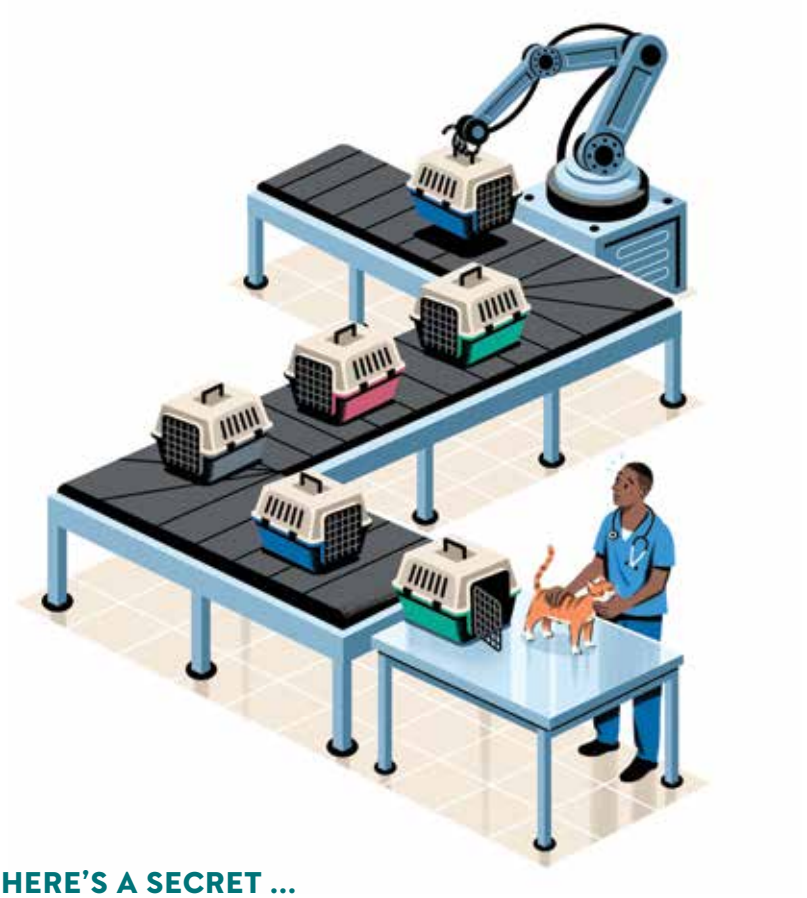


HERE'S A SECRET ...

Time Really Is a Thief



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Everywhere you turn, the answer to all of our profession's problems seems to be efficiency. Veterinarian shortage, long wait times for appointments, practice ownership shifts? All solved by ... efficiency? And who can blame us? The whole world seems obsessed with efficiency these days, from the government to your household budget.

There are some great examples of efficiency in veterinary medicine. The high-quality, high-volume spay/neuter superstars that can safely and effectively perform more than 30 surgeries in a single day. The production veterinarians who can examine, vaccinate, and deworm hundreds of head of cattle in an afternoon. Simply, efficiency is more for less. And simple math is always the easiest to talk about: more pets in a day, more revenue in a quarter, and higher-dollar transactions per client.

Efficiency can also be anything but simple. More pets in a day doesn't always mean more revenue! And when does one truly achieve "efficiency"? Are 30 pets a day enough? Efficiency can be as nebulous and unattainable as "perfection." And perfectionism is a major risk factor for poor mental health. Demands to increase appointments and patient numbers for the sake of "efficiency" sacrifice the very mental health we are striving to protect. Studies show that reducing workload by 10% can reduce these risk factors by 30% in physicians, and there is no reason to think veterinarians would respond differently!

For years, employees have been asked what resources they need to excel at their job. We tend to think about a new ultrasound machine or hiring additional staff, but why don't we just say we need more time? A wild thing happened during the pandemic that is consistently glossed over. Appointments took longer and veterinary clinics were seeing fewer patients, but revenue went up. It turns out, happier veterinarians are more productive.

What if veterinary medicine is far more complicated than a production line at a factory? What if building trust, relationships, and familiarity with clients and our patients leads to better recommendations and higher compliance? Think back to a slow day at the clinic, one when you took a few extra minutes to laugh with a client over a funny pet story, which led to them agreeing to that extra test that gave you the information you needed to provide the right care at the right time—not next week at a recheck when the pet had declined. The next time you sit with your manager, bring that up when they talk about your productivity and "efficiency," and remind them that time is a resource you are ready to fully utilize. **TVP**

Ben Kirchner