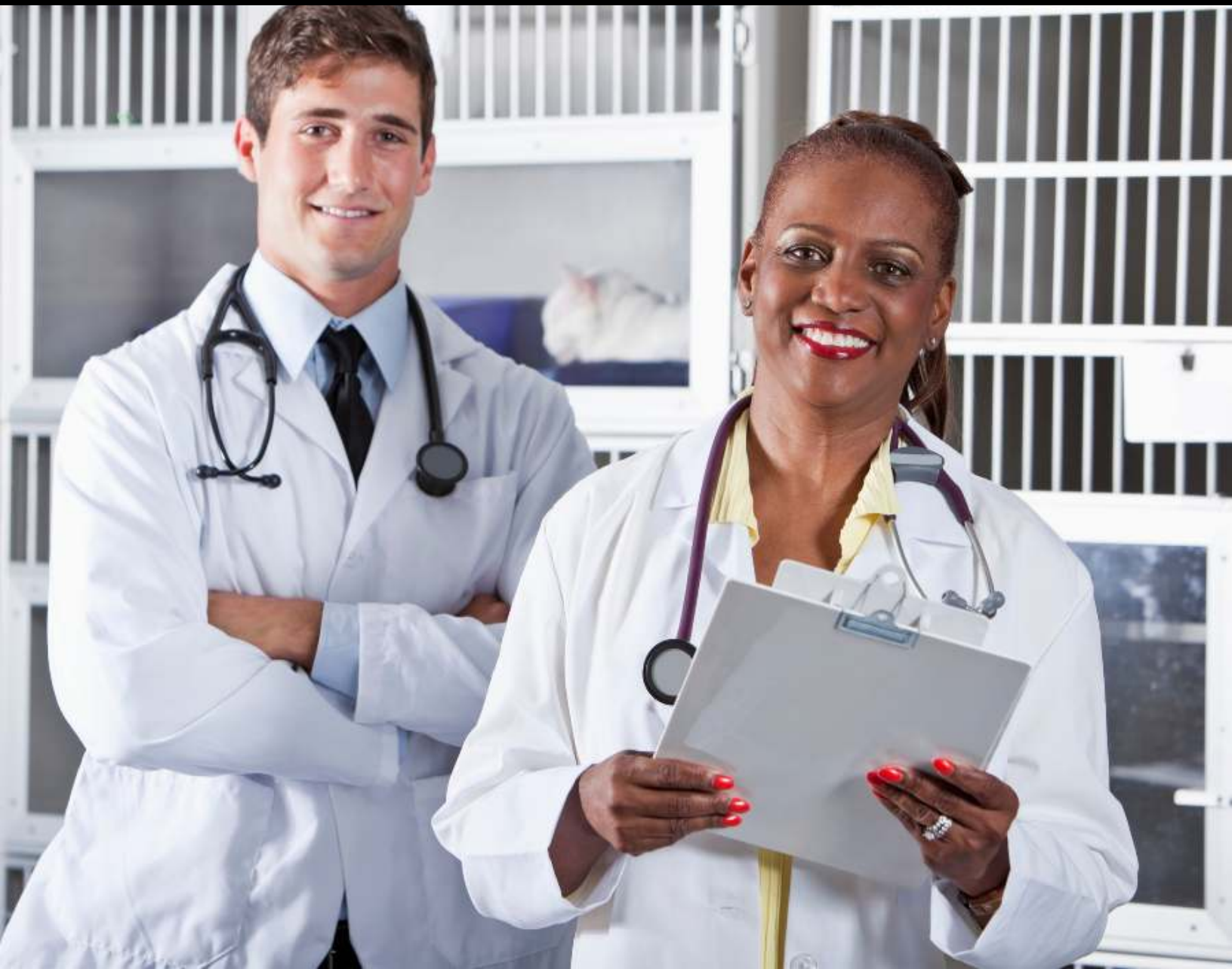


Tips For Starting Your

# New Veterinary Animal Hospital



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## How To Start a Veterinary Practice



If you're looking to start your own veterinary practice, congratulations!

You'll have a lot to think about and plan. But, there's nothing like being able to run your practice exactly the way *you* want to—to make *your dream* come to life.

This article is the first in a 10-part series discussing the different aspects of practice ownership—everything from location, to staffing, to equipment, to marketing.

This will help you think through some of the key decisions that come with opening a practice of your own.

### Veterinary Practice Location

Of course, one of the very first questions you might ask yourself is *where* your new business should be located.

In some cases—such as if you have a spouse with a long-term local job commitment—you may not be able to relocate.

But, even then, you could look at nearby cities within an hour's drive (or, however long of a commute you are willing to make).

Whether staying in place or relocating, when looking at your desired location, here are some things to ask yourself...

### *What's my ideal clientele?*

When looking at local socioeconomic factors, does this line up with the level of care and pricing strategy you intend to offer? Also, is your clientele younger and more likely to want things like telehealth and online appointment scheduling?

### What's my competition?

Knowing whether your ideal location is already saturated with veterinary hospitals can help determine whether it's wise to open a new practice there—or, at least help you think of some way to differentiate your practice from the crowd.

### Which logistics do I need to consider?

For example, what's the parking situation like? Are you conveniently located near major roads or shopping areas? And, where on the property can dogs go to the bathroom?

## Services Offered

Are you a general practitioner? A specialist?

Knowing EXACTLY what you offer will help determine where you fit within the local community.

For example, a neurologist or ophthalmologist may fit in nicely even if the area is already filled with GPs.

And, if you are a GP, maybe there's some other way to distinguish your practice and provide something new and unique to the community. For example...

- Emergency hours.
- Urgent care hours.
- Care for exotic pets.
- House calls.
- Hospice care.
- Acupuncture or holistic care.
- Large animal care and farm calls.

## Will You Be On Call?

Depending on your state's practice license requirements, you may need to provide access to 24-hour pet care—whether at your hospital alone or by recommending a local 24-hour facility to your clients.

So, if you don't intend to be on call for emergencies, research what's available in your area to fill this need for round the clock emergency services.

### To Build or Not To Build?

Do you want to build an entirely new facility, tailored to your specific vision?

This may be to your benefit, especially if you want to integrate some of the Fear Free standards for lighting, insulation, separate entrances, and more.

On the other hand, you may have found a practice for sale at a location that's hard to beat, with an established clientele.

While less common, franchising may also be an option.

In any case, you'll also have to decide whether to buy or lease the property.

### The Legal Stuff

If you don't have the right business permits and licenses, that could result in severe financial or disciplinary penalties.

You'll need to research what's required in your area, but examples include...

- Veterinary licenses for yourself and all associates.
- A veterinary practice permit.
- Local business licenses for your city or state.
- Registration for taxes.
- Forming an LLC, corporation, or other legal entity.
- A DEA license for controlled substances.

**And in addition to licenses and permits, you'll also need to plan for...**

- A CPA or other professional for bookkeeping, financial planning, and filing your taxes.
- Liability insurance.
- Occupational health and safety requirements (OSHA).
- Hazardous waste and EPA requirements.
- Employment contracts.
- Developing a business plan.

## Considerations for Modern Times

Modern times have resulted in the need for changes to the way most veterinarians practice.

At the time of this writing, curbside service is the norm because of the coronavirus pandemic. And, telemedicine is being added to many practices.

Because of the convenience of telemedicine in your clients' busy schedules, many pet owners may expect this service to continue even after social distancing precautions are lifted.

So, what modern services and conveniences do you think your potential clients will want? How can you stay competitive?

### It's Best to Work With A Consultant

Before you make a big investment, it's a good idea to work with a consultant—or, more likely, a team of several experts and advisers.

These specialists can walk you through legal, financial, demographic/feasibility information for start-ups, valuation for the sale of established practices, HR management and compliance, real estate, equipment and supplies, and various other aspects of practice ownership.

***This will not only save you time but also ensure you've considered all angles and have the best chance of finding success as a veterinarian and business owner.***

One helpful resource is Vet Partners, where you can search for experts and consultants by location and specialty.



Look for veterinary consultants, and for businesses (such as banks and real estate agents) who are used to working with veterinary practices and understand the nuances of your business.

Also, consider talking to other veterinarians who have been in your shoes and purchased a practice recently, who can share the wisdom of their experience.

### How Will Your Clients Find You?

Once you establish your dream practice, you need to ensure new clients know you exist, and that they *want* to bring their pets to you.

***In this day and age, your online presence (your website and social media) will play a large role in helping new clients find you.***

So, in the next article, we'll have some tips for making sure your online presence truly conveys how great your practice is.

***Stay tuned!***

# Location and Real Estate Considerations When Opening a Veterinary Practice



When starting your own veterinary practice, location is one of the most important decisions you make.

Here are some considerations to help you pick the perfect place...

## Where Do You Want to Be?

If you're firmly rooted in your current location—due to family or a strong tie to the community—then go ahead and explore the options in your town or nearby within a reasonable driving distance.

But, if you're more flexible, looking outside your city may present more options to choose from.

*If you're staying close to home, remember to look at the non-compete clauses of all the practices you've worked for recently.*

## What Do You Need to Consider About Your Desired Location?

So, you have an idea of where you'd like your future practice to be. But, how do you know that location will be sustainable for your new business?

Evaluate your potential location(s) for...

***Visibility/prime location*** in the community.

A high-traffic area may help new clients find you. But, a prime location can also be more expensive.

### ***Ease of access.***

Is it convenient to reach your practice from the road? Is there plenty of parking? Is there a spot for dogs to go to the bathroom?

### Is there ***enough space?***

Consider anything you might want to add in the future (such as a boarding facility)—will there be enough room on the property for this?

### What's the ***veterinary community*** like?

Is the area already saturated with **the** competition? Or, is there room for one more?

What will differentiate your new practice from other veterinary businesses in the area?

## ***What's the clientele like?***

Is the average income in the area consistent with the prices you're planning to charge for your services?

## **Which businesses are *your neighbors*?**

A dog grooming salon could be a perfect neighbor to form a mutually beneficial relationship with. On the other hand, sharing a wall with a club that plays loud music might not be good for keeping pets calm.

## **Is the *population growing or declining*?**

*For many of these considerations, it's best to work with a veterinary or start-up consultant.*

## **Do You Want an Existing Practice, Or Something Totally New?**

Many experts report that ***existing practice*** is favored by lenders since there will already be an existing, provable business structure and cash flow.

But, the disadvantage of this option is that it may be harder to make changes and create a practice that's truly your own. Existing staff and clientele may be expecting things to be done the same way they've always been done.

Here are some important questions if you're thinking about buying an existing practice...

## How was the *asking price* calculated?

You'll also have the chance to get your own valuation with a consultant, to be sure the price is appropriate.

## *What's included with the sale, and what isn't?*

Don't assume the x-ray machine and other equipment are included (and in good working order), only to find out they're not.

- *Why is the current owner selling?* What are their plans for their own career after the sale?
- Are there any *special terms* or conditions?

## Other buying options include:

- an existing non-veterinary structure
- or building your own practice from the ground up.

Each of these options has its own pros and cons.

When purchasing an *existing non-veterinary building or unit*, look into what sorts of renovations are needed to create space for major equipment, a surgery suite, exam rooms, etc.

This may be a good in-between option that allows you to build your own practice culture, and that's less expensive than starting from scratch with a new structure—assuming the renovations aren't price prohibitive.

If you decide to ***build your own practice***, you'll have the most freedom in terms of seeing your own dream practice come to life.

But, this option can be very expensive, and it will take time to build a clientele. You'll need a solid business growth plan to show lenders they can take a chance on you.

## Should You Rent Or Buy?

Here are some things to consider about ***renting***...

- A leased space may be *less expensive than buying* (according to some consultants, your loan will be half or even just a quarter as much as buying a practice).
- You may be *limited in renovations and expansion* potential.
- *How and when will the rent go up?*
- Are *repairs* (such as a plumbing leak) covered by you or the landlord?

When ***buying***, think about these factors...

- *Is the higher loan amount realistic* for your immediate income needs?
- Will the current owner cover *repairs* that are needed right away? You certainly don't want to buy a practice only to discover an expensive foundation or roof repair is needed!

## How Do You Figure All of This Out?

If you're working and have your hands full with a packed appointment schedule, you may be wondering how you'll find the time to do all this research and make an informed decision.

That's where the right consultant (or team of consultants) comes in. Experts you work with may include a: veterinary consultant, start-up consultant, veterinary practice appraiser/valuator, accountant, banker, architect, real estate agent, attorney.

***Every situation is unique, so your list of consultants may look different than this. In general, try to find professionals who have experience with veterinary practices and understand the nuances of your industry.***

All of this may take time, but it's important to have patience. Rather than rushing into something that isn't quite what you wanted, you'll be excited the day you open the doors to your dream practice!

## The Value of Staff Specialization and Training



A well-trained team can make your life easier and improve your practice's bottom line.

Instead of trying to do everything yourself, you can delegate to someone you trust—so you can do more.

Delegating is all about balance. There's always a tug-of-war between giving someone enough responsibility that they feel valued, trusted, and professionally stimulated, while also not overburdening that person with more than they can reasonably handle.

It helps to communicate with your team, keeping in mind that their needs may change over time. It's also important to make sure your highly qualified team members are fairly compensated, so they won't need to seek out a better-paying position after they're trained.



However, done well, ***there is definitely value in investing in your wonderful team members.***

Here are just a few ways to do that...

## Formal Training and Certifications

The NAVTA (National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America) offers several official certifications through their Committee on Veterinary Technician Specialties. Some of the specialties include...

- Emergency and Critical Care Technicians.
- Dental Technicians.
- Internal Medicine Technicians.
- Technicians in Anesthesia and Analgesia.
- Zoological Medicine Technicians.

## What does certification mean, exactly?

***To take an example, there could be a lot of value in hiring a dental RVT. This is a tech or nurse who specialized in the field of veterinary dentistry.***

According to the Academy of Veterinary Dental Technicians (AVDT), their members have immense knowledge of pet dental diseases and can help to educate clients on the importance of oral health, as well as on procedures the doctor may need to perform during a dental.

This knowledge comes from a minimum of 3,000 hours of veterinary dentistry training, training under a mentor from the AVDT program, and a 2-phase (written and practical skills) exam.

So, having a dental RVT could save you a lot of time in client communication, while also instilling trust in clients that the whole team is knowledgeable and cares about their pet.

You also know a dental RVT is a person you can trust to help you perform dental procedures efficiently.

So far as this program and other formal training programs go, you could look to hire someone who already has this certification.

Or, if possible for your practice, it may be worth it to help invest in the process for a team member whom you know will be staying with you long-term.

## Continuing Education Events

In addition to CE for veterinarians and veterinary students, large conferences such as VMX also offer a wealth of choices for technicians/nurses, practice managers, and other support staff.

Topics covered often include...

- Various skills for vet techs, ranging from daily procedures to emergency and critical care.
- Hiring and employee evaluation best practices for managers.
- Social media and marketing tips.
- Communication skills.
- And more...

Supporting your team members in learning these new skills could help to add more technical capabilities to your practice, ease team communications, and make your practice's daily operations smoother.

***If sending team members to a big conference isn't an option yet (which may very well be the case until your new practice gets established), look for local events.***

Sometimes, emergency vet hospitals or local veterinary specialists offer CE events for community veterinary practices in topics such as pet CPR.

## In-House Training

Having an in-house training program for your new hires is a very common method of bringing new team members up to speed. Done well, it can be very efficient and help new employees bond to their team members.

However, it's important to go about it the right way. Here are a few tips...

- ***Have a comprehensive resource***—such as a staff training manual covering client communication, dress code, fecal interpretation, etc.—in a place that's easy to access, such as a physical binder or computer file.
- ***Ask your new hire about their previous experience***, and what questions they have for you.
- ***Set up a timeline***, so the new employee knows exactly what they need to learn and by when.
- ***Decide who is doing the training***. Make sure that person is up for the job—rather than viewing it as a burden, they should be someone who enjoys teaching others.
- ***Have check-ins*** during the training process—both to see if the new hire is doing their part to learn, and to be sure they're not overwhelmed.

## Learning to “Let Go”—So You Can Thrive

As a veterinary practice owner, delegating your tasks can be hard at first.

After all, you've just built the practice you dreamed of, and you might feel a strong desire to have a hand in every aspect of your daily operations.

It can be challenging to let go of that need to oversee everything.

Also, delegation is not necessarily something to be taken lightly. You must be sure you have team members you trust to take on important responsibilities.

***However, once you allow your talented team to take on the responsibilities they're trained to do, that can mean better professional satisfaction for them, and less "overwhelm" for you.***

It can allow you to do more with your time each day while expanding your reach in terms of both patient care and income potential.

## Hiring and Staff Retention



Your team members are a crucial part of your veterinary practice's success.

Therefore, it's worth it to invest time in hiring, developing effective team communication, and figuring out how to nurture team members so they stay with you long-term.

But, if you're new to hiring and team motivation, where do you begin?

### It All Starts With Your Foundation

To hire and retain the right staff members for your new veterinary practice, you first need to know what you really want your practice to be like.

***What's your practice philosophy? How big should your team be? What style of communication would you like to be the norm? Will your staff be cross-trained, or will each team member have a clearly defined role?***

Spend some time thinking about these things. Make notes, and put as many details into your vision as you can.

The more you can convey your vision in your job postings and during interviews, the more you'll be able to find people who are a good fit for your practice environment.

## Finding the Best Candidates

Here are some basics to think about when it comes to attracting high-quality candidates...

- ***Where will you find candidates?*** Think about posting your job listing on sites like Indeed, LinkedIn, the AVMA, Facebook job boards, and asking vet schools to post at the school for you. In addition to posting a job description, think about local and online networking.
- ***Does your job listing stand out?*** Think of a catchy title. Use bullet points rather than long paragraphs—that makes it easier to scan the text. Also, focus not just on technical information about your practice, but also on the perks and benefits for potential employees and why it's great to work there.
- ***Be specific and accurate.*** Be honest about the job and responsibilities, in as much detail as possible. That way, potential candidates will know exactly what to expect.
- ***Why should candidates choose you?*** Once you find a good candidate, it's important to remember they may be interviewing at several places and have several good offers. So, it's best to make your offer as attractive as possible, if you really want to hire the best.

Benefits could include things like health insurance, scheduled raises or bonuses, incentive programs, paid time off, a relocation bonus, student debt repayment help, or a CE allowance. It could also include a structured mentorship program for new graduates. Get creative, see what others in your region offer, and figure out how to make an offer that would be difficult to refuse.



- ***Talk to colleagues.*** It's possible someone you went to vet school with may have a stellar employee who's moving to your area, and your classmate can recommend your clinic.
- ***Keep your website up to date.*** Potential candidates may research you via your website and social media presence. Keeping these online platforms up to date, with great content and fun pictures, can create a positive first impression. In addition to potential employees, it also helps with potential clients.
- ***Consider hiring a veterinary recruiter.*** Sometimes, it's best to let the experts do the legwork so you can balance your daily responsibilities as a practice owner.

### ***Your reputation is also important.***

If your employees rave about how much they love working at your practice, word of mouth can help to attract wonderful new employees.

On the other hand, employees who've had a negative experience may have the opposite effect.

## Hiring Tips

Once you have candidates to interview, you'll need to design a process that works well for you in terms of interviewing.

This may take some trial and error. But start with these tips...

- Focus not only on **technical skills** and qualifications, but also on **attitude**, and on **soft skills** such as communication.
- **Verify** degrees, licenses, references, etc.
- **Ask the same set of questions** to all applicants. And consider using behavior-based interview questions, which tell you more about how a person may act in a given situation.
- Ask about **availability and flexibility**, especially if you need to fill specific shifts.
- **Don't make the process too difficult**. For example, multiple days of interviews may not be possible for someone currently employed elsewhere.
- Try to do a **working interview**, and consider bringing other key staff members into the decision process.
- Always **communicate clearly**, and try to give a timeframe for when you'll make your decision.

During social distancing, it may also be valuable to do your initial conversation via Zoom. Become familiar with this platform, and treat it just like you would an in-person interview by sending personalized messages and introducing everyone who joins the call.

## Staff Retention

Once you find team members who are a good fit and contribute to the growth of your practice—of course, you'll want to keep them around!

Here are a few ideas to help with staff retention...

- ***Deliver on what you promised***, in terms of the new hire's job responsibilities, your practice culture, etc.
- Have a clear, comfortable ***onboarding and training process*** for new team members.
- ***Have check-ins*** at specified times after hiring, to see how the new team member is adjusting and if they need anything.
- ***Ask your team members about their goals***. Some may want to increase their pay. Others may want a flexible schedule based on their kids' school and activities. Still, others may be interested in professional growth and the ability to rise to management. For veterinary associates, this may mean adding a new skill set to offer to clients, such as acupuncture.

Whatever your employees' goals, professional fulfillment can help with retention.

***Encourage open communication.*** By making it safe for your staff to have any complaints heard and addressed, you can resolve issues ***before*** they become a big problem.

By nurturing your team and creating a supportive environment, you'll not only make your own workdays more pleasant—you'll also be contributing to the success of your new veterinary practice.

## Social Media Tips For Veterinary Practices



You spend all day running your practice and seeing patients. So maybe social media seems like an unwelcome burden on top of your already-busy days.

However, it's best to think of social media as an advantage rather than a burden...

Done well, social media can bring in new clients, help current clients bond to your practice, and boost your practice's reputation.

This can make social media well worth your time.

### How to Use Social Media to Your Advantage

Here are some of the advantages of developing your social media presence...

## Building your practice's reputation.

Social media gives a “window” or “sneak peek” into what your veterinary practice is like, which is part of your branding and also helps establish trust.

## Finding new clients.

Many potential clients choose a veterinarian not only by looking at websites and online reviews but also by looking at social media.

## SEO/Searchability.

Social media isn't a replacement for an optimized, searchable website. However, it can aid your other efforts to show up higher in online search results.

## Nurturing existing clients.

Social media is a great way to keep in touch and nurture your relationship with current clients—so they would never dream of taking their pets anywhere else.

## Building trust during social distancing and curbside service.

During the last year, your online presence may be more important than ever...

Because of the pandemic and curbside service, clients can't observe your clinic firsthand or see the caring way you work with their pets.

Social media can give clients an idea of what's happening behind the scenes—which may promote a sense of trust and confidence while they wait in the car for their pet to return.

## Free marketing!

Some social media advertising is paid. However, you can post plenty of content and pictures for free!

## Which Platforms Matter?

Maybe you're convinced of the benefits—but, you have no idea where to start...

That's normal. Keep in mind that social media management can be a full-time job and profession—so don't expect to be an expert overnight.

Instead, ease your way in with 1-2 of the following platforms...

- **Facebook** is tried and true, and a great place to start.
- **Instagram** is another popular, growing platform, especially for Millennials (the US's largest pet-owning population).
- **YouTube**. If you're comfortable posting videos (which can be simple, short videos you record on your phone), YouTube is a great option.
- Twitter and other platforms. Feel free to start these if you're interested. But the three platforms listed above are usually the best bets for veterinary practices.

## What Should You Post?

The key is authenticity, and visual posts (i.e. pictures and videos do better than just text).

Rather than stock photos, people want to see pictures of you and your team in action. Try to capture the times when your team is smiling and enjoying caring for pets.

Also, try your hand at simple, inexpensive tools to create infographics, such as Canva.

With that in mind, here are a few post ideas...



- ***Timely information and events***, like holiday safety for pets in December, toxic plants to be aware of in springtime, local animal shelter fundraisers, or sharing information about your team members during National Vet Tech Week.
- ***Anything that encourages engagement*** (response to your post). For example, ask your followers which pet topics they'd like to learn about. Or put out a request for people to post pictures of their own pets.
- ***Contests***. For example, if you request pet photos, select one of the photos to receive a small prize like a bag of treats.
- ***Discounts or special offers***, such as discounts during the dental month.
- ***Special announcements***. Share a picture and some information on any new team members you hire. Or announce closures during inclement weather.

- ***Cute animals!*** Cute animal photos and videos are hugely popular on the internet—giving you an advantage as a pet professional. Share pictures of your team members' pets, or pics of your patients (with the client's written consent, of course, since confidentiality rules still apply—but many clients are happy to have their pet's picture posted!).
- ***Educational content.*** Explain to pet owners what sorts of parasites live in your area, what are the signs of a sick pet, how to read cat body language or anything else that may be of interest.
- ***Videos.*** Record instructional videos on how to properly clean a dog's ears or how to administer a pill, for example.

## How to Find the Time

Here are some tips for fitting social media into your schedule...

***Decide who will be posting*** on social media, whether that's you or a team member.

Don't assume that a team member who spends a lot of time on their own social media profile will be able to manage your pages—because personal and business social media management are two different animals.

If delegating, provide guidance on goals, strategy, and what is/isn't an appropriate post.

## Set realistic goals.

Initially, this could be as simple as posting once per week. This is less than social media gurus say you should post—but it's better than setting a lofty goal and then abandoning it and never posting at all.

Once you're more comfortable, allow your strategy to evolve over time.

### ***Create a "cheat sheet."***

Write down ideas of what to post, which may include some of the examples listed above. Then, you won't be out of ideas when it's time to post—you'll have a reserve of ideas to draw from.

***Put social media time into your calendar***, just as you would a patient's appointment. That way, you won't miss it.

This should include checking your platforms daily and responding to any questions and comments—in the beginning, this shouldn't take longer than 5-10 minutes per day.

### ***Watch which posts get the most engagement.***

"Likes" are good, but comments on a post are even better. Try to produce more of the types of posts that get engagement.

When you're ready, it may be worth it to ***invest in a professional*** marketer or social media expert who is familiar with the veterinary industry.

Consistency pays off over time. So keep it up—you'll be happy you did!

# The Value Of Newsletters For Your Veterinary Practice



There are many ways newsletters are beneficial to veterinarians, including...

## Staying front of mind.

Clients are busy, and after their pet's checkup, they might not think about their veterinarian at all until the next time their pet needs something.

But informative or entertaining newsletters will help clients remember your practice and how helpful you are—so they'll never have a reason to look elsewhere.

## Developing trust.

They say people buy from those they trust. Newsletters help you in this regard.

By providing informative articles or other content, you can help dedicated pet owners learn more about their dog or cat's health. Newsletters can reinforce what you teach clients during their visit, and also present new and valuable information on a variety of pet health topics.

Additionally, newsletters can show off a bit of your practice's personality and culture. That's especially valuable during curbside service when clients can't always come in to "see" your practice for themselves the way they used to.

## Sharing important announcements.

If you're running a special promotion (such as dental month discounts or discounted vaccines on certain days of the week), newsletters are a great place to inform your clients.

## Marketing and social engagement that isn't subject to algorithms.

Last week, we shared information on social media for veterinary practices. And while social media is great, most platforms are subject to one potential disadvantage—algorithms.

In short, algorithms mean that social media platforms have a formula they use to determine which posts your followers actually see.

Newsletters, on the other hand, are delivered to EVERYONE on your email list, with no interference from finicky and unpredictable algorithms.

## How Do You Set Up and Write a Newsletter?

Here are some tips for getting started...

### Decide on a frequency.

Are you going to send your newsletter weekly? Every month? Every quarter?

This depends on your clients' preferences, and your strategy may change over time.

If you're not sure, one newsletter per month is usually a good place to start.

### Create a template.

A template is a backdrop for your newsletter—the formatting, colors, and graphics that make it look visually appealing.

If you use a mail service provider like MailChimp, they generally have pre-made, professional-looking templates you can use.

If you want something more unique, you can look into formatting and designing your own template if you're the creative type, or consider working with a professional graphic designer.

### Brainstorm a list of ideas.

That way, you'll never get "writer's block." See the section below for inspiration.

## Share your articles.

Don't just email your content. Also, post it on your website and share it on social media.

## What Do You Write About?

- Seasonal or timely content. This could include holiday hazards, fireworks safety, warm or cold weather advisories, and fun holidays like Love Your Pet Day or National Dog Biscuit Day.
- Important announcements. Tell your clients about changes to the hospital (like closures or new staff members and new services offered), pet food recalls, local pet events, etc.
- Veterinarian Q&A. Encourage people to send in general pet health and wellbeing questions, which may be answered by one of your veterinarians in a future issue.
- Discounts and special offers.
- Interesting or important pet health topics.
- How-to articles, such as how to administer pills or brush a pet's teeth.

## Some Helpful Tips...



Keep the writing simple. Sometimes less is more, meaning shorter articles and shorter paragraphs are more likely to be read than larger chunks of text.

Include pictures, since they can make a newsletter more entertaining. Look for stock photos, including some of your own authentic photos from your practice, or work with an artist on Fiverr who can create infographics (such as a picture illustrating 10 plants that are toxic to pets) for a very reasonable price.

Also, create enticing subject lines that will make clients want to open and read your newsletters. For example, instead of a subject line that says “Pet Dental Health,” write “Dental Disease Affects a Pet’s Whole Body - Here’s Why...”

To save time and maximize your results, consider working with a professional marketer or copywriter who is familiar with the veterinary industry.

## How Do You Know If Your Newsletter Is Effective?

If you put time into your newsletter, you want to know it’s accomplishing its purpose. Here are some ways to tell...

- ***Look at statistics*** (such as how many people opened your email, and whether they clicked on any links you included) from your email service provider.
- ***Take note of any engagement***, such as people sending you questions, leaving comments, or even mentioning the newsletter during an appointment.

If you're not getting a big response in the beginning, don't worry—this is a marathon, not a sprint. Your goal is to build relationships over time, not get a huge wave of business with each article you send out.

All in all, newsletters are a good investment. They're a great way to stay in touch and deepen those relationships that make caring for pets so rewarding.

# Client Communication And Customer Service Training



Veterinarians and veterinary team members sometimes say they got into veterinary medicine because they like animals more than they like people.

*But the truth is, no matter how much you and your awesome team love animals, a large part of your job will consist of dealing with the human beings attached to those animals.*

## Why Invest Time in Communications and Customer Experience Training?

You'll probably have some clients you love, others you feel neutral about, and others that you find difficult to work with.

Sometimes, the art of “communications” is presented primarily as a way to become skilled at conflict resolution, for those times you're dealing with people who are rude or argumentative.

***But the truth is, communications can help ALL of your clients (everyone from difficult to A-list) better understand your services and the value you provide.***

It can help them feel comfortable coming to you with their questions and concerns and have a better perception of you and your veterinary practice.

***All of this can potentially lead to more income, as well as more flattering online reviews and word of mouth referrals.***

Communications and customer experience are fields where there's always more to learn, and these skills can continue to improve with practice over time.

But, here are a few good places to start...

## Communicating for Clarity

One of the most important things to do is ensure your clients understand the information you're telling them about their pet—and, that they'll retain that information.

Here are some ways to do that...

## Clearly state what is happening.

For example, we've probably all heard stories about clients who thought a neuter was the same thing as a vasectomy—until they got home and realized their pet's testicles had been removed!

Clear communication at the beginning (and not just assuming a client already knows what the word “neuter” means), could prevent such misunderstandings.

## Offer ways for a client to easily recall the information or learn more.

For example, give the client a handout with more detailed information to refer to, or allow them to videotape your talk.

This can also help when they go home and relay the information to their spouse—so you won't get a request to repeat your entire speech for their spouse!

### ***Use distraction-free communication.***

Make your exam rooms cell phone-free zones.

Have something available to occupy rambunctious kids (for example, a movie or toys).

And wait to bring the pet back into the room until you and the client are done talking.

## Prioritize Time With the People Who Truly Value Their Time With You

It may be tempting to spend extra time in the room and debate with the client who wants to listen to their breeder or Dr. Google instead of you.

And sometimes that's worth it. But, if you're pretty sure that person is never going to change their mind, your time may be better spent with a client who WANTS to hear what you have to say.

## Keeping All Your Communications Consistent

If you and your technician both give a client the same advice about heartworm prevention—but then your receptionist tells the client, “Nah, I don't use it for my own dog...”—what would be the end result?

***Probably confusion and doubt in the client's mind. And maybe suspicion that you are selling products that aren't really necessary for their pet.***

This could happen with a variety of products and services, including parasite preventions, good quality pet foods, dental procedures, and more.

*It's important to be sure your whole team is on the same page, sending a consistent message to your clients.*

## The Little Things You Can Do to Improve Client Perception and Experience

Often, small little things you do to brighten a client's day can make a BIG, positive impression—and bond that client to your practice for the long-term.

### A few examples include...

Helping elderly clients by going out to their car when you see them arrive, and offering to carry their pet's carrier for them.

- Sending a card after a pet is euthanized, or during the holiday season.
- Allowing clients to go out the back door after euthanasia, for privacy when they're crying.
- Telling clients how you change to a fresh needle after drawing up a vaccine, so the injection is more comfortable for their pet (remember, if you don't tell them, they won't know!).

## Avoiding Client Shaming

While still somewhat controversial, this topic is drawing more attention in the veterinary community...

Client shaming means unintentionally (or, sometimes intentionally) making a client feel guilty when they're behind on care for their pet or did something they shouldn't have done (like giving a human medication that's toxic for pets)—especially if it's led to their pet becoming ill.

The thing is, most clients already feel very bad about it without veterinary team members making them feel worse.

***If you can make your practice a safe space for clients to come without judgment, you may find that some of those very same clients appreciate it so much that they'll be bonded to your clinic long-term.***

They may even start to bring their pet to you more frequently for routine care and preventive diagnostics!

Of course, it won't go that way every time. And clients do need to be informed when they've made mistakes, so they can avoid repeating those mistakes.

So, use your judgment to figure out the best way to communicate in each unique client situation.

## Who Can Benefit From Learning More About Communication and Customer Service?

***In short—everyone! The whole team, from the medical director to kennel assistant, could benefit.***



Even if someone is naturally a good communicator, there's no harm in that person learning more and adding additional communication tools to their toolbox.

To get started, you can look for formal communication and customer experience training. You can also do in-house training, with role-playing.

Progress checks from time to time may help, too, so everyone can continue to learn and grow.

The time you invest can be well worth it. It can make everyone's daily interactions (for team members and clients alike) as smooth and pleasant as possible.

***And, nurturing happy clients can certainly help to improve your bottom line.***

# What Is Section 179 And How Can It Help My Veterinary Practice?



According to the website [Section179.org](http://Section179.org)—a free resource dedicated to providing information on the Section 179 Tax Deduction—many people who take advantage of this special tax deduction find that...

***“...the tax savings will actually exceed the total of the first year’s payments on the equipment, which makes buying equipment profitable for the current tax year.”***

That makes it a lot easier to invest in equipment for your new or growing veterinary practice.

## What is Section 179?

Section 179 is part of the IRS tax code. It's a perfectly legal tax "perk" for small to medium-sized businesses, which allows a generous tax deduction for purchases of many types of equipment and software.

The original intent of this tax benefit was to help small businesses purchase equipment and invest in themselves.

***This deduction can be for the full purchase price of qualifying equipment purchased within that tax year. Yes, that includes financed/leased equipment, too, in addition to equipment purchased outright.***

Larger businesses can also benefit from this deduction. However, the dollar-for-dollar deduction decreases after a certain spending cap (and the benefit disappears altogether after a certain amount), since the benefit is designed primarily for small to medium-sized businesses.

## How Can Section 179 Help My Veterinary Business?

In the past, businesses usually benefited from tax write-offs for equipment depreciation. But this was a much slower process, writing off just a little bit of depreciation each year.

Section 179 speeds up the process and allows for a much larger deduction—the entire purchase price of qualifying equipment you invested in that year—during a single tax year, rather than slowly over several years.

This can make it more financially feasible for you to purchase the equipment you need right now.

Since most small businesses' entire year's equipment purchases fall well within the deduction limit (\$1,040,000 in 2020), you may be able to write off the **entire cost** of all the equipment you invested in for the year.

***This would be especially helpful for a startup or brand-new veterinary practice, when you will need to purchase or finance a lot of equipment all at once.***

But well-established clinics can certainly benefit, too.

## What Else Should I Know?

The website [Section179.org](http://Section179.org) is a great resource to answer your specific questions about how this tax rule applies to your veterinary business.

But here are a few more general principles to know about Section 179...

In addition to being ***purchased*** during the tax year in question, ***the equipment must also be put into use*** during the year it is written off.

So you can't, say, make a big purchase and then just put it into storage or start using it next year—the write off is only for the equipment you are currently using.

***Bonus Depreciation*** is offered for some years.

## What Is Section 179 And How Can It Help My Veterinary Practice?

This Bonus Depreciation allows you to “double-up” in a sense—by combining a tax write off for equipment depreciation on this year’s equipment purchases, in addition to the Section 179 write off of that very same equipment.

At the time of this writing, in 2020, Bonus Depreciation is available at 100%.

***Section 179 covers used equipment***, as well as new—as long as the equipment is new to ***your*** business and purchased or financed by you within the current tax year.

This even includes Bonus Depreciation on used equipment—previously this wasn’t allowed, but the most recent tax laws do allow for it.

***There are some restrictions*** on which equipment qualifies.

***In particular, vehicles and software have their own stipulations.***

For an up to date list of qualifying equipment and stipulations, check [Section179.org](http://Section179.org).

- ***The deadline*** in which to purchase your equipment and place it into service is December 31st of the year in which you’d like to take the deduction.
- ***To gain the Section 179 benefit***, you’ll need to fill out ‘Part One’ of IRS form 4562.

## Where Can I Learn More?

## What Is Section 179 And How Can It Help My Veterinary Practice?

As we've mentioned, [Section179.org](https://www.section179.org) is a great resource. In addition to some of the most up to date information and lists of qualifying equipment, the website also includes a *calculator so you can figure out how much your tax savings will be.*

Also, as with all financial or tax information, it's always best to consult a qualified professional for your specific situation.

But once you understand how this and other tax benefits may apply to you as the owner of a veterinary practice, the savings could make a big difference in your bottom line—which in turn could give you a leg up to help your practice grow and thrive.

## 7 Tips For Managing Money In Your New Veterinary Practice



Learning to manage money—including balancing your budget, planning your taxes, and tracking all expenses—is a daunting task for any new business owner. And veterinary practices are no exception.

However, healthy finances are necessary for your practice to grow and thrive.

### Think of Accounting as Part of Your Strategy

With all the work that goes into opening a veterinary practice—not to mention your busy schedule seeing patients—it's understandable you might want to ignore your practice's balance sheets or just assume you're doing okay if you're not out of money at the end of the month.

***However, much like a personal budget, keeping track of your business revenue and expenses can help you make the most of your money.***

It allows you to focus on your goals—like investing in better equipment or hiring new team members, all for better patient care.

It can even help you maximize your practice's valuation, for that far-off day in the future when you may want to sell.

Importantly, knowing where you stand also helps you feel in control—so you can confidently “steer your ship” through good and bad economic times alike.

Here are some tips for taking on your practice's financial duties...

## 1. Learn Basic Bookkeeping and Financial Terms

Do you know what it means to set up a profit and loss statement?

What about cash versus accrual style accounting? And how is cashflow different from profits?

If these terms sound like a foreign language to you, you're not alone. There's a lot to learn when you're just starting out managing finances for a business.

Like any field, it helps to start with the basics.



*This will allow you to understand more complex financial concepts in the future, and to properly categorize all your expenses and revenue for accurate records.*

## 2. Ensure You Have All the Proper Legal Paperwork

If you've formed a corporation, there is always paperwork involved. This may include not only your paperwork to create a corporation, but also certain forms regarding your tax classification (for example, LLCs have the option to file taxes as S corporations).

You'll also need the correct forms required by your state, county, or city to operate your business. At the very least, in addition to veterinary licenses, this probably includes a local business license and forms that authorize you to collect taxes from your clients on taxable goods or services.

*All of this may vary a lot between states or cities, so it's important to research what is required for your location. Failing to do so, and to renew when needed, could result in financial penalties.*

## 3. Keep Business and Personal Finances Separate

Mingling personal and business finances make it impossible to really see how your business is doing.

Also, it may carry financial risks. You could lose tax benefits such as deducting business expenses.

Depending on which type of business you've set up, you could even face personal liability (rather than having liability protection through your corporation) if you are sued.

To avoid these issues, it's crucial to keep your personal and business finances separate.

***The easiest way to do this is by having entirely different bank accounts for yourself and your veterinary practice. And if you need to use a credit card, have separate business and personal cards.***

By maintaining this separation, you'll never accidentally mix your personal and business transactions.

There are ways to withdraw money from your business to use for yourself, such as when you pay yourself a salary. But it's important to check that you're following all of the legal rules and tax considerations for this.

### 4. Track Everything in Real-Time

Don't be the person who shows up at their accountant's office two weeks before April 15th with a giant box of unsorted receipts...

***Rushing at the last minute is inefficient. It prevents you from setting goals, seeing where you stand throughout the whole year, and planning for certain tax benefits.***

So stay on top of your bookkeeping year-round.

### 5. Find a System That Works for You

You may have heard of common accounting software like QuickBooks. You may also have some accounting capabilities in your veterinary practice's software.

Do some research and see what works best for you.

***Try to automate whenever possible—i.e., use a system that automatically syncs with your expenses and revenue, so you don't have to enter numbers manually.***

## 6. Consider Working With a Professional

Many business owners outsource their financial tracking to a CPA or other qualified professional.

***This makes sense. It saves you time and allows you to focus on what you really want to do—care for animals—rather than spending hours on tedious number crunching.***

Plus, you have the security of a knowledgeable professional who can ensure everything is done correctly (some even offer guarantees to defend you if you're audited), and offer additional tax and financial planning strategies you might not have thought of on your own.

Also, a financial professional may be more likely to spot mistakes or missing money—whether accidental or due to something like an employee pocketing cash or merchandise.

Nowadays, there are even CPAs who specialize in the veterinary industry and understand your needs as a practice owner.

## 7. Track Your Goals

One of the biggest benefits of managing your finances is that it allows you to accomplish your goals.

Rather than leaking cash here and there, you know exactly where every dollar is going—so you can use your money the way you want to use it to grow your practice.

Even if you've outsourced to an accountant, check in with them on a regular basis. Explain your goals so they can work with you to make it happen.

Knowledge is power. When you take control of your practice's finances, you've taken a powerful step toward success and realizing your dreams as a practice owner.

# Online Reviews and Your Veterinary Practice, Part 1: An Introduction to Online Reviews, Why They Matter, and the Ethics and Rules



Nowadays, many people search online for local businesses before deciding where they'd like to spend their money—and yes, that includes searching for a veterinarian or veterinary practice.

You've probably done this yourself when searching for a specific type of restaurant, hotel, dentist, hairstylist, etc...

Have you ever been more inclined to use a business because of a good review—or avoided it because of a bad review?

Well, your potential clients think the same way when it comes to finding a veterinarian...

## How much do online reviews matter?

Research indicates that over 90% of consumers read online reviews, and nearly as many incorporate those reviews into their purchase decisions.

Star rating is the number one factor used to judge a business, and 40% of consumers form an opinion about a business by reading just 1-3 reviews online.

This is especially relevant to the Millennial generation—*the largest pet-owning population in the U.S.*—who are very likely to do online research before choosing a veterinary practice.

*In short, all of this means that online reviews can affect your veterinary practice's reputation, how high you show up in online search results, your ability to attract new clients, and your practice's bottom line.*

So yes—online reviews are VERY important.

## Where do online reviews live?

When we say online reviews, that could include a large number of different online platforms where consumers post reviews of products, services, and businesses.

However, there are a few places where you may want to focus your attention since they are the most commonly used platforms...

***Google.***

When it comes to online reviews, Google is HUGE.

Not only is it one of the most commonly used platforms for reviews, it's also connected to other modalities such as Google Maps and general online searches.

***So even if a pet owner just wants to find your website or get directions to your clinic, there's a good chance your Google reviews will pop up and be prominent on the page.***

## ***Facebook.***

This includes “official” reviews, as well as social media posts made by clients on your page or on their own pages.

## ***Yelp.***

Whether you love Yelp or hate it, there's no denying that Yelp pages often feature prominently in online search results.

- Other review sites like Angie's List.
- Online directories such as Yahoo Local, InsiderPages, SuperPages, YellowPages, and more.
- The Better Business Bureau.
- Your own website.

## How do you ethically obtain good online reviews?

So, you recognize that online reviews are important to your veterinary practice... but how do you obtain more good reviews in an ethical way?

When we say “ethical,” that basically means the reviews must be genuine, honest, and unbiased—and there are rules in place to help enforce this.

***This is important because violation of the rules can result in stiff financial or even legal penalties.***

If you fail to follow the rules, you may be in violation of not only the platform’s policies, but also in violation of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) rules.

Penalties may include a serious plummet in your rankings (Yelp will even add a Consumer Alert warning about your business on their site), removal of reviews, and significant financial penalties.

***All of this is in place to ensure reviews stay as honest and unbiased as possible.***

To stay on the right side of the rules, here are some things NOT to do...



- ***Don't "incentivize" reviews***—in other words, don't offer your clients a payment or other reward in exchange for an online review.
- ***Don't place undue pressure*** on clients to write reviews.
- ***Don't pay third parties*** to write reviews.
- ***Don't flood review sites with biased reviews*** from yourself, your employees, or family and friends.
- ***Don't leave negative reviews for your competitors.***
- ***Don't remove reviews.***

If you feel a review is inaccurate or fake, contact the platform to discuss removal.

### ***Stay up to date on the rules, and keep in mind that different sites may have different rules.***

For example, at the time of this writing, Yelp is more strict than other review sites when it comes to asking your clients for reviews—it's against their policies altogether.

## Where should I start?

Obviously, there's a lot to keep up with here...

To simplify the task at hand, focus on these things initially...

***Claim all of your online business listings***, like Google My Business, your business's Yelp page, and online directories.

Keep all information up to date, including your location and hours of operation.

- ***Focus on the “big ticket” review sites*** first and foremost—especially Google, Facebook, and Yelp.
- ***Include reviews on your own website***—it's the only place you have total control over what content you include.
- ***When in doubt, stay on the conservative side of the rules*** for asking your clients for reviews, to ensure you're in compliance.

Next week, we'll have more specific tips for you in terms of how to gather good reviews.

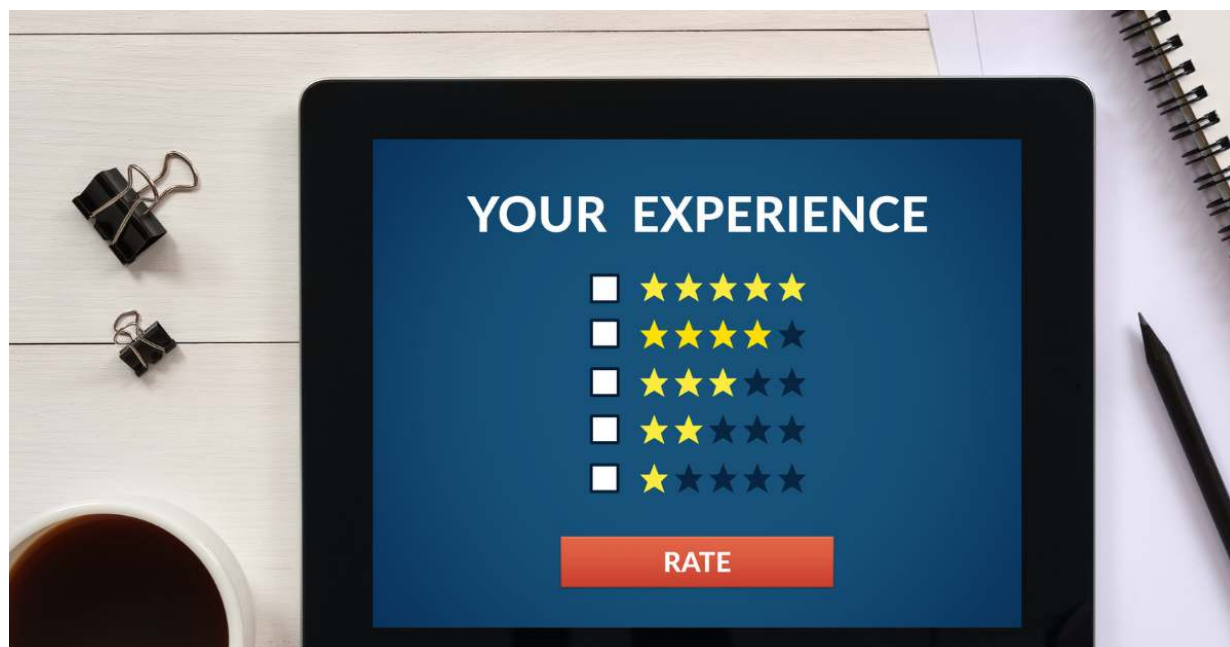
We'll also cover a topic that's surely on your mind—that is, how to deal with negative reviews...

***Stay tuned for part 2 of this very important topic!***

Helpful statistics for online reviews:

<https://www.vendasta.com/blog/50-stats-you-need-to-know-about-online-reviews>

## Online Reviews and Your Veterinary Practice, Part 2: Getting More of the Good, and Dealing with the Bad



In part one, we offered an introduction to online reviews, including why online reviews matter so much to the success of your veterinary practice.

***As a reminder... online reviews can affect your veterinary practice's reputation, how high you show up in online search results, your ability to attract new clients, and your practice's bottom line.***

Considering that over 90% of consumers read online reviews, it's more important than ever to "take the reins" and use online reviews to your advantage.

Here's how...

## How To Ethically Solicit Good Reviews for Your Veterinary Practice

### ***Keep it simple.***

Your clients are busy, so the easier you make it to leave a review, the more likely they are to do it.

Try placing links to review sites on your website or social media.

### ***Automate the process.***

Consider sending automated follow-up emails (or even text messages, which are gaining in popularity as a communication tool for businesses) for well patient visits.

In the message, you can include links to review sites—or even an invitation to leave a review, so long as your invitation follows the rules (some review sites don't allow you to ask clients for reviews, while others do).

### ***Maximize your use of positive reviews.***

Frame and display them in your lobby, use them as quotes on your website, or share them on social media.

### ***Follow up on ALL reviews.***

Positive reviews deserve a response just as much as negative reviews do.

In fact, responding to positive reviews can help bond those happy clients to your practice and show future clients that you are attentive and caring.

***Thank clients who leave reviews.***

If a client goes out of their way to leave you a glowing review, a phone call or thank you card is a quick but effective way to let that client know you appreciate them.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to offer a small thank you gift, such as a bag of treats for their pet. Just be sure to follow the review site's guidelines for gifts—and use the gift as an unexpected “thank you” after the fact, not as an incentive offered in exchange for a review.

***As you can imagine, angry or dissatisfied clients are far more likely than happy clients to take time out of their busy day to leave a review...***

Fortunately, you can combat this issue by using the above strategies to acquire more good reviews.

That way, a couple of negative reviews here and there will seem less relevant.

## **How do you deal with bad reviews?**

A bad online review may feel like a punch to the gut—especially if it's very accusatory or a WRITTEN IN ALL CAPS angry review.

To make matters worse, it can affect new clients' perceptions of your veterinary practice.

### *Don't worry, though... it happens to everyone.*

Here are a few tips to help you deal with those inevitable negative reviews...

#### ***Take a deep breath.***

An emotional, knee-jerk response never helps...

Don't respond until you've had a chance to not only investigate the facts, but answer from a calmer frame of mind.

#### ***Determine if the review is legit.***

Mistakes happen, and sometimes clients of a different veterinary clinic may mistakenly leave a review on your site. Or, a fake review could come from a disgruntled ex-employee or someone else with their own agenda.

If you've determined that the review is false (from someone who isn't a client), communicate that fact politely in response, then contact the platform or directory and request they remove the review.

#### ***Go on a fact-finding mission.***

If the review is, in fact, from someone who visited your clinic...

Talk to your team, do some research, and figure out what actually happened.

## ***Look at this as an opportunity to grow.***

Sometimes, negative reviews are invaluable opportunities to improve your practice's communications, customer service, or quality of care. In that regard, a negative review could be a blessing in disguise.

## ***Try to contact the client.***

Whether the review was accurate or not, it's often a good idea to call the client as soon as possible—within 24 hours is a good rule of thumb to diffuse the situation.

Express your concern for the wellbeing of their pet. Listen with empathy, even if their review made you angry. Sometimes, just being listened to will help an angry client calm down.

## ***If appropriate, take measures to make the situation right with the client.***

Some people are impossible to please...

On the other hand, some clients will be perfectly happy if you try to make amends.

If the situation seems to be resolved, give the client an opportunity to update or remove the review themselves—and if they don't do so in a few days, it's usually okay to politely ask (check on their pet's wellbeing when you contact the client, too).

## ***Respond to the online review if it's not removed.***

If you haven't been able to reach the client, write that you hope they will contact you so you can learn more and help to resolve the situation.

If you have contacted them, mention that you were glad you were able to resolve the situation (if applicable) and express your well wishes for their pet.

### ***Always be kind and helpful.***

It may be tempting to defend yourself or get into an argument...

But taking the high road and focusing on your sympathy for the client's pet will leave the impression that you're professional and caring—something future clients will notice since they'll read your response along with the original review.

### **Good rules of thumb...**

Always be authentic and caring in your communications, and let your love of pets shine through.

Craft a unique response to each review, rather than using a "cookie-cutter" phrase that's exactly the same each time.

Respect each client's privacy, even if their negative review is inaccurate. Revealing personal information (like names or their pet's medical history) could land you in hot water.

If all of this seems overwhelming, you're not alone...



Many veterinary practices consult with marketing professionals to help them with online reviews and communications. You may find this option saves you a ton of time, and helps you effectively accomplish your goals so your practice can thrive.

## How To Make Your New Veterinary Practice Part of the Community



By now, you may have a location in mind for where you want to open your own veterinary practice.

In addition to strategic reasons for choosing your location, it's important to think about the community you'll be a part of.

Maybe you already live in the area and know exactly what to expect in terms of clientele and local pet events.

Or, maybe you're a new arrival and are eager to learn as much as possible about the community.

Either way, here are some things to consider that could help your practice thrive and become a household name among local pet owners...

## Partner With Local Businesses

A good way to become part of the local pet network is to get out there and meet your “neighbors”—that is, other owners of pet-centric businesses in your neighborhood, town, or city.

This could mean...

- Pet groomers.
- Boutique pet gift and supply shops.
- Boarding facilities.
- Pet trainers.
- Rescue groups or shelters.
- Other veterinarians, especially with complimentary services like acupuncture, exotics, and specialty or emergency services.

Of course, you'll resonate with some of these business owners' pet care and business philosophies more than others.

But you won't know which ones are a good match until you make the effort to meet them.

***When you find colleagues with whom you'd like to partner, think about setting up a mutual referral program.***

For example, if your clients ask about a groomer, you can tell them about the pet salon you recommend—and tell them to mention you referred them, for a discount (pre-arranged with the pet grooming salon's owner, of course).

And vice versa, the groomer could refer new clients to you if they notice allergic dermatitis, ear infections, anal gland issues, or other concerns during grooming.

## Set Up a Charity Effort

This may be a little bit of a challenge at the beginning when you're trying to get your business up and running and cash flow is tight.

But even small efforts or funds could be helpful to start. It's all about goodwill and showing how much you care about pets.

Plus, on tough days, it may make you smile to think about a good deed that's not directly tied to the ups and downs in your appointment schedule.

***One example of charity is a small donation to a local animal shelter or rescue group.***

You can fund this yourself. But also consider having a collection jar on the counter where clients check out. That way, clients who feel inclined to do so can help with your charity effort.

During social distancing and curbside service, this may look a little different, of course...

Instead of a physical donation jar, you could include a checkout prompt that asks clients if they would like to donate—the same way many grocery stores have an option to leave \$1 or more for charity when you pay with a credit card.

## Teach Pet Owners About Local Pet Care Interests

While some pet health concerns are universal, such as obesity, others may have a higher or lower risk depending on climate and other location-based factors.

Different parts of the country face different pet health issues and concerns, including specific types of parasites and infectious diseases.

For example, if you live in a warm, humid climate that sees fleas year-round and has a high prevalence of heartworm disease, that's something to talk to your clients about.

You could also include factors such as tick-borne diseases, heatstroke, certain fungal infections, foxtail plants, emergency-preparedness for hurricanes, and other weather-related and outdoor factors.

*This is a good opportunity to use technology, too. Look for data from sites such as [CAPC](#) or the [CDC](#). Some even have interactive maps and other visual tools you can show to clients.*

In addition to talking to clients during an appointment, consider *writing blog posts and sending out a newsletter with seasonal, local information*, to keep your clients informed.

**Social media** is also a great place to share this sort of information.

Include **fun** local information, too! Your clients may enjoy hearing local news about pet events, charity drives from other pet organizations, and more.

## Go To (Or Host) a Pet Event

“Pet events” could include many different things, such as...

## How To Make Your New Veterinary Practice Part of the Community

- Meetup groups for dog walkers.
- Charity or fundraising events.
- Pets in costume Halloween parades and contests.
- Informative talks for pet parents on things like emergency preparedness or nutrition.
- Puppy or kitten socialization classes.
- Local sporting events where businesses can set up booths.
- Farmers' markets.
- Pet adoption events.
- In the time of quarantine and social distancing, this may also include virtual events.

See what works best for you. Since your days will be busy, try to choose events that are fun for you—so you can have a great time and renew your energy while allowing pet owners to get to know the real you and how much you love animals.

## 10 Marketing Ideas For Your New Veterinary Practice



Even in the beginning stages of planning your veterinary practice, it helps to think about marketing alongside all the practical considerations like financing, equipment, and staffing.

Marketing is how you let potential clients know who you are, and what sets you apart from the competition. It's what helps you bring in more and more clients as your practice grows.

With that in mind, today we have a list of marketing ideas for veterinary practices.



We'll have in-depth articles on some of these topics down the line, so you can learn more. But for now, here are 10 ideas to inspire your plan for your very own practice...

## **1. Make Sure Your Website is Mobile-Friendly**

Today, the largest pet-owning population in the US is Millennials. As you may have guessed, Millennials spend a lot of time online, especially on devices like smartphones.

I need a new Website for my Clinic or Organization

So, it's important to make sure your website shows up clearly and quickly not just on a computer screen, but also on a small, vertical smartphone screen. If you're not sure whether or not your practice's website is optimized for mobile, talk to your website host or manager.

## **2. Claim Your “Google My Business” Listing**

This online listing is connected to Google Maps, and optimizing it can improve your rankings in online search results.

## **3. Content Marketing**

This broad category includes things such as...

- Blog posts and articles.
- Email newsletters.
- Client handouts and educational materials.
- Testimonials or case studies (success stories of some of your patients, published with their owner's permission).

### *Content marketing works like this...*

Clients read informative content from you. Then, when the time comes for their pet to receive care, they won't even look anywhere else... They'll want to bring their pet to **you**, because they already feel like they've gotten to know you—and that they can trust you—after reading your blog posts or newsletter.

So, this is a long-term strategy. The good news is, the work you put in can help to develop long-term client relationships and promote client retention.

Plus, this is a convenient way to update current clients on new services you've added to your practice, as well as any specials or promotions.

If you're not sure where to start—or, if you don't enjoy writing—consider working with a professional veterinary copywriter, who can guide you and help you create content.

## 4. Online Reviews

Don't leave your online reviews to chance, or in the hands of difficult-to-please clients (who are often the only ones who remember to take the time to leave a review).

We'll have a more in-depth article later, but some simple strategies to encourage good reviews are simply asking happy clients if they would mind leaving a review (but don't place pressure, or tell them what to say), and making it easy with a "Review us now" button on your website or in a post-visit email.

## 5. Use Social Media

Your social media platforms can be great places to engage with your clients (and thus reinforce their bond to your practice). It's also great for announcing updates to your practice, and sharing specials and promotions.

The occasional fun contest or giveaway (such as having a small prize for captioning a cute pet photo) can also encourage clients to interact with you, and strengthen your client relationships.

## 6. Create Videos

Next to Google, YouTube is the most used search engine.

So, creating useful or cute videos for pet owners can help your practice show up higher in online search results and nurture a client's bond to your practice.

Fortunately, nowadays you don't have to be a tech whiz or own an expensive camera to produce a reasonable quality video. Most modern smartphones have a great camera that can be used for this purpose.

Video ideas include a tour of your facilities, introductions to staff members, short educational content for pet owners, and "how-to" videos such as a demonstration on how to properly clean a pet's ears or give a pet medicine.

Post the videos on your website and social media, and ideally on YouTube, too.

## **7. Start a Rewards Program**

Consider punch cards for products such as parasite prevention or pet food, to encourage pet owners to return to you for purchasing these supplies.

## **8. Start a Referral Program**

Create an incentive—such as a small discount on the next visit—for current clients to refer friends to you.

## 9. Build Relationships With Other Community Businesses

For example, offer a first free exam to pets adopted from the local shelter or rescue organization, so that these businesses will refer new clients to you.

Or, develop a relationship with a local grooming or boarding facility. They can refer to you, and vice versa.

## 10. Hold Classes at Your Practice

This could mean puppy or kitten, socialization classes.

Or, it could mean an educational evening for pet parents on nutrition, first aid, or other topics of interest.

Consider holding these classes a couple of times per month to create a positive perception of your clinic, and to find new clients who are interested in providing a high level of care to their pets.

***There are many other marketing techniques out there, but this should give you a great place to start—and hopefully, it's sparked some ideas for seeing your veterinary practice grow and thrive!***

## 5 Questions To Ask Yourself When Financing Your New Veterinary Practice



When it comes to opening your own veterinary practice, financing may be one of the most important—and most daunting—hurdles to overcome.

Since most practice-owners-to-be don't have a large cash reserve saved up or an angel investor waiting in the wings, chances are you'll need to look for financing.

Every situation is different, and working with financial experts and veterinary consultants can help you make the best decision for your future.

Here are a few good questions to ask yourself along the way...

### What Do I Need Financing For?

*Evaluating the following factors can help you figure out how much you'll need to borrow...*

#### The Practice Space

The most obvious thing you'll need to finance is the space in which you intend to practice.

This could mean acquiring an existing practice, leasing a new space, or breaking ground and building your own practice from the ground up.

Less commonly, this could also mean a buy-in option at a practice where you currently work as an associate, or even a franchise opportunity.

#### Major Equipment

Your veterinary practice can't operate without equipment like an x-ray machine, exam room tables, surgery lighting, a dentistry unit, computers, and more...

## Fortunately, you have options

Financing may be available directly from the equipment seller, or from a bank (often called a “capital lease”), so you can pay as you go start making a return on your investment right away.

Also, consider purchasing used equipment. Sites such as [usedvetequipment.com](http://usedvetequipment.com) offer high quality used equipment you can score at a great bargain.

## Daily Supplies

All those little costs add up, including needles, syringes, pharmaceuticals, cleaning supplies, surgical scrub, gloves, and anything else you need for your practice’s daily operation.

## Other Operating Costs

When making a business plan, don’t forget to factor in costs such as wages, insurance, utilities, landscaping, licenses, and more.

## How Much Can I Afford to Live On?

***Most new businesses don’t make a profit for the first 1-3 years... and unfortunately, veterinary practices are no exception.***

It takes time to grow a business to the point where the money coming in each month is more than your expenses. And until that happens, you might not be taking home a salary.



This doesn't impact everyone in the same way, though. For example...

- Purchasing an established practice may mean you have more clients initially than if you start up a brand-new practice.
- Some new practice owners have a spouse whose income can cover all of their household expenses in the meantime, while others do not.
- You may have other life factors that limit you from taking risks with a new business, such as dependents or health considerations.

If owning a practice is your dream but you're concerned about limited income while your practice gets up and running, talk to a veterinary consultant to figure out if practice ownership is right for you, and see what's the safest path for you to realize your dream.

## How Do My Student Loans Factor In?

According to an [article](#) in *Today's Veterinary Business*, veterinary lenders don't typically expect you to have your student loans paid off before you start a practice of your own.

That makes sense because with today's growing costs of veterinary education, paying off student debt quickly isn't always a realistic expectation.

***However, be sure your student loan and other debts are in good standing. Very few lenders are going to trust you with a practice loan if your student debt is in default.***

And, of course, you'll have to factor your student loan payments into your own income needs and overall financial picture.

When in doubt, it never hurts to find out more, rather than assuming student loan debt would prevent you from starting the veterinary practice of your dreams. You'll never know for sure if you don't do the research.

### Where Do I Find a Good Lender?

***There are some veterinary-specific lenders*** out there. These businesses can be a good option because they understand your industry and may have realistic expectations in terms of starting costs and a repayment timeline.

***Small Business Administration loans*** (government-backed lending funded and serviced by banks) may be another good option, with flexible terms and conditions.

And, ***local banks or lenders*** may offer great customer service and community knowledge.

So, explore your options and see which lender works best for you.

***Ask a lot of questions*** to see what your lender's customer service and communication style are like, and to find out important information such as...

- The required down payment.
- The term of the loan.
- The interest rate.
- Fees associated with the loan.
- Penalties for late payments or pre-payment.
- Any available special arrangements, such as graduated repayments (loan payments that start small when your business is new, then gradually increase over time as your business becomes more established and successful).

***In general, many lenders require a business plan and financial projections to fund your new practice.***

## How Do I Figure All of This Out?

While there are never any guarantees when you start a new business, doing your due diligence before you finance will help you make the best possible investment.

***This will likely involve a CPA or financial advisor, a veterinary management consultant, and experts in demographics and feasibility for new practices—to name a few.***

These experts can offer invaluable advice, and also help you with the business plan and financial projections you'll need.

Be sure to put in the time to research. And, invest in expert advice to help you make the best decisions for yourself and your future.

If you need help with financing, we can help connect you.

## Starting A Veterinary Practice: The Importance Of Your Online Presence



You might have the best veterinary clinic in the world, with stellar medical care, an amazing team, and great customer service...

*But, for clients to bring their pets to you, those clients must be able to easily find your practice and learn how great it is.*

So, when you open a new veterinary practice, how will your clients find you?

**The First Place Your Potential Clients Will “See” You is Online.**

In modern times, many pet owners locate and research their next veterinarian via an online search.

***That's even more true during the 2020 pandemic, when physically "stopping by" a veterinary practice to meet you is difficult.***

Even if you have a prime hospital location with a lot of foot traffic and nearby businesses, pet parents who see your hospital in passing will probably Google your practice before bringing their pets to you. So, it's still important to have a strong online presence.

For that reason, we're talking about websites and social media in today's article.

Because even though you'll have a lot of important decisions to make before you open your practice—such as financing, equipment, staffing, and more—it's never too early to start thinking about messaging and marketing strategies for your clinic's success.

## Your Veterinary Practice's Website

Think of your practice's website as an online hub where clients can come to learn more about you, your staff, your services, and your facility.

But, creating an effective website can be tricky. There's a lot to think about, including searchability.

***And, it's crucial to make sure your website paints a clear picture of who you are and all the wonderful things you do to help pets.***

Here are a few tips to help make your practice's website effective...

***Use warm, inviting photos and images.***

For example, images of your caring team members—smiling, in action, and holding cute pets—is much more effective than a picture of the outside of your hospital.

This creates the right mood for your website and also helps potential clients know what to expect when they bring their dog or cat to see you.

Just remember: If using pictures of client-owned pets on your website, get the client's permission in writing first.

***Focus on your clients' needs and wants.***

When writing about your practice, be sure to include your experience, expertise, and services offered... But, don't forget to tell clients HOW these things benefit them.

For example, instead of saying, "We have 40 years of combined experience," say, "Our 40 years of combined experience means your pet will receive excellent care from experienced veterinarians."

## Make all key information easy to find.

Place your practice's physical address and contact information right at the top of the page, where it's easy for a potential client to find it.

### ***Pay attention to SEO.***

SEO stands for search engine optimization, and it's what makes your practice's website show up higher in Google's search results (which makes it easier for clients to find you!).

Don't worry, you don't have to be an expert in SEO... Actually, it's a pretty broad field that can take some time and dedication to truly master. And, it's constantly evolving.

But it's important, so consider hiring a consultant—or, if you're creating your own website content, at least be familiar with SEO basics.

We'll have an article with more details on SEO basics later in this series, so keep an eye out for that.

## Do You Need Social Media?

***Social media is an excellent way to extend the reach of your website.***



By posting on Facebook, Instagram, or other social media platforms, your posts can make pet parents smile and prompt them to learn more about you by following a link back to your website.

However, the world of business-related social media may seem nebulous and confusing if you're new to it...

So, we'll have a more in-depth article on social media further into this series. But for now, here are a few things to keep in mind...

## Start with one platform at a time.

If you try to master Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and more all at the same time, you'll probably feel overwhelmed—and then give up. So, just start with one platform. When you feel comfortable, consider expanding.

On that same note, set a realistic schedule for how often you are going to post.

## ***Where do your potential clients spend the most time?***

Facebook is a very common and effective platform. But, if you have a younger clientele, maybe they spend more time on Instagram and would be more likely to see your posts there?

A veterinary consultant or marketing expert could help you determine factors like this.

### ***Use photos or images as much as possible.***

Images are more likely to catch attention than posts that contain just text.

As with your website, obtain a client's permission if you post their pet's picture.

### ***Try to engage your followers.***

Ask them questions, ask them to post pictures of their pets, and so on—anything that encourages them to interact with you in a positive way.

While you're planning the veterinary practice of your dreams and working out the more material aspects of financing, equipment, and so on, go ahead and ***start thinking about how you want potential clients to see your practice.***

***Think about your practice's philosophy and culture, as well as the impact you would like it to have on pets and pet owners in the community.***

Then, think of how to express that message in everything you do online—on your practice's website and all of your social media posts.

*That way, new clients who find you online can get to know you and feel happy about scheduling their pet's first visit.*

## Starting A Veterinary Practice Using Modern Technology: Part 1



Advancements in technology have made veterinary medicine very different than it was 10-20 years ago.

And now, the 2020 pandemic has fostered faster adoption of technologies such as telemedicine.

It can all seem a little overwhelming to keep up with, since technology changes rapidly. But it's also very exciting. These advancements allow you to practice, share information, and stay in touch with clients like never before.

Since tech-savvy Millennials are now the largest pet-owning population in the US, it pays to keep up with the times. You'll have to choose what's right for your individual practice, but some of the technologies you could incorporate include...

## Cloud Technology

Patient record keeping has largely moved from paper to digital. And now, instead of just having that information stored on the server in your practice, there are options to use cloud storage.

Here are a few of the advantages that cloud-based software offers over server-based software...

- ***You can access information from any device***, including desktop, phone, tablet, etc., even without software installation. This means you could check tomorrow's schedule while at home, or access a patient's medical history remotely if you are called out for an emergency.
- **Data is backed up to the cloud.** So there's no chance of losing records.
- **Information sharing is easier.** For example, giving access to patient records to a specialist.
- **The technology is secure.** While it's natural to feel some reservation over the fear of information being hacked, cloud technology is advancing all the time and this form of data storage (from the right providers) is generally considered very secure. Some providers claim it is more secure than in-house servers.
- **Upgrades are automatic** much of the time, so you don't have to do anything on your end or even think about it.
- **Additional, in-demand options** like online scheduling or automated SMS messages are available. These things are in-demand right now for many businesses, so some clients will seek out vets that offer these modern features and conveniences.

## Telemedicine

Telemedicine is a hot and widely debated topic in veterinary medicine. But no matter where you stand on the issue, it's hard to deny that telemedicine is becoming more prevalent and more in-demand by clients.

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly given telemedicine a “boost,” with many states in the US changing their laws on telemedicine and allowing the technology to be more widely utilized during social distancing.

Some of these laws may go back to their original status once the need for social distancing is over. But some experts speculate that this is our “new normal”—that consumers will be so used to this new way of doing things, it will be difficult to go back.

This service may especially be in-demand from pet-loving Millennials, who often want to be very involved in their dog or cat's care.

Telemedicine is still evolving, and its uses can vary between veterinary practices. When choosing the type of service you would like to offer, here are some things to consider...

- **What are the laws** regarding telemedicine in your state or location? No matter how good your intentions in wanting to provide telemedicine services, it's always critical to follow the laws in your jurisdiction. Watch for changes and updates to these laws, too.
- **How will you use telemedicine?** Will it be just for informational consults, such as nutritional consults or an in-depth discussion of a pet's already-diagnosed medical condition so the client can better understand it? Or will you use the service to do remote consults for medical issues (of course, with the option to recommend the client bring their pet to a vet in person if needed)?
- **When will you offer consults?** During office hours, or after hours, too?
- **What technology** or program will you use?
- **How will you tell clients** about this new service? And will you offer it only to existing clients, or to potential new clients, too?



- **How much will you charge** for a consult? Will price vary depending on the type of consult or time of the day (or night)? If the client does end up bringing their pet in for a visit based on your recommendation, will the cost of the telemedicine consult be applied toward the fee for the in-person appointment?
- **Would it make sense to outsource telemedicine?** There are companies that offer after-hours services—so you can have the night off from answering phone calls, but still have a number for your practice that clients can call.

## Apps

One type of app currently in use is an app for the veterinary practice, where owners can input information about their pet, see their upcoming appointments and their pet's medical history, set reminders for medications, and even receive birthday wishes on their pet's birthday!

There are also apps out there specifically for storing a pet's medical history, so an owner can easily have that information available in the event that they see a new veterinarian, go to an emergency vet hospital, or need to pull up their pet's vaccine history for boarding or grooming.

App technology is evolving, and this is one way to help clients be involved in their pet's medical care and potentially bond them to your practice.

Technology is always evolving. In part 2, we'll feature more high-tech gadgets and services that can be incorporated into veterinary practices. Stay tuned!

## Starting A Veterinary Practice Using Modern Technology: Part 2



In part 1, we covered some common new technologies that are being integrated into many veterinary practices—including cloud technology, telemedicine, and apps.

Today, we'd like to take it a step further and discuss some new and evolving tech that may help you provide great patient care and customer service in totally new ways.

Here are some technologies to think about...

### Pet Wearables

There are now devices available for pets that can monitor body temperature, heart rate, respiration, and more.

Often, this would be something pet owners purchase and use at home, similar to a FitBit. This technology may help pets with medical issues (such as tracking a resolving fever or monitoring exercise in overweight pets). Or it may help with something as simple as seeing true TPR values when a pet is at home and relaxed versus at the clinic and stressed.

Another thing to consider is the possibility of having these devices at your clinic, for a low-stress way to get a TPR during a pet's visit.

You'll have to decide for yourself the practicality and dependability of this relatively new pet trend—but the possibilities are certainly exciting!

## Live or Visual Information Sharing

Times have changed from the days of placing x-ray films on viewers in your exam rooms for clients to look at (and reserving the room with the “best” x-ray viewer for that specific client!).

Don't get us wrong—this traditional technology can still get the job done. But how much more convenient and interactive would it be to share digital info and images on large, flat-screen monitors that you have in each of your exam rooms?

This digital, high-depth technology looks impressive to clients. And even when you're not using a monitor to present patient information, you may want to have informational pet care videos playing to keep clients entertained while they wait (and also promote some of your services).

Plus, there's an opportunity for live sharing when clients can't be in the room with their pets.

One example would be cameras mounted on the ceiling for live and convenient sharing of patient updates, bloodwork, ultrasound findings, etc. Even some microscopes can connect to Wi-Fi.

This type of visual, real-time sharing maybe even more relevant until pandemic restrictions are lifted...

Since clients can't always accompany their pets into the clinic, this can help them feel like they're still connected. Instead of worrying about the "unknown" (i.e. what happens when their pet is taken to "the back"), clients can see some of what's happening during an exam or other procedures. This may provide mental comfort, confidence, and trust.

## 3D Printing

According to the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, 3D printing can help surgeons plan and practice a surgery ahead of time, via models of bone that are created based on CT scan images. Printers can also replicate muscles, blood vessels, and other organs for this purpose.

In addition to a veterinarian's use for surgical planning, 3D printers can create models for client education purposes.

## Encourage Clients to Use the Tech in Their Phones

While not considered new or ground-breaking anymore (since most of us have had smartphones for some time now), simple features on a phone like a camera or voice memo can be immensely helpful during a visit.

For example, if you're going over bloodwork results, encourage a client to record what you say—that makes it less likely their spouse (who wasn't at the visit) will call and want you to go over all the results a second time.

Or if your team is demonstrating how to clean a dog's ears, have the client record it so they can replicate the process at home.

## Choose What's Right for You

If you're just opening your own veterinary practice, it might be worth it to invest in new technology right from the start—to help set your clinic apart from the competition, and to customize your practice so it suits your workflow, communication style, and the type of medicine you'd like to practice.

It may also be practical to start with just a couple of new technologies at a time—to save some expenses when first opening a practice, and to wait and see what other new technologies are developed in the meantime until you're ready to invest again.

Either way, it's certainly valuable (not to mention fun) to start “dreaming” about how you want your veterinary practice to look and function.

Dreaming is the first stage of planning—and imagining what sorts of tech you'll use in your veterinary practice can help you bring your dream to life.

## Mental Health And Work-Life Balance For Veterinary Practice Owners



**Veterinary medicine can mean a busy schedule and emotional ups and downs.**

Unfortunately, recent data suggest that this, along with other factors of daily practice, can take a toll mentally and emotionally.

Plus, as a practice owner, there's the additional pressure of running a business.

You got into this profession because you love pets and want to help them—and that can make for a very rewarding career.



The trick is finding ways to care for yourself.

This may look a little different for everyone, but here are some popular suggestions that have helped many veterinarians find more energy, wellbeing, and balance...

## Set Boundaries

When you love animals, it's natural to want to help every pet who needs care. But failing to set boundaries can lead to burnout.

In addition to the turmoil it causes in a person's life, burnout can also interfere with the ability to help pets over the long-term.

Setting boundaries can mean a number of different things, depending on your personal preferences and what your work rules allow. Here are a few suggestions...

## Put breaks into your schedule

Giving yourself 5-20 minutes to recharge in the morning and afternoon (in addition to your lunch break) can be immensely helpful during a busy day.

## Have clear cut rules for scheduling

For example, is double booking allowed? Can you go to lunch rather than seeing the patient that walks in at lunchtime (assuming it's not a life-threatening emergency)?

To accommodate these and other scheduling surprises, it helps to leave a few appointment slots open each day—that way, you have enough time for all patients rather than running yourself to exhaustion trying to fit everyone in.

## Set boundaries with clients

For example, if you give your phone number out to pet owners, be sure they know when and under what circumstances they can call you.

Or if a client is acting really outrageous and causing stress for all employees, it may be in your team's best interest to “fire” that client to protect everyone's time, energy, and morale.

## Say “no” sometimes

This might mean coordinating with another doctor at your practice to take over care of your patients on your day off, so that your team isn't calling you at home unless absolutely necessary.

You deserve to enjoy some days off!

## Focus On the Positive

Despite your intelligence, knowledge, and passion, some things are out of your control.

Even with your best efforts, sometimes pets don't get better—due to the nature of their medical condition, or due to owners not agreeing to the type of care you'd like to provide.

This happens to everyone. And while it's hard to accept, it may help to focus on all the good memories—all the times you've helped pets, all the thank you cards from clients, etc.

Sometimes negative thoughts—whether it's a client who said something rude or the loss of a patient you care about—dominate our minds. It's human nature.

But usually, the good days outweigh the bad. It's just a matter of training our brains to refocus on the positive.

## Figure Out What Brings You the Most Fulfillment

Find ways to make your daily work life as enjoyable as possible.

This could mean cultivating relationships with clients.

It could also mean community involvement, such as charity efforts, puppy/kitten classes, or informational talks on pet nutrition or other topics.

Fulfillment may also mean specializing, or being the “go-to” doctor in your practice for specific procedures or medical conditions that you enjoy working with.

## Cultivate Joy

In addition to professional fulfillment, it's important to cultivate joy in your personal life.

This means some type of human connection—whether that’s a partner, friends, or family.

If you’re working long hours, it’s easy to feel isolated. By doing your best to schedule time with people you care about—even just a quick phone call—you may find that your mood lifts.

Additionally, physical activities, hobbies, learning new things, and other pursuits outside of work can remind you that “there’s more to life.”

This makes it easier to reframe a bad day as something that, while hurtful, is probably small in the scheme of things.

## Schedule Time to Slow Down

If you need to sleep or binge-watch a show after a tiring week, go for it!

Or find time to read a book, take a bath, or meditate.

In addition to activities that bring you joy, scheduling “slow time” may help you feel centered, recharged, and in control of your schedule.

## Seek Out Support

It’s helpful to find caring people who can listen.

Depending on your needs and circumstances, this may include...

- Friends and family.
- Colleagues you trust.
- Veterinary support groups such as...

[Vets4Vets®](#)

A confidential support group for veterinarians associated with the VIN Foundation, which includes everything from weekly group discussions to one-on-one support.

## Not One More Vet

An online support network of over 20,000 veterinarians with additional resources, including support in finding temporary relief workers for vets who need a few days off.

A therapist or counselor. Nowadays, there are convenient and reasonably priced online services such as Talkspace and BetterHelp.

Sometimes, just venting to someone in a safe, confidential setting can really lift the weight off of a person's shoulders.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text 741 741 to speak to a trained crisis counselor.

## The Truth About Balance...

The thing about balance is, it's dynamic, not static.

That means that as you go through different stages of life, your schedule, priorities, and tricks for recharging yourself may change. The key is to be aware and to adjust as needed.

The better you care for yourself, the better you'll be able to care for pets—and the more joy you'll get out of your daily work and personal life.

**Resources:**

- Vets4Vets: <https://vinfoundation.org/resources/vets4vets/>
- Not One More Vet: <https://www.nomv.org/>
- Talkspace: <https://www.talkspace.com/>
- BetterHelp: <https://www.betterhelp.com/>
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text 741 741 to speak to a trained crisis counselor.

## Equipment Options For Your New Veterinary Practice



If you're ready to take the leap and open the veterinary practice of your dreams—or if you're still exploring options and seeing if practice ownership is right for you—finding the veterinary equipment you need is an important part of the process.

After all, it's difficult to diagnose and treat patients without the proper tools.

Depending on the type of practice you open, your equipment wish list may include...

- X-ray and ultrasound machines.
- In-house bloodwork analyzers.
- Surgical lights, an autoclave, and anesthesia monitoring equipment.
- IV pumps.
- Exam room tables.
- Kennels.
- A scale to weigh patients.
- A tonometer for measuring intra-ocular pressures.
- A dental cleaning unit.
- Computers, and veterinary clinic software.
- Credit card processors for payments.
- A washer and dryer.
- Separate refrigerators for medications and for your staff to keep their lunches in, and a freezer for cadavers.
- Specialty equipment, such as a vehicle for a mobile practice, and pneumatic drills, and an MRI for a neurology practice.



Plus, there are smaller items to consider, like otoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, staff uniforms, and all your daily supplies like needles, syringes, and gloves.

*With all this in mind, it's not surprising that your equipment costs could add up to tens of thousands of dollars—or more—making your equipment a vital consideration when opening and financing a veterinary practice.*

Not to worry, though, because you do have options.

## Considerations for Purchasing Veterinary Equipment

**Purchasing new** equipment is certainly an option many practice owners pursue. It's exciting to get the latest technology delivered to your practice's door, and—depending on the type of equipment—installed by experts. And, the equipment should be in excellent condition because it's brand new.

When buying new, it's important to do your research, though. Be sure you're getting good quality and the best value for your dollar.

Also, check the manufacturer's or seller's **warranty**—because there would be nothing worse than investing your money only to have a malfunction (less likely with new equipment, but possible) or have something get dropped or broken during the grind of daily practice.

And finally, ask about ***support and training***. For example, who do you call when you have a question about the machine? And, does the company offer training to your staff, to ensure the equipment is used to its maximum potential?

***Purchasing used*** veterinary equipment can also be an excellent option. Many machines are designed to last for years, and your colleagues may want to sell relatively new equipment in order to upgrade. This can be a great benefit to you because you can catch a real bargain.

For used equipment, we recommend [usedvetequipment.com](https://usedvetequipment.com), a site exclusive to veterinary professionals looking to buy or sell veterinary equipment, with guidance on shipping and a moderator for payments. But, you may find quality used equipment through other online sellers or medical equipment specialist resellers, too.

With used equipment, inquire about the condition. Also, ask if there is a warranty still in place—you don't want to miss out if it is still in place and transferrable.

[Buy or Sell? - Check Out - usedvetequipment.com](https://usedvetequipment.com)

Finally, consider ***maintenance costs*** with any equipment you buy. Maintenance is crucial for keeping your equipment running for as many years as possible, potentially saving you lots of money in the long run if you can avoid replacing your machines sooner than necessary. So, these maintenance costs should be factored into your budget.

## Financing for Veterinary Equipment

If you have some cash saved up, you may be able to purchase some of your equipment outright. But, chances are you'll need to finance at least some of your purchases.

For financing new equipment, check with the manufacturer to see if they allow payments over time. Some may have monthly payment plans. These plans take away some of your initial financial pressure since the money you bring in with the equipment can fund the monthly payment (for example, your x-ray fees can support your monthly payments for a good quality x-ray machine).

Alternatively, you could seek financing from a bank or other lender. The bank you're working with on practice financing may include equipment costs as part of your loan, or as a separate negotiation. Or, you may reach out to another lender.

Typically, lenders refer to these loans for equipment as "capital leases," and they may offer monthly payment plans.

The lender would own your equipment until the loan is paid in full, but there's usually an affordable (as low as \$1 for some institutions) purchase option for you once you finish all the loan payments.

When evaluating a lender or other equipment payment plan, here are some things to look for...

- What's the interest rate?
- What fees are associated with the loan?
- What is the loan's term, or how long will you be paying?
- Is there a purchase option once the loan is paid in full, and how much it will cost?
- What penalties exist for late payments, paying off the loan early, or if you would like to get out of the lease?
- The reputability of your lender (if it's not the lender you're already working with, do they have recommendations from the equipment sales representative or other veterinarians? Do they routinely work with veterinarians?).

Also, talk to a tax professional to find out if the depreciation and interest payments on your veterinary equipment are tax-deductible.

## Your Overall Financial Picture

Before purchasing **any** equipment, it's important to think through what the equipment will do for your patients, and what sort of return on investment you can expect.

For example, will you use the equipment often, or will it only be on rare occasions?

What training is required to learn how to use this equipment? What about client education on the benefit of the service? How many years is the equipment expected to perform?

A veterinary consultant, or financial professional who's familiar with veterinary businesses, can guide you through these analyses and include these considerations in your business plan so your new practice can find the right balance of initial equipment purchases, then grow and thrive over time.

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