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Implementing an Effective Wellness Testing Program

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This white paper describes some of the high-level steps of the implementation process as it pertains to Veterinary Metrics, Inc.'s involvement with the Bigger Road Veterinary Clinic in a recent Senior Wellness Program launch. This paper aims to be very specific at times to allow the reader to know what to expect before working with Vet Metrics. Every practice engagement is different and your practice's engagement with Vet Metrics will depend on the programs and services you elect to pursue. Rest assured, it is our goal to provide significant positive change, along with minimal practice disruption.

Introduction

The Bigger Road Veterinary Clinic is one of Veterinary Metrics, Inc.'s most satisfied customers... and for good reason. Their partnership with Vet Metrics recently helped shape the foundation of the practice's Wellness Testing Program -- and helped earn the practice an incremental \$67,000 in the first four months of 2008 in Wellness Testing Revenue (vs. same period, 2007).

Bigger Road is a full-service veterinary medical facility located in Kettering, Ohio. The professional and courteous staff, including five full-time veterinarians, seeks to provide the best possible medical, surgical and dental care for their valued patients. They are committed to promoting responsible pet ownership, preventative health care and health-related educational opportunities for their clients.

Veterinary Metrics, Inc. (Vet Metrics) is a data, consulting and marketing services company based in Atlanta, Georgia. As an industry leader, Vet Metrics helps provide valuable database analysis and consulting services in the animal health market to generate incremental revenue from a practice's existing client base by uncovering missed service and product opportunities. The company's research indicates that lack of effective client education accounts for up to \$1.5 million in unrealized annual wellness revenues for the existing client base within a typical two-vet practice.



“Walk before you run, so you don’t stub your toe.”

Dr. John Talmadge joined the Bigger Road Veterinary Clinic in September of 2006. With nearly 25 years of practice, corporate business and marketing experience, Dr. Talmadge wanted to develop an effective approach to identify growth opportunities within the Bigger Road practice. Enter Veterinary Metrics, Inc.

Vet Metrics helped jumpstart 2008 for the Bigger Road Veterinary Clinic. Here’s how.

Outlined below are the steps Bigger Road and Vet Metrics took in implementing the customized Wellness Testing Program that generated an incremental \$67,000 in the first four months of 2008.

Step 1: Planning & Analytics

Described here is the planning process to identify opportunities for wellness services and products in general and, specifically, senior wellness, with a focus on senior wellness testing:

The practice identified their senior wellness opportunity about one year prior through basic in-hospital research. They then engaged the services of Vet Metrics for a comprehensive Practice Performance Analysis. The analysis Vet Metrics conducted on their client/pet data found that their pet population was disparately aged versus the average vet practice patient populations. The analysis also identified declining numbers of new client acquisitions. The practice decided to attack both areas and enlisted the help of Veterinary Metrics’ consulting and marketing implementation services targeting:

- Introduction of specific senior care services
- Increasing wellness compliance by existing clients & patients

Step 2: Staff Development

Vet Metrics immediately helped the practice understand the importance of staff development. Two months prior to the wellness testing program implementation, Vet Metrics consulted with Bigger Road’s management regarding testing protocols by species, pricing, terminology and consistent benefit statements for communication to clients. Vet Metrics staff training and testing materials were delivered during staff





meetings. A highly important area, staff knowledge is critical to ensure all layers of staff have a clear understanding and appreciation of the preventive health significance of wellness testing and early disease diagnosis and how a wellness program must flow through all touch points of client/pet visit. All staff members must know their role and clients must understand the value of the program.

At Vet Metrics request, and in conjunction with Bigger Road's lab services provider, all staff members' pets received age appropriate wellness tests. The results of these tests showed some significant findings that were eventually weaved into the customized program for the practice. The results showed the staff that 25% of their pets - one in every four! - had some hidden abnormality. The test results were tracked and shared. Specific abnormalities like thyroid disease, subclinical bladder disease and dental disease were documented in the findings.

“Vet Metrics made it easy for my staff to understand the importance of this program. Not rushing to get the program out the door helped create a very disciplined roll out. And the best part was, my staff was able to communicate the message to our clients.”

—Dr. John Talmadge

Step 3: Internal Study and Additional Planning

All results from the staff members' pets' wellness tests were shared and the entire practice began to grasp the importance of wellness testing. These rounds of training, implementation and staff meetings drove the personal investment and buy-in, which ultimately led to the conviction, communication, programs and scripts for all areas of the practice.

Step 4: Launch Preparation

Prior to launch, the practice had narrowed their focus on preparation of the client education materials -- and also reached out to their lab services partner to:

- Help design custom testing protocols
- Negotiate volume pricing based on performance



Because of their disciplined approach, Bigger Road was able to lean on their Veterinary Metrics analysis and planning to develop a powerful, structured approach to their roll out. The practice deliberately and methodically followed Vet Metrics' wellness testing implementation module, as it had throughout the introduction of this program.

“Partnering with Vet Metrics truly made a difference in building out our Wellness Testing Program. Their experience in rolling out a program of this magnitude was amazing. They helped us every step of the way.”

— Dr. John Talmadge

Step 5: Education Process for Clients

At the launch of the Wellness Testing Program, the entire staff made a point to communicate the importance of the program during visits by all pets meeting the program criteria. Scripts provided by Vet Metrics that focused on benefit statements were refined to further tailor the approach to their clients and optimize compliance.

A component of Vet Metrics' implementation services involved “mystery shoppers” to call on the practice (while posing as clients) to make sure the staff was meeting the program criteria. This service, conducted during the first days of the program, revealed thoroughness and consistency of recommendations, not to mention the staff's sincere support of the program, but also conviction for the service. Any issues or opportunities determined by the mystery shopper can then be addressed at the program outset.

As recommended by Vet Metrics, a complete “life stage” approach helped staff members understand the big picture of client education for wellness testing for pets of all ages. This included the introduction of mandatory pre-anesthetic testing for pediatric spays, neuters and first dental cleanings serving as the initial baseline for lifelong wellness testing. Beginning with messages from the front office personnel, to support from a personalized direct mail campaign, to showing their clients the value of the program through their new exam report card, the Bigger Road Veterinary Clinic staff was able to thoroughly explain the importance of the program in an easy-to-understand manner... the essence of which is: “Here are the tests we run and this is why it is important for your pet (constant and consistent client education).”



Conclusion...

Results speak louder than words. In this case, the practice has accomplished the following through April of this year:

Jan-April 2008 (versus 2007) Wellness Testing Performance in the practice has generated \$67,000 in incremental wellness testing revenue and achieved 34% wellness testing conversions (percentage of wellness exams also receiving wellness testing). Based on historical Veterinary Metrics data, your practice may see similar results depending on the type of programs and services you elect to pursue.

Hats off to all of the staff at the Bigger Road Veterinary Clinic!!!

“We plan to continue our engagement with Vet Metrics to further grow our program. Practices need to remember that their Wellness Testing Program needs to grow with the practice. To avoid being complacent, they need to continue to reinforce the message in new and innovative ways.”

“That which get’s measured, get’s done.”

— Dr. John Talmadge

