

AVA PFIZER PRACTICES OF EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF ENTRY

The entry documents are designed to give enough information for the judges to answer the questions “**what makes this practice different and what makes it excellent?**” The entry needs to provide a clear picture of practice management procedures and protocols and the culture of the practice. Entries should look at customer service in its widest possible sense and should reflect an understanding that there are customers other than clients both externally (including suppliers, territory managers, local community and other stakeholders) and internally (the staff). The whole entry procedure should involve as many staff as possible – it is a very valuable team building process. We recommend that in many practices it may be best for a staff member rather than the practice owner to take primary responsibility for developing the entry.

The first part of the form gives a basic description and overview – fill it in fully and honestly. Please ensure that all owners are members of the AVA. Details of qualifications for all staff will help quantify commitment to professional development and continuing education. Career training and personal development of staff is part of developing and maintaining excellent customer service. **Winning entries will have described their human resources management processes in significant detail.** You may transfer the information from this first part to paper and present it as part of a single document. The quality and appearance of the presentation itself is not critical to success but a neat and tidy document that is easy to read and sends a message about the professionalism and culture of the practice will help an entry stand out and will definitely impress the judges.

Successful entries are those that add more detail in the second descriptive part of the forms and in supporting documents. Please keep to the one thousand-word limit (as this will be enforced for fairness) and try to detail the procedures, protocols and policies that keep your practice focussed on clients and other customers. **The most important message for the judging should be what differentiates the practice from others and what focuses it on client and customer service.** To quote from the entry form - “You should interpret customer service in its widest sense and consider how you organise your practice, how you develop and deliver your services and **how you judge the final outcome** or your professional activities.” Include consideration of client and staff communication (very important), human resources management, the use of information technology (important) and the veterinary and ancillary services you provide. If the practice has prepared a statement of purpose or a vision and mission statement then it should be highlighted as a demonstration of practice culture. Emphasis on teamwork is also valued.

The supporting documents provided should not overwhelm the entry but should complement it. Successful entries have included copies of practice forms (such as consent forms), documentation of procedures, staff meeting minutes, client information/education documents (“hand-outs”) and other practice documents. Photographs and videotape records are acceptable “within reason” – the judges appreciate a well-prepared, imaginative and efficient set of entry documents.

Don't be disappointed if you don't win an award – the opportunity to look at how you do things and the interest that creates in your practice makes entering very worthwhile. Reaching the short list will give everyone a pat on the back and is very rewarding.

GOOD LUCK