

Creating Client Experience Around Technology

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Danielle Burrus is a renowned and respected futurist who lectures around the world on the subject. He discusses soft trends versus hard trends. The easiest way to define them is a hard trend is something that will happen no matter what in the future as opposed to a soft trend that may or may not change over time. One could simply say a hard trend is objective or factual and then compare it to a soft trend which could be described as subjective.

In a recent workshop, he worked with his audience on establishing some hard trends that could be used as predictors for future success. Increased use of Technology overwhelmingly came back from the audience as a hard trend. It would be hard to argue that technology which has yet to be created will continue to evolve the world we live in not to mention play a role in the veterinary industry.

I was recently cleaning out some old files and I came across a *USA Today* newspaper article that I had used for a team meeting with my staff. I vividly recall seeing the article and requiring everyone to read it. From there, we brainstormed on how this article might affect us in the future. It was titled: “It’s a Do-It-Yourself World” – The article went into depth on how consumers were wanting to be able to provide services or seek products on their own without having to use help or staff. The ironic part of finding the article was the publication date of April 27, 2004. Nearly 12 years ago and look where we are. We have come along ways and are only going to go further. One can book their own plane ticket, select a seat, check out of a grocery store, deposit a check from a smart phone, order a Big Mac from a kiosk at McDonalds, and/or order just about anything anyone would ever want on the world wide web 24 hours a day.

Each year, Meadow Hills Veterinary Centers, where I am a hospital administrator, we come up with a theme for year. In 2015, that theme was “Connect with Us!” While we don’t know what lies ahead in the way of technology for interacting with our clients we wanted to start and make sure our clients knew we were going to continue to stay relevant and invest time and resources into seeking out technology that would ultimately encourage a positive experience while having services or products provided for their pets.

We further invested into our software system and implemented a web platform that ultimately the client could set up a portal to monitor their pet’s health and medical information and also communicate to our hospitals. From looking up vaccine status, to reviewing blood results and from requesting prescription refills to requesting an appointment. We had given our client the tools to facilitate their pet care 24 hours a day.

We don’t know where technology will take us but it is important to our hospital brand and our client relationships for them to see we are going to continue to embrace technology and integrate the technology as it is available to further the client experience.

In 2015 we established these posters that can be found in each exam room, our consultation room, and our reception area.



We grew tired of seeing doctors' offices, dental offices, and other businesses that were adamant that you turn off your phone, tablet, etc. Essentially, they were giving the message of "Disconnect". We wanted the opposite effect. We wanted for our clients to see we were encouraging the behavior. In turn, the technology is going to enhance the client experience.

First off, we established a guest WI-FI. We wanted to make it fun so our password for the internet access is bow-wow-meow. Say that 10 times fast! We also set up a web based platform with our phone system that allows clients to use our main phone number to text our receptionists. If a text comes in, it will show up on all of our front end computers. The idea of texting is certainly not new as many veterinary clinics have smart phones set aside for this very reason. But what we find is we are having to give the client a different phone number for that communication. It then becomes human nature to assume if the clinic is texting from this phone number that I can also "call" the phone number and get information. Many clinics do not answer the smart phone or have a message that plays indicating which number to call. We wanted to alleviate all of this. We encourage our clients to text us while in the exam rooms if they want an update on their pet or time, want us to pull/prepare pet food, want us refill medication, or simply want a chilled beverage.

The next section of the poster refers clients to our website. We take pride in keeping our website up-to-date, user and mobile friendly, and easy to navigate. Our doctor information section far exceeds any other area for number of clicks. We make sure to constantly update pictures and biographies.

The far right section encourages clients to become members of our web based portal system that allows them manage medical records, request appointments, request medications, print vaccine record, and find reliable education on hundreds of pet diseases, diagnostic and treatment options etc.

On the poster we have included a QR code that allows clients the ability to use their phone and be directly taken to our Facebook page. From there, they can like us on Facebook and participate in our frequent posts that include contests and more.

On the bottom of the poster, we have included a clinic e-mail that will go directly to our receptionists. We are encouraging clients to send us a favorite picture of their pet from their phone that they have taken previously. If they don't have one, they can shoot a quick picture and send it to our staff for an immediate update. We promise to update our medical records in addition they become part of our revolving pet photo book that is displayed on many flat screen monitors throughout.

You can see from this one poster, we are giving our clients many options and activities in which they can use their personal technology devices to incorporate into each of our visits. As I indicated above, we know technology is a hard trend. We know it will continue to play a bigger and bigger role. We are off to a great start in getting clients prepared for the future in doing business with us. We even have a sticker placed on every retail item we sell indicating they can text us ahead and we will have the item ready and invoiced waiting for them at our reception desk.

Throughout the lecture, we will take a look at other industries and learn from them in how they are incorporating technology into their client and customer experience. From the airlines to banks and from hotels to gas stations. It is happening all around us. Make sure you clients are connecting with you and make sure you are not giving off signs that indicate you are disconnected.