

Marketing objectives

How can I tell if my marketing efforts are effective? What's the best way to measure the results?

"First, set clear marketing objectives," says Linda Wasche, founder and president of LW Marketworks Inc. in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. "Be specific and avoid the tendency to simply try to 'get your name out there.'" Your objectives, she says, might be to:

- > Attract a new type of client.
- > Increase share of services per existing client.
- > Increase the number of new spay or neuter patients.
- > Interest clients in new services.
- > Increase client retention.
- > Change or strengthen clients' or community members' perceptions of your practice.

"Your objectives will determine what you need to measure and how," Wasche says. Here are her tips to get you started:



Linda Wasche

1. Decide what you'll track

How will you know you're succeeding? An increase in new clients? Improved perceptions of your practice versus the competition? An increase in the number of young singles—considered high consumers of veterinary services—who are attracted to your practice?

2. Choose a measurement tool

Choose tools that are cost effective, practical to implement, and provide usable data. For example:

- > Use surveys and registration cards to profile clients.
- > Purchase software to track and analyze client data.
- > Conduct blind interviews or surveys to find out client perceptions.
- > Interview local referral sources.
- > Track incoming phone and Web site inquiries.
- > Use mystery shoppers to test client service.
- > Conduct focus groups for more in-depth information.

3. Assign responsibility

While some methodologies are best left to marketing professionals, some duties can be delegated to a sharp team member. This team member should regularly report to you and update you on the situation.

4. Establish a process and time frame

Decide at what point you'll review and interpret the data. When possible and appropriate, test the methodology to make sure you're getting the type of information you need. In some cases, you'll get clear answers; in others, you may need more time to see patterns and results.