



From rabid raccoon to workhorse. Tame the practice phone.

First in the series “Seen, Heard, Trusted” by Rick Purnell
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For some younger vet team members, the office phone might as well be a rabid raccoon. It rings, the heart rate zooms and the urge to run away nearly overpowers. They’re not alone. Multiple studies show **60 percent of Gen Z and Millennial** workers regularly avoid phone calls. They prefer texting. Others cite phone anxiety with a fear of working the phone system properly, or a lack of confidence to effectively manage a conversation.

This isn’t generational. Baby Boomers don’t cling to traditional phones because they’re nostalgic. Most simply learned to communicate using tools clients prefer. In a clinic setting, client preferences matter.

A Salesforce survey reinforces this.

- **61 percent of customers prefer to speak** to someone via phone when they need help.
- **75 percent of customers believe calling** a business will give them the quickest response time.

This doesn’t ignore the reality that increasing numbers of clients and practices are **texting and using web chat with great results**. These are customer service options we’ll address in later columns. However, when three-fourths of prospects and clients still use the phone, it deserves focus.

Remember to smile

Good phone behaviors can turn ringing lines into great care and strengthen client relationships. Ideally, practices will have their own phone training protocols that should be learned and followed.

Rest assured, great phone skills aren’t about knowing everything. They’re about **creating clarity and instilling calm** quickly. It starts the moment the line rings.

These **proven steps** will help ensure you and your clients have worthwhile phone experiences, even if other clients are waiting at your counter.

- Smile sincerely before answering. It changes your tone of voice. Really.
- Clearly state your practice name.
- Introduce yourself and include your name. Don't rush.
- Offer immediate assistance, such as "How may I help you?"
- Be sure to ask, "What else?" before ending the call. [Link](#).

Every call is a chance to **reassure a worried animal owner** and get care started or keep existing care moving forward. Before you know it, the phone will not be a rabid raccoon. It will be a workhorse customer service tool for you, your team and the animals that depend on you because that **smile-before-answering tactic works**.

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Additional resources

More resources are available. The first two below are courtesy of DVM360. There are online tips and local libraries can access additional sources. Companies that sell phone systems generally provide phone user guidance, as well.

5 mistakes your veterinary receptionist is making on the phone. [Link](#). Karyn Gavzer, MBA, CVPM, is a veterinary business consultant, writer and speaker. Her straightforward advice is on target for practice managers and good reading for those handling phone support.

Top tips for telephones in the veterinary practice. [Link](#). Amanda Donnelly, DVM, MBA, presents proven, pragmatic tips in this YouTube video.

7 surprising psychological reasons Gen Z hates phone calls. [Link](#). Dr. Bataji Niiwlikar presents why Gen Z approaches phones differently than others in PsychUniverse.

About the author

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