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Hunt Lambert's Start-Up Spotlight

In the Way of Good Luck: **The Firehouse Animal Hospital Case**

Several years ago I was invited to speak at the annual Western Veterinary conference in Las Vegas. My talk focused on how to increase profits in private practices by focusing. Specifically, I used Treacy and Wiersema's "Value Disciplines" model to contrast the average veterinary practice to other practices that focused more narrowly and designed their operations to deliver either operationally excellent product leadership or customer-intimate services at a world-class level, while staying minimally competent in the other two areas. **Little did I know that my talk provided a vocabulary to a vision Dr. Jed Rogers was pursuing.**

Last fall, I was talking with Dr. Rogers and his business partner, Greg Waldbaum, about their Firehouse Animal Hospital business model. They are always anxious to find new ways to take their unique customer-intimate model to the highest level, and we brainstormed ideas. They had already hired CSU's new DVM/MBA graduates (a unique joint degree between the College of Business and the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences) to capture the human talent capable of managing their customer-intimate processes. As we talked, we began to discuss the model provided by CSU's Argus Institute - and from there, our partnership moved to the next level.

At CSU, we house the Argus Institute, an institute originally built around the need to support veterinarians to help their clients deal with the loss of a loved animal companion. Over the years, the institute has evolved toward a teaching program in communication skills related to building strong relationships between veterinarians and pet owners. Now, under the direction of Dr. Jane Shaw, the institute was ready for an industry partner to help commercialize the methods and improve veterinary practice communications skill.

Over the next few months, Dr. Shaw worked with the Firehouse team to define the project and determine funding and partnership needs. The hypothesis of the project is that communication-skills education in a private practice will result in improved clinical outcomes, including increased client adherence to veterinarian recommendations, increased client and veterinarian satisfaction, and enhancement in use of communication skills. Today, we have a funded project with Argus, Firehouse, Pfizer, Hills and the University working together to improve animal care. If the project is successful, veterinary practices will have access to a new set of tools to create value for their customers.

This industry/university partnership illustrates exactly what the new CSU Office of Economic Development is trying to accomplish. We are taking existing CSU strengths and identified industry needs and building broad relationships that encompass our human talent, technologies and knowledge. Packaged together, we deliver the benefits to society and grow economic value. Firehouse is growing faster than even they planned and hiring top talent at premium prices. Colorado and the industry all win

To learn more about the Argus Institute, go to www.argusinstitute.colostate.edu

To learn more about Firehouse Animal Hospital, go to www.firehousehospital.com

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