turn the care of clients' pets into a joyful experience within a positive working environment. Thank you for reading, and we wish you the best of luck on your journey!

Resources

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