



Keeping the Perspective in Balance, Speed, Pricing and Communication

Per spec tive (per'spek'tiv)n.

1. A mental view of the relationship of aspects of a subject to each other and to a whole.
2. An idea of the relative importance of things.

Speed in trimming is mainly a function of capability. Distractions and digressions often rob us of precious time. Poor planning of a procedure may lessen the speed we are trying to attain. The time it takes us to complete a trim is subject to the client's unfair interpretation as "too fast"...or..."too slow." Certainly the time we spend working on an animal has a bearing as to how the client feels about the bill. Time is our most valuable asset. Time management is vital to a successful business. Performing our work within a reasonable parameter of time instills confidence with the client. Work performed too slowly may create an image of incompetence while work done too quickly evokes an attitude of not giving quality work for the fee charged. Clients are very aware of the time spent in relationship to the fee charged. Quality should never be sacrificed for the sake of speed. The direct correlation between speed and profit can never be far from an astute professional's business plan.

Pricing should be directly linked to the time involved to perform certain procedures. In addition to the amount of time involved, knowing exact costs of the materials used is essential to establishing a pricing schedule. A question arises as to what we actually sell. Advice, goodwill, expertise, continuing education, labor, travel, facilities and our time make up the basis of what most trimmers charge. A fair profit on materials not normally used for standard procedures is good business. Establishing our own professional fee for our time should replace the old practice of charging the going rate which allows someone else to set them for us. Trimmers are often victims of allowing the clients to set their fees. All equine practitioners should charge for the depreciation of their bodies. Most trimmers never learn the difference between cash flow and profit.

Communication is the weakest link in most of our business chains. Communication skills are an asset to any business person. For trimmers, verbal communications with one another and the clients is often a less than meaningful experience. Recent studies show that medical doctors are among the poorest listeners. As professionals, we also may fall into this category. Good listening habits and assimilation of the subject matter are essential to good communication. Arbitration and compromise are also important to successful commu-



nication. Communicating with our colleagues and clients has been made easier in this age of electronics. E-mail, cellular telephones and telephone answering machines assure us of usually getting our messages to another person in a timely manner. The biggest breakdown in the electronic communication system are the numerous people who refuse to talk to an answering device.

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Balancing these three segments of a trimming business should start with communication. Understanding the requirements of the client and hearing their expectations of our services can often be accomplished during initial contact. This is also a good time to explain your fees to a new client. In my opinion, communication skills are the most important segment of a successful practice. Including the client in our endeavors by explaining what we are about to do with their animal involves them in the process. Giving them a brief prognosis often tends to eliminate their expectation of immediate success. Fully explaining the steps involved for remedial treatment allows us to use methods without having to defend the results of step-by-step procedures. Assuming the client understands that even the most routine applications may creates serious breakdown in the communication system.

If your communication skills are sound, relating your fees and the time it requires you to perform your work will fall into place.

