



The Best Defense Is a Good Offense

Mark Crootof, DVM

Crootof Veterinary Consulting, Gainesville, Florida

I have been a sports fan all of my life, and if there were one sport that I have followed with passion, it's baseball. Growing up in Long Island, I naturally developed a predilection for pinstripes. This summer, I enjoyed a balmy evening at the new Yankee Stadium, where everything is just *better*: the lights are brighter, the grass greener, and the peanuts fresher. As a customer experiencing the end product of an expensive upgrade, I could not have been more satisfied—even if the tickets cost a bit more.

CLEARING FIRST

My message is simple: baseball teams and fans are no different than veterinary clinics and clients. Business is like a baseball franchise: to keep clients satisfied and revenue streaming, the clinic needs to recruit and retain talented players who work as a team and showcase that talent for clients.

After visiting thousands of veterinary facilities, I can say that too often talented veterinary teams lose business because the clinic has been neglected. Think your clients don't notice? *Think again.*

Even if clients do not consciously notice everything, a clinic that has delayed remodeling can portray shoddy care and poor attention to detail. In contrast, a clean, orderly, brightly lit office can be reassuring of the quality of veterinary care and medical judgment.

ROUNDING SECOND

The best defense against lost revenue is to go on the offense, making improvements and upgrades *before* deficiencies become obvious. A new Yankee Stadium need not be built to grow your practice: start small, keeping costs and headaches minimal. That dead ficus tree in the corner? Trash it. Those supplies stacked in the upper cages, the dust ball tumbleweeds nestled in

the computer wires, the "kinda broken" IV pumps? Get out the trash cans and donation bins and fill 'em up.

It is amazing how much more orderly the hospital looks and how much new storage space becomes available. Going further, a new coat of paint can be inexpensive, easy, and provide a fresh attitude to a dreary office.

THE HOME STRETCH

These facelifts often lead to a broader assessment of the facility: frayed awnings, faded outdoor signage, stained ceiling tiles. Don't fear this process—embrace it! Solutions to many of these problems are often simple and affordable, and clients will reward these efforts with business and recommendations. In addition, staff will feel happier and more invested in the practice's success. It's a win-win situation.

Remodeling should not be delayed. If the cash is not available right now, remember that interest rates are low and lenders are lending. Design sessions at conferences can also be beneficial, such as the lectures and labs offered on hospital renovation (with one full day devoted to remodeling) at the NAVC Conference 2013 in January. The NAVC is also running a hospital makeover contest with a prize worth \$25,000 to be divided among three top finalists. The next hospital makeover contest (bigger and with more prizes) will be announced in January 2013.

There has never been a better time to step into the big leagues.

Mark Crootof
NAVC Board of Directors

