

LOOK DEEPER

Comfortable conversations with clients



Improving communication for better patient outcomes

Communication is key

The way you communicate with clients, especially on preventive care, influences the relationship they have with you and with your hospital. This is how you gain their trust, their compliance, and their loyalty.

85% of pet owners stated that they were likely to proceed with diagnostic screening tests, whereas veterinarians perceived that only 31% were likely to proceed with testing. Many pet owners are open to diagnostic health screening - **it just takes a great conversation to get started!**¹

Share your story

Why did Diagnostic Health Screening make a difference for your pet?

Two important points:

- 1) Make a clear recommendation to the client.
- 2) Demonstrate the Value of Diagnostic Health Screening - uncover early disease and establish baselines.

We know YOU know the importance of diagnostic health screening, but do your clients?

Clients often use other sources such as social media, friends, and family members, to find answers for their pet's health which can create misunderstandings around preventive care.

Still, more than 50% of clients say "no" to diagnostic health screening because they don't understand the benefits of it.¹

Let's change that together with more comfortable conversation in your hospital, and start with some communication skills and tips.

1: Trone Study data 2022. Data on file T1-08168



**Never make assumptions about what your client may think:
always make the recommendation.**

Communication skills and tips

Road to more comfortable conversations

A client-centered approach focuses on the relationship between the veterinary healthcare team and the client, as well as the impact and outcomes that these experiences have on the client – it puts the client and their needs first and foremost.

Proper communication (verbal and non-verbal) is very important for a client relationship.

Effective communication skills for comfortable conversations

Ask open-ended questions



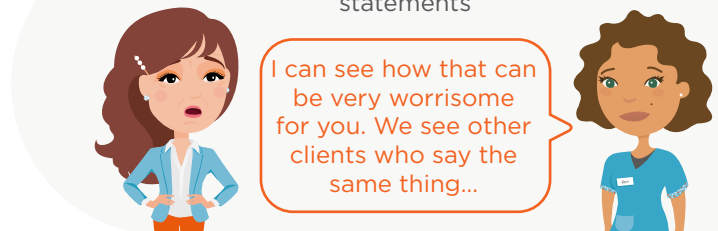
Use reflective listening



Observe non-verbal communication/
body language



Apply empathy statements



Reminder: Use appropriate language: clients are not veterinarians. Use simple, specific language and avoid medical jargon.

Delivering information: The Rule of 3

This is a technique helping you to be more effective, memorable, and impactful. The trick is to present your suggestions and recommendations in sets of 3.

Dealing with objections: a 3 step process

E Emphathize the concern, express understanding

S Search for the reason and try to learn more about your client and their pet

P Promote the value and explain the benefits



Effective communication requires you to make a strong recommendation: advocate for the pet.

Explaining value

Helping the client to understand why we recommend diagnostic health screening

Here are some common misconceptions you may hear and how we can address them.

Diagnostic results on a healthy pet will be normal.

Healthy on the outside does not equal healthy on the inside. A preventive care exam complemented by **diagnostic health screening is important in detecting illness** which might otherwise go undiagnosed, improving the ability to offer **proactive** rather than reactive care.



Diagnostic health screening on a healthy pet is not worth the money.

There are medical reasons to perform routine diagnostic health screenings at every life stage, such as identifying each **pet's individual baseline values** or potentially **detecting underlying diseases** earlier based on changes to those values. Clients are **willing to invest** in the health of their pet for this.



Pets age the same as humans.

Clients might not know that pets age faster than humans and their 1 year old “baby” is actually already a teenager. Leverage tools such as an age chart poster to demonstrate the pet’s age in human years and the importance of diagnostic health screening.



Addressing common misconceptions in a positive way can help them see the benefits of wellness testing.

Common objections you might hear

This is too expensive

“ I hear that cost is a concern. One of our goals with running routine health screens such as bloodwork, is to help identify health issues in their early stages. This may help to avoid more costly treatments down the road.”

“ I know you love and care deeply for Fiona and we thank you for bringing her in to see us! Diagnostic screening can help us with a few things: It can help us understand Fiona’s normal organ values, which would then allow us to more easily detect changes from one year to the next. Early detection of disease can be a gift of improved quality of life.”

“ By doing annual health screening we can help provide peace of mind for you. Diagnostic screening such as bloodwork, allows Fiona to have a voice and gives us information to make specific recommendations tailored to her. Preventative versus reactionary medicine is our goal.”

We already did bloodwork last year

“ I’m so glad you ran bloodwork last year! Thank you for taking critical steps to care for Fiona! We know that our pet’s health, similar to ours, can change over time, and conditions can develop or worsen within a year. Regular bloodwork helps identify and address these changes early.”

“ The recommended frequency of bloodwork can vary depending on a pet’s age, breed, and health history. Tailoring the care plan ensures that Fiona’s unique needs are met each year! Refer to the age chart to help guide the conversation.”

“ As much as we wish they could, our pets can’t tell us what is wrong. We know that they can hide underlying disease and things can change quickly over time. Diagnostics gives us the ability to monitor those changes.”

My pet is young (and healthy)

“ Yes, you’re right, Fiona is young and seems very healthy on the outside, based on her exam. I understand you might wonder why we would do diagnostic health screening.”

“ Would you like to ask me any questions about Fiona’s health? Any concerns you or any other member of your family might have?”

“ We want to provide you ease of mind with bloodwork and ensure that if there are any significant changes in the future, we know where we started. By running bloodwork annually while Fiona is young, we will get individualized baseline values for her. This allows us to uncover abnormalities sooner, detecting disease earlier.”

“ You know, pets can’t tell us when something is going on inside, and not every disease is easily detected on the physical exam. Doing bloodwork allows us to see how well their body is functioning. You know, half of the healthy pets we perform bloodwork on show at least 1 abnormality that may require additional testing.”

“ You’d be investing in Fiona’s health and longevity for years to come, allowing us to give her the best care possible.”

1. Stockham, S.L. and Scott, M.A. (2008) Fundamentals of Veterinary Clinical Pathology. 2nd Edition, Blackwell Publishing, Ames, p 20.



A “no” for screening last year might turn into a “yes” this year. A “no” today doesn’t mean “no” forever. Make sure to offer health screening to all your clients – at every visit.

It's a team effort

Everyone has a part to play

The entire team should be willing and able to discuss the preventive care program with clients or, if not client-facing, understand how they can contribute within their role in the success of the patient visit. Consistent communication from the entire veterinary healthcare team is important: veterinarians, technicians, nurses and front office staff.

Share your story



It is important to share your experience with your own pet or from patients in the hospital.

Think about how each member of your team influences the client's experience during the visit.

Consider the client as part of the team

The conversations with the client should help to project a consistent voice - with a single message clearly expressed at each touchpoint within the hospital. The essential elements of this message should help to meet and maintain these goals:

1

Include the client in their pet's healthcare

Explain the preventive care program to the client. Make them aware of the short-term and long-term value of diagnostic health screening so they can make informed decisions.

2

Help reduce client anxiety

Explain the benefits of diagnostic test results. Ensure to provide a clear timeline when you'll be able to share the results with the client - whether you run the tests in-house or send out your samples.

3

Keep the client informed

Discuss results and explain next steps when necessary. Celebrate normal results allowing individual trending of the pet's health status in future.

4

Demonstrate value

Recap on the health screening carried out. Highlight the value of screening and the peace of mind it provides.



Every member of the team has a role to play, and a consistent voice is needed.

Personalized best practices

Pre-visit communication at reception

Assets:
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Best practice:

“Hi, I’m calling to confirm your annual exam for Bob. It looks like Bob is due for a few things including vaccine boosters and Lyme vaccination, as well as his annual bloodwork to monitor for any changes from the last time. Having this information annually really helps us uncover potential illness earlier. Make sure that Bob has been fasted before his appointment and bring in a fresh stool and urine sample with you tomorrow? It will make it easier for Bob.”

My personal script:

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Check-in at reception

Assets:
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Best practice:

“Hi! Thanks for bringing Bob in today. Our goal for today’s annual exam is to get Bob up to date on his preventive care, including diagnostics to make sure he is in great health! We will run bloodwork, a fecal, and a urinalysis to ensure all his bodily functions are performing the way they should and there are no hidden diseases. My cat, Harry, recently had his routine bloodwork done too and the Doctor found early kidney disease. I was so worried about him at first, but I’m so glad we found out now. The Doctor recommended that Harry start on a kidney diet and we hope to slow down the progression of his disease. I’m so glad you are screening Bob’s organ function too. We have a complete diagnostic health screening package that’s affordable. Did you remember to fast Bob and bring his urine and stool samples? We’ll have you in the exam room shortly!”

My personal script:

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Exam room - Technician/ assistant

Assets:
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Best practice:

“Hi! Thanks for bringing Bob in today. We are recommending his full diagnostic health screening today: CBC, chemistry, and urinalysis to establish normal baseline values for him or uncover any illness. Did you know Bob is older than you probably think? Let’s look up his age in human years on this screening chart and see what else the Doctor might want to include today. I see you brought in his urine and fecal samples, so we’ll borrow Bob for a few minutes to collect his blood sample and we’ll get his vitals. Do you have any questions for the Doctor?”

My personal script:

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Exam room - Doctor

Assets:
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Best practice:

“Mrs. Smith, I know my team has already discussed this with you, but what questions do you have about diagnostic health screening for Bob today?”

“After my physical exam, I can say that Bob seems healthy on the outside. Diagnostic health screening can benefit Bob and yourself for several reasons:

1. It will help us see if everything is fine on the inside, as sometimes pets can hide illness.
2. It will be great to see if everything is normal, for peace of mind for you and to give us baseline values that we can use in the future.
3. It’s quite a quick process, and we will share the results within a few days.”

My personal script:

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Check-out at reception

Assets:
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Best practice:

“We should have the results of Bob’s tests tomorrow and we’ll give you a call in the afternoon. It will be great to make sure that he is as healthy on the inside as he looks on the outside. Let’s book your next appointment in a few months for Bob.”

My personal script:

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Reporting results: callback/ follow up

Assets:
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Best practice:

“Hi Mrs. Greer, this is Jake from Great River Animal Hospital. I’ve got great news: Bob’s baseline tests were normal today. His red and white cell counts are fine; also, his liver and kidney values look good. That’s good news and knowing his normal values can help us in the future. Now let’s get that dental cleaning that he needs scheduled.”

My personal script:

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Staying in touch

Your toolbox

You can use a variety of resources and tools to support more comfortable conversations



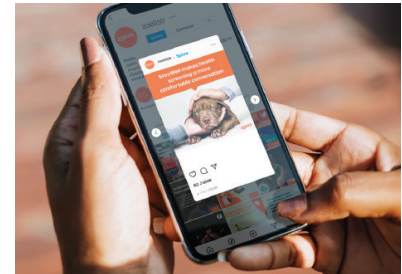
Flyers

A classic tool to hand to a client, giving them a chance to learn more about diagnostic health screening ahead of the consultation. Also great to take home if they say “no”.



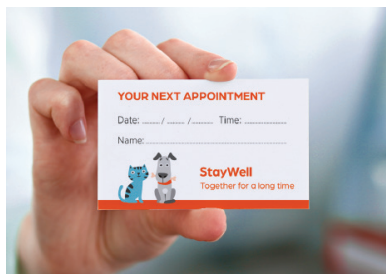
Posters & Videos

Posters or video sequences in your consult and waiting rooms can be a great help in educating clients about life stages, diagnostic tests, and how results can support proactive care or appropriate treatments.



Social Media

A powerful way to stay in touch with your clients in today's world. Share news and stories about diagnostic health screening, why you do it, and what clients can expect. This will make it more attractive for other clients.



Appointment confirmation

Reminding clients about their next appointment starts at the end of each visit. You can print appointment confirmation & reminder cards to hand out or prepare digital versions of them and share via e-mail or text.



Appointment reminders

Use calls, emails or text messages to remind clients of their upcoming appointments. It's also a great way to support your clients to prepare their pet for diagnostic health screening - for example to collect and bring samples, or fast their pet before the appointment.



Setting up your practice management system

Connecting your practice management software with your diagnostic analyzers or reference lab is important to make sure you can share and show results during and after the appointment by email.

(Remember: Results with clinical findings should be shared over the phone or in person.)

It's important to stay in touch with your clients before, during and after appointments in your hospital.

More importantly you need to share one consistent voice: the whole hospital team should work in harmony to deliver the same message to the client at each touchpoint.

Share your story



Think about your client's journey and how you stay in touch with them after their visit.

What worked well in the past? Where can you improve communication? Share your experience with the team.



Use online and offline tools to maintain the link with your clients.



**Contact us if you want to discuss further or
if you have any questions:**

Your contact is:

Name:

Phone number: