

# Service Recovery

Strategy Evolution &  
Lessons Learned  
in the Time of COVID-19

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 MEDVET  
**2021**  
Practice Management  
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What does  
“Service Recovery”  
mean to you?

# Our Time Together

- The Service Recovery Starting Point
- How Things Have Changed!
- Evolution of MedVet’s Service Recovery Model
- Three Common Service Breakdowns & Strategies
- Service Recovery is About Wellbeing
- Q & A

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# Axioms of Service Recovery



- All Clients have basic common expectations
- Successful Service Recovery is psychological as well as physical
- Work with Clients in a spirit of partnership
- Effective Service Recovery is a planned process
- Clients react more strongly to “fairness” service breakdowns than “honest” service breakdowns

Source: *Strategy 6P: Service Recovery Programs*. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. Content last reviewed January 2018.

# The Type of Service Breakdown Matters

**"Honest Mistakes"** can be explained without added context"

- Scheduling errors
- Natural events – power outages, equipment failures
- What are other examples in your experience?

**"Fairness Mistakes"** are service breakdowns that feel personal or that involved perceived inequitable treatment

- Insensitive/rude communication
- Perceived inequities – order seen, wait times or cost of care

## Listen

- ✓ Active listening throughout – HEAR them out
- ✓ Take notes – then reiterate what you heard

Find a private space. Be sure to sincerely thank the client for taking the time to offer the feedback

## Apologize

- ✓ Express regret that expectations were not met
- ✓ Use the words – “I personally apologize . . . “

Apologizing is not an admission of guilt. It is a sincere expression of regret for the impact of the service breakdown.

## Solve

- ✓ Provide some context
- ✓ Do not be afraid to ask the client . . .
- ✓ Offer options – empower the client to choose

Not every problem can truly be solved; however, involving the client in the resolution is sometimes enough to restore loyalty.

## Thank

- ✓ Thank for the opportunity to address
- ✓ Explain what happens next

Having an opportunity to forge a closer relationship with a client via service recovery is a gift in terms of sustained loyalty over time.

# The L.A.S.T. Method Overview



# How Things Have Changed

The Pandemic's Toll on Clients

Veterinary Professionals and Compassion Fatigue

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# The Pandemic Client Experience

- I have a longer waits for appointments
- I answer personal questions about my health
- I wear a mask and keep a distance
- I cannot accompany my pet inside
- My communication is electronic
- I wait in the parking lot in all conditions
- I can't be with my pet for euthanasia
- I pay electronically
- I often don't have a choice

**Just when I think I know what to expect – It changes.  
And changes again.**



# The Team Member Experience

- The way we do our work has changed
- I have never spent this much time on the phone
- I wear a mask and keep a distance
- I don't get to know the clients like I used to
- I am starting to get used to curbside and I am not sure that is a good thing
- It is hard to stay on top of client updates
- More clients are frustrated, and I am worn out
- It is hard to stay current on our COVID precautions

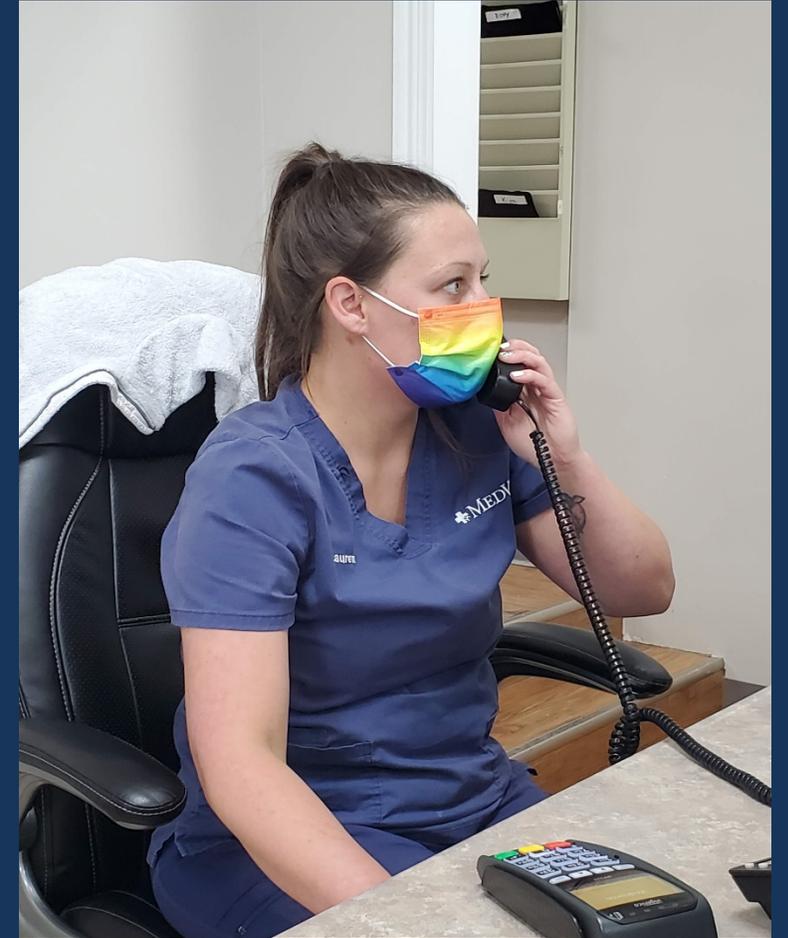
**Just when I think I know what to expect – It changes. And changes again.**



# The Practice Manager Experience

- I am focused on keeping my team
- I am worried about our wellbeing
- I keep finding myself working the desk/floor
- **I have never spent this much time on the phone**
- The way we do our work has changed
- More clients are frustrated, and I am doing a lot of service recovery

**Just when I think I know what to expect – It changes.  
And changes again.**



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# MedVet's Evolving Service Recovery Model

- Empathic Communication: Authenticity in Connecting with Clients
- A Refreshed Perspective on Empathy
- Listen-Apologize-Solve-Thank (L.A.S.T.) Method Phase II
- Team Member Development
- When it is NOT Service Recovery

# Empathic Communication: Values in Action

## Teamwork



### We Are Better Together

We communicate with one voice by . . .

- Introducing our team approach & roles
- Including the Client as “Patient expert” on the team
- “Managing Up” at Care Hand-Offs

*We reinforce our team approach upon arrival and at every touchpoint.*

## Leadership



### We Do the Right Thing

We take the lead by . . . .

- Introducing (and re-introducing) ourselves
- Guiding the Client every step of the way
- Proactively addressing questions

*We communicate during care as a series of hand-offs to ensure that the Client feels a consistent level of support*

## Compassion



### We Act with Heart

We connect with empathy by . . .

- Listening to understand what is most important to each Client
- Acknowledging emotion and aligning our body language & tone
- Recognizing anxiety’s impact

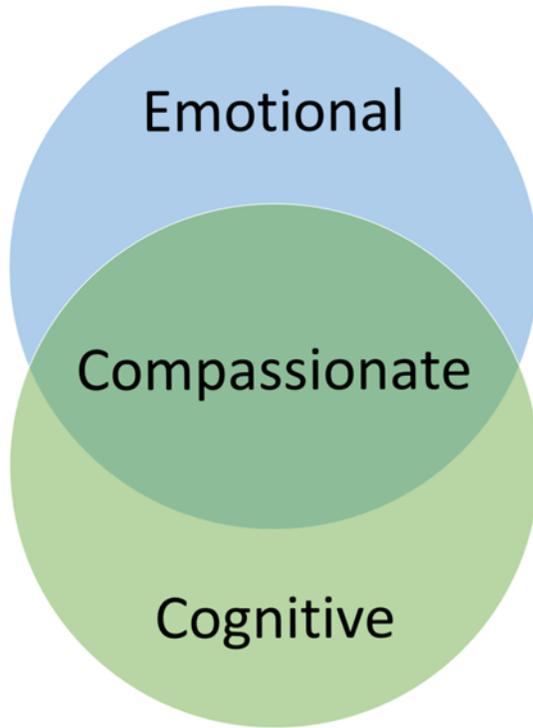
*We recognize that being fully present and listening for understanding is more important than the specific words we choose to connect.*

***The Premise: To be authentic, you must communicate these points in your own personal style and manner***

# Looking at Empathy With Fresh Eyes

“Is it possible to connect with authentic compassion if I do not feel the way I used to when working with Clients?”

## The Three Types of Empathy



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## Three Types of **Empathy**

**Cognitive**  
Empathy



Desire to  
**Understand**

**Emotional**  
Empathy



Desire to  
**Feel**

**Compassionate**  
Empathy



Desire to **Help &**  
**Support**

# The L.A.S.T. Method Phase II: Refinements

**Get Your Mind Right:** What is the emotion expressed? What is the best conversation outcome? What is your positive intent?

<b>Listen</b> <i>Phone</i> <i>Video</i> <i>In person</i>	Connect re: Pet	
	Introduce yourself – name and role	"My name is INSERT and my role is INSERT . . ."
	<b>Explain Your Positive Intent</b>	"I want to understand/walk through/help . . ."
	<b>Reiterate what you heard</b>	"This is what I heard you say – did I capture it all?"
<b>Apologize</b>	Be specific to the service breakdown	"I'm sorry that . ." (what did not go as planned?)
	Not our intent for this to happen	
<b>Solve</b>	Define/explain the situation (MedVet)	"This is what I am hearing . . . . At MedVet, we . . ."
	Provide options if you can	"There are a couple different things we can do next"
	<b>Step back in THEIR shoes – the impact for them</b>	"What this means for YOU is . . ."
	Assess understanding	"What questions can I answer? Is there anything else we should talk about that we have not?"
<b>Thank</b>	<b>Reiterate your Positive Intent</b>	"I wanted to make sure we talked everything through. Did we do that?"
	Reconnect re: pet/Thank <b>if authentic</b>	"Thank you for your time in working through this . . ."

# When it is NOT Service Recovery

## AVMA Termination Criteria

- Physical violence (or threats of physical violence)
- Verbal abuse
- Discriminatory language or hate speech
- Continued repeated and/or unreasonable requests
- Threats if demands are not met
- Consistently negatively impacting the experience of other Clients at the hospital

Service Recovery is intended for situations in which someone has been inconvenienced, for minor misunderstandings, and for simple service disruptions.

# Three Service Breakdowns

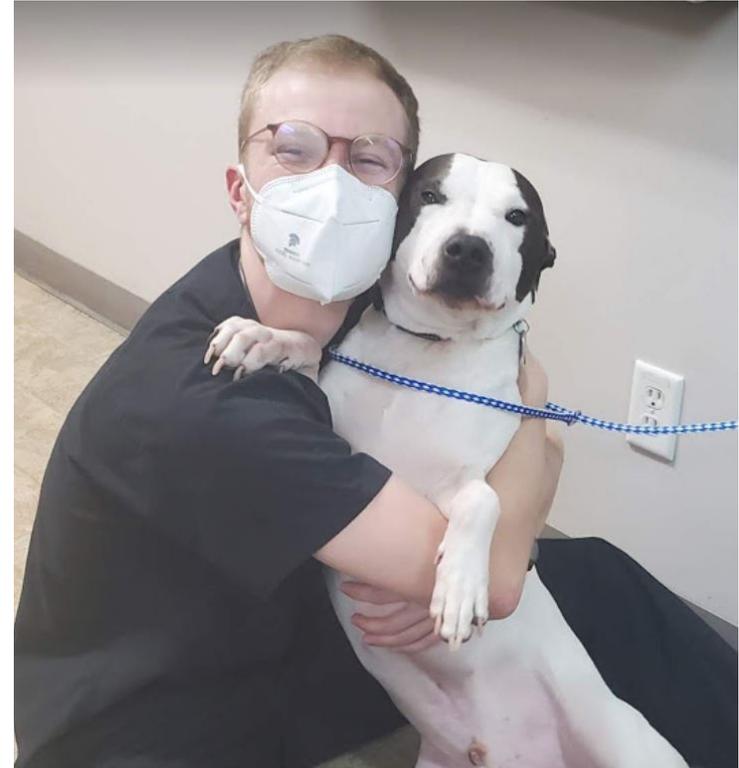
Mask Requirements  
Curbside Service & Wait Times  
Variations in Service Availability

# “Why are masks still required at MedVet?”

**A Client (Mr. Jones) says to you:**

“No one else is requiring us to wear masks anymore and I don’t get why you say I need to wear one while I am at MedVet.

Aren’t you sick of all of this?”



Service Breakdown Theme: Differing philosophy on COVID safety precautions was not what Mr. Jones was expecting.

# Think It Through: “Why Are Masks Still Required at MedVet? ”

## “GET YOUR MIND RIGHT” (R-Factor)

- What is the emotion being expressed in this situation?
- What is the desired outcome of this conversation?
- What is your positive intent?

## LISTEN

- What are the steps in what happened?
- What is Mr. Jones asking us to understand?

## APOLOGIZE

- How will you customize your apology to the service breakdown specifics to ensure that Mr. Jones feels heard?
- How will you know Mr. Jones is ready to move on?

## SOLVE

- What are the options available to us to restore the balance in this situation? To address the specific issue?
- What does it mean for Mr. Jones? For Moose?

## THANK

- What will you say to connect back to your positive intent for this conversation?
- What are you grateful for that can inspire your thanks?

# “Why Are Masks Still Required at MedVet?”

Mr. Jones brought his dog, Moose, to MedVet on the advice of his veterinarian. Greeted with signage explaining our COVID precautions, he called to express his frustration. You’d like to address his issue in hopes of pivoting to focus on Moose.

## Listen

“Mr. Jones, it sounds like you are frustrated with our mask protocol. My name is Jeanna, and I am a Client Services Representative. I want to help if I can.”

## Apologize

“I’m so sorry that this was not what you were expecting when you got here. I appreciate that you are having different experiences with masking right now, depending on where you are going.”

## Solve

“We decided to err on the side of keeping everyone safe, with no exceptions on masks. We also respect your right to make your own choice. I can offer you options - we can bring Moose back and you can wait in your car or at home. You could opt to take Moose to another vet. Or you can use the spare mask we have for you. Which is best for you?”

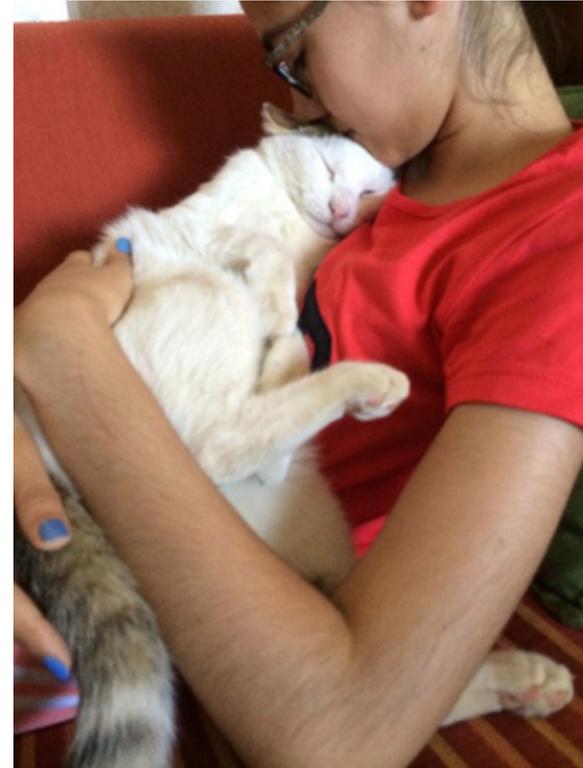
## Thank

“I hope talking through the options was helpful for you and Moose. Thanks for your patience as we work through this pandemic. I hope we will have the chance to help with Moose today.”

# “If I can’t come in, you need to call me every 30 minutes!”

MedVet is on curbside service status. Ms. Heyward’s cat Beau was triaged and deemed stable earlier this morning. Offered the chance to wait at home, she refused and has been calling in frequently for updates. We estimate it will be several more hours before Beau sees the doctor and he is resting comfortably.

Ms. Heyward explodes when told the wait time. “This is unacceptable. If I can’t come in, you need to update me every 30 minutes on how Beau is doing!”



Service Breakdown Theme: Client expected to be able to stay with her pet while waiting to see the doctor and the visit has not gone as she had hoped or expected.

# Think it Through: “You Need to Call Me Every 30 Minutes!”

## “GET YOUR MIND RIGHT” (R-Factor)

- What is the emotion being expressed in this situation?
- What is the desired outcome of this conversation?
- What is your positive intent?

## LISTEN

- What are the steps in what happened?
- What is Ms. Heyward us to understand?

## APOLOGIZE

- How will you customize your apology to the service breakdown specifics to ensure that Ms. Heyward feels heard?
- How will you know when Ms. Heyward is ready to move on?

## SOLVE

- What are the options available to us to restore the balance in this situation? To address the specific issue?
- What does it mean for Ms. Heyward? For Beau?

## THANK

- What will you say to connect back to your positive intent for this conversation?
- What are you grateful for that can inspire your thanks?

# “If I can’t come in, you need to call me every 30 minutes!”

Ms. Heyward is extremely anxious about not being able to be with her cat, Beau, who has been triaged and taken inside. She is requesting more frequent updates and having a hard time in general with the anticipated wait to see the doctor.”

## Listen

“Mrs. Heyward, I can appreciate how difficult it is to be apart from Beau when he is not feeling well.”

## Apologize

“I’m so sorry that this is such a busy day and that you have to rely on telephone updates from the team. We are offering curbside service to keep everyone safe, but I realize it comes with both pros and cons. I want to help by offering some options.”

## Solve

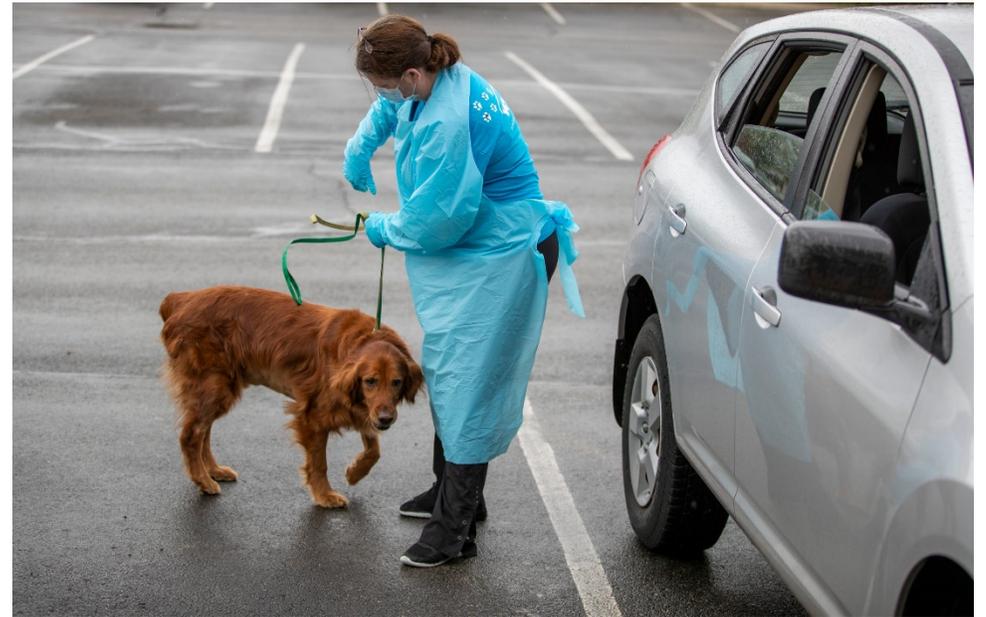
“Since Beau is medically stable, there are a couple things we could do. He is resting comfortably, and you could opt to wait at home. We can send you an update with a picture every two hours. We could bring him out to wait with you. He won’t have the oversight while we wait, but you would be together. Which option is best for you?”

## Thank

“I wanted to walk through some ideas, knowing how concerned you are about Beau. I hope it was helpful and thank you for your patience as we work through this pandemic.”

# “How can you turn away a bleeding dog?”

“My dog Frisky was bleeding from his nail, so I ran to you for help. I arrived at 7:19 PM, only to be told that I won’t be seen, because you told me you are only seeing critical patients and that everything was behind, which I am completely capable of understanding. However, you are supposed to be an “animal hospital” – you shouldn’t be turning animals in need away. I understand that my dog “looked stable” but that’s only because I was constantly wiping away all the blood from his foot. Where is your compassion?”



Service Breakdown Theme: Variations in Service Availability (dependent on volume & acuity)

# Think it Through: “How can you turn away a bleeding dog? ”

## “GET YOUR MIND RIGHT” (R-Factor)

- What is the emotion being expressed in this situation?
- What is the desired outcome of this conversation?
- What is your positive intent?

## LISTEN

- What are the steps in what happened?
- What is Mrs. Ames asking us to understand?

## APOLOGIZE

- How will you customize your apology to the service breakdown specifics to ensure that Mrs. Ames feels heard?
- How will you know when Mrs. Ames is ready to move on?

## SOLVE

- What are the options available to us to restore the balance in this situation? To address the specific issue?
- What does it mean for Mrs. Ames? For Frisky?

## THANK

- What will you say to connect back to your positive intent for this conversation?
- What are you grateful for that can inspire your thanks?

# “How can you turn away a bleeding dog?”

Mrs. Ames and her dog Frisky were triaged at MedVet when our ER was in YELLOW status. Frisky was seen by the family veterinarian the next day, after being assessed as stable. Ms. Ames called MedVet to discuss her frustration afterwards.

## Listen

“Mrs. Ames, I do want to make sure I understand everything that happened when you were here last night. I can hear how scary it was when he was bleeding like that. Is there anything else that you haven’t touched on that you want to be sure that we know?”

## Apologize

“I’m so sorry that it was so busy, and the wait times were so long last night. Our hope was that he would be seen more quickly elsewhere to ease your mind, but our compassion did not come through in that process for you.”

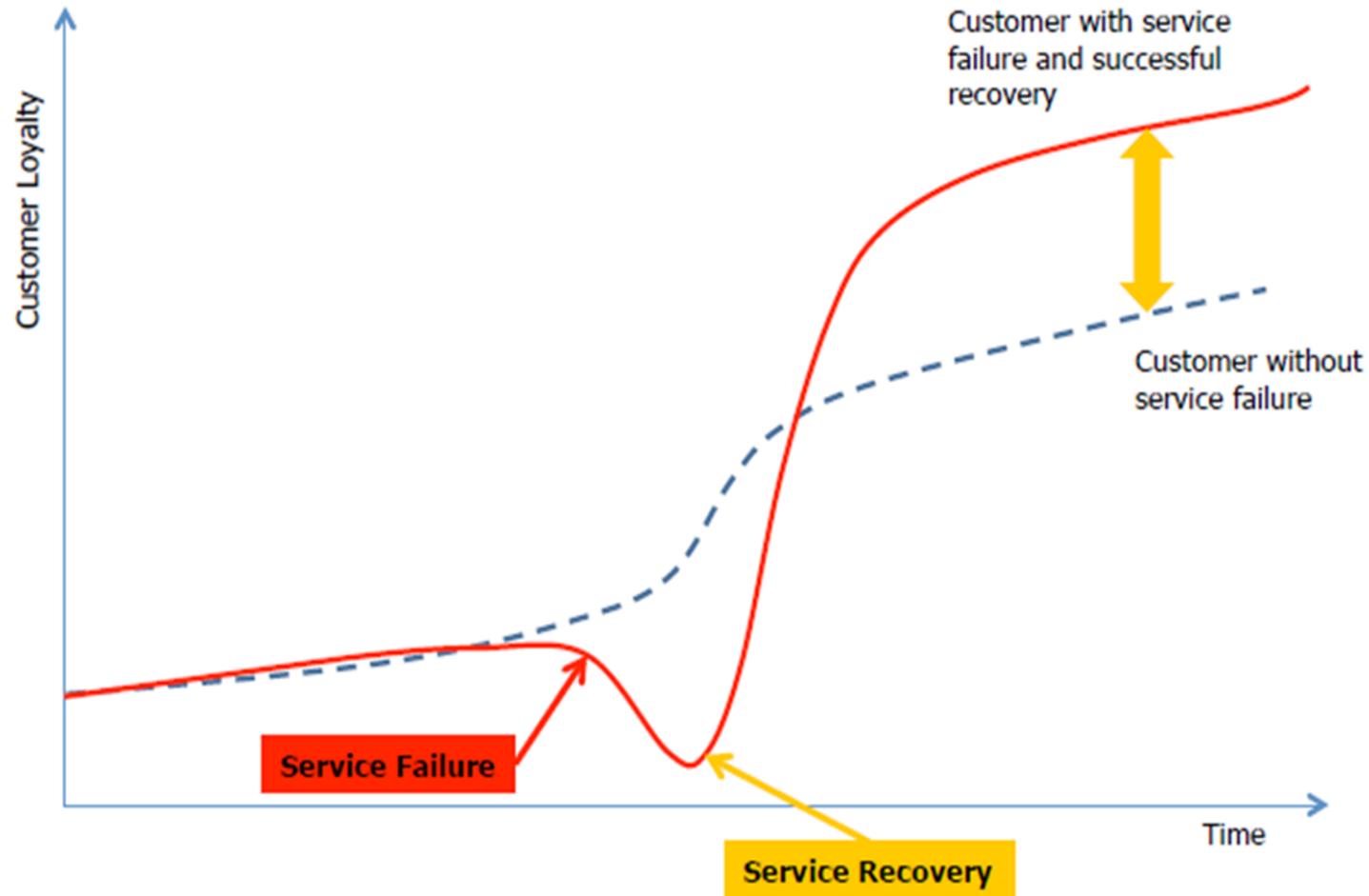
## Solve

“I wish that there was a way to solve for what happened last night. We were in a hard spot and would have loved to see your dog if we could. I will take your story back to the team so we can look at the way we communicate more compassionately with clients whose pets are medically stable and waiting. We will learn from this.”

## Thank

“Thank you for spending some time telling me about your experience. I hope that you and Frisky are not in a position to need our care, but if you are, please know that we would appreciate a second chance to make it right.”

# Service Recovery is About Wellbeing



“It isn’t easy, but I am starting to feel more comfortable in the uncomfortable moments. It is an amazing feeling to work through the process with a client and have it better on the other side. I am getting GOOD at this!”

# For Practice Managers: Putting It All Together

- Your own self-care and wellbeing are the foundation and starting point
- You are already doing service recovery – the LAST method will be a support
- We have a planning/debriefing checklist and sample phrases for you and your teams
- Linking service recover to empathy, authenticity, and wellbeing is empowering

# Questions?





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