

DEVELOPING A SALES CULTURE

In a non-sales world

by Jan Spence

If you ask any pet care services professional why they got into the business of animals, the answer will most certainly highlight their love of animals, their love of medicine, their love of science. Very few, if any, will answer that they pursued a career as a pet boarding facility owner, veterinarian, or groomer due to a love of sales. In fact, selling is often the furthest thing from the minds of these professionals and their staff. However, *every business is a sales business.*

The pet care services industry has undergone a variety of changes over the past 50 years. In order to stay ahead of the pack, business owners have to dare to be different by fostering a culture of sales in their organization from the top down. Understandably, many pet care professionals and their teams are resistant to anything having to do with the term “sales”, as it often conjures up exaggerated images of the sleazy, slimy, dishonest snake oil salesman. However, not considering this important factor of business growth and success will lead to missed opportunities for capturing additional income, increasing customer loyalty, and growing the business.

Here are three important steps that can be used to start developing a sales culture:

1 Look in the mirror! Those in leadership, management, and ownership roles must be real and honest about their own attitude and perspective regarding being a “sales organization”. If there is “head trash” regarding a stigma about “salespeople”, then the leader will always hold themselves and the team back from getting to that next level of growth. One veterinarian had such a disdain for salespeople that he had a written policy on how to abruptly brush off any solicitor contacting the business. You can imagine the challenge he had in attempting to flip the switch of the mindsets of his staff to genuinely offer products and services that would be valuable to the

clients they served. An open examination of these types of beliefs is the first (and often times most critical) step in moving toward a sales culture.

2 Look around! Identify opportunities for additional service offerings, up-sells or bundled packages. Utilize two angles regarding this step:

A) Use the staff to get creative. When it is their idea, they are more likely to buy in to “offering” (code word for “selling!”) additional services and products to existing customers. Ask questions such as, “When Mrs. Jones sets an appointment for Fluffy’s annual check-up, what are other valuable treatments/-services/products that we offer that would be beneficial to Mrs. Jones and her pet?” As personnel begins to view these offerings as a solution to a problem or potential problem, the stigma regarding salespeople begins to melt away.

B) Find out where the profit is. What products and services are most profitable for your business? One must evaluate the time, materials, labor, and resources to obtain, stock, or administer these items to determine what is most profitable. Choose three to five targeted products or services and then educate the staff on when and for whom these are the best fit. Starting small and giving the team specific tools to use will help them all dip a “paw” into the water regarding upselling to existing clients.

3 Create a system! Setting up written procedures is critical in order to change the culture of an organization. Having employees understand and practice a process, along with realistic incentives, will begin to turn the tide of a “non-sales” culture. Three beginning steps are:



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A) Questions – Teach the staff **HOW** to offer additional services and products to clients. What written questions can you teach them to ask and when should they ask them?

B) Procedures – Put a “policies and procedures” document in place that holds staff accountable and teaches them how they will be measured on this aspect of their job. Remember the old method of show them how to do something, explain why it is important, have them try it, give feedback and have them try it again until they are comfortable with this new method of operating.

C) Incentives – Just as our pets respond to rewards, so do humans. As part of staff’s compensation package, include “selling” as part of their role. This includes measurement in three areas:

1) Behavior – Are they offering upsells consistently as part of their process of setting up appointments, intake, evaluation, check-out, etc.?

2) Results – Are they consistently seeing an increase in added services and products as an indication that they are effectively offering what is best for clients and their pets?

3) Exceeding expectations – Is there a financial bonus associated with those who go above and beyond to

make sure that every pet and their owner that enters the business has all that they need to live a safe and healthy “pet family” life?

Regardless of industry or company size, promoting change in an organization can be uncomfortable, difficult, and met with resistance. However, as the old saying goes, “If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always gotten.” It’s important for pet care services professionals to be intentional about the growth of their business. After all, no company continues to grow by accident. Not taking the continued progress of their organization seriously means competitors who are focused on growth will end up with their market share, their customers and loyalty, their profit, and ultimately their brand.

Dare to be different, embrace a sales culture, and your practice will be around for the long haul!

Jan Spence, CEO, Jan Spence & Associates, is an international speaker, consultant, trainer and business coach. With contagious charisma and a zest for life which make her an excellent motivator and leader, she has used her vast knowledge in sales, marketing, communications, finances, and business operations to help numerous clients including Pillsbury, Walmart, and Frito-Lay. For more information, visit janspence.com.

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