

Encourage better animal health outcomes through technology

About The Author

6–7 minutes

Technology itself holds no value unless it provides real solutions for veterinary practices. One-off solutions and software systems that function in a silo often come with substantial training burdens in terms of time and effort required of managers and staff. These still end up being underused, often with only [20% of functionality](#) employed. Such inadequate solutions can lead to sagging morale and growing resistance to new tech in general.

Yet, consumer tech advancements continue to raise client's expectations. Positive experiences with flashy tech elsewhere in life makes wowing them with anything in the veterinary space much harder. Rather than focus on tech for tech's sake, veterinary practices can use tech to:

- Fix logjams
- Improve outcomes for patients
- Provide more benefits to practice teams (less stress, more satisfaction)
- Upscale services to veterinary clients

Technology should deliver specific benefits such as extended reach, removing barriers, automated processes, supporting decisions, accelerating action and feedback.

Extension

Extension means improving access to care. Veterinary practices can achieve this through [asynchronous communication](#) such as text

messaging. Extending conversation beyond the walls of your exam room and into the client's home, can help veterinarians better connect with clients, better gauge adherence, and better gauge outcomes.

A well-executed extension of animal health services also establishes broader goals. Staying connected throughout the client's life is a better objective than staying connected throughout the pet's life. The practice can make improvements to the care of all the subsequent pets in the context of that client's life.

For example, [teletriage](#) and [telemedicine](#) provide ways to extend veterinary services beyond what's traditionally done onsite. However, adding such services requires reimagining workflows, too. Telemedicine cannot function using the same workflow as on-location veterinary visits because virtual and onsite care are so different. Reimagine your virtual care process and tech solution instead of trying to bend technology to force old ideas into a new care delivery model.

Stop-gap strategies during the pandemic likely won't scale for future telemedicine growth because they were thrown together on the fly. Interim weirdness and glitches people tolerated in the early days of the pandemic will likely feel less charming as time goes on, leading to failures meeting client expectations in the long term and frustrating veterinary teams in the process.

Efficiency

Efficiency through automations and other streamlining should [improve the day-to-day experiences](#) of busy animal health services teams. Then they can focus on the patient work they enjoy.

The most common practice automations include:

- Routine care or recheck reminders
- In-app or online appointment booking
- Tailored forward-booking recommendations
- Auto-refills and subscriptions for foods, long-term meds, and preventive products

- Relevant, values-driven information provided each time someone accesses a client record
- Data-driven inventory ordering and management
- Drivers of data consistency that prevent typos and other mistakes that make data unusable

In addition to freeing up team time and mental bandwidth, automations also save money by preventing waste from mishandled and mismanaged inventory, such as expired items due to over-ordering or mistakes in product rotation.

Teams, however, need to use their found time toward bigger goals such as prioritizing stellar case management, customized recommendations, improved compliance, and better control of the schedule.

When teams put their energy where it matters most they free up practice leadership to handle evaluation and planning and continued improvements and strategic thinking.

Effectiveness

Along with better team morale and functionality, efficiency also improves the effectiveness of animal health services. Driven by communication, consistency, and retention, effectiveness pays off emotionally for veterinary professionals, too. Teams that have worked together longer often operate like clockwork with fewer miscues, mistakes, and miscommunications — which can create better outcomes for patients and lower the stress for everyone through seamless case management.

Technology should and can improve outcomes. Veterinary practices achieve better insight, better adherence from clients and more proactive and wellness-focused care. The appropriate application of technology and a good workflow also contributes to better customer service.

For example, say that a hospitalized patient experiences a mild adverse medication reaction. The attending team handles the immediate situation and reworks the treatment plan to use a

different medication. Case management in that moment remains fine, but a lack of information and communication could still cause stress for teams and clients and result in potentially poor patient outcomes. If nobody alerts the client of the medication change, they may feel frustrated and confused upon their pet's discharge. That miscommunication causes the client to panic, doubt the practice's competence, and likely dents the team's morale as well.

Exponential improvements

The benefits of using technology for practice solutions are not linear. Technology platforms can result in exponential improvement if they are designed and implemented for more than surface-level integrations. These improvements are called [network effects](#).

Animal health teams and technologies work together to improve outcomes for patients and boost morale and success. As veterinary practices extend their reach and gain efficiencies and effectiveness, they move everything forward in ways not always visible when considering new tech. To get started, practices must consider what problems to address and how tech-supported solutions could help.