Going Digital at Appomattox Animal Hospital

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Background

For the last four summers I have worked in a small animal clinic in my hometown. It is managed and owned by one veterinarian who takes care of hundreds of small animals (Dogs and cats). In this clinic there is one veterinarian, one veterinary technician, one receptionist, and I am one of three veterinary technician assistants.

We offer boarding for both dogs and cats, basic grooming services, x-rays, laser treatments, annual appointment and vaccines, dental services, and basic surgeries like spay and neuters.

My daily tasks include caring for boarders, cleaning kennels, and holding animals for examination. I also have been trained how to preform simple blood tests using IDEXX technology, urinalysis, and heartworm test. I give medicated baths, brush out shedding or matted dogs, and provide foam flushes. A lot more is included on this list, and I am still learning every day.

I spend all my time during the summer at the clinic and I am very happy and grateful with how far I have progressed. After I graduate in the spring, I plan to take an online course to be certified as a Veterinary Technician.

Capstone Project Goals

1. Update client records to be input into an online filing system by use of telephone.

2. Determine the needs from an online software system that would benefit everyone

3. Research online veterinary software systems and report the pros and cons of each site.

4. Get comfortable talking to clients on the phone and determine what information is need to update their record.

5. Practice team building skills by asking questions to everyone about their wants and needs from a new system.

6. Create a budget for the costs of going digital.

7. Keep all records used organized and confidential.

8. Develop an understanding of time management for project time.

9. Develop a script to use on the telephone to determine the information needed in client records and an online software system

Images

Image 1 & 2: Demonstrating handling techniques of two separate cats

Mission

Since this clinic is ran by one person the technology in the clinic is a lacking. There is still paper filing in this clinic. All records of clients are on paper in a large filing cabinet. Scheduling is all done on paper as well. My mission for this project was to teach an old dog new tricks!

Having a paper filing system can be very tedious at times. Like when a client calls to ask for their records it usually takes a while to find the file, fill out a form and deliver their records. Files also get lost very frequently and names do not line up with who is calling. Trying to reading someone's handwriting is a hassle and not worth the struggle so I decided something needs to change.

With the help of the lead veterinarian, I created this project with the intention of making all necessary steps to move from a paper filing to an online format. This included calling clientele to update records to put into a new system.

I calculated costs and recommendations of a new system and collaborating with the veterinarian and vet tech to determine the needs of the clinic and the community.

As the veterinarian gets older new practices are evolving and eventually a new Vet will take over the clinic. So having the updated technology will transform the clinic into a twenty first century place that was sure to bring the flow back into the clinic

Methods

1. I started the project by making a "Cheat Sheet". This sheet included a list of questions required to update a client's record (Image 4).

2. With the help of the veterinarian and the veterinary technician, I began to start pulling files of the clients that were considered A+ clients to get a feel of using the phones and talking to people.

3. I pulled files of clients that we haven't seen in a while or older pets to get an update of their status.

4. Researched and created a booklet of 5 software systems that could be used in the clinic and listed
- What the system does
- Pros and Cons
- Prices
- User critiques
- Star rating system
- Images of the software

5. Called the chosen software company to get more information on what the software includes, pricing, and what kind of technical support is provided.

6. Created a budget/ list on what steps would be needed after I leave to continue going digital that included best Desktop computers, WiFi obligations, and what the chosen software provides.

Image 3: Using the phone to contact clients to update records
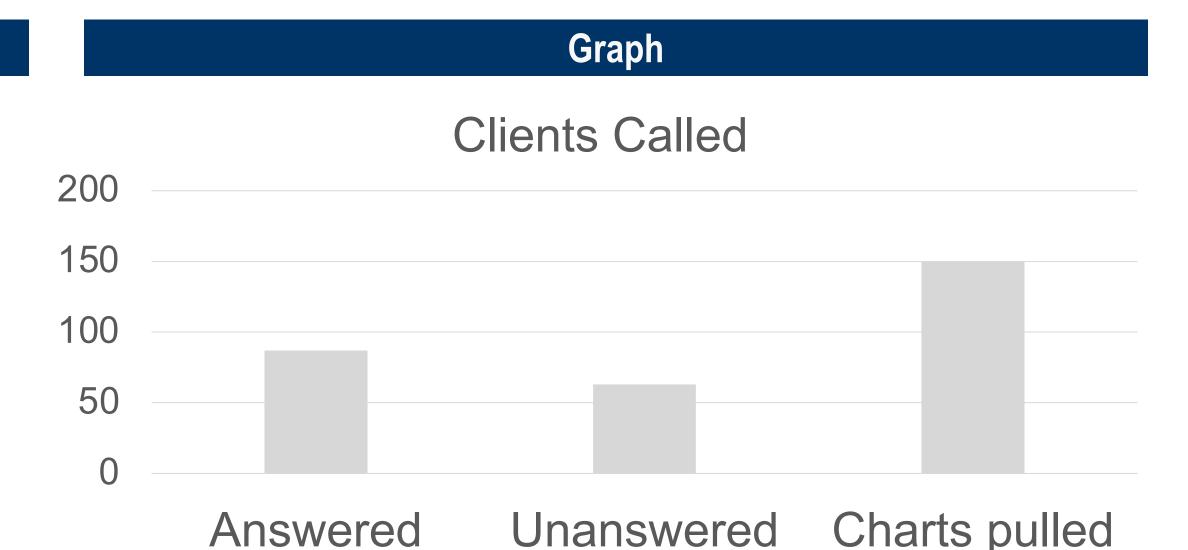
Graph

Clients Called

Chart 1: Graph showing the amount of people I called and gathered information to update their personal files to later bet put into an online system. 150 records pulled, 82 people answered, 68 people did not answer.

Conclusion

At the end of the summer, with help, I was pleased to say I have gathered a part of client records, and enough information to continue the process of going digital. It is not in the owner's financial interest at the moment to continue forward with the process, but I have laid the groundwork for future exploration if someone else needs to pick up the project.

I personally grew so much from this project in terms of public speaking, organization of information, and developing team building skills. I can use the skills I learned in the future for my career as a veterinary technician to gather history on a client. Also, personally I can use my skills to determine the best pricing for products and compare and contrast them.

If I were to change something it would be the amount of time I put into calling clients to get records. It took up too much time when I could be using that time to research more programs and developing a more detailed budget.

Cheat Sheet

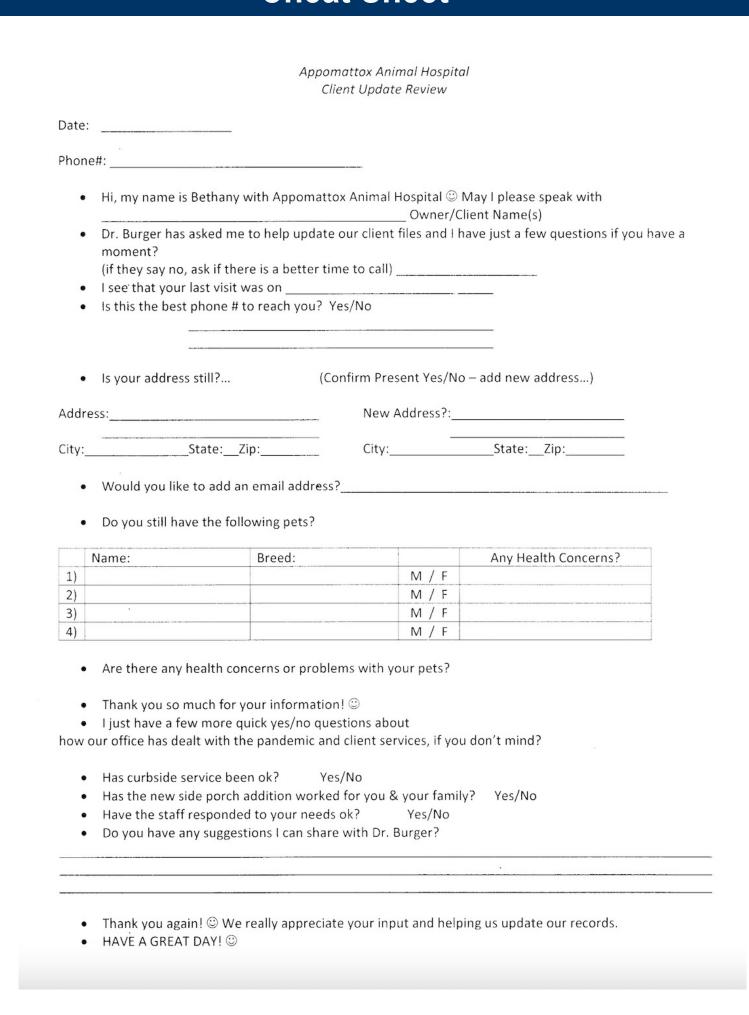Image 4: Cheat sheet, Information I gathered over the phone to update client records.