

PRACTICE PROFILE: COLONIAL VETERINARY HOSPITAL

Colonial Veterinary Hospital, located east of Ottawa in Navan Ontario, is a rural companion animal practice with four doctors. Colonial strives to offer a warm and friendly environment for their clients, along with the services you would expect from a companion animal practice. Jessica Lalande, Head Receptionist and the person responsible for their web store says “We want our office to be like walking into a friend’s home”

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Colonial opened their MyVetStore web store over 2 years ago with the intent of replacing their Special Order Book, where they manually managed therapeutic food orders for their clients. The Special Orders Book process was very cumbersome for Colonial and expensive in terms of staff time and money. By automating their Special Orders Book, Colonial wanted to:

- Have clients buy their therapeutic pet foods through their web store and take that work off of the staffs’ shoulders
- Have client orders delivered to the home, eliminating the need for staff to wrestle with bags or give up precious space for the storage of custom orders
- Having special orders pre-paid for the clients that choose to pick them up from the hospital
- Eliminate the need to call people to come and get their orders (Colonial would call 20-30 clients, twice a week)
- Free up the capital that was tied up in unpaid orders for many weeks until people came in to pick up and pay for their products
- Eliminate the returns of 5-6 tote boxes every 3 months for client orders not picked up

KEYS TO SUCCESS!

Colonial Veterinary Hospital found that the following were the keys to their great success:

- **Target the right clients with the right message.** Colonial focused initially for registration on those clients who ordered dietary products. This helped them focus on the main reason for their web store and provided early successes stories that drove the momentum of the web store through the practice. Jessica states that “When people came in to pick up their orders, we had written down on the bottom of their receipt, all the information about the web store. When our receptionist presented them with their bill, the client was told about the web store and was asked to enroll. Most wanted to sign-up, but a few did not, and for those that did were set up on the spot, we gave them an information packet about the web store that they could take away.” This made registration easier, Colonial’s Front Desk staff talked about a tangible benefit to the client that resonated with them. Benefits like home delivery, re-order reminders, ordering convenience and proper pet care. With this focus on specific client needs versus general benefit statements, Colonial’s registration rate is in excess of 75%.
- **Don’t forget to tell patients that the web store is not just for dietary food only.** At the same time, don’t be too narrow in your focus. Jessica says “a big plus for many people was that they could order their OTC items and regular pet food, as well as veterinary prescribed diets, all at the same time. Many people are interested in doing this” By telling clients the breadth of the offering you have available through your web store, you increase its value to the client which translates into greater average order volume and revenue.

- **Have the Veterinarian re-enforce the value of the web store during the client's visit.** Jessica said that this is very powerful. While the veterinarians have many things to focus on, a simple comment such as "talk to the Front Desk about getting set up to order your prescription foods through our web store" sets up the client's conversation with the Front Desk, who can then address any specific concerns the client may have regarding the web store and ultimately get the client setup in the web store before they leave the practice.
- **Spend money on signage wisely.** Colonial, like most practices, has very limited space in the office and do not need more paperwork around the Front Desk: there is enough there already! Instead, on a very large whiteboard immediately behind the receptionist, Colonial staff writes messages – very informally - that are of interest to their clients. And they change them monthly, to reflect what's going in the practice or seasonal issues. They spent nothing on posters.
- **Go online with your signage.** Colonial used several different online means to promote their web store, all of which cost the practice nothing, but each had an impact.
 - Add an email signature line in your email. Place one of the MyVetStore graphics (available in the Support Center) and link it back to your web store in your email signature. And with every email someone gets from you, they get a simple little ad about your web store.
 - Link your Facebook Page to your web store. By telling stories about how the web store helped someone, or by announcing special promotions you are offering, you will drive interest in your web store.
 - Link your website to your web store. In case a client forgets to bookmark your web store, they can still find it...through your website!
- **Have a Web Store Champion and make sure they have backup.** It's critical that someone "owns" the web store and is responsible for it. But it's just as important that everyone needs to be engaged in promoting the web store, personally using the web store for their own ordering and are trained on managing the web store, to handle coverage issues that arise from people going on vacation or shift scheduling. Make your Web Store Champion responsible for this.
- **Don't assume that the web store is only for young people.** Colonial had assumed early on that the web store would be used by young adults. They found out over time that they had a number of senior citizens who used the web store, for the convenience it offered (imagine not having to go out in the winter snow to pick up your dog's food if you run out), as well as for a certain element of pride!

ABOUT MYVETSTORE.CA

MyVetStore.ca provides Canadian veterinarians with their own branded web store, where their clients can exclusively purchase for home delivery or in practice pickup, their pets prescriptions, therapeutic diets and other pet products. The program is supported by the OVMA, AMVQ, as well as the major manufacturers and distributors. The program also includes unlimited training and support.

MyVetStore.ca is developed and supported by Acumenex, a Canadian company with over a decade of experience in providing web store solutions across Canada and the United States. For more information on MyVetStore.ca or on how Colonial Veterinary Hospital used it, call 1-877-788-5028 or email info@myvetstore.ca