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on what they want  
and need in their jobs

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Do they  
attract new  
clients ...  
or do they  
demean the  
profession?

**p10**



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# Veterinary economics

The business of client and patient care

## How are female leaders in veterinary medicine perceived compared to their male counterparts?

**SHAWN FINCH, DVM**  
Women are viewed as intellectual, compassionate and family-oriented associates who are willing to work for less. Men are viewed as strong, business-minded and career-oriented business owners unwilling to work for less. Acknowledging that people are individuals—rather than putting them in a gender-specific box—would let our actual traits define us and improve veterinary medicine for all of us.

Check out page 4 to read more challenges women face in the profession and what you can do to encourage female leadership.

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You don't need inspiration to help animals and the people who love them—that's in your blood. Instead, we'll give you the inspiration and tools you need to be happy, healthy and whole. Because you matter to us.

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# Chip in to promote community efforts at microchipping

We built goodwill in the neighborhood and boosted our morale with free microchips. *By Wesley Taylor, MPA*

I've seen firsthand how common it is for pets to get lost, so offering microchips is a cause close to my heart. Our shelter and rescue partners are constantly flooded with lost pets, and I felt that it was important for our private practice to make pet identification a community priority. I knew I'd need to overcome two challenges:

**Challenge 1: Get staff buy-in for community outreach.**

Who wants to volunteer on weekends? Still, once we organized and saw the difference we could make, our team's enthusiasm was contagious.

**Challenge 2: Make sure the idea is affordable for you.**

I pitched the idea of a microchip clinic to the owner of the microchip company we chose as our vendor.

He was thrilled to hear that we wanted to feature their microchips at our festival. He threw in the first 100 microchips for free and provided T-shirts for our staff to wear and banners to display at the event.

It was amazing to watch the faces of our team members as they educated pet owners who would have never thought about the importance of a microchip.

Once their pet was chipped, you could see the sense of pride pet owners felt knowing that they did something important for their animal.

When all was said and done, we'd chipped more than 75 animals, and it cost us only \$125. And all 75 of the pet owners returned to Mercy Animal Hospital within six months of the event for pet care.

I've heard from many of these clients that their first interaction with us was to have their pet chipped at the festival. Many say they would have never even thought about pet microchipping if they hadn't been introduced to it. **VE**

*Wesley Taylor is the 2015 winner of the Veterinary Economics Practice Manager of the Year contest, sponsored by Nationwide. He is currently practice manager at Mercy Animal Hospital and Mercy West Spay & Neuter Clinic in Gardendale, Alabama.*



## Managers' insights

To read more tips from the Practice Manager of the Year finalists, visit [dvm360.com/pmoy](http://dvm360.com/pmoy).

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# 3 ways to promote female leadership

CVC forum hosted by WVLDI explored the external and internal forces confronting female leaders. *By Matthew Kenwright*

Challenges facing female veterinarians were explored during a session put on by the Women's Veterinary Leadership Development Initiative (WVLDI) during CVC Kansas City in August. The forum revealed these three insights for practice owners:

## 1 Age differences cause conflict for women and men alike.

Doug Aspros, DVM, a member of WVLDI's board of directors, told attendees that many baby boomers are puzzled by younger associates who want more work-life balance—which usually means fewer hours. “How does that work? Like, ‘I’ve got a lot of debt; I’ve got to pay it off—and I want to work less,’” Dr. Aspros said.

This suggests associates should explain that their desire for balance is a matter of personal health, not laziness, and owners can be less judgmental when scheduling associates.

## 2 Self-doubt could be holding women back.

Sarah Wooten, DVM, an associate veterinarian in Greeley,



>>> Dr. Sarah Wooten leads a discussion about women in the veterinary profession.

Colorado, who also presented during the session, cited an internal report by Hewlett Packard that found women would apply for a position only if they met 100 percent of the position's criteria. However, men said they would pursue it if they were 60 percent qualified.

This research suggests women should pursue opportunities, despite self-doubt. Owners should be more inclusive when promoting their job openings and to proactively reach out to women they believe would fit the position.

## 3 Negative labels discourage women.

Being described as “bossy” or



Visit [dvm360.com/WVLDItweets](https://dvm360.com/WVLDItweets) to read all the tweets from the forum.

@dvm360

The Heidi/Howard Study showed people wanted to work for a man over a woman when they had the same resume

@dvm360

Losing family time is the top reason women don't pursue #veterinary practice ownership, number 3 for men.

“bitchy” is an issue for women in power, according to many of the session's participants.

“It's a hard lesson to learn when you first come out because you think it's personal,” said one attendee. “Then you start to realize that if you have to be that person at that clinic and you happen to be the hardest worker and happen to be female, then that's the label you get.”

This suggests owners should support their female leaders and not tolerate these insults. **VE**



## Where the women are

Read about what inspired WVLDI president Karen Bradley, DVM, to start the female leadership organization at [dvm360.com/Bradley](https://dvm360.com/Bradley).

# From Eureka to Action

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*"Top 10 Ways to Get Started with Fear-Free Veterinary Visits."*

### Marty Becker, DVM

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### Richard LeCouteur, BVSC, PhD, DACVIM (Neurology), DECVN

*The science of fear in animals: It's real. It's damaging. It's our responsibility.*

### Lisa Radosta, DVM, DACVB

*Fear-Free techniques: Clinical behavioral evidence that they work.*

### Jonathan Bloom, DVM

*Modern love — Making pets happy at the veterinary hospital.*



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\*Eye Opener Breakfast will open at 6:45 AM.

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# How does your clinic handle **Fear-Free**?

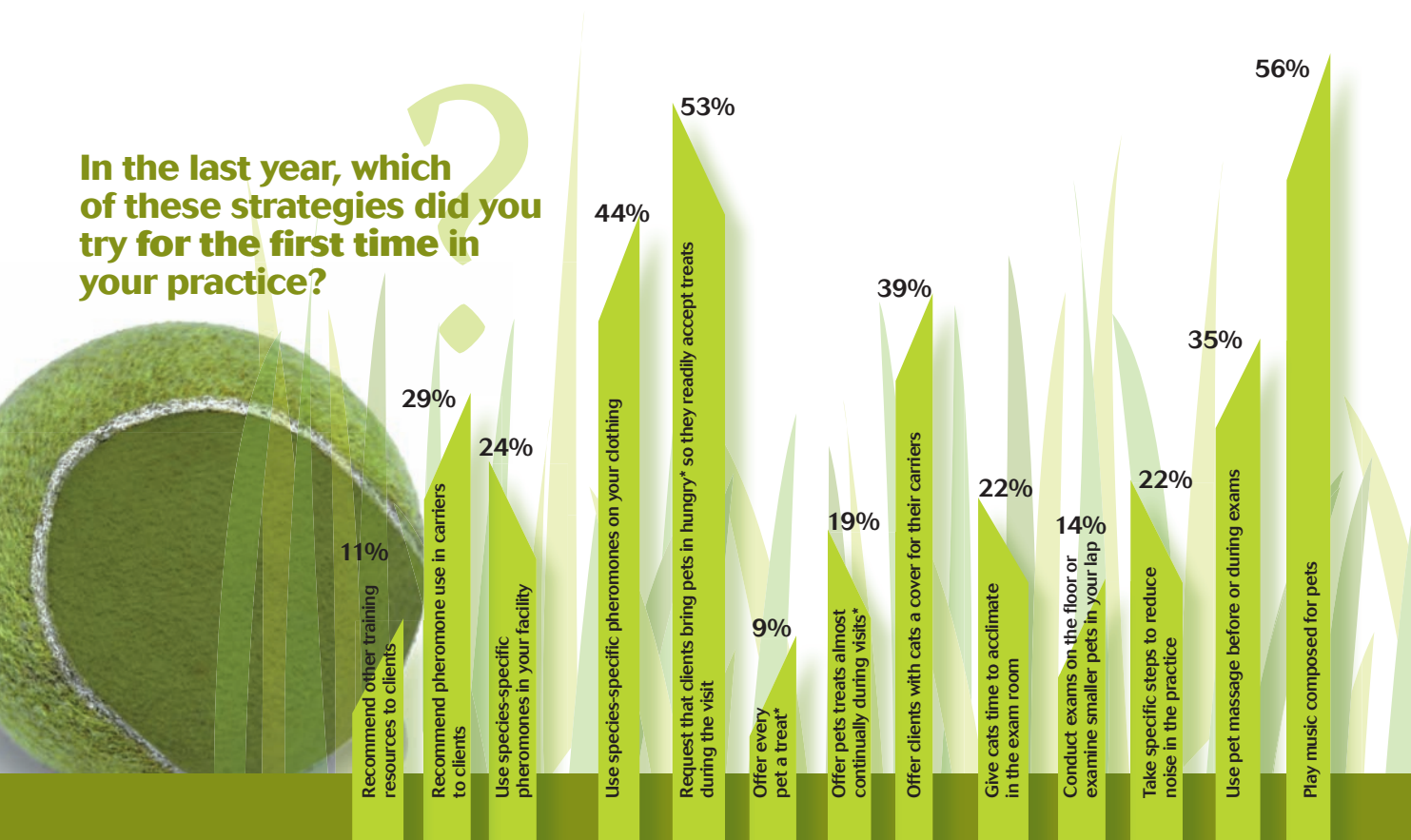
Techniques to calm patients are sprouting up in everyday practice life. Here's what your peers are trying out.

**E**vidence shows that stress and fear are worse than we ever imagined for your patients' health. So, more and more practices are taking on a lower-stress approach to try and help pets feel better while at their practice.

In a survey fielded earlier this year, we asked more than 550 veterinarians and team members how they're providing a lower-stress environment. A whopping 71 percent said that in the last year they had specifically changed something

about how they practice with the goal of reducing pets' fear and anxiety. To see what they tried, check out the data below. For more Fear-Free tips, tricks, videos and client education tools than anywhere else, head to [dvm360.com/fearfree](http://dvm360.com/fearfree). **VE**

**In the last year, which of these strategies did you try for the first time in your practice?**



Source: 2015 dvm360 Managing Pets' Fear study

\*If not medically contraindicated

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# Are euthanasia comfort rooms a hospital design must-have?

Maybe not, experts say. A better experience everywhere, rather than a separate space, should shine. *By Katie James*

**D**esignated comfort or euthanasia rooms in veterinary hospitals have been a growing trend the past few years. But what if you don't have the space for a standalone room? Should you convert a room in your practice for just this purpose? Our experts' opinions vary, but their overarching

advice was the same: No matter the location, the feel of the space should be secure and comforting for the client and patient in their difficult time of transition.

Dr. Dennis Cloud, a *Veterinary Economics* Editorial Advisory Board member and practitioner in the St. Louis area, recommends doing what you can to make the space—whether it be dedicated space or multi-purpose—feel as warm and soothing as you can.

“Use warmer colors and put a cozier chair in the space,” he says. Dr. Cloud's ideal version of this space would be a dedicated area and include a separate exit that clients can use, rather than having to exit back through the main hospital areas.

Privacy is key for Dr. Ross Clark's clients. Dr. Clark, a multi-practice owner in Oklahoma and a *Veterinary Economics* board member, says that although only some of his practices have dedicated rooms, they place an emphasis on privacy. In those rooms that serve a dual purpose, they have curtains that can be drawn to cover any windows in the exam room.

“You don't need a dedicated room to make it comfortable and private,” Dr. Clark says. “In a regular exam room, you can still turn down the lights, have soft cushions for the pet to lie on, and have something to cover the patient with after they've passed.”



>>> Littleton West Animal Hospital in Littleton, Colorado, has a dedicated exit so grieving clients can go straight to their car.





>>> Country Club Veterinary Clinic in Lake Charles, Louisiana, uses plush fabrics to bring a sense of comfort into their room.

From the perspective of veterinary architect Heather Lewis, AIA, NCARB, more importance should be placed on making all the exam rooms more comfortable to help all clients feel more at ease. Every room is an important room where you're having an important conversation with your client about their pet about their pet's health, and every room needs to support the client and the health of the pet, Lewis says.

"I don't necessarily think there needs to be a specific room, but I think when clients have gone into a euthanasia room for this difficult time with their pet, they may not want to come back into that room the next time they visit the hospital," Lewis says. "Having a more across-the-board approach on making comfortable exam rooms can be successful." **VE**



## SOCIAL MEDIA Roundup

Readers sounded off on Facebook about comfort rooms.

### Vet Changes World

I think they are a great idea, have had many clients want to avoid a specific room that their pet was put down in, think it would be easier if there was a happier more comfortable space. Though, I also think Dr. Sophia Yin had a good point in that maybe all our rooms should be more comfortable and comforting since that will also likely decrease fear and stress for our pets and pet owners.

### Debra Linton Bryant

All for it!

### Sharon Delgadillo

It was very important when we expanded our hospital. We designed a large exam room with a fold-up table, optional dimmable lights and an additional door that leads to a private entrance. The room is used as an exam room too, but reserved for scheduled euthanasias to eliminate public wait time.

### Vicky Payne

Brilliant idea. But we don't have the space. Or the money.

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# Dissecting THE DISCOUNT

Are incentives worth cultivating new and loyal clients who may be worth 10 times the original investment?

By Jessica Goodman Lee, CVPM

Talking about discounts with veterinarians is like talking about politics with your in-laws—it opens up a can of worms you wish you'd never opened. There continue to be strong, often highly emotional responses about discounting or incentivizing as a marketing strategy in veterinary practices, which is why *Veterinary Economics* surveyed more than 300 veterinary professionals to get a better handle on the controversial topic.

The survey looked at four types of discounts in practices:

for new clients, referrals, specific demographics and missing clients. Here are highlights:

## Do you discount for new clients?

Many respondents say they don't use new-client incentives as a marketing tool, but admit to leaving it to "doctor discretion" or "when the client has already generated a decent bill," neither of which are strategic, objective approaches that provide real value for the practice.

The other half of respondents—who don't offer new-

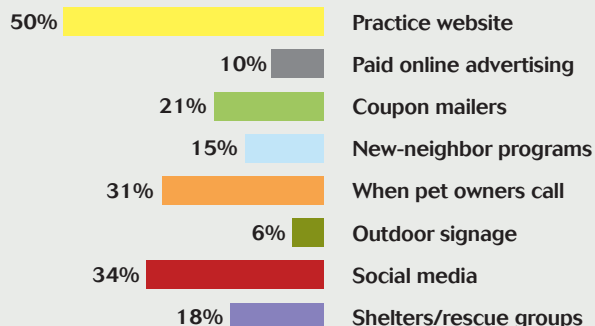
client incentives—say they believe "it devalues our services" and sets future expectations for more discounts. The fact remains, however, that regardless of an improved economy, more and more pet owners say that cost is a serious issue for them in picking and staying with a particular veterinarian.

Many respondents said they don't offer new-client incentives specifically because they offer superior service. Here's a question to consider: How will you know if you can't get them in the door?

Table 1: New clients

**51%** of respondents do.

**81%** of those who offer discounts feel that they've helped attract new clients. **Here's how they advertise them (they picked all that applied) ...**



Data source: 2015 *Veterinary Economics* discounting survey

### Objections to new-client discounts in your words:

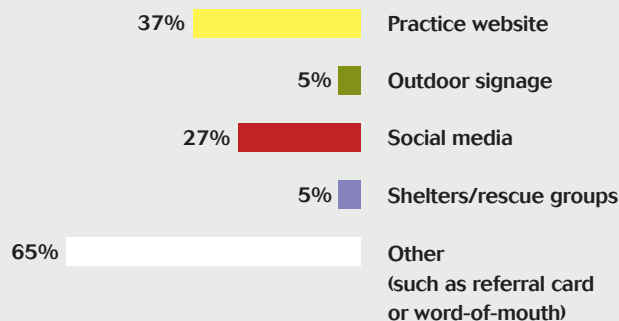
**"I don't necessarily want clients looking for price breaks all the time. Some 'shoppers' continually jump veterinarians to get the best price. This results in lack of continuity of care and a poor relationship."**

**"We don't want our current clients to feel like they're not appreciated."**

**Table 2: Referring clients**

**54%** of those surveyed give discounts to clients who refer a new patient.

**78%** feel they're successful. **Here's how they market them (they picked all that applied) ...**



### Do you reward clients for referrals?

Similar to those who offer discounts to new clients, many respondents said they don't promote their incentives for clients who refer. (See Table 2 above.) With little risk and the opportunity for significant reward (based on what we know about the value of new clients resulting from personal referrals), this lack of promotion seems strategically counter-productive. Everyone likes to be rewarded for doing something good, and the benefits to the practice far outweigh the minimal costs associated with that type of recognition.

While there were similar responses for not offering this

incentive as there were for new clients ("I don't have to rely on gimmicks to get referrals from my good clients"), it's important to measure this to be sure. What was most interesting is that a large number of respondents who don't offer a referral incentive said they recognize the value of those incentives and expressed interest in implementing this type of program. Unfortunately, their reasons for not doing so to-date were purely logistical, with "difficult to track" and "lack of organization" as the most commonly reported roadblocks.

### Objections to referral-based discounts in your words:

**"Referrals and return visits should be based on bonding with clients by providing effective care, a clean and pleasant facility, polite staff and fees that represent honest value. Buying referrals through discounts is extremely unprofessional."**

### Do you target certain demographics?

Practice owners who see little apparent value may still think offering discounts to seniors and other special demographics is worth the goodwill it provides. Or they may fear that discontinuing the discounts would generate animosity from the handful of pet owners who use them. Whatever the case may be, the data shows that the most common type of discounts being practiced aren't necessarily the most strategic approach for a practice to increase service usage or client loyalty. (See Table 3 on next page.)



Based on the lower financial value these discounts offer, if a practice isn't currently offering these discounts, it may not be the best strategy to pursue. The exception would be if there are some truly unique demographic considerations practice management plans to capitalize on. Limiting these discounts to slower days or certain times of day

### Objections to demographic-based discounts in your words:

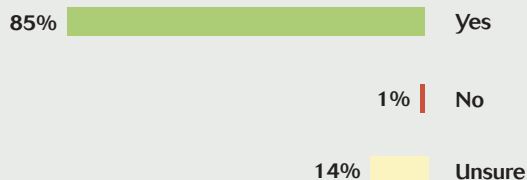
**"A majority of our clients fits in one category or another of those that we would offer."**

**"We saw terrible abuse of our military discount in the past, from fake IDs to fatigues used for hunting being called 'uniforms.'"**

**Table 3: Specific demographics**

**60%** of respondents give discounts to specific demographics, such as seniors or military members.

**46%** feel these discounts have been successful in their clinics. **That makes it a bit surprising how many respondents below say they'll continue offering these discounts ...**



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would also make them more profitable, because there won't be any increase in overhead costs.

### Do you entice missing clients—those who've been away for a while?

The survey question on missing clients generated a lot of understandably passionate responses from veterinarians and their team members about the fact that it seems counter-intuitive to reward clients who are disloyal to the practice. (See Table 4 above at right.)

Only 16 percent of respondents said they make phone calls to directly offer this promotion, which leaves room for opportunity. However, the personnel costs associates with making all those calls would

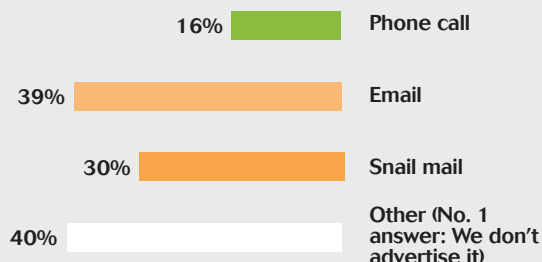
### Objections to missing-client discounts in your words:

**"If I haven't succeeded in convincing my clients of the medical necessity of periodic examinations, it is certainly not a good business practice to entice them back in the door with a discount."**

**Table 4: Missing clients**

**20%** of respondents offer incentives for missing clients, those who haven't been in for 12 or more months.

**82%** said they felt the incentives were successful in attracting clients back. **Here's how they get the word out about the incentive (they picked all that applied) ...**



need to be weighed and measured against any possible increase in client visits and gross revenue.

### Reward behavior

Any discount, whether to attract new clients or incentivize current clients, is about rewarding desired behavior. If you truly don't have any need to offer incentives, then don't. If you feel it's "wrong" to discount, then you have a right to that opinion, but make sure yours is not just an emotional response because you feel it devalues the work you do. (Does it devalue the work millions of other Americans do when they offer discounts to get clients to use their product or service?) Make sure you aren't offering random, unadvertised discounts that do nothing to foster growth or loyalty. Base your decision on data, not emotions or guesswork.

It's time to accept the fact that there are costs associated with acquiring new clients, whether through direct incentives or by incentivizing others to make referrals. The key is to measure that cost and determine whether it is acceptable. Is it worth a \$10 credit to a current client for making a referral—plus a complimentary exam for the referred client—to have the opportunity to add a loyal fan to your list of clients who

will continue the cycle by referring others? Sure, a few pet owners hop around from one clinic to another for an incentive, but that's not the norm. The lifetime value of a client far exceeds this initial investment. According to SCORE (a volunteer nonprofit organization dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses), loyal customers are worth at least 10 times the investment to get them.

Ultimately, the key is for every practice owner to consider potential opportunities and make well-informed, strategic decisions with regards to client incentives. These decisions should always reflect attention paid to clients, capabilities, industry evolution and competition. When done right, a sound incentive strategy can benefit all parties—the pet owner, the pet and the practice. **VE**

*Jessica Goodman Lee is a practice management consultant for Pinnacle Integrated Veterinary Solutions.*

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# What **associates** today want and need in a **great job**

Our fictional Dr. Alex Doe exemplifies real-life survey results on what they're looking for in the workplace.

**“W**hat’s most important to you as an employee?” can be a simple question for associates, but the answers are crucial if practice owners want to successfully hire and keep associates and minimize low morale. Associates, do these

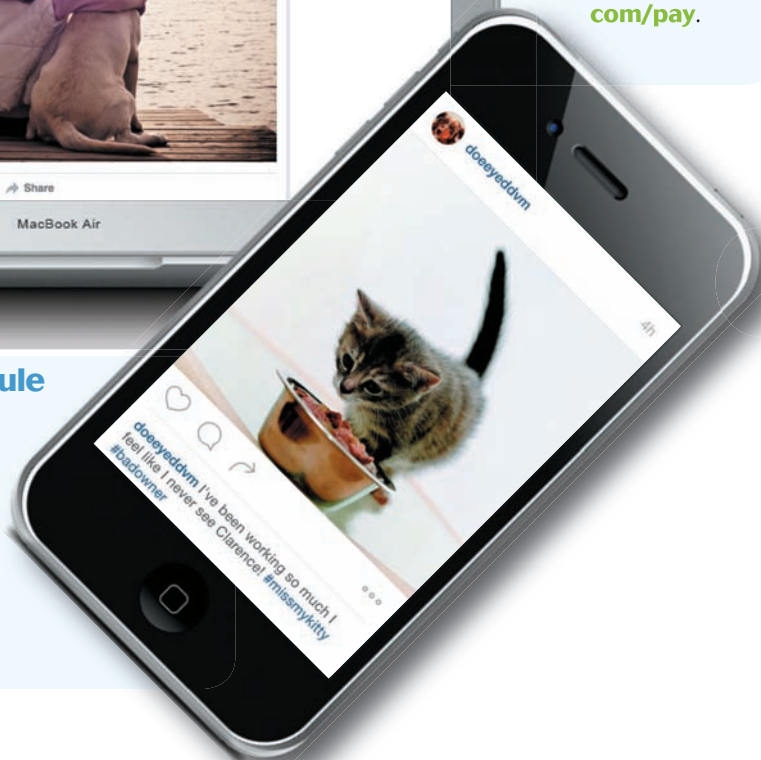
survey results from *Benchmarks 2015: A Study of Well-Managed Practices* mirror your feelings? Practice owners and managers, what can you learn? Let’s click through associates’ top six work concerns in these social media posts from our fictional doctor ... **VE**

## 1. Competitive wages

Pay was associates’ top concern. If you want a formula to calculate if your wages are in the ballpark, visit **dvm360.com/pay**.

## 2. Flexible time/schedule

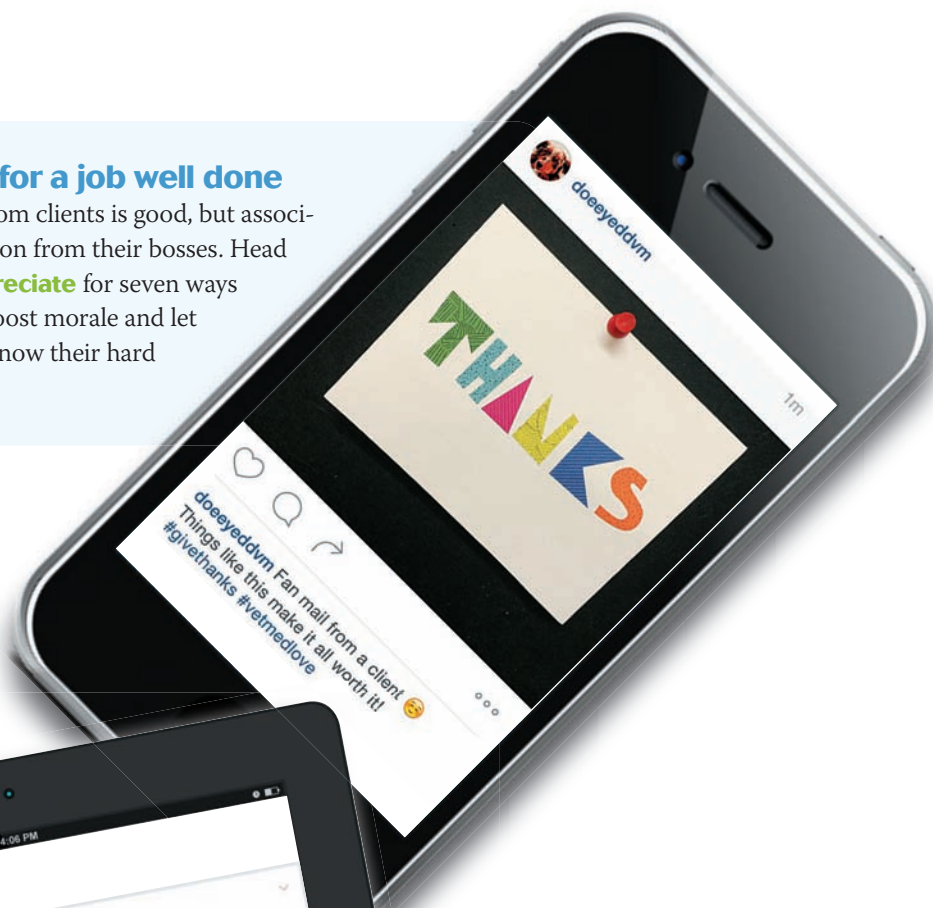
“Work-life balance” isn’t just a buzzword—it’s the second-highest priority for associates. Visit **dvm360.com/balance** for insightful data, concise articles and fun videos on helping associates and others lead healthier, happier lives.





### 3. Appreciation for a job well done

Hearing “thank you” from clients is good, but associates also want affirmation from their bosses. Head to [dvm360.com/appreciate](http://dvm360.com/appreciate) for seven ways a practice leader can boost morale and let associates and others know their hard work is appreciated.



### 4. Chances for growth, career development

Providing opportunities for associates to grow isn't a one-way street for practice leaders—it can spark ideas, retain talent and make everyone better. Visit [dvm360.com/growth](http://dvm360.com/growth) to read why mentorships can elevate practices and help associates feel more fulfilled at work.



#### Know more

Find out even more about what associates want and need in *Benchmarks 2015*. Get your copy at [dvm360.com/benchmarks2015](http://dvm360.com/benchmarks2015).

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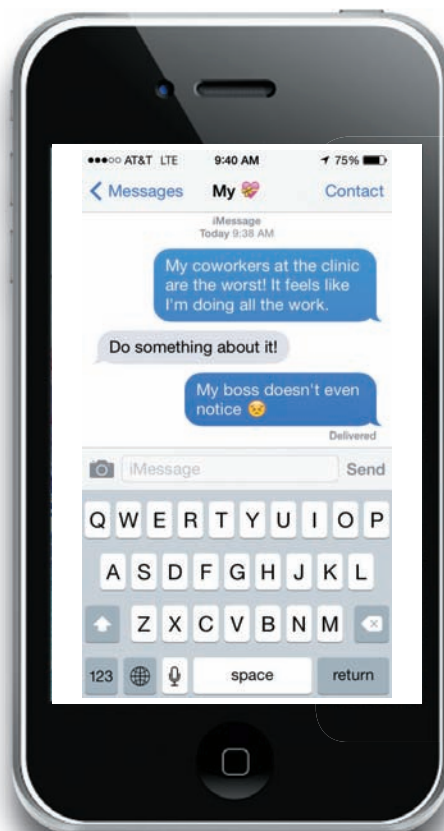
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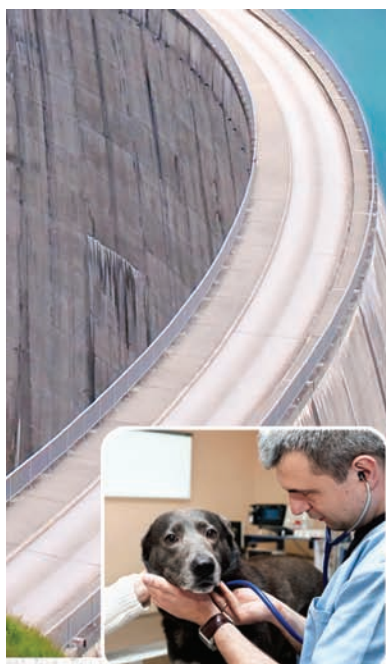
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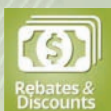
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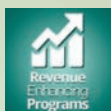


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



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Volusia County: Emergency w/RE.  
Maine, York County: 2,000sf w/RE.  
Maryland, Baltimore County: 1,600sf SA.  
Price to Sell;  
Michigan, Bay County: 2,500sf w/RE.  
Missouri, St. Louis: Feline, 2,200sf.  
New York, Elmira: 3,500sf w/RE.  
North Carolina, Charlotte: New  
Ultra-Modern facility.  
Oregon, Linn County: 1,800sf 2-story w/RE.  
Vermont, Orleans County: 4,400sf w/RE.  
1-800-636-4740  
[psbroker.com](mailto:psbroker.com)  
[info@psbroker.com](mailto:info@psbroker.com)

Mableton GA Area -- Small animal practice  
grossing \$800K+. Quality lifestyle. Beautiful  
physical plant and very well established practice  
with tenured staff. Real estate available. Motivated  
seller. Call Mike Nelson, Nelson & Associates,  
770-475-7559

Unique opportunity to own a specialty feline  
practice in picturesque, historic Georgia  
community near major university. Quality  
lifestyle in growing community and family  
environment. Freestanding facility. Tenured staff  
and well established business make this a truly  
special opportunity. Real estate available. Highly  
motivated seller. Call Mike Nelson, Nelson &  
Associates, 770-475-7559

West GA -- Small animal practice grossing  
\$1.2 million. Exceptional lifestyle in charming  
community with a wonderful family environment.  
Beautiful physical plant and state-of-the-art facility  
available for sale. Very tenured staff. Motivated  
seller. Call Mike Nelson, Nelson & Associates,  
770-475-7559

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Greenville, SC -- Small animal practice grossing  
\$1 million. Outstanding opportunity with amazing  
cash flow in high trafficked location. Exceptionally  
well-equipped, very well-established practice  
with tenured staff. Real estate available. Highly  
motivated seller. Call Mike Nelson, Nelson &  
Associates, 770-475-7559



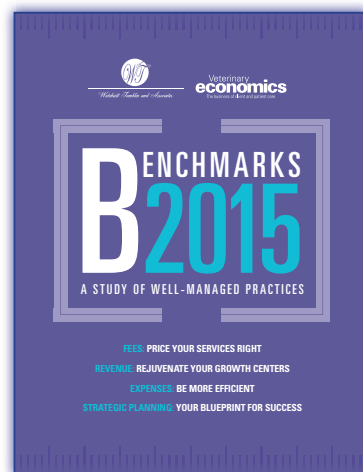
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# here's to **success.**



## Numbers don't lie. And they're *all here.*

*Veterinary Economics* and Wutchiett Tumblin and Associates are back with another edition in our Benchmarks series for veterinary practice owners and managers. This year we reveal the **fees**, **revenue** and **cost control** key to running a well-managed practice!

**Fees.** Survey's in, with more than 200 median fees for services and procedures animal hospitals perform every day — plus data and analysis putting it all into context.

**Revenues.** Bringing in revenue can be like completing a puzzle. We lay all the pieces out for you. See what opportunities well-managed practices are tapping to make more money.

**Expenses.** From wages & compensation and facility costs, to fixed and variable items and capital improvement, up-to-date figures from practices are in one place.

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or call 1-800-598-6008



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Continued from page 17

## Elanco Otitis medication

Elanco Animal Health has launched Osrurnia (florfenicol-terbinafine-betamethasone acetate), a treatment for canine otitis externa. The product could help improve client compliance in treating canine otitis externa because it is formulated in a gel and has an administration schedule that calls for two doses, one week apart. It is administered in a premeasured, easy-to-use, single-dose tube with a flexible, soft tip that is meant to be gentle on a dog's ears. The gel formulation squeezes out of the tube and spreads with gentle massage.

*For fastest response call (877) 352-6261*



## Veterinary Products Laboratories Nutraceuticals for inflammation

Veterinary Products Laboratories has launched two additions to the Duralactin brand portfolio. Duralactin Feline + Fatty Acids Soft Chews helps manage inflammation in cats and support healthy skin. The newly reformulated Duralactin Canine Joint Plus Soft Chews helps manage inflammation while maintaining healthy joints and cartilage. The products contain an ingredient called MicroLactin that has been shown to help manage inflammation by stopping neutrophil migration during the inflammatory process.

*For fastest response visit [duralactin.com](http://duralactin.com)*



## Kinetic Vet Sterile solution

Kinetic Vet announces the immediate availability of

Compass, enabling veterinary surgeons to normalize joint fluid following arthrotomy. Compass is a 10-ml sterile solution that contains both 50 mg sodium hyaluronate and 500 mg polysulfated glycosaminoglycan (PSGAG).

*For fastest response visit [kineticvet.com](http://kineticvet.com)*



## Zoetis Equine influenza vaccine

Fluvac Innovator vaccines help protect against contemporary equine influenza viruses (EIV) and equine herpesvirus (EHV) types 1 and 4. A recent study shows that the vaccines are cross-reactive with three emerging influenza viruses, including Ayrshire 2013 (AY/13), a European Clade 2 isolate as well as Kentucky 2014 (KY/14) and Texas 2012 (TX/12) which are recent North American Clade 1 isolates. The products also contain both EHV-1 and EHV-4 to help protect against rhinopneumonitis. The vaccines demonstrated at least 97.4 percent cross-reactivity to these three recent EIV isolates.

*For fastest response visit [FluvacInnovator.com](http://FluvacInnovator.com)*



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# Associates: Take **control** of your **brand**

You're not involved in your veterinary practice's marketing? Big mistake. *By Kathryn Primm, DVM*



## **Don't post that!**

Having content to post online is important—but knowing what *not* to share with followers is just as crucial. Visit [dvm360.com/goodposts](http://dvm360.com/goodposts) for tips from CVC speaker Bash Halow, LVT, CVPM. Then catch some of Halow's high-energy advice live at CVC San Diego in his Dec. 6 session "10 take-home marketing tactics to try today." Visit [dvm360.com/SDregister](http://dvm360.com/SDregister) to register now.

**A** young associate recently told me he is expected to "produce" for his employer, but he feels that he has no control over how often folks come in the practice's door.

Is this really true? Are young associates powerless?

They don't have to be.

## **Make the practice owner fork over Facebook to you**

Like to take pictures? Like to tell stories? Like to write 50 words? Utilize your talents. Ask to be the administrator of your practice's Facebook page.

Post something every day or at least several times a week. Peruse the Facebook insights tool to see when your audience is present and schedule your posts to appear during those times.

As a practice owner, I welcome any employee who wants to assist with this marketing. You'll get your name out there to clients and prospective clients too.



*Kathryn Primm, DVM, owns and practices at Applebrook Animal Clinic in Ooltewah, Tennessee, and is the author of Tennessee Tails: Pets and Their People.*

## **Wheedle the website out of your practice owner's hands**

Find out whether your hospital's website has content your current and potential clients would find relevant.

You know what's affecting your patients better than anyone. Write a blog post that highlights a case each week, bring the stories to life with photos (with clients' permission, of course) and make sure you're listed as

the author. Call the owners to let them know their pet is "famous." They'll share it online and help with word-of-mouth.

## **Be a face, if not the face, of your practice in the community**

Participation in community outreach is another great idea.

Think of the positive ripples that you could make if you took an hour or two once a week to volunteer at an animal shelter or go to an animal rescue fundraiser.

Meet rescuers and tell them where you work. Plan a coffee talk for dog walkers and groomers to teach them how to recognize signs in pets that might require a visit to the veterinarian. Take your business cards and show how much you care about animals. These steps showing that you care about animal welfare in your community will be easy—you're a veterinarian.

Clients know veterinarians are smart. Brand yourself as one that cares. **VE**

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