

# Aligning

Doing business from the customer's perspective

**C**ustomer-centric distributors and their reps have always been more successful in growing a business regardless of the economy. Almost every company has some reference to “our customers” in their mission or vision statement. But few actually follow through on those promises because they try to be interesting to the customers rather than INTERESTED IN their customers.

Here is a quick guide to help you align with your potential customer's various points of view using BIVI's Metacam as an example.

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**Apathy** – Find out what is important to the customer and determine if you can connect there. If not, accept the indifference and move on.

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**DVM:** “This is a new practice in a developing area so our first priority is to assess how our older patients are managing their chronic pain now before recommending a new approach.”

**Rep:** “That makes sense. When do you think you will have completed the assessment? It might be better to look at Metacam as a post surgery pain management regimen for now.”

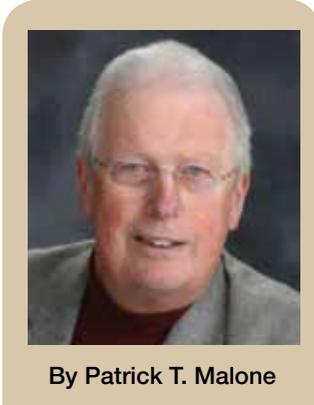
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**Complaint** – This is a cry for help. Explain how your product or service might help. Go slow because customers seldom believe that you can instantly solve the problem ... even if you actually can.

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**DVM:** “I've heard that oral dosing doesn't have the same efficacy as sub-Q.”

**Rep:** “That's a fair and reasonable concern. A study demonstrated that meloxicam is 100% bioavailable whether it is administered by the SC or oral routes. This suggests



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that efficacy by either route of administration is similar.”

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**Avoidance** – The customer sees your idea as risky so your job is to minimize or eliminate the perceived risk. Offer a trial, smaller quantity, a test, a guarantee or any other risk reduction method available.

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**DVM:** “I'm worried about the safety of long term usage in older dogs.”

**Rep:** “Safety is a prime concern. Throughout the world, Metacam is used safely in older pets. Many older pets are perfectly healthy except that they are experiencing osteoarthritis. Their liver, kidney and other organ functions are within normal parameters. For this set of older patients Metacam would be expected to be safe for long-term use.”

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**Hostility** – For most people “NO” is the most intimidating customer response and it causes them to sell harder. Resist that urge! There is something wrong here so stop selling and find out what the barrier is. You have no hope of making a sale if you do not know what's wrong. Once you understand it you might be able to “fix” it. If not, move on.

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**DVM:** “I don't want to stock another NSAID.”

**Rep:** “Is that the only concern?”

**DVM:** “Yes”

**Rep:** “Inventory control is more important than ever. Perhaps you may want to consider Metacam as your only NSAID because it is available both as an injection as well as orally. Additionally the oral suspension permits much more accurate dosing than caplets even if they are scored.”

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**Skepticism** – The challenge is finding the right kind of proof for each customer. For some it may be a testimonial.

For others, research studies are required. Some will require a pilot project to prove feasibility.

**DVM:** “What proof do you have that Metacam is safe with other drugs?”

**Rep:** We know that many drugs have been safely used concurrently with Metacam. These may include heartworm preventatives, vaccination regimens, thyroid supplements, many antibiotics, etc. Some other drugs are also highly protein bound and should be monitored closely when used in conjunction with Metacam. Examples include ACE inhibitors and certain medicines for seizure control.

However, because of the mechanism of action for Metacam, it is imperative that certain pharmaceuticals never be used at the same time. These include other NSAIDs, (Deramaxx,<sup>®</sup> Rimadyl,<sup>®</sup> Etogesic,<sup>®</sup> Zubrin,<sup>™</sup> and others not approved such as aspirin, ibuprofen, etc.), corticosteroids, and other drugs that are either nephrotoxic or hepatotoxic.

Regardless of medication that is administered with Metacam, it is important to realize that every dog is an individual and side effects can, therefore, vary.

**Open** – Relax, your customer is just open, not positive yet. Explain your product or service in a relaxed, easy manner. This is your opportunity to provide information to help the customer reach a decision.

**DVM:** “Tell me more about flexible dosing.”

**Rep:** Flexible dosing has dual meaning for Metacam. First, treatment can be initiated with Metacam Solution for Injection allowing the veterinarian to provide relief from OA pain more quickly, and then follow by dispensing Metacam Oral Suspension to the owner for follow up therapy. Second, Metacam is very flexible in that it provides precise dosing to the pound. Thus, if a dog loses weight as part of its overall OA treatment regimen, it is very easy to continue to provide correct dosing.

**Studious** – For some, “let me think about it” is another way of avoiding a decision. Most do really want to think, analyze and consider all the information. So offer to help them study it or give them time to study it by themselves with a date to reconvene.

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**DVM:** “I need some time to study the effectiveness and safety issues.”

**Rep:** That makes sense. Both of those issues are addressed on the package insert. Let’s review the information and if there is a need for additional data, I will be happy to provide it.

**Interested** – The customer is asking questions so you give them answers. Keep it up until all the questions are answered.

**DVM:** “How is Metacam Solution for Injection administered for dogs?”

**Rep:** Metacam Solution for Injection can be administered either by the intravenous (IV) or subcutaneous (SC) routes. What other questions do you have?

**Play** – The customer is enthused and we want to close. Hold on! Enjoy the moment. Play back by considering all the positive possibilities.

**DVM:** “Well it sounds like there are multiple advantages to Metacam and I’m especially pleased with the accurate dosing of the oral suspension.”

**Rep:** It is great to have such an accurate dosing option and the best part is there is a great promotion on right now. Let me explain the details.

**Committed** – Draw a conclusion, and close with a positive statement.

**DVM:** “Sounds like using Metacam as our exclusive NSAID makes the most sense.”

**Rep:** I’m glad you feel that way. I took the liberty of preparing an initial order in light of the ongoing promotion. Let’s review it and get you started off right.

This short guide will help you align and be interested in your customers. They, in turn, will see your products and/or services as interesting and helpful in assisting them to get to where they want to go. ■