

Driven to serve: Mobile bovine production practice

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Abstract

Being driven to serve a clientele on large-scale production farms.

Key words: mobile practice, consulting practice, serving rural clients

Maximizing Windshield Time

A major crux of operating a mobile practice in veterinary medicine is the loss of productivity during drive time. Whether your practice is service-based, consulting-based or a mixture of the 2, the time spent behind the windshield is difficult to bill out. According to the AAA American Driving Survey, the average American with a college degree spends 57 minutes per day driving. If we assume an average veterinarian only spends double that time driving:

- This equates to 475 hours a year, if we work 5 days a week and 50 weeks out of a year.
- US Foreign Service Institute research indicates it takes 480 hours to reach basic fluency in group 1 languages.
- You could obtain 3.5 bachelor's degrees in that time.
- You could read 7.5 million words, which is around 94 novels.

Assuming you don't want to learn a new language, obtain a new degree or read/listen to the Harry Potter series of novels in only 6.54 days; it is beneficial to find a way to maximize the time spent behind the windshield. I try to speak to 4 main people while driving: my mother, my clients, my mentors, and my Amazon Alexa.

It's pretty clear what I am doing when speaking to the first 3 people on my list. By utilizing the voice function on Amazon Alexa for mobile, I can create order lists, punch lists, to do 'someday when life is less crazy' lists, grocery lists, and set reminders for a more efficient work week. My favorite reminder that I have to ask Alexa to set is my daily, "Don't forget to pick up your kids," reminder.

Podcasts and continuing education are readily available at your fingertips while driving. The AABP website has a multitude of learning opportunities from past conferences and the newer installments of the Have You Herd? Podcast by Dr. K. Fred Gingrich. With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the opportunity for online continuing education has exploded. I also garner a significant amount of professional growth from self-improvement and industry-based podcasts.

Serve a Diverse Need

Find diverse ways to serve your clients. I am personally passionate about the Beef Quality Assurance program and

what it promotes in the beef industry. I am a certified trainer for the BQA program and it is relatively easily to obtain this certification with your state BQA coordinator. I offer this training to my clients and work with them to make sure every member of their team is certified on an annual basis. Recently, packers in our area have required that all livestock haulers be BQA transportation-certified as well. I have been training truck drivers in our area to fulfill this requirement for this sector of the industry. There are other examples of ways to serve our clients beyond veterinary medicine, we just need to be driven to fill the gaps.

Keep Your Boots on the Ground

It is very easy to fall into the habit of answering questions or working through problems over the phone. For current clients, this falls under the VCPR and definitely does not violate practice acts. For new and potential clients, this gets gray fast. For both clients, it's my number one source of billing anxiety, and many times I will get the diagnosis correct, but you miss a lot of things. Boots on the ground allows you to see the big picture of the problem. The problem almost always has 3 parts – the people, the animals and the environment. I often find that I am told half of the story, and when I pull up to the yard or dairy I can instantly spot about 3 things I was not told.

Conclusion

Being a member of a brick-and-mortar practice is a different outlook than that of a mobile or consultant veterinarian. Both business plans have pros and cons that could be an entirely different discussion at an AABP Conference. By maximizing your windshield time, serving a diverse need for clientele and committing to always having your boots on the ground in order to solve problems for your clients, you will drive to success if mobile production practice or consulting is the right choice for your business.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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