VETSOLUTIONS, which claims to be the UK’s largest provider of veterinary practice management software, has come a long way since it was first established almost 30 years ago.

From its Edinburgh headquarters it now serves over 1,500 veterinary practices in the UK and Ireland and states that it is committed to helping practices thrive and prosper, despite difficult market conditions.

Under the leadership of new managing director Greg Clay, the company reports that it “has realigned its market position, so that it is now gaining a reputation for not only supplying software products and support essential to running a modern-day veterinary practice, but is also providing a full range of business solutions, designed to create practices that operate with streamlined efficiency”.

Vetsolutions reports that it achieved its market-leading position almost 12 years ago and having been acquired by Henry Schein in 2009, the last four years have seen it go from strength to strength.

The association with Henry Schein Inc. – the world’s largest supplier of healthcare products to medical, dental and veterinary professionals – means Vetsolutions and its customers are able to benefit from knowledge shared with other members of the global Henry Schein organisation.

Strength in depth

Greg Clay explains: “This association gives us enormous strength in depth, allowing us to constantly refine our business processes and ensure we are best equipped to fulfill the ever-evolving needs of busy, progressive veterinary practices and provide the care and attention to detail that our customers deserve.

“As the only software provider to offer a ‘live’ support answering service, we have always placed customer service at the top of our agenda. Our support team now comprises 22 system consultants answering in excess of 200 calls per day, meaning that all customers are able to get immediate resolution to queries or problems.”

The firm currently supports four practice management systems. PremVet is described as its legacy product: this is used by around 300 practices and although it has ceased to be in development since the advent of RoboVet, Vetsolutions still provides maintenance to this group of practices. Ventana, its second system, was acquired, along with the Theos system, just over three years ago and although no longer available to new users, Ventana customers are able to receive service and support from Vetsolutions.

The company’s premier system is RoboVet, which is currently installed in over 600 UK practices and this system is the foundation for all of its current research and development.

“When considering the on-going development of RoboVet we have sought to differentiate between our customers’ ‘needs’ and ‘wants’,” says Greg. “Our challenge is to develop solutions that satisfy the changing demands of the market, changes that are being driven by a whole series of factors, some from within the profession and others that are a result of external factors beyond our control.

“An important aspect of how we keep up-to-date with the market is via our annual survey which provides an insight into the market as a whole and our customers in particular and the survey we conducted earlier this year provided evidence of a shift in the issues most concerning vets.”

He explains that in the survey, the need to attract new clients to their practices was highlighted by 77% of respondents as their area of most serious concern, whilst retaining the clients they already have was considered only slightly less of a problem. These concerns have led the company to delve deeper into how, as a provider of business solutions, they can help practices address these and related issues.

“Following the results of our survey we started to look a little deeper into what was happening to practices in relation to client flow. We discovered that few practices have any idea about how many clients are being lost each month, how many have lapsed and fail to return for routine treatments and vaccinations and therefore how many new clients are needed to remain viable.

“Linked to this are issues of how practices can retain the clients they already have and these factors led us to consider how practices communicate with clients, how they can provide a 5-star service to keep clients satisfied and avoid them looking elsewhere for services and how practices need to maintain regular communications and build client loyalty in order to maintain client satisfaction.

“Only by attracting and retaining clients can practices hope to treat more animals. Our evidence shows that, across the board, average treatment values are falling and owners are still postponing routine, non-emergency care due to the continuing squeeze on disposable income and general lack of confidence in the economy.

“These three issues are all interlinked and each has a direct impact on the other. By helping practices understand their needs in regards to each of these areas we feel we can have a significant impact on the success of individual practices and on the economy of the profession as a whole.”

Keeping track of stock

The company’s position as part of Henry Schein is facilitating the development of further innovations to address some of the practical issues in practices and one of these areas is the ability to keep track of stock movement.

In association with Henry Schein Animal Health (HSAH), Vetsolutions has developed StockTrax. “Stock is a large and expensive part of any practice’s itinerary,” says Greg, “and it is easy to lose track of stock when it moved from the dispensary to consulting rooms or vets’ cars, and up to 10% of stock can easily become ‘lost’ or unaccounted for. The new system involves using a hand-held scanner to scan the barcoded item, which is then transferred to its new location using the StockTrax software.”

Greg sees StockTrax as a perfect example of how Vetsolutions’ customers can benefit from the firm being part of Henry Schein and is the first step in a wider “inventory control management” project: “This new system demonstrates how we have taken a specific practical problem and combined existing HSAH scanner and barcode technology with a software solution, enabling vets to keep control of stock movement without creating burdensome administrative tasks.”

In the same way, Vetsolutions is embracing the growth in digital imaging across the market being driven by significant advances in technology in this area. The benefits of digital imaging as opposed to traditional x-ray techniques are widely recognised and the company has developed a software solution that enables full integration of a wide range of imaging hardware with RoboVet to ensure a smooth, streamlined process between imaging room and the consulting room table.

With continuing change in the state and make-up of the veterinary market, Vetsolutions sees itself very much as a company able to help drive the market rather than simply react to it.

“We continue to innovate and apply our knowledge from other sectors to answer the needs of vets, often before they realise they have a need,” says Greg. “It is this expertise and foresight that makes us a worthy market leader, though I prefer to think not about being market leader but about us leading the market.

“In response to the application and acceptance of new technology in all areas of our lives, the veterinary market needs to change and adjust and for some that is an uncomfortable process. I believe that from our solid customer base and with our extensive knowledge, expertise and heritage, Vetsolutions will be trusted to help the profession face the challenges that lie ahead.

“Our commitment is to recognise some of the pain that comes from running a business and do all we can to develop integrated solutions that will dramatically improve practice processes, increase profitability and enable all types of veterinary practice to thrive in the future.”

Taking to Edinburgh streets for charity

STAFF from Vetsolutions took to the streets of Edinburgh in two different events recently in aid of cancer charities.

Software developer Robin Knox (pictured) completed his first ever marathon and three members of the support team – Fiona Dawe, Jo Barron and Joan Todd along with office administrator Linda Travis – completed the 26-mile Edinburgh Moonwalk. Robin raised £833.75 for Cancer Research UK and the Moonwalkers over £1,500 for Walk the Walk – uniting against breast cancer.

VETERINARY PRACTICE talks to Greg Clay, the new managing director of Vetsolutions, about the development of the company and where it is heading