



EVSS Client Feedback Survey

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Background

I've worked as a Client Service Representative at the Emergency Veterinary and Specialty Services of Roanoke since July of 2021. Currently, I'm working there part-time on Fridays and Sundays. As a CSR, my primary responsibilities are interacting with clients at check-in and checkout, admitting patients for hospitalization, and clerical work involving patient records. While my responsibilities primarily entail working with people, working in an emergency setting often necessitates taking on additional tasks such as bringing potentially critical patients to our veterinary staff and occasionally aiding in patient restraint.

We are a relatively small practice and one of the only emergency clinics in the area. Our practice has consistently received positive reviews from our clients, with an average review score on google of 4.3/5 stars based on 912 reviews. While we strive to see patients in a timely manner, being one of the only local emergency clinics often results in high patient volumes. Most often clients come to our practice under stressful circumstances and the wait times caused by our high patient volume tend to exacerbate this. The goal of this project was to design a client feedback survey for owners to fill out while they are waiting to be seen or while our staff are treating their pet.

The purpose of this survey for our clinic was two-fold: it was designed both to provide our staff with valuable feedback on potential areas of improvement as well as provide the clients with something to occupy them while their pet is being seen.



Survey Questions

The feedback survey given to clients was designed to be brief and as such consisted of five questions:

- Have you been with us before?
- Do you feel that your pet was assessed in an adequate time frame?
- Do you feel that we've provided adequate amenities? If not, what might we add to improve your experience?
- Do you feel satisfied with our ability to communicate with/update you on the status of your pet so far?
- How do you feel that we can improve your experience next time?

These questions were evaluated and approved by our medical director, Dr. Roberts.

Data Collection

For data collection, I went to our clinic in Roanoke every Saturday from February 18th to April 1st of 2023 between the hours of 2 PM and 6 PM as this is typically a busy window for us. I would conduct the survey in an interview format if the clients were willing or provide them with a paper copy to fill out if they declined the interview format.

Over the course of this survey, participants were selectively chosen to exclude clients that were under particularly stressful circumstances. The decision as to which clients to select for the survey was based upon my own discretion as well as the discretion of the doctor on staff. While determination of exclusion/inclusion criteria was made on an individual basis, generally patients that were being seen for severe trauma or euthanasia were excluded from the survey.

In total, 29 responses were collected with 20 of them being in an interview format and 9 of them being filled out independently.

Expectations

Going into this survey, I had certain expectations regarding the types of feedback I may receive. Based on my own experiences I had the expectation that most clients would be unsatisfied with wait times exceeding 2 hours. Furthermore, clients are often anxious while their pets are being seen and typically ask for status updates throughout examination and treatments. While we do our best to keep clients posted on the status of their pets, I still had an expectation that clients may be unsatisfied with our ability to update them on their pets.

Regarding our waiting room and ways we may be able to improve, I was not expecting much feedback as I do feel that we provide adequate amenities for clients while they wait including a drink machine, television, and coffee.

Findings

Throughout the course of the survey a total of 29 responses were received. Responses to each question were evaluated after the survey as positive, critical, or uncategorized feedback and recorded. The 29 responses yielded 140 individual answers, of which 103 were positive, 7 were critical, and 35 were uncategorized. Surprisingly, very little of the critical feedback received was repeated among individuals.

Of the critical feedback received, three of the responses were about our lobby's amenities, one was regarding our billing policy, two were requesting more frequent status updates, and one suggested that our reception staff smile more.

One particularly interesting finding was that none of our clients surveyed were unsatisfied with the wait times. While some of the clients surveyed were only waiting to be seen anywhere from 5-30 minutes, a fair number of clients surveyed waited in excess of 2-3 hours but were very understanding towards our staff. Overall, I found the results of this survey to be very reassuring.

	Interview Format	Paper Form	Total
Positive	71	32	103
Critical	3	4	7
Uncategorized	26	9	35

Sources of Bias

Over the course of this survey, there are several sources of bias that became apparent. The first and most obvious of these is the somewhat variable selection criteria for survey participants. Participant selection excluded many potential participants because they were in stressful situations, and we did not want to cause them any further distress. This does however come with the drawback of potentially excluding our most critical clients from the survey, and as such is a clear point of bias.

Another point of bias in this study was the decision to conduct the survey in an interview format. This decision was made to encourage client engagement with the survey, but this also compromised the anonymity of the participant and as such may have contributed to the low rate of critical responses. Furthermore, it is very likely that individuals were less willing to provide negative feedback to an employee directly. Initially I believed that this would encourage those dissatisfied with our service to be more forthcoming with their experience, but it appears that the opposite effect was true and this was only emphasized by the selection criteria.

A final point of potential bias was the time at which the survey was conducted. I intentionally conducted the survey with clients after they had been given an update from the doctor in an effort to better gauge our ability to communicate with them on the status of their pets. While I do still feel this was the best way to properly evaluate our communication, it is possible that a conversation with the doctor seeing their pet could realign a client's expectations and cause them to withhold critical feedback that they otherwise may have provided.

Interview Format

While the interview format used for many of the surveys conducted was a source of bias, there were also some benefits this format provided. Regarding engagement, I found that only one client that was asked to participate was unwilling to do so. This high rate of engagement can likely be attributed to a combination of factors including the interview format. Perhaps more importantly, the responses received from the interview format had significantly more detailed feedback. This can likely be attributed to the conversative style of interview – oftentimes clients were asked to expand on some of their answers. I.e. If they felt their pet was assessed in an adequate or inadequate time frame, I often followed the question by asking how long they were waiting before their pet was seen. Contrasting this with the 9 responses received from paper copies, only 3 of those surveys had responses that went beyond a simple yes or no. Overall when evaluating this method of conducting the survey, it appears there were several advantages and disadvantages, but it can be reasonably concluded that the interview format did contribute to increased survey engagement.

Conclusions

Overall, this survey provided feedback that showed our clients were overwhelmingly satisfied with our service. The feedback we received far exceeded my expectations with regard to how few of our clients were dissatisfied with our wait times. While this shouldn't be surprising given our online reviews, I was still impressed given that many of the participants in this survey waited in excess of two hours before their pet was evaluated.

While it is unlikely that any significant changes will come to our clinic as a result of the overwhelming positive feedback received, there are still several valuable takeaways from the responses we received. First off, our reception staff can try to be friendlier with clients throughout their time at the clinic. I feel that this goes a great length in establishing trust between clients and our staff. Additionally, the number of positive responses has had a significant impact on myself and my confidence at work. For instance, I would find it especially reassuring to work with a client prior to conducting the interview and know that they had waited in excess of three hours only for them to say that they found such a wait perfectly reasonable given the circumstances. It is always hard to tell clients that we are experiencing long wait times when we are busy, and the overwhelmingly positive feedback has given me more confidence that our clients are understanding of the circumstances necessitating these wait times. While I've always felt its of the utmost importance to be forward with clients regarding our wait time it was often uncomfortable for me to do so. After conducting this survey, I feel more confident in telling clients when we are experiencing long wait and overall feel I have a more reasonable understanding of client expectations.

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