Ways to Increase Productivity When You're Short-Staffed

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What you'll learn:

- How to prioritize tasks—focusing on what will help your practice thrive
- Engage your team to challenge "Why do we do it this way?"
- Identify opportunities to streamline processes and shave minutes that could add up to hours
- Have a morning huddle to inform and inspire your team before the perspiration begins
- Set work schedules with assigned areas of responsibility
- Plan administrative time in your daily routine
- Create team checklists for consistency and to train new hires
- Reduce the call volume for refills with technology tools
- Set admission and discharge appointments to avoid traffic jams

A technician moved out of state when her husband's job was transferred. A receptionist cut hours to be home with her new baby. Worse yet, you've had a vacant technician job for six months because you can't find qualified candidates. Get solutions to work smarter when you're short-staffed.

How many employees do you need?
Top-performing practices saw 7% revenue growth over 2015 figures, according to the 2016 Well-Managed Practice Study from WTA Consultants in Columbus, Ohio. The number of transactions per hospital also increased, with total doctor and non-doctor transactions 36% higher than last year. Practice owners credit the growth to getting more efficient and productive. Staff-to-doctor ratios increased to 4.7 team members per doctor, up from 4-to-1 that was steady for many years.[1]

4.7 to 1 staff-to-doctor ratio
2 technicians
1 veterinary assistant
1 receptionist
0.7 managers

Staff costs as a percentage of revenue
In small animal hospitals, the benchmark for staff costs is 22% to 25%. You can lower staff costs with a super-productive team, advises Denise Tumblin, CPA, of WTA Consultants. The more your staff contributes, the more productive your practice, which lowers staff costs as a percentage of revenue.[2] Tumblin suggests targeting $580,000 to $600,000 of medical revenue per full-time doctor.

Each month, the practice manager and owner should monitor your average charge per transaction (ACT) and staff costs. In the 2016 Well-Managed Practice Study, medical revenue was $614,700 per doctor with 3,800 doctor-provided transactions.[1] The average doctor transaction was $161.76. Separately track the average doctor transaction (ADT, medical visit) and average charge per transaction (all sales).

Support staff influence the average transaction amount. When clients arrive for checkups, receptionists should look in the practice-management software to see when pet owners last purchased preventatives, diets and medications. If the client has a few doses remaining, she prompts the refill. Say, *"Good afternoon, <client name> and <pet name>. I will let the doctor and technician know that you've arrived for <pet name's> checkup. I see that <pet name> needs refills on his heartworm preventatives today. When you buy 12 months of <brand name>, you'll get a $____ rebate. I will have the refill ready for you at checkout. Does <pet name> or your other pets need any medication or food refills while you're here today?"* If 12 months of heartworm preventatives for the client's 50-pound dog is $80, the receptionist took the transaction from $161.76 to $241.76 while supporting the hospital's standard of care for year-round protection.

How to prioritize tasks—focusing on what will help your practice thrive

Prioritize your daily task list. Don't fall into the trap of "first in, first out." Order the importance of projects and work through them in order. Use the ABC method to set priorities.[3] An "A" priority must be done and has serious consequences if you fail to do it. Lab results indicate a pet is positive for roundworms. You must talk with the client today about treatment and ways to prevent the zoonotic disease from being passed from pets to people. If you have more than one "A" task, order tasks A1, A2, A3 and so on. A1 is where you begin your day. "B" items are tasks you should do but have mild consequences if carried over. Never do a "B" task when an "A" task is left undone. A "C" tasks would be nice to do but doesn't have consequences if unfinished. The ABC habit will keep you focused on your highest priorities.

Track how much time tasks take. Only 17% of people can accurately estimate the passage of time.[4] How much time are you spending on emails, social media posts and employee work schedules? When starting a routine task, start the stopwatch on your smartphone. Hit "stop" when the task is complete. How much time did it take? Then set appropriate blocks of time in your schedule. For open-ended tasks, set self-imposed deadlines. If you're revising the library of client handouts, set a deadline of two weeks. Set aside 30 to 60 minutes each day to work on the task and adjust as you go with the end deadline in mind.

Make meetings matter. Staff meetings should not be gripe sessions about the dishes left in the breakroom sink. Meetings should be devoted to continuing education and planning strategies that will grow your business. Post a meeting agenda one week in advance so employees will know what to expect and come prepared with contributions. Set up work email addresses for employees and send items that don't require work stoppage for a staff meeting, including housekeeping reminders and employee benefit updates.

Avoid distractions. Research shows distractions impact productivity, taking up to 25 minutes to return to prior tasks.[5] A practice manager, supervisor or doctor could place his phone extension on "do not disturb" mode until a high-priority task is complete. Close your door to keep co-workers from interrupting you. While an open-door management approach is effective, you need to stop the parade of employees when deadlines are looming. Set office hours or work from home on time-sensitive projects. If you don't have an office, tape a note to the back of your chair that says "Please don't disturb until 10:30 a.m." Interruptions for medical emergencies are obvious exceptions.

Engage your team to challenge "Why do we do it this way?"

Update job descriptions annually. After you've completed employees' performance reviews, share current job descriptions and ask them to update the list, looking for duplicate tasks that other team members do. This lets you see how each employee spends his time and eliminate unnecessary work. After new hires' first 90 days, review the job description to see if there are tasks they haven't learned.

Eliminate duplicate work. Technicians open exams with history questions. Doctors ask the same questions again when talking with pet owners. Besides annoying clients who must repeat details, you've doubled the amount of time it takes to get patient histories.

Create a list of technician vs. veterinarian history questions. Use templates in electronic medical records or laminated cards to ensure consistency and efficiency. For example, a technician would ask *"What day of the month do you give your pet's heartworm preventative, and when did you give the last dose?"* Note answers in the patient's medical record. The veterinarian will read the information BEFORE beginning his exam and history questions, asking for more details. The veterinarian might say, *"I see that you gave your last dose of heartworm prevention two months ago. Your dog needs monthly* *protection from deadly heartworms. Mosquitos spread heartworms to both dogs and cats. We will collect a blood sample to test your dog for heartworms and will have results today. I will have the technician set up monthly dosing reminders so your dog will be consistently protected."*

Have technicians close their brief history questions with, *"Does your pet have any health or behavior concerns that you want to talk with the doctor about today?"* The client shares that her cat has been urinating outside of the litterbox, which now becomes the chief complaint. The technician would respond, *"Whenever a cat is urinating outside the litterbox, we need to determine whether it is a medical or behavioral problem. I will take your cat to the treatment area to collect a urine sample and start the test so we have results during today's exam. The doctor will ask you more questions, and then offer solutions based on the test results and your cat's symptoms."*

Technicians should alert doctors of chief complaints so they can set the priority of medical services at the beginning of exams.

Identify opportunities to streamline processes and shave minutes that could add up to hours

New client paperwork can suck 15 minutes from exam time. You hand a clipboard with the form to new clients upon arrival. They take 15 minutes to complete paperwork and return it to receptionists, who then must interpret handwriting and enter information into electronic medical records. The best strategy is to gather new-client information during scheduling calls, which will take 2 minutes. If you need the new client's signature for acceptance of your hospital's financial policy, have her sign at check-in. Say, *"To speed your check-in as a new client, I'll get your information now over the phone…"*

If you're experiencing high call volume and are unable to set up the record now, email the new client a link to your website where she can complete the form online. Say, *"To speed your check-in as a new client, I will email you a link to our new client form. You'll also be able to get driving directions and meet the doctor who you will see. Which is the best email to reach you?"*

Your form should be an electronic submission where the new client types information and clicks "submit" to have data instantly emailed to your hospital. Receptionists receive emails and copy and paste information into electronic medical records before clients arrive. At Intermountain Pet Hospital in Meridian, Idaho, the new client form includes the hospital's financial policy, medical records release and payment options. (www.intermountainvet.com/new-client). A PDF of your new-client form can prove problematic. The new client will need a printer at home, will handwrite the form (which you must interpret and transcribe) and must remember to bring it to the first exam. You're delaying the setup of the electronic medical record until the time of arrival. Ask your website provider about an electronic form. Common website form makers are www.jotform.com and www.formstack.com.

Confirm appointments by text, email and apps. The client-service team at Creekside Pet Care Center in Keller, Texas, used to make 80 confirmation calls a day. Now they use AVImark Rapport two-way email and text reminders, which decreased calls 70% to 80% (www.avimark.net/rapport-messaging/).

Stop the exam room scavenger hunt. Where's the otoscope or thermometer? Create a checklist of which supplies should be in each exam room and where they are stored. This should be identical for every exam room. When technicians clean exam rooms at the end of each day, check stock and refill low supplies.

Eliminate "find the doctor" game. Install peepholes in every exam door so staff can glance in without interrupting an appointment or walking in at inappropriate times such as during attended euthanasia. Place the peepholes at a comfortable viewing height for your most petite employees. I'm 5'2" and can't look through a peephole installed by a 6'3" doctor!

Avoid SOS signals coming from exam rooms. To avoid waiting for technicians to assist in exam rooms, doctors can use exam room signal flags. Choose color codes that let doctors and staff know what's going on inside the exam room and to keep exam rooms turning quickly. The position and color of the signal flags can be used to designate which doctor is inside or the status of each room (occupied, ready for cleanup, technician in room, ready for doctor, patient ready for lab or x-rays, etc.). Choose signal flags with two to eight flags in various colors, which are available from Amazon, veterinary distributors and medical supply stores. Outpatient doctors and technicians are accountable for monitoring flag signals.

Prevent the mind-erase hallway. The doctor diagnoses Grade 2 dental disease and the technician presents a treatment plan. Both assume the client scheduled with the receptionist at checkout. The receptionist wasn't in the exam room to hear the medical diagnosis and need for treatment, so she collects payment for today's services and thanks the client for visiting. A year passes before the patient's next checkup and now the dental disease has graduated to Grade 4 with higher cost of care. Communication is more reliable when written rather than spoken. Use a "Grade 2 dental needed" code in electronic medical records or travel sheets to signal when progress exams or procedures need to be scheduled. The receptionist would say, *"I see the doctor diagnosed your dog with Grade 2 dental disease today. Let's schedule the procedure first, and then I will check you out for today's services. The doctor does procedures on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Which choice fits your schedule?"*

Update medical records after each exam. A veterinarian might see 18 patients during six hours of appointment time (average of three patients per hour or every 20 minutes). At 4 p.m., you will not remember details of your 8 a.m. conversation with a client about her sick cat. Technicians also should update reminders and medical notes as they go.

Schedule medical progress exams with the same doctor. Avoid the term "recheck," which sounds optional and free. Words matter. Would you rather have a piece of meat or an aged sirloin steak? Practice schedule first, pay last. If sick patients require follow-up care, schedule medical progress exams first and have clients pay last. This order has two advantages. First, it prevents pet owners' hesitation to schedule follow-up care sometimes caused by sticker shock. Secondly, appointment reminders will print on clients' receipts. The receptionist would say, *"Dr. <Name> needs to see your dog again on <date> for a medical progress exam for his ear infection. Let's schedule his exam first, and then I'll get you checked out for today's services. Does this same time, 2 p.m. on <date>, work for you?"*

Receptionists must ask with confidence, never asking, "Do you want to make your next appointment?" which gives clients an option to decline necessary care. For progress exams, strive for "same day, same time, same doctor." If the client is here at 2 p.m. on a Monday, she can probably visit again at a similar time and day of the week. Book the appointment with the same veterinarian, ensuring continuity of care and efficient use of exam time.

Stop hunting for handouts. Link documents to diagnoses codes in electronic medical records. When a doctor enters the code for a cat's diagnosis of diabetes, a handout automatically prints and is sent home with the client. Printing handouts as you need them will avoid waste and produce crisp copies.

Prevent lost phone messages. Post-it® Notes will get lost. Doctors also must interpret receptionists' handwriting and shorthand. Use electronic messaging features in your practice-management software so messages never get lost. Messages can post in employees' task lists, and they can type notes of client conversations in electronic medical records without ever touching paper.

Have a morning huddle to inform and inspire your team before the perspiration begins

It's Monday morning and you're facing six surgeries. You've been waiting 90 minutes for technicians to get the first patient ready. When surgery begins late, your entire day dominos and tensions among staff rise. How can you stop the frustration?

Veterinarians should arrive at least one hour before surgeries are scheduled to begin. The veterinarian is the captain of the surgical team and needs time to plan a strategy. If you want surgeries to begin at 9 a.m., arrive at the hospital by 8 a.m. so you have time to check on overnight patients and talk with your surgical team about the day's procedures.

Have a morning huddle with your team. The veterinarian who is performing surgery today leads the morning huddle for about 10 minutes, depending on the number of procedures scheduled. The lead technician also could help guide the discussion. The morning huddle happens before the hospital opens or 45 to 60 minutes before procedures are scheduled to begin.

The morning huddle leader will:

- Give a brief overview of today's procedures
- Set the order of patients (Tip: Start with the hardest cases first, and then finishing with the easiest patients. This allows time for preanesthetic testing as well as longer recovery time for complex cases.)
- Prioritize and explain lab work that technicians will need to perform
- Confirm and/or assign "care pairs" who will contact clients once patients are recovered

Whenever possible, include receptionists in the morning huddle because they initially greet clients who are checking in patients for surgery and will handle phone calls throughout the day. Receptionists need to know the name and procedure of every hospitalized patient each morning so they can confidently talk with clients and quickly connect calls. Remember, every client assumes his pet is the only one having surgery today. If an anxious pet owner calls and asks, "I'm calling to see how Bella is doing" and the receptionist replies, "Who is Bella, and what is she here for today?" you have created a negative experience that could harm the client relationship and potentially lead to a bad online review.

If receptionists cannot participate in the morning huddle or start their shifts later in the day, they need to review the patient census or electronic whiteboard in your practice-management software at the start of their workday. If your hospital uses a wall-mounted whiteboard in the treatment area, receptionists could view the list of patients and may want to get the latest updates from a technician.

Set work schedules with assigned areas of responsibility

Delegating means not dumping. If managers ask staff to do tasks and walk away, they're dumping work on them. Train in order to trust that tasks will be completed correctly, provide benchmarks to ensure they understand assigned tasks and give feedback so you get the performances you expect. Think of delegation as an investment that pays off.

Assign areas of responsibility to each employee. Empower your team and ensure important tasks get completed. The employee assigned to the area of responsibility is accountable for maintenance, training other staff and improving this area. Don't ask for volunteers. Match the right person with the right skills to each area of responsibility. Here are examples based on job function:

Veterinarians

Medical area	**Doctor responsible**
Evaluation of new equipment	
Evaluation of new drugs	
Senior care protocols	

Vaccine protocols	
Pain management protocols	
Anesthesia and surgical protocols	
Dental protocols	
Preventive care plan services	

Technicians

Medical area	**Technician responsible**
Radiology	
Dentistry	
Pharmacy	
Client handouts and home-care instructions	
Laboratory	
Exam room supplies	
Online pharmacy requests	
Prescription refill requests	

Client-service team

Administrative area	**Receptionist responsible**
Phone system and skills	
Reminder system	
Retail and merchandising	
Food ordering and inventory	
Puppy/kitten baby gifts	
Maintenance and cleanliness of lobby, client restroom, beverage center	
Clinic email	

Assign work areas daily. In multi-doctor hospitals, designate which technicians will work in exam rooms, surgery, dentistry, pharmacy and laboratory. Rotate technicians through all departments so skills stay sharp in all medical areas. Don't risk having one technician who does dentistry because when she's sick or takes vacation, you won't produce dental income. Cross-training is key to running an efficient hospital.

Plan administrative time in your daily routine

Use calendar tools. Every day, receptionists manage the schedule for doctor and technician appointments, so why not use the same tool to master their daily tasks? Add a receptionist column in your appointment schedule to efficiently organize daily administrative tasks.

Each day, the client-service team works together to perform duties such as:

- Appointment and surgical confirmation calls
- Calling clients with overdue patient reminders
- Checking the clinic's general email
- Responding to online appointment requests
- Checking online pharmacy approvals

None of these duties can be overlooked. Set a routine for administrative time. If you need to check the clinic email three times a day, set task times such as 8 a.m., 1 and 4 p.m. In the newly created receptionist column, enter these tasks times and set alerts as reminders. The first and last two hours you're open are the busiest times for most clinics, so reserve callbacks and confirmations for mid-day. Make calls between 1 and 2 p.m. after teammates have finished lunchbreaks and before busy afternoon appointments. Work as a team to plan the list of tasks and times. Be flexible and adjust when you have one of those crazy vomiting, diarrhea and walk-in emergency days. Your best plan is to have a plan!

Managers will use calendar tools when completing tasks such as payroll, employee work schedules and performance reviews. If an employee's anniversary is April 15, enter the date on your calendar with an alert two weeks before the event. This signals you to write the review, discuss it with the practice owner and confirm any pay raise. When you present the review on time and have a thoughtful discussion about performance and skill growth, the employee will feel appreciated.

Create team checklists for consistency and to train new hires

Use team checklists by department. Have the technician and reception teams make a list of tasks that should be performed daily, weekly and monthly. Having employees create lists will ensure buy-in and accountability. For example, the reception team checklist would include checking the clinic email three times per day, refreshing the beverage station mid-morning and walking the parking lot twice a day to make sure it's clean. A technician checklist might include ordering drugs and supplies, maintaining in-house lab equipment and restocking exam rooms.

Set new employees up for success. Create phase-training checklists with tasks to complete each week during their first 90 days of employment. Provide the checklist on Day 1 so new hires know what they need to learn and when. Assign a mentor to each new employee who will assist with training, answer questions and provide encouragement. At the end of 90 days, provide a performance review or decide to terminate employment. Trust your gut—hire slow, fire fast. Get phase-training checklists in *The Veterinary Practice Management Resource Book & CD* (www.csvets.com/cart/books-and-cds/the-veterinary-practice-management-resource-book-cd/).

Reduce the call volume for refills with technology tools

The habit is predictable. Every day, multiple clients call your veterinary clinic within minutes of closing time to request prescription refills. "My dog took his last pill this morning, and I need a refill today. I'm on the way to your hospital now. Could you wait for me?" pleads the pet owner.

You both want the dog to get timely medication, but why did the client wait until the last dose was gone before contacting you? To avoid the stress of urgent refills, take preventive approaches:

Alert clients when refills are coming due. My cat, Caymus, takes benazepril daily. I refill his medication every three months. When you dispense his next prescription, create a refill reminder for 11 weeks, when one week of doses would remain. Alerts could be phone calls, emails, texts or app messages.
At Blue Sky Animal Clinic in Loveland, Colorado, Practice Manager Chrystal Bell wanted to be able to call and text from the same phone number her clients knew. Zipwhip lets you use your existing business phone number to send and receive texts. Now clients text refill requests to Blue Sky Animal Clinic's main phone number. Employees reply when messages pop up on the desktop screen. (Save 20% on Zipwhip through our partnership, https://blog.zipwhip.com/2016/11/08/special-20-off-for-veterinarians/).

Push notifications tell clients when they need to repurchase. A VitusVet call study found the average client service representative (CSR) answers 600 calls per week at a veterinary hospital.[6] While more than 60% of calls generate revenue through appointments and prescription refills, the average hospital is missing $123,000 of gross revenue due to inefficiencies in phone-based customer service.[6]

Enter the number of refills available. If the veterinarian wants to perform a blood test every six months and the technician is filling a one-month supply, five refills of 30 tablets would remain. The number of refills will print on each prescription label, letting the client see the countdown of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 refill left.

While I agree that veterinarians will need to approve each prescription refill, don't punish clients with long hold times on the phone. Note the number of refills that are available in medical records, avoiding the find-the-doctor game each time clients call with refill requests. Tell the pet owner*, "<Client name>, I see that you have five refills available. When do you want to pick up your pet's medication? I will have the doctor confirm the refill. I will only call you if the doctor has any questions or concerns. Otherwise, we will see you at <time>."* After speaking with the caller, the CSR would hand off the request to the pharmacy technician.

Let clients request refills through your website, text or app. Receptionists will cheer when you eliminate 20 or more calls each day. At Shackleford Road Veterinary Clinic in Little Rock, Ark., clients can request refills before 2 p.m. on the hospital's website and pick up by 4 p.m. the same day (www.shacklefordvetclinic.com/request-a-refill/). Vitus Vet can create a mobile app branded to your practice that lets you accept refill requests as well as send push notifications. Get a free 90-day trial because of your relationship with us (http://content.vitusvet.com/request-a-demo-of-the-vitusvet-vet-app-csvets). Print on prescription labels, "Refill this medication through our website, app or text 555-555-5555." Let clients know about electronic refill options when they pick up medications.

Place a sticker on the vial when one refill remains. When blood work will be due before the next refill, put a label on the prescription vial such as "Blood test required before next refill." The prescription label will note that zero refills remain. Use a bright-colored sticker rather than typing "Blood test required before next refill" on the label. Few clients re-read labels for chronic medications when dosing instructions remain the same.

The sticker alerts clients and employees. When the client arrives to pick up medication, the CSR would see the sticker and say, *"I see that this is your last refill before blood work is due. Let's schedule a 15-minute technician appointment for the blood draw. We could see your pet next Tuesday at 1 p.m. or Wednesday at 11 a.m. Which choice works for you?"* Schedule first before collecting payment for the medication because an appointment reminder will print on today's receipt. In addition to using stickers on chronic medications, also put the "Blood test required before next refill" sticker on heartworm preventatives when a heartworm test will be due.

Set up auto refills. Retail pharmacies such as grocery stores, Walgreens and CVS Health use text alerts when prescriptions are ready. Research conducted by the CVS Health Research Institute found that pharmacy customers enrolled in digital and online programs have better medication adherence.[7]
Your veterinary hospital could use an auto-refill strategy for over-the-counter and prescription drugs. If a client buys six months of heartworm preventatives, set up one auto refill in five months when one dose will remain. Alert the client when the medication has been refilled with calls, emails, texts or app messages such as "Your pet's heartworm preventative has been refilled and is ready for pickup. One dose remains, and we want to provide ongoing protection from deadly heartworms." Because a heartworm test would be due at the completion of one automatic refill for a six-pack, you would send reminders for the exam, heartworm test, prescription renewal and other services included in a checkup.

An over-the-counter flea/tick product also could be set up on auto refill. Let's say the brand has a "buy six, get two free" promotion. At month 7 when one dose remains, you would alert the client, "Your auto refill of <brand name> to protect your pet from fleas and ticks has been filled and is ready for pick up. Your purchase is eligible for two free doses, a value of $___, which we have included with your refill."

Midwest Veterinary Supply's partnership with MyVetStoreOnline.com lets clients set up recurring orders of any product, from food to medication (www.midwestvet.net/practice-solutions/home-delivery-solutions/mvso.html). The "Easy Dose It!" program sends clients a single preventative dose in the mail each month with free shipping.

Offer refills through your online store. When clients get refill notices, offer the convenience of online or app ordering. Ask your veterinary distributor about setting up your own online store. Henry Schein Animal

Health's partnership with VetSource lets your clients get home delivery of medications and diets with auto-ship benefits and Remind Me emails (https://henryscheinvet.com/home/services/marketing-solutions/home-delivery). You set prices. Clients pay your hospital's retail price plus shipping, handling and applicable taxes.

These strategies can graduate beyond prescription drugs. Think of every consumable product your hospital sells—diets, dental chews, preventatives, pet toothpaste—and create refill push notifications.

Set admission and discharge appointments to avoid traffic jams

Six clients arrive at 8 a.m. to admit patients for surgery. Two receptionists scramble to quickly check-in patients while answering four ringing phone lines. The last client in line shouts, "Can you get more people to help us? You said I could just drop off my dog. Now I'm late for work!"

This admission disaster happens too often at veterinary clinics. Instead of a drop-off approach, schedule admission appointments.

Surgical and dental patients will check in before morning exams begin, so receptionists can escort clients into exam rooms where technicians will complete the admission process. Never have receptionists handle surgical and dental paperwork at the front desk. Clients also may feel uncomfortable asking medical or financial questions in a public lobby.

Schedule admission appointments. By setting admission appointments, you will improve clients' confidence and the service experience. Surgery admission appointments are 15 minutes. In your appointment schedule, add a column that says Technician Appointments, which can be used for surgical and dental admissions, suture removals, nail trims, and other services that technicians provide. The surgery technician will be responsible for admission appointments, while a treatment technician will do suture removals, nail trims, blood tests and other outpatient services.

When the client schedules the surgery, the receptionist would enter a specific check-in time and tell the client, *"We have scheduled your pet's dental procedure for Friday. Your admission appointment with the technician is at 8 a.m. Please allow 15 minutes to complete the admission forms and receive instructions on how we will care for <pet name>. We also will call you to confirm the procedure and email your paperwork one day in advance."*

Have complex cases check in first. This allows time for preanesthetic testing as well as longer recovery. Let's say you have five surgical and dental procedures scheduled today with admission appointments from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m. Here is a sample admission schedule:

Admission time	Patient
7:00 a.m.	Cruciate repair, Max, 9-year-old Bulldog
7:15 a.m.	Grade 4 with extractions, Bella, 14-year-old Poodle
7:30 a.m.	Grade 3 with extractions, Sammy, 7-year-old Golden Retriever
7:45 a.m.	Grade 1, Tiger, 5-year-old Ragdoll cat
8:00 a.m.	Neuter, Caymus, 4-month-old black cat

In the privacy of exam rooms, have clients sign consent forms, collect phone numbers, answer questions and explain when you will call following procedures.

Set discharge appointments at the time of admission. After paperwork is complete, the technician would tell the client, *"Let's schedule your discharge appointment after 4 p.m., when your pet will be ready to go home. You will meet with <technician name> / <doctor name> for ___ minutes, who will explain the results of the procedure, medication instructions, wound care and answer* *your questions. Do you prefer 4:30 or 4:45 p.m. for your discharge appointment?"* (Client responds.) *"I see that you prefer text notification when <pet name> wakes up, so we will send you a text and remind you of the discharge appointment at 4:30 p.m. If you have questions today, here is my business card so you can ask for me."*

Put discharge appointments that technicians will handle the Technician Appointment column. If a doctor will release the patient, put the appointment in that veterinarian's schedule. Discharge appointments for routine procedures will take approximately 15 minutes. If a technician will discharge the patient, the veterinarian may want to do the wakeup phone call. Doctors should handle complicated medical or surgical discharges such as amputations because clients will have many questions. Budget 20 minutes for complex discharge appointments. Have set times because clients will be anxious to see their pets, and you don't want them to wait while the doctor tries to "catch" them between busy evening exams.

Which goals will you implement from today's training?

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____

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Helpful resources	Link
Article: Short-staffed? Get solutions to be more productive	www.csvets.com/news/
Article: Stop clients' bad habits of emergency refills	www.csvets.com/news/
Book: *The Veterinary Practice Management Resource Book & CD* with performance review forms and history questionnaires	www.csvets.com/cart/books-and-cds/the-veterinary-practice-management-resource-book-cd/
Video: A smart way for receptionists to manage daily tasks	www.youtube.com/watch?v=aL6LcbSZ2MQ
Videos: Communication Solutions for Veterinarians' YouTube channel with video tips	www.youtube.com/csvets
Webinar: Ways receptionists can market your practice	www.csvets.com/cart/webinars/ways-receptionists-can-market-your-practice/