
Planning is an essential element to effective veterinary management, but it is often neglected. Strategic plans are seldom made in practice. Tactical planning has rarely if ever been referred to in veterinary management — until now. Brian Hayden is a technician, trained in the military for 17 years. He comes to tactical planning honestly. When he left military life in 1989, he began a career as a practice administrator until 1999, when he began his own consulting company, Hayden Management Group, in Euless, Texas. One might think that a book about tactical planning would be very militarily oriented, especially given this background. This one is not and is, in fact, one of the easiest books to read about strategic planning that I’ve seen and the tactical component is extremely logical and practical. For example, one of the components to planning is list making. Hayden refers to the many lists as ‘grocery lists,’ to make them more accommodating. He also uses humor and relevance to make the subject even more amenable to the reader. He compares the average client charges for Dr. Power, Dr. Okidoki, and Dr. Donuttin as obvious and pertinent examples.

Yet the subject matter is not diminished in any way. The logic behind strategic and tactical planning is effectively presented. At the end of each section, there is an exercise to enable the reader to perform on-going planning as the lessons are learned. The appendices provide very useful check-lists of what needs to be done to self-evaluate the practice and of the top 100 things that need to be done in any practice.

This book is useful for practice owners and practice managers. As Hayden says, “Making tactical plans is critical for managers of all veterinary facilities regardless of size…You can’t properly manage any business without a basic knowledge of planning.”

Although the book may be a natural for those who like to make lists, it should prove to be extremely useful to those who procrastinate, who must learn how to make lists. Although I endorse everything presented in the book and agree with the author that these planning strategies will increase practice profitability, there is no quantification of this fact. Those who are looking for proof that strategic and tactical planning will improve the bottom line will have to take it on faith. This primer could be the first step to convince you.


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