

THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW

Often, we get frustrated with clients because they don't do their part at home with their pets. They don't brush the dog, trim their nails, or brush their teeth. Why do they even have a pet if they are not going to take care of their needs? Perhaps we are just overlooking the fact that they don't know how.

In years gone by, a large percentage of the population grew up in a farming setting and learned at a very young age how to care for animals. A large percentage of the "new" pet owners have not had that experience, so they start off behind a knowledge curve. Even so, all the new products, techniques, and tools we have to work with has changed significantly, making it hard to keep up with the latest ideas and trends.

In the past it was not very difficult to purchase a brush for our dog when the only place to shop was the "local feed store". You simply picked up the one brush that they sold. Now we have the internet and have tons of options, all of which sound amazing when you read the descriptions. As professional groomers, you often read the same descriptions and laugh or just blow off the idea that they come close to the claims made. The pet owner, however, doesn't come into the situation with the same level of understanding, so they DO believe the claims. As a veterinarian, this has become a daily "battle" (advice from Dr. Google) trying to convince an owner on things like feeding their dog matches (sulfur) won't cure the pet of fungus. The article even says that as a veterinarian, I will tell them it doesn't work because all I care about is selling them medication. The reality is if it truly worked, most veterinarians would recommend it, because the correct drugs are expensive and the average veterinarians are result motivated, not sales motivated.

As professionals, part of our job is being able to help a client, whether it be how to restore the skin back to health, or to make sure they have the correct equipment, or products to get best results. Can you imagine If I as a veterinarian diagnose cancer in your dog and then recommend you get on the internet to find a solution? How is that different than when you tell an owner to brush their dog, but you don't tell them the type of brush to use? They also need to know to use a brush out or hydration spray to avoid damaging a dry coat, which is brittle. Often, instead of helping we end up chastising them because they don't do it correctly.

Let's reverse this thought process. When I diagnose cancer in the dog, I am going to line out a treatment regime with time frames, explain what to expect, and I am going to use the best drugs possible. Drugs that I have researched or had experience with, so I know that they work very well. And yes, I am going to sell the clients these items, because if they decide to get them from the internet or at the local big box store, I can't be sure they will get the right ones. So as a groomer, when you recommend the client brush their dog we need to educate them, show them the correct way, provide the right tools, and the right products for success. I also believe it is good to revisit everything on the next visit in case they have questions (that they are afraid to ask) or concern along the way. This helps the client to refocus on the goal and evaluate if they are accomplishing it.

Somehow along the way, there has become a philosophy that if we sell a product that our only motivation is money. Yes, money is important to pay the bills and survive but it should never be the driving force. If money is our only motivation this will often compromise our outcome. If you use and suggest the best products, clients will have a high respect for your advice because they will appreciate the results. My

standard statement is I don't sell products, I sell results. If the results aren't there, people won't buy what you are selling. They want value for their money.

As professionals, we need to consider this in our strategic planning. Are we working for the best results? Are we charging appropriately to make a living? What opportunities may exist for other revenue sources like retail? Many groomers say I just don't have room to sell products. Do you have a shelf or a closet that you could keep a mixed box of brushes and a box of brush out spray? If so, you have room for retail. Who says you have to have a fancy set of shelves to display them? Unlike the big box store, at my hospital, I didn't display my drugs, foods, or grooming products, but I still was able to sell them. You can have the discussion with the client and then walk in the back and collect the things you need for their particular pet. Remember even if they could see the products and tools they don't know what they need. Mobile is no different other than you might need to plan in advance to carry it with you or bring it the next time when you see the client.

Any time we can create passive income or income that doesn't stress our bodies to accomplish we are working smarter not harder. The older we get, the more we understand this, because our bodies eventually start limiting what we can do. It becomes important that we start looking at other ways of bringing in an income without the bodily stress. Spending time thinking about different ways you can do a value-added service is always time well spent. Always consider it from the client's perspective of what they need, and how can you enhance the care of their pet, by offering services and products that they don't know how to do or don't know exists. Remember this should be about offering great results, not just "selling things".