

What's on the Menu?

Increasing the value of lunch/learns and educational dinner meetings

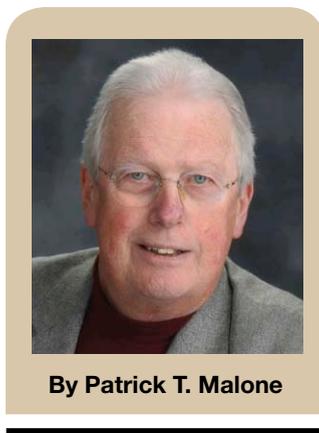
Over the last two decades, the number of “lunch & learns” and dinner meetings has grown exponentially. In many cases the value of these sessions has not kept pace, unless the sole objective was to increase goodwill for your organization.

If you have watched the industry mergers and acquisitions, you know that goodwill is an intangible – a business value not related to assets or liabilities. You also may be aware that the goodwill claimed at the inception of a merger or acquisition is mostly written off at some point during the consolidation process. I have often considered goodwill to be the amount that the buyer overpaid the seller for the asset. So the value of goodwill created or increased by lunch/learns or dinner meetings becomes elusive at best. Most of these meetings fail to answer upfront the audience's primary questions – “Why should I care?” and “What's in it for me?”

What pays the bills

The majority of meetings begin with the speaker thanking the audience for the opportunity, followed by “I want to talk with you about (fill in the product/service/issue/problem/etc.).” What follows is a data dump that builds goodwill, increases awareness for some and hopefully for a few might even increase their knowledge about (fill in the product/service/issue/problem/etc.). This may yield a little return on the investment of your time and your company's money. And you have gained some goodwill.

However, goodwill does not pay the bills. So how much different could your next lunch



By Patrick T. Malone

When you answer “Why should I care?” or “What's in it for me?” up front you will find that your audience will listen differently.

& learn be if you began by thanking them for the opportunity and then said:

“Congestive heart failure can affect dogs of all ages, sizes, and breeds, but most commonly occurs in older dogs. If not diagnosed and treated properly, CHF can cause a rapid deterioration in health that ultimately results in death.”

“I'm convinced that Vetmedin is the best course of action for improving your patient's quality of life, for proactive CHF management following diagnosis, and enhancing the quality of care provided by your clinic. So today I want to provide you with the efficacy and safety data so you can determine if you are willing to adjust your CHF treatment recommendations and which of your patients are the best candidates for this course of treatment.”

What follows is the same data you provide in your current meetings, only now that data is positioned to improve quality of life and enhance the clinic's quality of care. You are positioning your audience, from the DVMs to the techs, to be more successful. This is the answer to – “Why should I care?”

Adjusting as I have suggested is simple enough when presenting product information. What about educating about intangibles

like services? Consider these two examples when beginning an educational session on Webster's Vetsource or ePet Health Client Education Portal.

FOR VETSOURCE: *"I'm convinced that Webster's Vetsource is the most effective way to compete with third party online pharmacies. Let's look at the benefits of increased compliance, capturing previously lost sales, increased profits while maintaining veterinary control of your prescriptions. Then you can determine if Vetsource is the right strategy for your clinic."*

FOR EPET HEALTH CLIENT EDUCATION PORTAL: *"Our client education portal will help you increase compliance and assist in building client loyalty. Let's review the educational tools available to your clients as well as the marketing tools available to you. Then you can make a well-informed decision on the value of this portal to your practice."*

Real interest with real results

When you answer "Why should I care?" or "What's in it for me?" up front you will find that your audience will listen

differently. The questions that they ask will be more specific to their own situation and demonstrate real interest as opposed to the polite questions you are getting now. You will also notice more in-depth discussions during and after the meeting and a genuine appreciation for your assistance in making them more successful. Shortly you will transition from just another sales rep or marketing rep to a valued business advisor.



Adjusting the opening of your "lunch/learns" and/or "educational" dinner meetings will greatly enhance your return on your investment.

Valued business advisors seem to gain a greater share of the clinic's business, so while you were focused on making them more successful, they are helping you become more successful, and that is a true win-win proposition.

Adjusting the opening of your "lunch/learns" and/or "educational" dinner meetings will greatly enhance your return on your investment. But don't take my word for it. Try it. Find out for yourself. It works! ■