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BUILDING REFERRALS IN THE VET COMMUNITY

By Linda Wasche

“How can I generate and maintain referrals from other veterinarians?” This question is usually asked by specialty and emergency centers offering services beyond those available at family vet practices. Family vets may also refer to one another for reasons including location and species of pet.

Follow these four steps to build and maintain a solid referral base.

1) Listen

How do referring vets perceive your practice now? What is their understanding of your services and expertise? Why do they refer to you – or not? What other centers are they referring to in addition to or in place of yours?

Without answering these questions, efforts to build referrals are a shot in the dark.

2) Stay connected

We hear it all the time: “We sent them a brochure. They should know about us!” One -time communication is NEVER enough. Building referrals is a PROCESS. Staff members get replaced, information gets misplaced and new materials arrive from your competition. Stay in front of the practice with a continuous flow of useful information and updates.

3) Deliver value

Make the referral process easy with quick access to necessary forms and contact information (center hours, location and services.). Promptly report on patient outcomes. Look for ways to share specialized knowledge and provide tools to help vets communicate complex pet health issues and problems to their clients.

4) Gather feedback

That’s right – listen again! Ask “How are we doing?” Gather feedback on your communication with referring vets. Continuously look for ways to strengthen the process.

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