

Human Resources

There was a well known study on the vet record a few years ago quoting that the cost of hiring a new assistant was, on average, around 10000 pounds. This did not only include the direct cost of advertising or interview costs, but the need for locum and the revenue lost during the time the new vet gets up to scratch with the practice.

Bearing this on mind, it would be reasonable to assume that the longer that our assistants work for us, the better.

That is why, when hiring a new assistant it is important to find the right one. On this talk we will try to help you with choosing the right one, but not only that, also learning how to keep the staff happy. At the end of the day, assistants are like melons, you do not know how are they going to taste until you open them...

First it is key to remember the aims of the modern profitable company:

- Produce benefits
- Keep Employees Happy
- Satisfy Clients

We have spoken about how to satisfy clients before, so now we will focus in the second point, how to keep employees happy.

If you have an assistant or any other member of staff unhappy, it is going to affect the client service and the revenue.

As we spoke before, one of the key factors in any business is the competitive advantage and we should use the talent and abilities of our team as the first advantage. For example, help that vet to pursue the diploma in surgery and use it to the advantage of the team, or that nurse that enjoys the clinics and give the responsibility, not only of the weight clinics, but create the puppy or senior pet ones...

That advantage, will not only increase the revenue, but will create ways to respond the owners needs, which will provide a better than expected service and create the faithful

client. We need to find ways to allow the person's potential to be released.

The new employees are more prepared than ever before, they have a wider knowledge and they no longer need a boss, they are looking for a leader, that sets the goals and manages the results. Investing in people is investing in the future of the company.

The new concept of work for the new employee is that work has become a constant learning curve, a personal investment to improve that competitive advantage. It means that we need to encourage our staff to do CPD's, to try new techniques...

A leader of the XXIst Century company needs to know how to handle each assistant for the best benefit of the whole team.

The new employees will look for a better life/work balance, this will mean that we need to find the best rota for all of them. There will be also the possibility of part time jobs (mornings or certain days). We will need to take this into consideration so it does not affect the client care. It will be important to remind the clients when register that certain vets only work certain days

The new veterinary practice needs talented professionals that are prepared to innovate. This will allow to last in time and be a leader in the sector. For that it is key to have a committed staff, and you can only have them, if they are happy.

Let's think on how are we going to achieve this.

Be a leader and not just a boss

Boss	Leader
Administer	Innovates
Conserve	Develops
Focus on systems and structures	Focus on people
Uses power	Uses trust and commitment
Prizes and punishments	Rewards
Ask how and when	Asks what and why

Only cares about benefits	Looks into the future
Does the things right	Does the things that need to be done
Only sees his opportunities through the group	Creates opportunities for others
Accepts the status quo	Questions the status quo

A good leader knows how to delegate. It is crucial to have a compromised team and use it in the advantage of the group. This compromise is the base of the authority. If you are just a boss, you will not get the respect of your employees. You need to show commitment.

There are two types of compromises, external, which is defined for the assistant and does not create implication, and internal, in which the employee believes in their job. As a perfect example, if you set your assistants a target on the sales of foods, they will only sell as much as you ask for, if you convince your team of the importance of prescription diets for the health of the pets, it is very likely that the sales will exceed the goals.

How to be a leader:

The first step to be a good leader is to communicate. In this case it is not what you say, but how you say it.

Basic resources for a good communicator:

- Use the language efficiently: easy, concise sentences...
- Use words that improve the language: sounds better to say we have exceed that we have done well
- Use analogies and metaphors to explain things
- Body language: your body and your words need to be in the same wave, you can not cross your arms when you are listening to an assistant, because it is clear that you are not listening

What not to do as a leader:

There is not a single way to direct and a good leader will adapt to the team, but there are certain things that are clearly a no, no from start:

- We are all mates here:
 - Lack of respect
 - Lack of motivation
 - Blurry limits
 - Hierarchy jumps
- Micro manager
 - Loads of questions
 - Right way to do things
 - Time control
 - I am the boss:
 - World over shoulders:

Once we found what not to do, it is important to know what to do:

1. Set an example, if you want your employees to work longer, do not go home at the first chance
2. Do not make it personal, you are running the team, so do not let your feelings get in the middle of the business
3. Give positive feedback: it is very well to remind somebody that is not doing his or her job properly, but also to praise them when they are. Some ways to do it can be:
 - Salary increase
 - Bonus
 - Fame
 - Increase trust
 - ...

Remember, the employees should know that they work with you and not for you.

We have spoken about how important is to have a competitive advantage and with a good human resources management, we have to make our people to be part of that advantage. Use them not only to produce more money, but also to innovate, learn and react to the new needs of the clients. It is important to listen to the assistants regularly so they feel appreciated, but also because they can have the next great idea.

Let's just now pass into how to do this:

- **A New Job for a New People:**

1. The changes in the company will not stick, unless we incorporate them into the structures. For example; if you have a part time vet, we will not only need to adapt the rota, but also let the owners know that their vet only work at certain times and unless it is an emergency, they need to come those times.
2. In the classic view of a company, you would pay for somebody to do certain job. With the ever changing current market, a company can still fail even if everybody is doing their job. It is important to motivate the staff to make them part of the company, so they go beyond their duties. For example; if all the staff understands that certain food benefits the animals as well as the company revenue is more likely to sell it that if they are only set a food target.
3. We need to give freedom to the employees to develop their careers. Allow them to further their studies, encouraging their CPD's, but also allowing them to share their knowledge organizing a weekly meeting with the rest of the staff. We need to make the person feel important in the company so as long as the person improves, the company does as well.
4. We need to appreciate that the concept known as "employability" is key in the modern company. People want to develop their careers and if we do not apply changes to their jobs, they would move somewhere else to do it. It is important that we use their employability in our benefit otherwise it would go against us. If an assistant does an ultrasound CPD, let's create an afternoon of ultrasounds at special price for a while so they get the opportunity to use their skills and get the service known, for example.

This year, Charles Darwin is on the news very often about his theory of the species and his main statement can easily be applied to the modern company:

"As there are more individuals than those that can survive, there is a need for a survival fight in each case, whatever is against individuals of the same species, or individuals of different species, or the environment"

The traditional market has changed. The capital is not the main resource producer, the reduction of cost is no longer the main competitive advantage seek for, the consumers have become clients which buy more, but also want a more personalized service. The new technologies have changed the markets, our clients have more information available for

them in the WWW and they come to us with a knowledge of what to expect from the vets. So it is crucial for the companies to embrace this change and use it to their advantage.

How can we do that:

1. Different relation employer-employee: nowadays it is more desirable to hire the right amount of people for the time needed (maximize the use of part time, employees on busy periods, increase the relation with locum agencies...). We need to understand that our team is our main asset as they are going to produce the revenue and we need, not only, find the right one, but work on keeping and growing with them.

We have talked a while on what do we want to get from our team and I think it is time to learn how to do it. We are talking about persuasion. This is a very fine art that is difficult to achieve and master. The persuasion has to be a tool to project ethical behavior. We can persuade our assistant that certain diet is beneficial for a dog, but it would not be ethical to try to get him or her to perform unnecessary surgeries.

There are four stages on the long way to influence:

1. Generate a credibility:

Based on a credibility and a personal relation. Credibility is a pillar of the process and without it, there is no point on trying the next ones

2. Search of common ground

We need to point the benefits for everybody and not just the company

3. Show proof

There is no need to explain this, every single rep that walks in the clinic brings with him loads of studies supported by his company that show how good their product is

4. Emotional connection

We cannot be all uninterested telling somebody about a product and try to convince them that it is going to work, but we cannot be too excited either, we need to find the right wave.

We have talked for a while on how to be a leader for the team, how to motivate them, how to persuade them... but who are they? Let's see how to identify the talent that is going to make our company excel over the competence.

In a very changing and challenging economic moment, companies need to be

prepare for this roller coaster. Money is not so important as the ability to innovate and create. People need to work for the company, but we have to remember that our team will only offer their talent if they want. Our aim is to get a group of ordinary people to deliver extraordinary results, by using their individuals talents on the benefit of the team and the company.

We can say that there are four types of talent:

- Managing talent
- Commercial talent
- Technical talent
- Operative talent

There is a fifth talent, the innovative one, which can apply to any of the ones above and there are the ones that bring value to the company.

Professionals like freedom of action and are going to make mistakes, we have the right to make them, but we need to learn from them. This kind of innovative behavior is what we are looking for. Let's divide the innovative talent in two areas to make easier its search:

- Attitude:
 - The ability to learn is more important than how much you know at a precise moment
 - We work better together as a team, so we need to interact properly with everybody. An isolate member is no good at all, no matter how much knowledge
 - Question the establishment; "this protocol is good, but is there any better?"
 - Entrepreneur spirit: a good professional only makes a mistake once, will learn from it
- Components:
 - Capacities: willingness to do the things
 - Compromise: team needs to be involve with the company
 - Action: ability of doing at the right moment

Let's gather this on what is going to happen if:

- If the professional has compromise and acts, but lacks the abilities, will not achieve superior results (on performance). If somebody does a crusade surgery in 2 hours, perhaps needs a refresh course or your help to improve

- On the contrary, if he or she has the capabilities and acts on the right moment, but lacks the compromise, will not achieve superior results. If somebody is unhappy at work for the working conditions, will not try to go that extra mile to convince an owner to do a dental when is doing the annual booster.
- If he has the abilities and compromise but acts late, will not achieve superior results. If he tries to hard on a case and delays a necessary referral, the client will be unhappy with this, so will consider coming back to the place.

Let's just say:

- Compromise gives the motivation
- Capacities gives performance
- Action gives opportunities
- The talent can be developed!!!

And now, let's cut to the chase... let's talk about the selection process and how to do an interview... or even better, let's have a break and we will restart after the coffee...