

Building Your Team

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In an era when more experienced and dedicated team members are necessary; when what really matters to clients is the experience they receive, how do we attract the right people and how do we encourage them to grow and blossom within our practices?

We in veterinary practice are excellent at paying attention to our patients. However, as a profession, there is still room for improvement when it comes to taking care of our people – both our teams and our clients, at least with the same consistent attention we pay all patients. Unless our people are knowledgeable and fulfilled, how can they provide unique experience to clients? How do we get them to want to excel at work every day?

The basis for team excellence is based on providing them with ARC:

Autonomy

Relatedness

Competence

Autonomy

For team members to excel, they need to feel trusted to do what they are supposed to. Micromanagement kills team's initiative and creativity. Team members need to master the tasks they are asked to do. They also need to know why they are doing (a big purpose), they need to know what the expected outcomes from them are, and then they need to be left alone. If results in the practice are achieved as defined, the team is doing what they need to do well. Doubting team members' performance cannot motivate them to excel.

So is team training an expense or an investment? In too many instances, team training is seen as an expense because it prevents them from "producing". To me,

this is a major omission in the vision of the practice. How can we expect team members to improve their ability to match clients' changing expectations from the experience they have in practice unless we constantly train them?

If you want to grow your team's ability to be autonomous, you need to systematize the way you train them. This means that team training is scheduled ahead of time and that everybody who needs to participate, does and that training sessions have a predesigned agenda and bring about expected, measurable change in results in the practice.

Relatedness

Team members need to feel they belong to a supportive group who sees them as people, not just as employees. Today's workforce expects that their emotional needs be fulfilled. In other words, we can no longer separate the worker from the whole person. People have needs that transcend the need for a paycheck. Successful teams recognize this and support this need, knowing that caring about them as people contributes to team excellence.

To enhance your team members' feeling of belonging, exercise the 3 R's of staff support:

Respect

Responsibility

Recognition

Respect

- Respect for their opinion
- Respect for them as individuals
- Respect for their values of the practice

Responsibility

The best way to develop responsibility in people is to assign them responsibility. Despite an initial apparent resistance, your team members will appreciate you if you give them responsibilities that stretch them and force them to grow. True responsibility is becoming accountable for specific set of outcomes (the how and who are left up to team members). This is how team leaders show trust they will maintain the practice values in pursuing excellence and will accept stumbling blocks along the way.

- Career progression

Para-professional staff to area coordinator to manger to...

Animal caretaker to technician assistant to technician or outpatient nurse

Technician assistant to technician to dental hygienist/lab tech/imaging tech

Receptionist to outpatient nurse

Receptionist/Technician to Coordinator to Manager to Administrator to

CVPM

Recognition

Recognition is appreciating someone for something they have done for you, your group or the practice. It is a visible or audible signaling to someone that a behavior or achievement has been noted. Recognition feeds the ego and feeling of self-importance.

- The power of positive reinforcement really works- you get what you reward.
- Behavior rewarded is behavior repeated
- Rewards, recognition and praise are effective low-cost means for shaping and obtaining desired performance.
- Recognition, specific and directed, concise and meaningful, up close and personal will reinforce behavior and make people feel good about themselves.
- Rewards, recognition and praise really do work to motivate individuals and produce desired results. In fact, most studies on the topic indicate that employees prefer recognition and praise over money.
- Rewards of recognition:
 - Increased: morale, productivity, competitiveness, revenue and profit
 - Decreased: stress, absenteeism, turnover, related costs
- Types of recognition:
 - Formal Recognition*: a structured or planned program of recognition for desired performance
 - Informal Recognition*: a spontaneous gesture of sincere thanks for desired performance or behavior.
 - Day today recognition*: daily feedback about employee performance.
 - Tangible recognition*: a physical object given to another person or group as thanks or to acknowledge an achievement.
 - In tangible recognition*: a symbolic act done for another person.

- Types of recognition:
Words, Food, Titles, Targeted compliment, Business Cards, Money, etc.
- Regularly give every team member the recognition they deserve, when they deserve it, and the team will flourish and prosper and with it the practice.

Competence

For team members to excel, they need to know they can learn and grow on the job. This is one of the most fundamental human needs. Ongoing learning and training will lead to improved performance and overall satisfaction from what they do.

Different team members have different aspirations from what they do. This is why it is important to know them as people, as this is how they will open up and talk about their true aspirations. Knowing what their drive is and creating goals with them that match the practice goals, will immensely improve how they see what they do and provide them with a bigger purpose.

This is how you train your team to treat their work as a career and not just as a job.

By combining the concept of a hiring team (to create accountability for the selection) that becomes the training team (to create accountability for personal growth and development) with respect, recognition, and responsibility, you create an atmosphere high in self-esteem and potential even if low in compensation. By requiring daily growth and education, training and concern, we create team members eager to seek the next level. By mentoring and training, we can create a perpetual system to support our hospitals indefinitely. All it takes is getting into action.

If you instill pride in your team, not only will they transmit it to your clients and make them proud to work with you, your team members will also become your biggest fans and let the world know about how great you are.