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Dear DVM 360,

I recently read an article in the January issue of Veterinary Medicine and posted on dvm360.com titled: Our Profession's Identity Crisis, and felt compelled to submit this response. In the piece Dr. Allen offered a concise and troubling observation regarding the trend in our business to view ourselves either as slaves to the retail demands of our society, or as professionals who deserve to be treated like highly educated specialists and also enjoy a quality home life. Most practicing veterinarians today believe they must choose between sacrificing economic success or time with family (a growing concern given the high number of women in the profession who want to be with their families despite the pressures to pay off school loans.) Those of us following veterinary literature are keenly aware of this emerging concern.

If our profession is to traverse the ever changing landscape of economic, academic, personal and professional demands, then we must be willing to expand the way we think about our role. We must elevate the status of our profession; by charging for our time and expertise, while at the same time, protecting the sanctity of our home and family lives. One manner in which we can accomplish this goal is to allow our clients to speak to us when they believe they have an emergency outside of business hours ... for a fee. The same way your accountant and attorney charge you for their time. Although it may sound unorthodox, my own clinic has had great success using this exact business model.

I had such great faith in this concept that I designed a system that allows veterinarians to collect a fee from their clients up front in exchange for emergency based phone consultations after business hours. Once operational, the system proved that pet owners who believe they have an emergency want to speak to a veterinarian from their primary veterinary clinic, and are willing to pay for it. The system of charging for phone consultations benefits all members of the veterinary relationship; patient, client, and doctor, as well as the industry in general.

- When you refer emergency related concerns to the emergency or specialty clinics in your area, you are not forced to sacrifice your evening or weekend time by meeting clients at your office.
- When you can responsibly and safely recommend that your clients wait to see you the next business day, you can keep the revenue from the services that you provide.
- When you inform your clients that they can treat their pet at home, or wait to see a veterinarian the next day, you save them time, money, and build their trust and loyalty. You will also grow your client base, as our experience has shown that pet owners will transfer to veterinarians who offer after hours phone consultations.
- When you let your clients know they should proceed to the emergency hospital because they require immediate emergency medical treatment, they know they are spending their money at the emergency clinic wisely.
- When emergency hospitals receive referrals from primary care veterinarians, they are able to provide superior care to the cases that need to be treated, and avoid overcrowding.
- When you charge for your consultations over the phone, you eliminate non-emergency calls, and experience low call volume, from your "A-level" clients, who need your help.
- Animals in crisis get the best care possible.

My goal in sharing my personal experience with this method is to offer veterinarians an alternative way to safeguard their personal time, increase their revenues and grow their business while they foster a trust in the industry as a whole.

I hope that this business model will establish a level of balance in the veterinary profession that has never existed. The imbalance I speak of exists because veterinary professionals have historically found themselves taken advantage of by a

clientele who have gradually become less respectful of the veterinary professional's time. The typical professional has responded by eliminating their accessibility outside of traditional office hours to the detriment of multitudes of responsible pet owners with legitimate concerns. By encouraging my colleagues to charge for their valuable time and expert advice, I hope to reshape the landscape to benefit all of the parties involved. For those professionals who believe that this concept holds the potential to solve some of the profession's current challenges, they can research On Call Solutions at www.oncallsolutionsllc.com or contact a representative with questions at 678-580-0421.