

You vs. Clients: The Battle for Sanity

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The goal of this talk is to share a model for responding to angry or complaining clients that was developed primarily through research conducted in the airline industry (with supplemental information from published research in the hotel and restaurant industries). While this model was developed outside of a medical context, I have found it to be very effective when implemented in veterinary practice.

The response model is composed of 6 components, and addresses client anger and/or complaints. These 6 responses, when used together or separately, have been shown to positively impact client satisfaction as measured by three different metrics. Those metrics are: 1) Word of Mouth Likelihood, 2) Word of Mouth Valence, and 3) Client Retention (or “Intention to Repurchase”).

The 6 components to an effective response are:

1. Timeliness - The perceived speed with which a practice or doctor responds to or handles a complaint.
2. Facilitation - The policies, procedures, and structure that a practice has in place to support customers engaging in complaints.
3. Redress - The benefits or response outcome that an angry or complaining client receives from the practice.
4. Apology - An acknowledgement by the doctor or practice of the client’s distress.
5. Credibility - Willingness to present an explanation or account for the problem.
6. Attentiveness - The Interpersonal communication and interaction between the practice and the client

The combination of these 6 responses can greatly impact client satisfaction following a complaint or negative encounter with a practice.