

Technology: A Friend not a Foe

What is your cost per bath with your shampoo? How long does it take you to groom a Great Pyrenees that you only see every six months? If you don't know these figures, how do you know what to charge? Now Imagine if you could have all of this information almost instantly at the tap of a button with modern technology! Unfortunately, the grooming industry as a whole does not rely on computers and technology to appreciate what it can really do for us! As the industry significantly evolves, many computer companies are building programs geared specifically to the industry to aid in our efficiency.

Large companies often rely on technology to increase profitability, especially in the hugely competitive market that we live in. As a business, we can change our profit quickly and significantly by improving things ever so slightly. For example, I hear people say that they only use 1 to 2 oz of shampoo for their bathing process, which they feel is extremely efficient. Now let's break that down-1 to 2 oz is 30 to 60 ml of product. What if I informed you on a technique in which you could do the same bath with 5 ml? That is 83-91% savings! Multiply that savings to what you spend on your products and that all goes to your profit at the end of the year. The common response is, "I could never get my bathers to do that." Now this is where technology could really help. Consider this scenario, as you buy products you input them into your computer and then as you do baths, you input the amount you use. By supplying the system with this data, the computer can now tell you when your bather is not tending to business. Now you can hold them accountable with facts, not just feelings. This type of technology is very common in many industries like the bar industry and has added a significant amount to their bottom line.

How about if we kept track of things such as how long a dog stays with us during the day? How long it takes to check out, or even better, how long it takes to actually groom a certain dog? I always joked in the veterinary field that there are two separate timetables, the length of time a doctor thinks it takes him to do a procedure (always way shorter than reality) and the technician's account of the time it takes. Which time table do we base the next appointment on? As we progress to hour wages vs commission, wouldn't it be great for the employer as well as the employee to know exactly what is generated on an hourly or per dog basis? It would also be very valuable in setting our fee schedule. I often hear of groomers not servicing poodles/doodles because, "they take way too long." What if we calculated how long it actually takes, determined your desired hourly wage, and then set the price accordingly? This issue is not that they take too long, but rather that you are not charging appropriately. Even that Great Pyrenees that comes in every 6 months shouldn't bother you if you charge appropriately. \$50 an hour for a Boxer or \$50 an hour for a Great Pyrenees all pays equivalently. Computers can do that for us. Several grooming shops have computer systems that are great for scheduling and getting payments for the grooms, however, if that is all they are capable of, there is still some shopping around to do, because there are more robust systems out there!

Is there a learning curve to using them? Absolutely! Anytime you take on something new you have to change your operating agenda. Do not be afraid to assimilate to these ideas, it is a positive change! Two things need to occur. You first must go through the process of learning a new way of conducting things and second you have to create accountability for everyone to follow through. Always expect resistance, because it is a change and unfortunately, people do not like change. My motto in my hospital was, "the only thing consistent here is change and we hope that it is all for the better." Business is changing constantly and if you are not changing with it, you will eventually be left in the dust by your competitors.

Utilizing technology, especially computers in this day and age is a must to survive in this ever-changing business environment. In the veterinarian world, small clinics are being sucked up by Corporate America because, they are more progressive and have learned to work on these small margins to increase profit. Do you know how much you or your employees generates an hour? Or what your profit is per dog? It may be time to consider incorporating a new computer system and even a business coach to help direct you! As a groomer you work way too hard to not get paid for what you are worth. The time has come to work smarter not harder! Invest in technology as it is a friend not a foe!