

# Are You an Amateur or a Professional?

**O**ver the years I have had the privilege to ride with a number of reps both from manufacturers as well as distributors. Those ride-alongs and these columns in *Vet-Advantage* plus the weekly sales tips are designed to help more amateurs move up into the professional ranks. A recent extended trip into the field provided me with a stark comparison that I would like to share with you.

**Day one, call one (with the amateur):** The goal of this call is to place Boehringer Ingelheim's CaliciVax combos in the clinic's feline wellness protocol. The amateur opens the call with "I'm really excited about BI's new CaliciVax combos. Let me show you where they fit your protocols and then we can determine the quantities for your initial order."

**My notes:** Your excitement isn't a benefit to this clinic. There are the clinic's protocols and the DVM will decide if they fit. The assumptive close in the opening statement is arrogant.

**Later in the week (with the professional):** With the same goal, the professional opened the call with "Boehringer Ingelheim's CaliciVax combos will provide your clients with the safest and broadest spectrum protection available in the market today. Let me review the benefits with you so you can decide if it fits your protocols and should be part of your wellness regime."

**My notes:** Well done.

**Later in day one (with the amateur):** We were in the middle of a presentation on the advantages of Mometamax and Posatex when the DVM said, "I think our biggest challenge will be to define mild/moderate vs. chronic/severe."

And the amateur's response was, "That's not a problem. The best way to diagnose a *Malassezia* infection is with a positive identification of the organism under a microscope.



By Patrick T. Malone

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Samples can be obtained from the infected area by scraping, swabbing or applying and removing transparent tape. Most infections will have a large number of yeast present that will confirm the diagnosis."

**My notes:** DVM said diagnosis was difficult and you said, in effect, no it isn't. Then you suggested the most difficult and time consuming way to diagnose.

**Later on in the week (with the professional):**

I asked the professional how she would have responded and she immediately replied, "It can be challenging to determine if it's mild or severe. My recommendation would be to start with Mometamax and if you don't see a decrease in the head shaking and scratching within a week then have your client come back for Posatex. Also remember about 1 in 4 dogs with Otitis Externa will be severe."

I played this out further to see how she would respond.

Suppose the DVM responded, "You know that's helpful and sounds like a good plan."

To which the rep responded, "Great, is there any other information regarding Posatex that I can provide?"

And the DVM responded, "No. You've answered all my questions."

The rep closed with, "then I suggest we work up an initial order for Posatex to complement your initial treatment of Mometamax."

**My notes:** Great alignment to the initial CHALLENGE. Nice raise to CONTINUE. Very nice firm close.

**Day two (with the amateur):** We made a call on a clinic that was using the amateur's company as a backup. The bulk of their purchases went to a competitor. Starting off, the amateur said, "What's it going take to get a bigger share

of your business?” To which the DVM replied, “How can buying more from you help my practice overall?”

The rep then replied by ticking off a list of benefits his company offered. As I watched the DVM's face it was clear that these were all the same services he was receiving from his current supplier. The rep was so intent on doing a data dump that he apparently never saw the look because he just continued on until the DVM kindly said, “I am happy with our current arrangement. Let's just keep it the way it is now.” And that ended our call.

**My notes:** What was important to the DVM? The rep's answer was “I don't know.” How did he react to your company's benefits? The rep's answer was “I don't know.” What could you have done different? The rep's answer was “I don't know.” I was glad my two-day ride along was over.

**Later on in the week (with the professional):** I had a similar call, but the DVM's concern was a little different. “I use XYZ Distributing web-ordering system already – won't it take a long time to get my history re-aligned?” To which the rep replied, “That's a fair concern. Is that the only thing standing in the way of us becoming your primary supplier?”

Once the DVM affirmed that was his only concern, the rep started with “Let me tell you how I handled the conversion at ABC clinic who was also on the web-ordering system and you can tell me if that will work for you.” Needless to say, the professional's company is now the primary in that clinic.

Obviously there were some stark contrasts in these two reps, and that is why I wanted to share them with you in this column. So the question to ask yourself is “Am I an amateur or a professional?”

If you're working on your development and are struggling with reading your customer, go back to the Sept/Oct issue of *Vet-Advantage* and reread the column *Understanding Decision Making*.

If you are struggling with the opening statement of the business interaction, look at *Creating a Common Goal for any Conversation* in the Nov/Dec issue.

If your issue is not knowing how to effectively acknowledge negative points of view, review the Jan/Feb column *You're Not Listening to Me*.

If you're struggling with an account situation that is not covered by the three references above, send me an email with the details and I will try to give you some other options.

One last thought on the difference between the professionals and all the others. Amateurs practice until they get it right, but Professionals practice until they can't get it wrong. ■