

The Back Page - No Customers, No Business

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“If you are not taking care of your customer, your competitor will”

A Good Read

“The Customer Culture Imperative” by Lindon Brown and Christopher Brown

This is a really great book and a must read for all practice owners, practice managers and indeed anyone who works in customer service, which is just about all of us who work in the veterinary industry.

Far from the anecdotal archetype of many books on customer service, this book is based on three years of research.

No matter which way you look at it, veterinary business is a people business. Every day we work alongside people interacting with each other while we treat pets that belong to: you guessed it, people. And if we don't get the interaction with the pet owner right, we can lose them, often for ever.

Creating a customer centric business takes a lot more than investing in customer training and service systems. That is important. But it's all about crafting a workplace culture in which the customer is at the very heart of all decisions made within every part of the veterinary business. What is best for the customer is best for our businesses. Businesses that adopt that mindset and embed a “customer first” MO into the DNA of the workplace will always outperform.

“The Customer Culture Imperative” draws on information from large and small companies in the USA, Europe and AUSTRALIA.

Brown and Brown found that there are seven behaviours that define customer culture strength or weakness.

- 1. Customer Insight:** The extent to which employees monitor, understand, and act on current customer needs and satisfaction.
- 2. Customer Foresight:** The extent to which employees monitor, understand, and act on potential customer needs and opportunities.
- 3. Competitor Insight:** The extent to which employees monitor, understand, and respond to current competitor strengths and weaknesses.
- 4. Competitor Foresight:** The extent to which employees monitor, understand, and respond to new market entrants and potential competitors.
- 5. Peripheral Vision:** The extent to which employees monitor, understand, and respond to trends in the larger environment (Political, Economic, Social, Natural and Technological)
- 6. Cross-Functional Collaboration:** The extent to which employees interact, share information, work with, and assist colleagues from other work groups or departments within the business.
- 7. Strategic Alignment:** The extent to which employees understand, and enact the vision, mission, objectives, and strategic direction of the business.

Note the reference to “employees” which means everyone in the business, not the just the owners and managers. Is everyone in your business on board?

Our Referral Veterinarians

Dr John Punke	Specialist Surgeon
Dr Adrian Wallace	Specialist Surgeon
Dr Richard Woolley:	Specialist in Veterinary Cardiology
Dr Matt Woodruff:	Resident Small Animal Medicine
Dr Kirsty Hailstone:	Resident Dentistry

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CLIENT INTERACTIONS: PLEASURABLE AND DISTRESSING

Of all the sources of pleasure in the workplace, Dr Michelle McArthur has discovered that veterinarians cite interactions in some form with their clients as rewarding. Despite this enjoyment and a genuine desire to help others, sometimes that source of satisfaction is also a source of distress. How can interactions with our clients and their pets whom we wish to help, end up being so difficult at times and go so wrong?

Veterinarians and nurses are often the bearers of bad news. In addition to a poor prognosis or diagnosis, expensive bills, chronic diseases and ongoing testing can all be viewed by the client as bad news. And when that news hits home we are often the recipient of client anger, that amalgam of grief, a sense of loss and a lack of understanding. Stressful? You bet. When anger and sadness impact communication with our clients, the intended message can become distorted and confused. Client complaints frequently result from this confusion. Ms Carol Irvine from the Veterinary Surgeons boards cites communication breakdown as a contributing cause in a significant number of notifications to the board.

On Wednesday the 5th of April, Michelle will be presenting our GP seminar where she will explain why clients react this way and discuss some of the skills we can use to navigate these encounters.

In this Issue:

- Hip Replacements now at AAERC !
- Customer Culture A Business Imperative ?

In the News ?

Dr Adrian Wallace returns to the AAERC surgical department.

Dr Mark Moore, an internationally renown human cranio-facial surgeon collaborates with Dr John Punke and Dr Kirsten Hailstone at AAERC to repair a complex cleft palate in a dog. The surgery was amazing.

We are soon to complete CT number 300 !!

April 5th: Optimising Difficult Interactions with Clients
This a an AAERC GP seminar that must not be missed.

Total Hip Replacements now at AAERC

Dr John Punke DVM, MS, DipACVS, DipECVS

The Surgery Service at AAERC is happy to announce that we are now receiving appointments for total hip replacement (THR) surgery in dogs!

Total hip replacement is the only way (medical or surgical) to treat painful, osteoarthritic hips and return them to 100% function and complete comfort. You can expect 97% of patients with THR to have an excellent outcome. In my experience, there is no better treatment for coxofemoral joint disease in dogs than a successful hip replacement. My own dog, Azzie, had a THR during my residency. After surgery, she was able to stop pain medications and did very well for the last 8 years of her life with no further treatment required.



The implants

Our new hospital addition has a dedicated sterile orthopaedic surgery theatre that now allows us to perform THR surgery safely with the lowest risk of infection possible.

However, THR surgery is technically demanding and has a steep learning curve. The best results are achieved by surgeons experienced in the technique. In an effort to do everything we can to avoid complications in your patients, AAERC is teaming with Dr. Sarah Goldsmid from Animal Referral Hospital in Sydney. Sarah has performed hundreds of THRs in dogs since the early 1980's with excellent success. She performed the earliest THR techniques available in veterinary medicine and currently performs the Zurich Cementless THR by Kyon. Zurich Cementless THR is one of the best and most widely used in the world. By the end of 2009, over 9000 Zurich THRs were performed by over 150 surgeons worldwide.



Implants in Place

Zurich Cementless THR uses titanium and titanium alloy implants to dramatically reduce the risk of infection. The stem is held in place by screws to prevent movement of the femoral component. The acetabular component has an ingrowth design that allows it to increase in strength over time and makes it an excellent choice for young patients.

I will be evaluating and caring for all THR patients at AAERC pre and post operatively to ensure that they receive the best care possible before and after their surgery.



And ... post operative radiograph

Total Hip Replacements

Continued - Dr John Punke



I have had extensive training in THR by Dr. Jim Tomlinson and Dr. Derek Fox, during my surgical residency and further training since, so you can be assured that your patients are receiving excellent quality care at every step in the THR process.

If you have a patient that requires THR, please have them schedule an appointment to see me for consultation and evaluation. I will happily talk them through what THR surgery entails, how much better they can expect their dog's function to be, possible complications (THRs carry a 10% complication rate with 97% of dogs having an excellent outcome). If your client wishes to proceed, we will take very specific radiographs of the femur and acetabulum to measure for implant ordering.

We will order multiple implants for each dog to be sure that the proper implants are available on the day of surgery. On the day of surgery, THR patients are our first priority to ensure that the surgery is performed efficiently and with the lowest risk of complications. Typically patients are comfortable enough to be discharged the following day. They are re-evaluated at 2 weeks, 1 month, and 2 months' post-surgery. Generally dogs are very well healed by 2 months' post-surgery and have full function and comfort at that time.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss THRs further or have a patient that you think might be a candidate for THR.

Which dog received a THR ?

Dog 1: Nine year old German Shepherd with chronic severe bilateral hip arthritis with a 4-6 week history of rapidly worsening right hind limb lameness. Range of motion decreased in both hips. Marked pain on extension of the right hip.

Dog 2: Seven year old Labrador with chronic severe bilateral arthritis and right sided lameness. Was able to walk 7 to 8 km comfortably. Over 6 months the dogs mobility had declined to the point where it could not walk 1 km comfortably.

Answer in the next edition of our Newsletter.



Dog 1



Dog 2