

Practice review leads to growth

INCREASING existing client business, improving cost efficiencies and boosting client loyalty are just some of the indirect benefits of a competition win at the 2009 BSAVA congress for one practice.

Matthew and Helen Fry of Sleaford-based Quarrington Veterinary Surgery won a "Spotcheck" for their practice, courtesy of Merial.

Matthew Fry explains: "We entered the competition via a simple flyer as part of a Merial offer at BSAVA. When we found out that we had won, we were delighted, if a little apprehensive as to where we were going to find the time to invest to make best use of the process."

Matthew says that the Spotcheck process is not something he would have thought about prior to winning: "It is, however, well worth the investment of time and we would thoroughly recommend it to any practice, whether they are seeking to simply maintain or want to develop their business.

"The process involved is simple, but you do have to plan your day and block

out a period of time so you can give it your full attention and concentrate. But if you are looking to go forward, you have to take a step back from the practice – it is very easy to get insular and say 'well, we are doing ok!'"

Quarrington Vets was established in 2003 by Matthew and his wife Helen, VN, who is practice manager. Prior to setting up, Matthew worked as a locum, an experience which allowed him to

collect plenty of good ideas for his business. "Nonetheless, after just over six years in practice, the time was right for an outside assessment," he says.

Caroline Johnson, principal of Spotcheck, started the process by meeting the

principals and gaining as much information as possible about the practice: "I like to get as complete a picture of the business as possible, in particular, its aims and objectives, and the culture and ethos of the practice.

"I then met with other members of the team in and around the practice for a chat about their role, and their perceptions of the business. I also

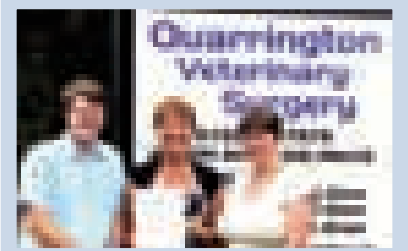
collected as much literature as possible – everything from brochures and leaflets to a copy invoice and pill bottles!"

Two weeks after the initial assessment, Caroline returned with a report on her findings and to discuss proposed recommendations for future development of the practice.

Matthew reports that Caroline's first observation was that the practice's client to vet ratio is higher than average. "As a three-vet practice, this means that there is an opportunity to develop the business within our current client base by increasing spend per client. To do this we need to concentrate more on promoting our services to existing clients," says Matthew.

"Caroline suggested that we switch our focus to developing relationships rather than creating awareness. So by concentrating our marketing on food, wormer and drug sales, booster reminders and clinics, we can involve our nurses more directly with clients to help create closer relationships. This will enable us to grow the business whilst increasing client satisfaction and loyalty, so it's a win-win for everyone."

Other recommendations included better signage. "We are a little bit out in the sticks just outside the village. By



Matthew and Helen Fry with (centre) Caroline Johnson.

putting up prominent signage we have already created an impact! Clients cannot miss us, and it creates a more professional exterior to the business.

"We are also planning to get a sign made for the main road which says how far we are from the junction. It's a small but important point, as we know that people sometimes get as far as the village and think they have missed us."

Matthew believes that in the relatively short time since the check, the practice is seeing significant benefits. "It's very easy to become insular and forget to see things from the outside, and how people perceive your practice.

"Caroline came up with some fantastic new ideas involving the whole practice. It got everyone talking about what we wanted to aim for, and how best to implement the ideas. It was certainly well worth the investment of time," concludes Matthew.

■ For more information on Spotcheck, see www.spotcheckvet.co.uk.

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