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English 320
Sullivan
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Discourse in Your Field – Interview

The following is a summary of my interview with Dr. Serena Heig, D.V.M. Dr. Heig is a practicing veterinarian out of the Pipestone Veterinary Clinic in Pipestone, Minnesota. The interview took place via email on Friday, June 25th, 2004.

1. What percentage of your work time would you estimate you spend:

Writing? 15%

Reading? 25%

Speaking with clients? 40%

Speaking with co-workers? 20%

2. What kind of communication media (writing, speaking, email, phone, etc.) do you use commonly?

All of the above!!

3. How do you determine whether to use a memo or email or the phone?

If I need a quick response or if I expect a discussion will follow with questions or comments, I will usually use the phone. Otherwise I will use email so myself and the other party can respond when it is most convenient.

4. What forms of writing (reports, proposals, memos, etc.) do you most often write?

Typically for my job, I mostly write patient history reports for each case I see.

5. What are the typical reasons for writing these kinds of documents?

It is very important to keep complete and current medical histories for each patient. We use these for future references or to monitor progress or regression of a clinical condition.

6. Are there expected formats or organizations for these documents?

This will vary between individuals and between different clinic policies. Some histories will be very detailed while others are brief.

7. What other kinds of documents do you write?

I write discharge instructions for owner's that have animals with special needs or treatments. I often write health certificates for animals that will be traveling. I also write client education/information brochures on various topics regarding the health of their animals. These topics can range from "winter skin health of your cat or dog" to "dental care tips for your horse."

8. What are their purposes?

The discharge instructions are detailed directions for owners to follow for important at home care needs. These must be written very clearly so no mistakes will be made in the interpretation by

the owner or caretaker who will be carrying out the treatments. A health certificate insures that all animals who are being sold, or traveling across state lines or attending large functions where other animals will be present are healthy enough to travel and are free of any infectious diseases. The client education brochures are our way of helping our clients be properly informed regarding the health of their animals.

9. Who do you write to when you write these documents--what kind of audience do they have?

Primarily everything I write is focused on maintaining a healthy animal. I write medical records so we have a history of our patients' needs and to help inform my colleagues of what has happened in the past. I write instructions for owners and give out informational brochures so they, too, are aware of their animal's condition and so they can provide the best care possible.

10. What differences are there between writing you do for insiders and writing you do for people outside your profession?

As with any profession the lingo within it will be much different than the words used outside of it. Veterinarian to veterinarian transfer of information is very scientific and a lot of short hand abbreviations are used. Veterinarian to client transfer of information is based more on common terminology so everybody understands the conditions that exist.

11. I found a few examples of documents that I think are common to your field on the web. Would you look at a couple briefly and tell me what they are and what they are used for?

<http://www.dvmnewsmagazine.com/dvm/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=94402>
<http://www.roen.com/#cInctbl>

Basically, the DVM news magazine is for people within the profession. It is used to keep veterinarians informed about new research, new products, or new treatment protocols that have been successful. It is a way to share information within the profession. The roen.com site looks as if it is focused more towards educating or answering questions for animal and pet owners.

12. Who is the information in these articles directed to (professionals or the average animal owner)? Do you find articles like this to be of use in your profession?

(Also see answer above) I think information web sites such as the DVM mag one are great. As a veterinarian, I rely on websites or publications like that to keep me updated. Things change very quickly in the veterinary world and you really have to try to keep up with all the changing recommendations and technology. I also think websites for pet owners are good, too. They have a lot of handy tips for pet care as long as the owner uses some common sense when evaluating what they are reading. They need to realize that they can't always believe everything that they read (especially on the internet)!!

13. Do you have any examples of written documents you have used during work that you can share with me? If so, what kind of restrictions do you have on my use of them?

Yes, I have some client education flyers if you want to look at them. Just let me know and I can email them to you as an attachment. No restrictions