

Proven Dental Program Helps Shallowford Animal Hospital Take a Bite Out of the Competition



Located in a growing suburb of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Shallowford Animal Hospital was somewhat lost in a sea of veterinary clinics. With an animal hospital on practically every corner of East Brainerd, the competition is fierce. When the three-vet practice began to notice a decline in business, they knew it was time to get help.



Recognizing the need for an objective view on how to turn the practice around, Shallowford enlisted the help of Sheila Grosdidier from Veterinary Management Consultation, Inc. At the time, the majority of the hospital's marketing budget was spent on internal promotions for seasonal campaigns such as summer flea and tick programs. Typically, in order to educate the staff, there would be a team meeting to discuss the campaign focus, answer any questions and inform them of any promotions associated with the campaign.

The goal was to not only educate the staff so they could sell during each seasonal "push", but to increase their knowledge enough to enable them to sell the services throughout the year. While Shallowford was off to a good start by educating their personnel, very little was being done to promote the seasonal programs to their clients. "There was a lot more marketing with clients in-hospital and not as much communication with them outside of the practice," said Kate Bailey, practice manager at Shallowford.

In fact, the hospital's marketing strategy consisted of an ad in the local yellow pages and annual vaccine reminders mailed by the practice receptionist. Having analyzed the hospital's past marketing efforts, Grosdidier recommended the practice focus more on marketing to existing clients to increase revenue. She also thought it was

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— Kate Bailey,
Practice Manager
Shallowford Animal Hospital
Chattanooga, TN



time for the practice to consider outsourcing their reminder mailings. Familiar with the company's proven data management and direct marketing expertise, Grosdidier suggested the services available through Veterinary Metrics, Inc.

A New Direction

Initially, there was some apprehension. "The biggest initial reservation was the cost," said Bailey. "We took a chance in trusting that by spending the money without seeing how it works or talking to someone who's done it, we would get the results we were promised." With some encouragement from Grosdidier, the hospital put their reservations aside and chose to enroll in Vet Met's Dental Marketing Program.

In February 2004, Vet Met helped Shallowford implement a dental program designed to drive revenues through incremental dental visits. The program included:



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Vet Met makes it easy—all they need is access to a practice's practice management software, and they can begin instantly making a difference that ultimately will increase practice revenue and improve animal health.

- Client communications materials and fee schedules that stressed the importance of dental health and emphasized the value of Shallowford's dental services.
- Personalized mailings for dental services with an added incentive for dental cleanings.
- Client education messages seamlessly integrated into all communication efforts and reinforced in the exam room.
- Data management techniques that ensure consistent and accurate record-keeping and sustainable revenue.

Vet Met utilized the company's proprietary segmentation criteria to develop a target mailing list of more than 400 Shallowford pets most likely to engage or be in need of dental services. A personalized letter about the importance of dental health was created with a call to action to schedule a dental exam. The mailing also included an incentive for dental cleanings. In addition, the hospital opted to create a take home dental kit for each client complete with toothbrush and dental health information for their pet.

Vet Met's Dental Marketing Program has proven so effective, the company provides a five times return on investment guarantee for participating practices.

Shallowford's initial expense for this program was \$920, which included all program information, training materials and direct mail development. Among the training materials provided, Vet Met included multiple choice quizzes for the Shallowford team to help ensure that the program fundamentals were understood. "Vet Met made training our team on the importance of the dental program so easy," said Bailey. "They sent an entire training package written in layman's terms. This was important because not all of our techs are certified."

A New Strategy Pays Off

Within a matter of days, Shallowford began to see a return on their investment. "Before, we were relying on people to come in to the hospital," said Bailey. "Otherwise, they never knew about our programs, promotions or discounts." With the Dental Marketing Program, Shallowford increased the percentage of pets receiving prophylaxis by 25 percent within the first six months and experienced a 56 percent increase year over year in dental clients.

"We found that people who came in for dental, didn't just get dental, they would buy other services," explained Bailey. This additional revenue ultimately increased the total return on investment for the program. "Plus they keep coming back," Bailey added.

The benefits Shallowford realized through working with Vet Met went beyond the dental program. The initial data analysis conducted by Vet Met showed that 24.6 percent of Shallowford's client/pet records did not have reminders. By implementing Vet Met data management philosophies, Shallowford was able to significantly reduce this number to less than 10 percent per month.

The partnership was so successful, Shallowford signed on for additional Vet Met services including Senior, Wellness, WinBack and Heartworm programs. "The best part about working with Vet Met is their service," said Bailey. "My questions never go unanswered."





Veterinary Metrics™

Veterinary Metrics, Inc. is dedicated to helping veterinarians improve practice performance, and increase revenue. Our consultative offering combines effective data management with the personalized communication and comprehensive training necessary to establish a wellness strategy that leads to long-term client relationships.

More than 250 practices nationwide, made up of more than 800 thousand pets, have utilized Vet Met's services to improve client communications and operational efficiencies. Vet Met customers have generated over \$52 million in revenue from Vet Met's seasonal and ongoing wellness programs. At Vet Met, we view each of our client practices as a strategic business partner and the success of that partnership is our primary goal.

*For more information on **Vet Met** services, please visit www.vetmet.com, or contact us directly at **1-800-418-8449**.*