

Workflow or Fumble and Best Hospital Management Practices in America **Bash Halow, CVPM, LVT**

In 2017, a nationwide study found a common through line of management practices in America's best human hospitals. Here's what they found worked at getting these practices to score the best marks in customer service.

Mission Statement

Practices often fail to uncover the extensive benefits of a strong mission statement because there are few clear examples in our profession of how they work to transform businesses, but managers should look to books on the success of Disney, Apple, and the Red Cross for inspiration. The best practices in America worked to keep mission statements portable and easy to remember. Single sentences were sometimes best. Examples like *Every Patient Every Time*, *Think Different*, *Take Time To Sit*, and *The Patient Comes First* are some of my favorites. The best hospitals also helped team members connect the mission to their day-to-day efforts by getting them to see how the very best of their work was a direct extension of the mission.

Defined Their Goals

Hospitals uncovered what clients appreciated most in a service experience and then specifically targeted those goals. This is what they aimed for:

- Overall satisfaction
- Clear instructions from the medical team
- Responsiveness
- Clear discharge instructions
- Follow through
- Empathy

By exploring the broad term 'great customer service' in more detail, they were able to better train team members and measure progress.

Made the Mission Portable

Hospitals that had lengthy mission statements gave team members handy catch phrases to help guide their actions throughout the day. A wonderful book on the management success of the Mayo clinic chronicles how the simple phrase 'The Patient Comes First' transformed their facility and branded it as the premiere place for care in America and the world. Even janitors at the Mayo understand that their first priority is the client, not cleaning.

Encouraged Interdisciplinary Rounds

Hospitals found that rounding increased the team's awareness of what was going on in the practice and how to work together to meet the needs of patients. Doctors, nurses, and other support team members all participated in the process improving not just care and communication, but the sense of community.

Challenged Workflow

When I worked as a tech, I loved starting rooms. I loved talking to clients, getting the patient history, and working with the doctor to best serve the client. Now as a practice advisor with hundreds of hours of experience watching veterinary teams at work, I'm convinced that tech-started-appointments are a waste of time. They almost never improve the customer experience and generally decrease our success with managing the patient's services. They also increase the risk of errors by omission and by dropped communications. More on this during the lecture.

Encouraged Interdisciplinary Collegiality

Hospitals had teams focus on care, not on rank, and subsequently increased workplace satisfaction, culture, and care.

Added Teaching Tools To Rooms

The most successful hospitals understand that clients are often overwhelmed with anxiety, illness, and/or the complexity of their own medical cases. So these hospitals included learning tools in the rooms like dry erase boards, models, and videos to help patients understand the medical treatment plan and what to expect moving forward.

Hired For The Best

Armed with more specific expectations of what they wanted from their medical team, human resource departments had more success with hiring.

Terminated Those That Didn't Fit In

Lastly, the hospitals were more resigned to terminate any team member that wasn't willing or able to live up to the businesses' high expectations.

Conclusion

Veterinary business owners frequently short change themselves on fundamental, proven management protocols because they are too busy being veterinarians to explore their merit. As the Texas A & M professor and author of the book, Management Lessons From the Mayo Clinic told me in a phone interview, "If you let my grad students come to your practice and run the place for 3 weeks, I could dramatically improve your productivity. Doctors are regularly dismissing the value of great management practices because they are too busy focusing on medicine. But you remind them," he added after a pause, "that the Mayo brothers were just like them. They started off as two doctors with one practice and a dream of being the best. The difference is that they believed in the value of business management systems to help make their vision a reality."