



Seeing *Is* Believing

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Client's View: Kristi was eager to take her new pup Jake to the Ark Veterinary Hospital. She'd heard great things about their focus on wellness and preventive care. As a new pet owner, Kristi wanted to do everything she could to make sure Jake had a long, healthy life, and she wanted a veterinarian she could connect with.

Kristi spent an enjoyable few minutes with Kara, Dr. Conrad's tech, who seemed suitably impressed with the friendly Jake. In fact, Kristi felt that she'd found her practice of choice ... until Dr. Conrad walked through the door. She appeared distracted and preoccupied. Even when answering questions, Dr. Conrad seemed more focused on getting information in the records than getting to know Kristi and Jake. Kristi wasn't sure after all that Dr. Conrad's clinic was the place for her ... or Jake.



Veterinarian's View: Dr. Conrad had had a terrible morning. With two sick children and a reluctant sitter, she'd been late getting to the office. She was starting her day already tired; her call night had been rough and she'd had to come into the hospital twice for a dog in the ICU. She'd started her day overbooked and knew she had one of her favorite clients coming in at noon for her beloved Yorkie's euthanasia. Dr. Conrad was doing her best to get caught up.

Clients want information, education, diagnostics, and compassion.

They want to feel like their pet's well-being is the only thing on the mind of everyone they encounter during an office visit. And yet, everyone on the veterinary team is only human; we have lives and problems, and we get short on time. Sometimes, our need to buckle down and push through our day conflicts with what our clients hope to receive from us.

How to Communicate CARE

Make sure that clients see—and believe—your care and concern by following these tips.

- ✓ If you've got several life problems brewing, imagine them remaining "outside" of the building as you walk into your clinic.
- ✓ On days when you're feeling stressed, give yourself a few moments of quiet contemplation to center yourself before you begin your work day.
- ✓ As you leave one exam room, take a deep, slow breath and expel it, calming yourself before entering the next room. Let each visit go before you start the next one.
- ✓ When you enter an exam room, make a point to shake your client's hand or meet their eyes and smile hello. Greet the pet by name.
- ✓ Remind yourself to periodically make eye contact with your client as you do your physical and update your notes.
- ✓ If you are using electronic medical records, remember to periodically stop and look directly at your client when he/she is speaking.
- ✓ Remember that even though you see many clients a day, they only see you once. Make that one time count!

Skillsets addressed in this article: relational competencies; self-awareness