



VETCELERATOR CASE STUDY: A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING

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BACKGROUND

The road to practice ownership for Dr. Natalie Lucca at Homeward Bound Animal Clinic started, in spirit, like a lot of entrepreneurial endeavors. Wanting to do things your way.

“The other doctor said I had to wear a white jacket.”

When you enter Homeward Bound Animal Clinic you see all the personality of its owner. Rooms are decorated with fun wallpaper and named accordingly (we sat in the beach room which is also the cat room). The clinic is comfortable for pets and owners in a Fear-Free environment and the waiting area is spacious with warm sunlight throughout. The throughline in Dr. Lucca’s story is one of taking the best of what she learned from corporate medicine and applying her own personality to the result and her clinic matches this. From the moment she decided to pursue this dream, the following 12 months were a series of first time decisions, ones that were not previously ever considered and a steep learning curve.



HOMeward BOUND ANIMAL CLINIC

From building, architecture, layout, equipment, inventory, and pricing, Dr. Lucca excelled at leveraging a network of resources and relying on a trusted advisor to make informed decisions.

“I think the biggest aha moment for me was when they said walls cost money.”

How does one begin to think about the amount of first time decisions that it takes to build a practice? What was once a clubhouse and restaurant for a local golf course since closed, Dr. Lucca needed to retrofit a space to meet her needs. Her original plan was scrapped when she learned that walls cost money, but it ended up working out to the benefit of the hospital flow as her treatment area stayed an open space with good accessibility to the four room clinic.

Next was planning how to utilize the practice loan to outfit the space to her needs. Dr. Lucca's plan started with a list:

"I decided what was 'a negotiable', and what was 'a non-negotiable.' That led me to where I could save money, and where I could not save money. I made the decision I definitely wanted Casco containment units so knowing how much that cost, I kind of budgeted for everything else."

Every contract signed was Dr. Lucca's first contract, and knowing what she wanted in advance of discussing while remaining open minded to other options help her through the complexity.



IT'S A FLOW, IT'S AN EVOLUTION

Dr. Lucca's professional experience started in wildlife management and vet tech school. She loved the variety of animal care and the decision to go onto a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine seemed obvious to her. After graduating from the University of Minnesota with her Doctorate, she worked for a few years at Banfield Pet Hospital. When her non-compete took her away from her hometown, she moved to a three day a week shift at a different hospital and used the other free days to plan her next venture.



What came out of her free time was a small mobile practice while her non-compete expired and she was able to return to Rochester. It was at the mobile practice grew her confidence to launch her own business.

"Now I have the confidence that people enjoyed me and my medicine when I went into their home. And I felt confident that I could refer cases and so I just decided, you know if I'm gonna do this I might as well do it for myself."

And with that, Dr. Lucca's goal was to see all types of patients. In addition to companion animal care, the team at Homeward Bound sees exotics pets, an underserved population in her area. That adds complexity to the flow of the clinic but Dr. Lucca remains optimistic that this is a good business decision in addition to being a philosophical one.

"I feel if I can get better at seeing the animals I'm not comfortable with, then business-wise it will make a lot of sense in the future. if there's no one else to see them and they're willing to come here, why not be available for them?"



Prices for exotics reflect her value and time to see these pets as many of the pocket pets don't see the same size of dollars per visit of a companion animal, which is to be expected.

When asked about her first attempt at setting prices, Dr. Lucca was quick to point out she didn't have all the answers, and relied on a team and research to help her set up her Practice Software, services, and prices.

“So I've noticed since I've opened, prices have been adjusted and changed because of what people are accepting. So it's a flow, it's an evolution, but [Vetcelerator] definitely helped get me started.”

Incorporating Lessons from Corporate Medicine, with Individualistic Flair:

Her hardest part of selecting services and pricing? Knowing and recognizing her value – something she learned from her time in corporate medicine. What was initially a cost-plus pricing model evolved into understanding her costs, but understanding what the value of her services are to the customer, and adjusting from there. Without proper attention to understanding the value of service, Dr. Lucca insists that she can't take care of her team as much as she would like and the clinic cannot grow to support more families in the area.



NEXT CHALLENGE

The next great challenge? Process, Process, Process.

“My next great challenge is to get all of my policies, protocols, training, all that into a book. ..Having the tools available I feel makes a better team and makes a better clinic. But nowhere that I have worked in private practice has the time for that, it feels. So I wanted to be that change and really focus on that too.”

From monthly team and individual goals, Dr. Lucca tries to run the clinic using the business oriented structures she’s worked under, but augmenting it to reflect her own personality. The result has been a practice to grow, offer new services, and adapt to get better. White jacket mindset with a strong dose of individualistic flair and welcoming environment in Rochester, MN.

As Dr. Lucca continues to grow her practice, Vetcelerator stands by her side, offering essential tools to increase her market presence and thrive.



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