

Veterinarian's MONEY DIGEST™

April 17
Vol. 1 • No. 1



**“Untraining”
Your Team**
Why staff flexibility
is key to success



Top Dogs & Cool Cats

Meet 5 Passionate Practitioners

PLUS

A Better Business

**A ROAD MAP FOR NEW
PRACTICE OWNERS**

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**THE IMPORTANCE OF
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Filling a Wide Gap



Mike Hennessy Sr.

It might come as a surprise that a company so new to the veterinary publication industry – *American Veterinarian*[™] was founded only last year – would jump deeper into the waters with a second publication so quickly on the heels of the first.

As newcomers, however, have a great vantage point. We get to see veterinary medicine with a fresh eye, to get a true sense of the needs of practitioners in the trenches. And while all veterinarians need to keep up with clinical and conference news and medical updates, the cardinal thing missing from the array of available veterinary publications is a resource focused on the business and financial needs of this vital group of medical professionals.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, 63 percent of veterinarians worked in private practice at the end of 2016. It's no secret that veterinary schools pay little attention to teaching students about the business side of practice, and that leaves veterinarians in private practice with little to no idea of how to run the business of a hospital.

That's where *Veterinarian's Money Digest*[™] comes in. Our mission is to guide both new

and experienced veterinarians on best practices to effectively manage their business finances, stay up to date on legal and regulatory issues, and become better leaders. But that's not all. We also cover personal finances and lifestyle topics to help you keep better balance in your lives.

In this debut issue, we offer expert insight and advice aimed to help you make financial and career decisions, connect better with team members, and become better practice leaders. You'll learn how you to build your client base through practice endorsements (page 16), how and when to add a new associate to your practice (page 6), how you can build a better team through better communication with staff (page 18), and so much more.

Veterinarians are so much more than compassionate animal lovers and health care practitioners. You are entrepreneurs and businesspeople with needs and desires both inside and outside of practice. It is with this knowledge in mind that we introduce *Veterinarian's Money Digest*[™], a publication devoted entirely to you. So jump in, and let us know what you think.

Thank you for reading!

Mike Hennessy, Sr.
Chairman and CEO

Veterinarian's MONEY DIGEST[™]

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Pros and Cons of Being On-Call

Does being on-call affect your job satisfaction or personal well-being? Has the possibility of having on-call shifts made an impact on your job choices?

Researchers from the Department of Clinical Sciences at Colorado State University want to know! Drs. Lori Kogan and Peter Hellyer are studying this topic as part of a broader study of professional issues that may positively or negatively affect a veterinarian's job satisfaction and overall well-being.

This online survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete and is anonymous. You can access it here: goo.gl/QK18yu (case-sensitive). Survey results will be reported in a future issue of *Veterinarian's Money Digest*[™].

Questions about the survey? Email Lori Kogan at lori.kogan@colostate.edu.



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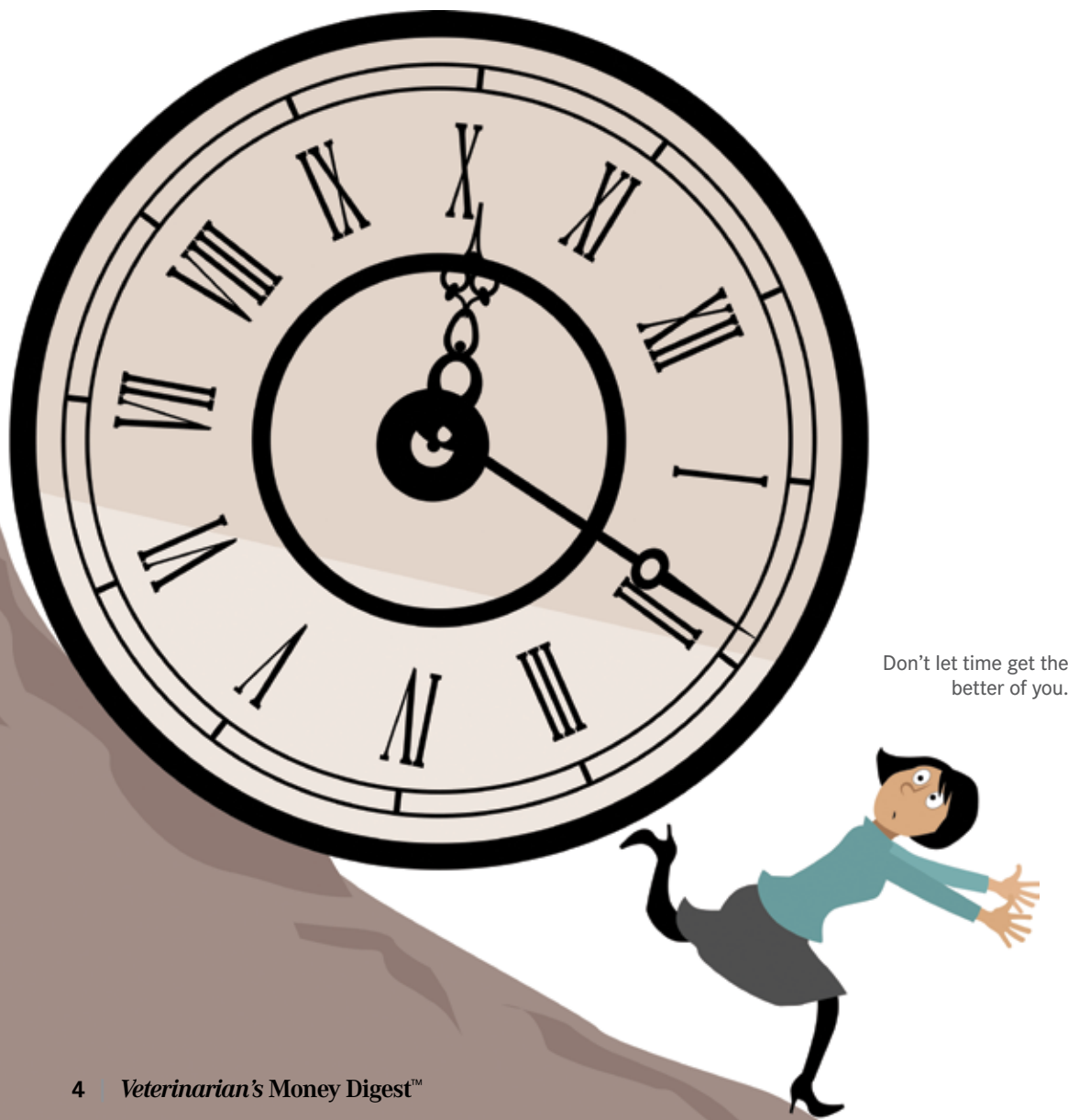


Tips and insight from business, financial and practice management experts.

Optimize Your Time

FINANCIAL ADVISER Camala Bailey, CPA, CVA, owner of Camala C. Bailey, CPA, PC, says that managing your email will help you better control your time. Here are five quick email tricks:

- I **Stop unwanted email.** Unsubscribe from all the emails you never read.
- II **Keep your outgoing emails short and sweet.** You don't have to write love letters, and you don't have to say 'Best regards' at the end; a quick sign-off is fine.
- III **Turn off the noise.** If you hear a ding every time you get an email, aren't you drawn to it? I know I am.
- IV **Schedule email time.** I schedule time when I arrive in the morning, right before lunch, and again right before I go home. When I made that change, my productivity increased significantly.
- V **Don't play Ring Around the Rosie.** If you're exchanging emails with someone over and over in a single sitting, the best thing to do is just pick up the phone.



Don't let time get the better of you.

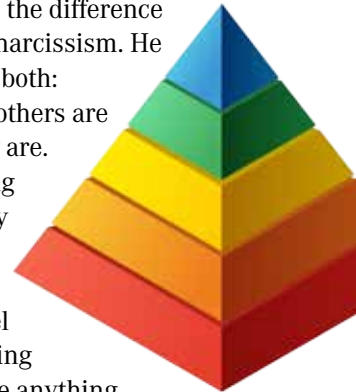
Project Confidence, Not Narcissism

BRIAN FAULKNER, BSc(Hons), BVM&S, CertGP(BPS), CertGP(SAM), MBA, MSc(Psych), MRCVS, owner of a small animal practice and the practice management coaching website colourfulconsultation.com, says it is important for leaders to understand the difference between confidence and narcissism. He explains the key traits of both:

"Most people feel that others are more confident than they are. It can be very intimidating to walk in alone to a party or other crowd. Everyone seems engaged in conversation, and you feel lost. Confidence is believing that you don't have to fake anything or be too pushy or be the center of attention. People who are genuinely confident are humble. They don't have to sell themselves.

Narcissism, on the other hand, is about a shame-based fear of never feeling extraordinary enough. Narcissists aren't really that confident or superior, despite publicizing how amazing they are, often on social media. That's a call for attention and reflects insecurity.

More wholesome, authentic confidence is about thinking, 'I'll take congratulations humbly when they're appropriate, but I don't have to seek out praise.'



Financial Advice for New Practice Owners

ACCORDING TO Karl Salzsieder, DVM, JD, CVA, owner of Salzsieder & Associates, TPSG, LLC/DBA Total Practice Solutions—Northwest, "The biggest mistake I see with new practice owners is that they're hesitant to hire a consultant because they're such superheroes regarding the emotional attachment to their profession and the care of animals. Commonly they're so short on management ability that they are not making their practices profitable enough to realize their full value, and this hurts succession planning, retirement and exit."

What does Dr. Salzsieder advise? "Hire a consultant as soon as possible after the purchase. In addition, act like a corporate practice with regard to the transition by retaining the seller as long as you can. Also, hold off for a bit on sending out 'I'm the new owner' letters. They might scare clients away."

Battle Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

“WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT the signs of burnout, how it happens, and what to do,” says **Deborah Stone, MBA, PhD, CVPM**, CEO of Stone Veterinary Practice Management. We also need to be mindful of compassion fatigue, which is seen often in the health care professions. “We go, we give, we go and we give, and we often just don’t take care of ourselves. We need to have more conversations about these problems and learn more about how to identify the signs. If you think someone in your practice is at risk, check in with him or her. It’s not always easy to do, but it goes a long way. Many resources are available to learn more about well-being and taking better care of ourselves so we can take better care of our clients, our team members, and our patients.”

The Value of Pet Insurance

ACCORDING TO T.J. Houk, chief data officer at Trupanion, experiences with pet health insurance companies continue to improve. “We’ve seen the number of insured cats and dogs grow significantly over the past 10 years or so, and we expect that to continue. Veterinarians are starting to become more confident in understanding the benefits of insurance both for the pet’s health and for their practice’s financials. Clients are growing more confident that the products out there are going to be there when they need them, and the companies are providing more transparency. We have thousands of situations where veterinarians have seen an insurance policy in action, so they can take it back to pet owners and share their experiences. More positive experiences over time will drive more adoption.”

Put More Business Into Veterinary School

“MANY SCHOOLS TODAY HAVE veterinarians with advanced degrees in business and finance on staff who are helping to teach some of these business skills,” says **Mike Chad-dock, DVM, EML**, associate dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University, “but we can do more. We need to integrate business skills, knowledge and assessment into the four years of schooling. If students are exposed throughout all four years to information about business principles, expenses and income that knowledge will become imprinted on them. We need to be creative so that we are not adding more courses to the curriculum but instead are collaborating with different disciplines to provide students with this vital knowledge.”



Family preparedness is key to avoiding the need for rescue during a disaster.

Prepare Clients for Natural Disasters

ANNE McCANN, national emergency programs coordinator at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Care, says that family preparedness is a critical aspect of helping the country recover from disasters. “Local veterinarians really play a key role in ensuring that their clients are prepared to take care of the animals in their lives should a disaster occur. If people aren’t prepared to evacuate with their pets or shelter in place with them during a disaster – with sufficient supplies on hand to weather the storm, so to speak – then we don’t get where we need to be with family preparedness.”

Everybody needs to be prepared to take care of themselves for at least three days to a week following a disaster. In Superstorm Sandy (in 2012), for example, one of the crazy things for me was how quickly people ran out of pet food. That was a disaster where we were given at least a week’s notice that this was going to be a huge storm. Yet, almost immediately after the disaster people ran out of pet food but couldn’t get it because the power was out, they couldn’t use the elevators in their apartment buildings and all the stores were closed.”

When Dreaming Means Doing

“WHEN I TALK TO veterinarians about dreaming,” says **Peter Weinstein, DVM, MBA**, executive director of the Southern California Veterinary Medical Association and the owner of consulting firm

PAW Consulting, “it’s really about trying to get them to think differently, to have a vision for where they want to go with their practice and how that practice dream will fulfill their life dream.”

I really want veterinarians to think about their future. I like to think of it metaphorically as programming your GPS. If you don’t program your GPS, you’ll never get to your final destination. In essence, you’ll just drive around in circles. So, program your personal GPS with a dream, a vision, and a future, and then create a dream for your practice that will deliver on the personal dream you’ve created as well – whether that dream is to retire comfortably at age 65 or to practice until you’re 75. Whatever your particular dream may be, try to set a future and a vision for yourself and then spend your life trying to accomplish that so that you’re constantly moving forward, constantly trying to reach that final outcome.” **VMD**





Is It Time to Add a New Associate?

Consider your workload, your alternatives and your future.

By Meredith Rogers, MS, CMPP



Meredith Rogers, MS, CMPP

As a practice owner, you're in a good position if you have more patients than you can handle. If you have been feeling like you are rushing through appointments or not providing the appropriate level of care, it may

be time to add an associate to your practice. However, success is only one reason to consider adding personnel. There are other potential motives as well:

- You want to gain a better work-life balance by reducing the hours you work.
- You're considering retirement and searching for someone to take over the practice.
- Your current associate is taking time off, going part time or leaving.
- You're expanding your practice hours and need someone to cover additional shifts.
- You want to offer your clients specialist care.

CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVES

The decision to hire a new associate should not be taken lightly as it can involve significant expense and time. It may be valuable to hire an independent (unbiased) professional to audit your practice. At the very least, you should have a good understanding of your revenue, expenses, efficiencies, and income potential. Evaluating these aspects of your practice may reveal inefficiencies that, when solved, may negate the need for a new associate.

One way to increase efficiency is to maximize technology. Updating appointment software may expedite scheduling; purchasing new equipment may speed up tasks and procedures. Although the time gains may seem insignificant on their own, they are considerable when consolidated over the course of a day, and the time saved can amortize the initial expense within a short amount of time.

After a practice audit, you may find that hiring a practice manager or an additional technician or receptionist may be a more economical alternative to adding another veterinarian. Hiring a virtual assistant, in the form of a remote bookkeeper, computer expert, or marketer may also free up enough time to relieve the pressure that prompted you to consider an associate in the first place.

DECIDING ON ASSOCIATE TYPE

If, after careful evaluation, you feel that adding an associate is the best option, you must decide what type of veterinarian to add. Hiring a new graduate may cost less in salary but will require extensive training that may defeat the purpose of hiring an associate in the

a new graduate may actually be more expensive in the short term.

An experienced veterinarian can produce income almost immediately but will cost more in salary and benefits. In addition, a veterinarian who has been practicing for a while may have preconceived ideas about how things should be done that may not mesh with your practice procedures and culture. Of course, hiring a specialist will come at a premium.

Another thing to think about is whether you need a full-time associate. Perhaps hiring someone who can cover evenings or weekends would relieve just enough of your burden.

HIRING THE ASSOCIATE

Once you've made the decision to add an associate, remember the old adage, "Be slow to hire and quick to fire." This is easier said than done because once you have identified the need, your sense of urgency in filling that need increases exponentially. Take your time in finding someone who not only has the technical skills, but who also will fit in with your overall practice culture. If yours is a solo practice, having another veterinarian working closely with you and your staff may necessitate an adjustment for everyone.

Establishing a limited probationary period, during which you can better evaluate the new associate, may save headaches later, but check with an attorney first to determine the specific requirements of such a period in your state (e.g., benefits, sick pay). At the end of the day, whether you decide to add an associate or find another solution, you should congratulate yourself on building such a successful practice that you are even considering the possibility. [VMD](#)

Meredith Rogers has a BS degree in animal health from the University of Connecticut and an MS degree in microbiology and molecular genetics from Rutgers University. She has more than 19 years of experience creating content for a variety of health care audiences. She lives in Kingston, New Jersey, and shares her life with a horse, a dog and a cat.

WHERE TO FIND A NEW ASSOCIATE				
WHERE	+	PROS	-	CONS
Social Media: Include a hiring notice on your website homepage or Facebook page		Free; concentrates on local people, especially new graduates looking to move back home		Limited reach; may be difficult to find a specialist
Referrals: Employees and colleagues can help spread the word that you are hiring		Prescreened candidates; fewer resumes to sort through		Limited candidate pool; should not be your only resource
Veterinary School Job Boards: Post an ad or review resumes of potential candidates		Often free; the first place new graduates explore		Not the first place a seasoned veterinarian will look for new employment
Professional Organization Job Boards: AAHA, AVMA, etc.		National reach; focused listings		Costs involved; good candidates may not be able to relocate
Professional Publications: JAVMA, JVECC, etc.		National reach; focused listings		Costs involved; limited ad space; good candidates may not be able to relocate
Niche Job Boards: National databases of animal health/veterinary jobs		Specific to animal health/veterinary careers; all levels of experience listed		Costs may be involved; listing may get lost among others; good candidates may not be able to relocate
General Job Search Boards: National databases of potential jobs and candidates		All levels of experience listed; can search resumes		Costs involved; listing may get lost among others; good candidates may not be able to relocate
Executive Search Firms: Veterinary-specific recruiters available		Firm does most of the up-front work finding and screening potential candidates		Expensive; best when searching for a specialist or experienced veterinarian

first place, which is to free up your time. In addition, the time spent onboarding is time not seeing patients and not generating income, so

Why Your Veterinary Practice Needs Steady Cash Flow

A lack of accessible funds can hurt your patients, your team and your bottom line.

By Bob Castro



It's virtually impossible for a veterinary practice to be successful without cash flow. Having a steady income means owners can maintain the day-to-day business, make smart investments and plan for future growth.



Bob Castro

Just because you're waiting for patients to either pay their invoices or commit to procedures for their pets doesn't mean you can put off issuing paychecks or paying business expenses. As they say, the show must go on.

Whether you're an aspiring or experienced practice owner, many ongoing expenses can impact your monthly cash flow. The biggest buckets include:

- **Payroll:** Administrative and staff remuneration and insurance costs are recurring.
- **Supplies:** Costs for bulk orders or replenishment can quickly add up.
- **Occupancy:** Your rent or mortgage has to be paid, and the lights and phones have to stay on, whether or not the money is flowing.

Of course, you can't prepare for *everything*, but you should try to anticipate the unexpected in an attempt to manage the potential halt of income. For example, if a doctor on staff must take a leave of absence, that can affect the number of patients coming through the door and result in lost income.

Cash isn't something you should wait to get until it's absolutely necessary.

Keeping up with technological and medical equipment improvements can put a strain on your cash flow as well. While these investments can improve your practice's efficiencies and capabilities, they initially can be costly and sometimes unexpected – or they can be a goal toward which you strive, so that you can upgrade when the time makes sense for you.

It's a good idea to have a nest egg for a rainy day – you never know if or when you will need it, but it will serve you well to have it. Cash isn't something you should wait to get until it's absolutely necessary. A bank could see a *need* as a *risk*. If you don't have a line of credit that you can use at your discretion, consider a working capital loan to help fill the cash-flow gaps.

Between treating animals, managing staff and running a business, there is little time left to handle financials, but it is unequivocally one of the most important aspects of practice ownership. By properly managing cash flow, you can maintain the long-term viability of your practice without interruptions that can affect you, your employees and your veterinary clients.

*Bob Castro is the president and co-founder of Bankers Healthcare Group, a leading provider of financial solutions to health care professionals. For more information, email Bob at bob@bhg-inc.com or visit www.bankershealthcaregroup.com. **VMD***

Getting Started as an Investor

How to avoid common pitfalls.

By VMD Staff



Investors of all shapes and sizes make mistakes. It doesn't matter if you're young or old, experienced or naïve, too risky or too risk-averse – there are potholes in every road.

As a group, young investors in particular, including veterinarians just entering practice, tend to make the same mistakes when just starting out. Here we lay out three potential mistakes, along with a possible solution for each.

LINGERING IN DEBT

Many veterinarians begin their career carrying a heavy debt load. This can be a big obstacle, both in actual dollars and in terms of the mental toll that debt brings. Potential investors often consider holding off on pursuing their retirement savings strategy until they are out of debt. This is generally a bad idea; the sooner you start saving for retirement, the better off you'll ultimately be.

Remedy: Address your debt as quickly and directly as you can, but not at the expense of future planning. Differentiate between long-term “good” debt, and high-interest-rate “bad” debt; the latter should be paid off as quickly as possible, whereas the former can be managed alongside a solid investing strategy. In the meantime, try not to accumulate new debt, as it will be counter to your strategy.

FAILING TO PLAN FOR CONTINGENCIES

A bad budget may have an allocation for “miscellaneous expenses,” but it might underestimate the amount and frequency of these expenses. This is dangerous for many reasons, but most importantly because funneling a portion of your investment income into a contingency fund has a positive overall impact on longer-term savings. If a situation arises where you need cash fast, you can tap your contingency fund instead of other investment incomes.

Remedy: Keep a portion of your investments and income in liquid holdings, such as a savings or money market account. Even relatively less liquid investments such as certificates of deposit give you more options than investing in only long-term corporate bonds or hedge funds. Your contingency fund doesn't even have to have growth potential; what matters is that your contingency fund is there if and when you need it.

This investment should be safe and relatively easy to access on short notice. Having that money set aside frees up your other investments to take advantage of the inverse relationship between risk and reward as well as the benefits of compound interest that build up over time.

MISUNDERSTANDING RISK

Every endeavor entails a certain degree of risk. We accept some risk in all areas of life, but the concept often seems difficult to grasp when thinking about retirement. But the simple truth is that because of the longer time window for your investments to grow, you can bear more risk than those who are closer to retirement.

Generally speaking, the bigger the risk of an investment, the bigger the potential return will be. Because low-risk investments earn only modest returns, inflation can erode the purchasing power of the funds invested. Your investment amount won't go down, but the value of that investment may.

Remedy: Don't think of your investments in terms of avoiding risk. Instead, think about how to manage that risk and use it to your advantage in your investments.

- Set and stick to your investment goals.
- Understand the relationship between risk and time.
- Adjust your portfolio depending on those goals and your time until retirement.

If you can relate to any of the mistakes listed here, don't beat yourself up – work with your advisor, adjust your strategy, refine your budget, and get back on track. [VMD](#)

Key Takeaways from the VetPartners Annual Meeting

By Beth Thompson, VMD

The veterinary practice of the future looks to utilize more technology, be less autocratic, expand beyond the traditional brick-and-mortar foundation, and offer a wider array of informational and educational services. That's according to the eye-opening presentations at the annual VetPartners meeting held in March in Las Vegas, Nevada.

VetPartners, the nonprofit organization of veterinary business specialists, brings together experts and thought leaders twice a year, allowing members to stay up-to-date on trends, ideas and promising new tools to help veterinarians run profitable and satisfying practices.

MEETING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Adam Little, DVM, director of innovation and entrepreneurship at Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences, led a cadre of speakers on the theme. Veterinarians, by their training, equate failure with poor outcomes or death, he reminded us. In business, we need to think differently.

Veterinarians are understandably hesitant to invest heavily in new technology and ideas, but Dr. Little urged the audience to think differently about changes that pet owners already embrace. We've become familiar with Dr. Google, email communications, and less stressful service – as demonstrated by the 7,000 veterinary professionals who registered for Fear Free certification within the past year.

Customers expect their service providers to use the same tools they use, Dr. Little said. The electronification of medical data makes telemedicine a reality that we shouldn't fear. In fact, many of us already use it when asking clients to take a video of a sporadically limping pet or an undesirable behavior scenario and, Dr. Little noted, regulations follow innovation. So, the more we start to embrace telemedicine, the less we will need to be concerned about violating veterinarian-client-patient relationship parameters.

In-home monitoring devices will only continue to proliferate, and unless veterinarians are open to using them and reviewing them, these devices will suffer without veterinary input.

Meaningful change doesn't have to be expensive or huge.

He agreed that the big issue of how to charge for a professional's time without an office visit remains unsolved but stressed the importance of trying out different payment options to see what works best. A panel discussion on telemedicine included practitioners who have successfully done just that.

BABY STEPS TOWARD BIG CHANGES

Expanding on the theme, Caleb Frankel, VMD, and Aaron Masseur, PhD, spoke about bringing the principles of lean start-up companies to veterinary practices. Meaningful change doesn't have to be expensive or huge, Dr. Frankel argued. Successful start-ups develop quick, measurable experiments to determine if an idea deserves more investment. The most challenging part of the process is correctly identifying a problem area, as frontline staff members often have a hard time articulating specific items for action. Ambiguity, they both reminded us, leads to inaction, which develops into frustration and paralysis.

The best advice is to ask a small group of clients and staff what bothers them, pick something that affects both, and design and implement the best simple solutions garnered from your survey. Still sounds overwhelming? Dr. Masseur advocates the "build-measure-learn" approach to new things. Always make sure you have some way to measure your results. Then, whatever the outcome, share the learnings of the team with everyone.



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Also consider the practice of "tiny habits." If you want to make a change that's big, start with a little piece. By doing so, you overcome the mental roadblock of committing to a monumental task. Another tip is to "stack" habits. Just add a new one on top of already ingrained habits. And, finally, celebrate your success. If you are trying to change things up and improve your practice, every experiment toward that end deserves some congratulations.

PROGRESSIVE PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

Thinking about the way practices are run continues to be a hot topic. Robert Trimble, DVM, head of veterinary services at California-based Fuzzy, reminded us of the cost of employee disengagement. With a growing need to have pet owners be our social media promoters, it's crucial that staff feel appreciated and involved.

Dr. Trimble cited research showing that employees feel drained every day – 33 percent don't believe in their company's core values, 57 percent wouldn't recommend their workplace to others, and 60 percent said their job took a toll on their personal life. Disengagement comes at a cost, and it's time we stopped thinking about old-fashioned scientific efficiency forms of management and branched out into more inclusive and empowering forms.

THRIVING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

According to the World Economic Forum, we are entering the Fourth Industrial Revolution and rapidly moving toward extreme digitalization. More ways to interact electronically, Generation Z, the use of robots and artificial intelligence in both manual and interpretive tasks, and the rapid interconnectedness of digital devices all point to a brand new world. VetPartners spent the time and effort to make sure its members are ready to help their veterinary clients adopt the strategies needed to thrive in the 21st century. [VMD](#)

Top Dogs & Cool Cats

Meet 5 Passionate Practitioners



Veterinarians are easy to love. Animal lovers, entrepreneurs, teachers, and detectives, veterinarians have a rare combination of proficiencies, deftly fusing technical know-how, problem-solving skills, compassion and business acumen to build thriving practices. Their wide-ranging skills also lend themselves to success in a host of professions that don't involve working in a veterinary hospital. The professionals we highlight in this issue are drivers and doers. They have dedicated their careers — and often their entire lives — to bettering the health and well-being of animals in a variety of ways, from animal rescue and field work (animaltarianism) to philanthropy, mentoring and inventing. Meet the fascinating veterinarians who inspire us.

By Maureen McKinney and Kerry Lengyel

THE RESCUER WHO KNOWS NO BORDERS

When she started Compassion Without Borders (CWOB) after a serendipitous trip to Mexico in 2001, Christi Cambor, DVM, wanted one thing: a better future for needy animals in Mexico.

“I saw how dire the situation was for sick, injured, homeless and neglected dogs in Mexico,” Dr. Cambor recalls, “and I became inspired to do all I could to help.” CWOB has since arranged transport for more than 2,000 dogs from the region.

Today, Dr. Cambor's work extends well beyond the border.

The nonprofit organization's mission is to help animals that are seemingly doomed due to geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic barriers. To date, CWOB has impacted the lives of more than 26,000 dogs and cats through four unique programs that direct rescue, spay/neuter and veterinary care clinics, and pet wellness education in underserved areas in Mexico and the United States.

“One of our main goals is rescue of at-risk animals from low-resource areas to higher-resource areas where there is a shortage of adoptable dogs,” says Dr. Cambor. To that end, every other month CWOB transports about 40 Chihuahuas from shelters in California's poverty-stricken Central Valley to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where they can find forever homes due to the region's shortage of small dogs.

When asked why CWOB concentrates so much effort helping animals outside the United States, Dr. Cambor says, “Their suffering knows no borders and neither does our compassion. It's as simple as that.”



Christi Cambor, DVM

THE INVENTOR WHO RUNS MARATHONS»»



Katrina L. Mealey, DVM, PhD, DACVIM (Internal Medicine), DACVP

Citing her “highly prolific spirit of innovation,” Katrina L. Mealey, DVM, PhD, DACVIM (Internal Medicine), DACVP, was elected last year as a fellow of the National Academy of Inventors. She earned this honor because of her expertise and standard-altering research in veterinary pharmacogenetics. In 2001, Dr. Mealey discovered a potentially fatal deletion mutation of the multidrug resistance gene *MDR1*. She subsequently

invented a genetic test for the mutation and created a program at Washington State University (WSU) College of Veterinary Medicine to test animals for the mutation and to identify genetic predisposition to other adverse drug reactions in dogs and cats.

The test, patented by WSU in 2004, has prevented dogs with the *MDR1* mutation around the world from suffering potentially fatal toxicity to common drugs, including some parasiticides, antineoplastic drugs and the antidiarrheal loperamide. The mutation is common among such herding breeds as border collies, shelties and Old English sheepdogs.

Dr. Mealey joins 756 other academy fellows with a recognition that is quite uncommon among veterinarians. She was inducted into the academy this month during the organization’s annual conference.

“While I am honored to be a fellow in the National Academy of Inventors, it is equally rewarding because this validates the impact of pharmacogenetics and precision medicine in the veterinary profession,” says Dr. Mealey. “It is rewarding to know that companion animal discoveries have made a large enough impact to be recognized by this prestigious organization. I hope to be able to help highlight other impactful veterinary discoveries.”

Dr. Mealey has nine national and international patents on the *MDR1* test licensed on four continents. These patents have generated more than \$1 million in royalties and licensing fees for WSU, where Dr. Mealey is a professor and the Richard L. Ott endowed chair in small animal medicine and research. She also serves as a founding entrepreneurial faculty ambassador.

In her eponymous lab at WSU, Dr. Mealey’s research continues to be aimed at preventing adverse drug reactions in animals. “Our research in veterinary pharmacogenetics has generated discoveries that are used globally to prevent adverse drug reactions in dogs (and are under development for cats),” she says.

When Dr. Mealey is not working in her lab, she enjoys running marathons and has completed 13 of them, including the 2013 Boston Marathon.





Opposite page: Dr. Mealey at mile 26 of the 2013 Boston Marathon. Left and above: Dr. Warpinski on his once-in-a-life-time trip to China.

THE UNDERSTATED ALTRUIST



Patrick Warpinski, DVM

When Patrick Warpinski, DVM, says that his practice is built on relationships with pet owners, his employees, and the community, he really means it. “It’s the relationships with your customers and employees – rather than profit – that truly drive growth,” he says. “If you treat your clients and staff with fairness, dignity

and respect, the bottom line will take care of itself.”

This philosophy has earned Dr. Warpinski and his clinic a host of accolades and awards from community and industry leaders over the years.

Founded in 2004 on the idea that excellent veterinary care should be accessible for all pet owners, The Animal House in Green Bay, Wisconsin, provides integrated care for every aspect of animal health, regardless of the owner’s income. With progressive and personalized services that include primary and specialty care, in-home euthanasia and other housecall services, and outstanding technological capabilities – not to mention day care, boarding, grooming and training – it’s no wonder the practice has been named “Best of the Bay” in four different categories for nine years running.

“We’ve received a lot of recognition over the years,” says Dr. Warpinski, “but the more rewarding aspects of owning a successful business are the ability to provide personal and professional growth for our employees and to support those in need throughout the community.”

The Animal House – under Dr. Warpinski’s direction – has more than proved its commitment to the local area.

Dr. Warpinski and his team work with dozens of local pet rescue groups, shelters, students and area charities. Every year, the practice provides free or discounted veterinary care for more than 3,000 area pets.

One charitable organization that benefits from Dr. Warpinski’s work is Paul’s Pantry, which feeds community members in need – and now also helps those community members care for their pets. “We approached Paul’s Pantry with our idea for a very low-cost veterinary program because we never want to see a family have to make a pet-owning decision based on their present, and often temporary, stage of distress,” he said. “Our goal is to help people in need keep their pets in their family.”

The Animal House devotes time and effort to providing a wide range of community support to children as well, from exhibiting a mini veterinary hospital in The Children’s Museum of Green Bay to sending low-income schoolchildren to an overnight YMCA camp that encourages character growth. The clinic has also supported the American Red Cross, St. John’s Homeless Shelter and Big Brothers Big Sisters, among many others.

The highlight of his career? Being one of 10 veterinarians around the world selected to participate in the NOBIVAC Global Vet Exchange Program, which gives practitioners the chance to visit a foreign clinic to experience a different culture and learn how veterinary medicine is perceived and performed globally.

In February 2015, Dr. Warpinski flew to Beijing to complete the exchange with Dr. Yi (Eric) Dong at Dr. Dong’s three Puppytown Clinics. “The Beijing experience was so memorable on so many levels, from the language to the culture to the food and, of course, the veterinary medicine,” he said. “For me to experience a few days in the life of a Chinese veterinarian was nothing less than phenomenal. That trip will resonate for years to come.”

THE HUMANITARIAN HORSE LOVER >>

Eric Davis, DVM, MS, DACVS, DACVIM, has a singular goal: to promote the availability of veterinary care in poor, rural communities around the world. And, considering all he's done to help others throughout his career, we'd say he is a high achiever.

Over the past 20 years, Dr. Davis has traveled countless miles to dozens of rural communities around the world to provide medical care for tens of thousands of animals and teach hundreds of veterinary students lessons they could never learn in the classroom.

The secrets to his success? Hard work, compassion, philanthropy, and kindness.

Dr. Davis's first large-scale volunteer effort was a six-year stint with Remote Area Medical, which provides free medical care to people in far-flung areas around the world. At the time, Dr. Davis was also on the faculty at the University of Tennessee University College of Veterinary Medicine in Knoxville. To say that his passion for volunteering overtook his life is a bit of an understatement. Ultimately, Dr. Davis resigned from his position at the university to start his own volunteer organization.

He approached the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) with an idea for starting a veterinary outreach program, and Rural Area Veterinary Services (RAVS) was born. Under Dr. Davis's direction, RAVS volunteers launched projects in dozens of underserved rural communities in the United States and abroad, including operating emergency animal shelters in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina and in Sri Lanka following the 2004 tsunami.

The RAVS program involved primarily small animals, but Dr. Davis's background and first love is horses. "Horses have been my main interest all my life," he says, "and I'm also sympathetic to the plight of working horses, mules, donkeys, and oxen, which still play such an important role in so many countries."

After 10 years, Dr. Davis left RAVS for the International Animal Welfare Training Institute (IAWTI) at the University of California, Davis. His role at



Eric Davis, DVM, MS, DACVS, DACVIM

IAWTI includes lecturing and training students on ethics, animal welfare, and large animal rescue; conducting research; and directing the Donkey Welfare Symposium, an annual forum for health care and training of "this most hard-working, cooperative, and yet often-maligned animal," says Dr. Davis.

In 2011, Dr. Davis and his wife Cindy Davis, RVT, a veterinary anesthetist, started a nonprofit organization called Rural Veterinary Experience, Teaching, and Service (RVETS). "I wanted to be able to continue working with students in the field and maintain projects in Central America and the reservations of the Dakotas," Dr. Davis says.

The goals of RVETS are simple: to provide each patient with the absolute best care possible and each student with the absolute best learning experience and training possible. RVETS sojourns – the group travels about 12 weeks each year – are a "no-frills" experience, says Dr. Davis. "We sleep in the bus or camp out. The investment is in the supplies, equipment, and teaching materials that we need to do a good job."

Dr. Davis never stops looking to the future for new ways he can help animals and students. Among the next steps on his journey? Improving the availability of veterinary care and upgrading the veterinary infrastructure in Nicaragua, make veterinary students in the United States and Mexico aware of the needs and rewards of mixed rural practice, and conducting equine research at home and abroad. Oh, and when he has time? "I want to train my horse in the traditional Vaquero way."

From bottom: U.S., Nicaraguan and El Salvadoran veterinarians and students in a remote community in Nicaragua. Dr. Davis hard at work. Work continues, even in the rain.





Above: Dr. Lopez demonstrates the GraftGrab.



«THE MENTOR INVENTOR

Veterinary surgeon Mandi Lopez, DVM, MS, PhD, DACVS, has made work easier for orthopedic surgeons everywhere. Her invention, the GraftGrab, is a bioabsorbable device that allows surgeons to affix tissue to bone while simultaneously adjusting tension during anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) graft procedures, reducing surgery time and improving patient outcomes.

Dr. Lopez, who is director of the Laboratory for Equine and Comparative Orthopedic Research in the Louisiana State University (LSU) School of Veterinary Medicine, says she and her colleague W. Todd Monroe, PhD, PE, initiated the design process almost 13 years ago while they were searching for ways to restore ruptured cranial cruciate ligament function in dogs with a graft created from tissues surrounding the joint.

“Loss of initial graft tension is a problem with soft tissue interference screws and can contribute to joint instability,” says Dr. Lopez. “The GraftGrab provides a simple mechanism for anchoring the graft immediately after tensioning that minimizes the likelihood of graft tension loss,” she says.

The biggest advantage of the GraftGrab, according to Dr. Lopez, is that the attachment can be adjusted so surgeons can try different tensions and decide on the one that is best for their patient. The device can also potentially be used in future bone and joint surgeries in both animals and humans. The GraftGrab and a “sister” device, the GrabTen, are currently licensed by Tesa Medical, Inc. and will be available commercially following completion of the Food and Drug Administration approval process.

Dr. Lopez has shared her research findings through hundreds of presentations and more than 75 original scientific publications. In addition to numerous awards for research excellence, Dr. Lopez’s work has also landed her a spot in the National Academy of Inventors (NAI). She was inducted as a fellow into the academy this month during the NAI’s annual conference. “Being nominated as a fellow in the NAI is beyond any accomplishment that I thought to achieve during my career. I’m incredibly humbled and genuinely grateful,” she says.

But Dr. Lopez doesn’t give herself all the credit for her success. Not by a long shot. “I plan to pay this incredible gift forward to other aspiring creators,” she says. So, when she isn’t working in the lab at LSU, Dr. Lopez mentors students at all career stages from high school level on up. She is also the associate editor for invited reviews and themed issues for *Veterinary Surgery*.

“I’m committed to this role because of the mentoring I received early in my writing experience when editors and reviewers provided me with extraordinary information that helped guide my research into clear communication,” she says. She decided to continue this process for scientific writers at all stages.

“I strive to support an efficient review process so that scientific progress is published in a timely manner,” Dr. Lopez said. “The work is something I genuinely enjoy, so I don’t mind having it be part of my daily activities.” **VMD**



Mandi Lopez, DVM, MS, PhD, DACVS



Expand Your Practice Base With Client Endorsements

Effective recommendations from clients can be an important factor in growing your practice.

By Naren Arulrajah

Regardless of whether your practice is in a rural, urban or suburban area, attracting new clients is crucial to building a rock-solid practice reputation and increasing revenue.

Happy customers are your best ambassadors. If you have their stamp of approval, getting the word out about your practice becomes easy. However, very few practice owners and practice managers know how to leverage the power of client endorsements.

Winning the love of your customers is not a matter of getting lucky with a few odd clients. You need to do a lot of things to get noticed in front of the right people. More importantly, you need to be consistent with your marketing and brand-building efforts. Here's how.

DON'T WAIT. ASK.

Word-of-mouth advertising still is the number one way to win new clients, but your biggest challenge is that your patients can't talk about how good you are. Their owners can, though, and they will. So the question is: *Are they talking about you in a way that will serve your business goals?*

Don't wait for a random referral, review, or testimonial to come your way. If your clients like what you're doing, your goal should be to ensure that the movement of these practice endorsements works like a well-oiled machine.

Remember these two cardinal rules when asking clients for referrals, reviews, and testimonials. First, understand that you are not asking them for a favor. In the digital space,

everyone has an opinion and most of your clients would be delighted to share their experience with the masses. Second, testimonials should not be general or vague comments. Instead, ask the client to talk specifics about their time at your practice. People want to read about real experiences that highlight a pertinent issue and the solution that addressed the issue.

TESTIMONIALS

Testimonials inherently offer an element of trust and can move potential clients to engage with your practice. Be sure to ask for a testimonial at the right moment, using mood momentum when the client is very satisfied with your service. Provide multiple platforms for clients to give testimonials, such as during

visits to your office, to your website, via email and over social sites. Testimonials should include the name, location, social handles and photos (if possible) of the client and pet.

Following are the hallmarks of influential testimonials:

- They are specific, outlining why the client came to you, the solution offered, the outcome and benefits and how satisfied the client was.
- They are authentic and written in the natural language of the client.
- They deliver a sense of credibility, leaving no doubt that the person behind the comments is real.

Online reviews and ratings of your practice can influence the decisions of potential clients, who are more likely to click on your ad or search result if it is accompanied by a five-star review. Reviews can also provide information that sets you apart from your competitors, such as unique benefits or services you offer. Here are three important practices for leveraging reviews of your practice:

- Feature the best reviews from existing clients on your website.
- Make it easy for clients to leave you reviews by featuring links to social sites prominently on your website.

Five Tips for Managing Online Reviews

Make sure you continually monitor your online practice listings to ensure they are accurate.

Work on acquiring positive reviews on Google, Yelp, and YouTube, and try to get more LinkedIn recommendations.

Respond to good, bad and neutral reviews promptly; this shows that you care about how your brand is perceived and are willing to take necessary steps to improve your image.

Never ignore negative reviews; respond to them and try to offer issue resolutions quickly and efficiently.

Never shy away from offering an apology; a short and sincere apology is the best way to handle criticism.



Perception of your practice is critical to keeping client and adding new ones.

- Manage your reviews, and address any potentially damaging issue (see **Best Practices for Managing Online Reviews**).

REFERRALS

According to the global market research firm Nielsen, 84 percent of consumers consider their friends and family to be trusted resources. So, any recommendations that come from these sources will be considered trustworthy.

Excellent client service is the most effective strategy for encouraging referrals, and there are a number of tactics you can employ. Ensure that all client touch points are optimized for delivering stellar experiences. Make your clients feel valued at each stage of interaction. If the client likes something, do more of it in a better way. If something is not working out, look at ways you can address the issue and improve.

Engage with clients on social media to build your reputation and brand trust. Tune in to

conversations and be part of the talk. Provide solutions and advice to establish yourself as a subject matter expert. Encourage client engagement and interaction with your brand as a way of establishing trust.

Price incentives can only take you so far, so provide existing clients with exclusive experiences. Go the extra mile in creating relationships so they feel privileged and encouraged to share information about your practice. A privileged membership program, such as one that automatically qualifies a client to a membership level if they spend a certain dollar amount or bring in a set number of referrals, is an excellent example of creating “exclusive” experiences.

Offering supplementary services at discount prices is another great way to attract referrals. Consider introducing pet grooming services or pet training courses at a discounted price. You could also offer specific routine pet health care services/treatments for a smaller fee to clients who bring in referrals. Here are some tips for managing a referral program:

- Make it easy for clients to join. Prominently display your membership or referral program button or tab on your website, include it in your newsletters and talk about it on social media.
- Make sure your program offers simple rules and straightforward benefits.
- Ensure that your site is HTTPS enabled and follows all security protocols.
- Reconnect with previous referrers and explore ways to re-engage them in your referral program.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Client endorsements in the form of testimonials, reviews and referrals can drive your veterinary brand reputation. How clients perceive your practice – and what they say about it – are crucial to maintaining your existing client pool and attracting new clients. **VMD**

Naren Arulrajah is president and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, an internet marketing company that focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education and the online reputations of veterinarians/practice owners. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call 855-598-3320 to speak with Naren.

Map Out a Successful Communications Strategy

Connecting with staff members is vital to creating a strong practice

By Ray Ramirez, DVM

When I did relief work, I saw a lot of great ways that veterinarians and hospital managers connected with team members throughout the day.

I'll never forget the clinic that had a guillotine outside its practice. Positioned in it was a headless scarecrow dressed as a staff member, with a pumpkin "head" sitting in a basket at the base of the guillotine. The staff and clients loved it, and there was no doubt that the doctor and management team at this practice were very good at the "soft skill" of relating to people.

These five simple techniques can bring your team connectedness up a notch:

- Ask staff **Q**uestions about themselves.
- Bring **hU**mor to the practice.
- Ask your team why they are **E**mployed at your practice.
- Share your own struggles with your staff.
- Get through the **T**ough days together.

Going on this "QUEST" will help you connect with staff in ways that will truly make them feel like the champions they are!



ASK QUESTIONS

Your team is just like you. Work is interesting and exciting, but their job is not what they live for. When people are polled about the most important things in their lives, they respond with something along the lines of "family, friends, and religion." Rarely does anyone say "my job."

To foster connections, don't just say "hello" to your team members each day; ask them

about what is going on in their lives. Talk with them about their family, their hobbies and what they did over the weekend. Inquire often, and really listen to the responses. You may have heard the phrase, "They don't care how much you know until you show how much you care." By asking questions about your team's personal lives, you show them that you care.



USE HUMOR

Humor is a fantastic bonding agent. Introducing humor into your practice can help solidify the connection between you and your staff and lighten the overall mood at your practice. You don't have to be a comedian; there are plenty of websites and email lists that can send you a joke a day. This can be fun, even if it comes off as corny. You may be surprised to find how much your staff looks forward to Silly Joke Monday or Joke Day Wednesday.

A word of caution: Crude jokes or jokes that are sexual in nature are inappropriate, as is humor that tears a person down. If you hear a joke and think, "I wonder if this is appropriate?" it probably isn't.



WHY ARE THEY EMPLOYED HERE?

What is important to your staff about their job? Why do they work in veterinary medicine? Why did they apply to your practice in the first place? And how do they know you are paying attention?



Ray Ramirez, DVM

Dr. Ramirez (DrRayDVM.com) owns Lakeview Veterinary Clinic in East Peoria, Illinois. He speaks at regional and state conferences on a variety of practice management topics.

Make it a point to thank staff members for doing their job and contributing to the good health of your patients. There are myriad reasons to thank your team throughout the day:

- The receptionist who alerted the appropriate person to inventory the refrigerated vaccines and refrigerate them right away
- The assistant who calmed an upset client with a kind word
- The technician who educated the owner of a newly diagnosed diabetic dog about her role in dealing with her pet's disease
- The technician who counseled a client whose cat was in renal failure regarding strategies for giving the necessary medication
- The assistant who put a client at ease when he was catching his pet up on vaccines after not being able to do so for a while
- The person who mops the floor and cleans the rooms each day, thereby decreasing the risk for infection

It is up to you to help paint a picture for the staff of the masterpiece they are creating for the pets they love to see at your practice.



SHARE YOUR STRUGGLES

Sharing your own struggles with your team shows them not only that you are not perfect but also that some things in your life can scare, encourage, confuse, or anger you. In short, sharing your struggles shows them that you are human. Don't overshare with staff, however, because some either don't care that you have troubles or are glad you have them.



THE TOUGH PARTS OF THE JOB

Ask your team what is challenging about their jobs. What you think may be difficult could be easy for them, and what you think is easy they may find difficult. A staff member could have an uplifting interaction with one client followed by client after client who is frustrated

and complaining and sucking all the joy out of the day. How can you make your team member's job a little better?

First, help staff realize that having to deal with frustrated clients is not a "problem" but a natural part of practice. The Pareto principle states that 80 percent of frustrations come from 20 percent of clients. Isn't it weird how those 20 percent all seem to come to your practice on the same two days? Help your team remember that these individuals (or days) are not the norm and that many of your clients love your work and are more than satisfied with the practice.

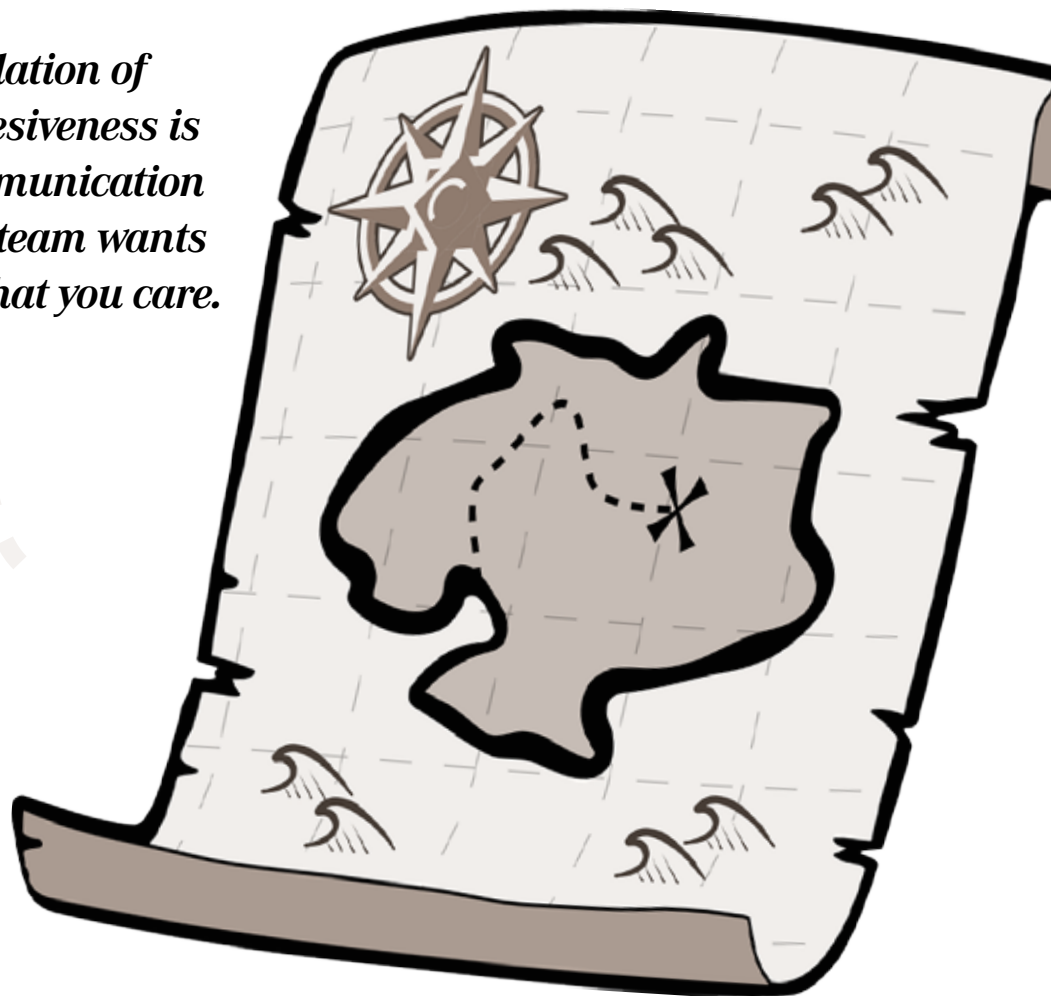
How you share these sentiments with staff is important. Simply offering platitudes such as "Don't worry about Mrs. Jones. We all appreciate everything you do here" may not be enough. Try this approach instead: "Don't worry about Mrs. Jones. Remember when Mr. Smith told you how much he appreciated

all you did for Milly when she was so sick? And what about Mr. Rickles? Even though he complains about payments, when Patches was sick he really appreciated your just being there with them. Clients appreciate that!"

CONCLUSION

Veterinary teams are made up of individuals who work together toward the singular goal of ensuring the health and well-being of patients. Connectedness among teams enables better performance across the board, but being able to relate to team members is a skill that doesn't come easily to every practice owner or manager. Your team wants proof beyond a reasonable doubt that you *do* notice! By going on a simple QUEST to change your everyday communication techniques, you can show that you truly care about your team, thus ensuring team cohesiveness and practice success. [VMD](#)

The foundation of team cohesiveness is good communication and your team wants to know that you care.





The Psychological Impact of Uncertainty: Why a Bigger IQ Isn't the Answer

Emotional insecurity in practice is inevitable, but it can be managed.

By Brian Faulkner, BSc(Hons), BVM&S, CertGP(SAM), CertGP(BPS), MBA, MSc(Psych), MRCVS

When I'm coaching veterinarians in exam room skills, I've noticed a pattern whereby confidence dips about three years after graduation. I hear comments such as "I honestly thought I'd feel more in control by now" or "I feel less confident now than the day I graduated." I call this the "three-year wobble."



Brian Faulkner, BSc(Hons), BVM&S, CertGP(SAM), CertGP(BPS), MBA, MSc(Psych), MRCVS

In the first year after graduation, we know we have much to learn and expect to come across situations about which we have no previous experience and little practical knowledge. We accept this inevitable period of living with the unknown during this stage of our career, and we're prepared to ask for help and accept direction. In the second year, as we continue to learn, we are still comfortable seeking help and receiving direction.

Toward the end of the second, third and even fourth years in practice, many veterinarians start feeling like they "should have this by now." That is, they should be able to diagnose what is wrong with most patients after taking a history and performing a clinical exam.

DOUBT IS INEVITABLE

Doubt in certain situations in veterinary practice is inevitable. The problem for many of us is that two misconceptions turn this situational doubt into self-doubt.

Misconception #1: If I Know More, I Will Stop Feeling Doubtful.

Many veterinarians believe that the antidote to their feelings of doubt is to acquire more knowledge. Of course, during the first couple years in practice, it is important to develop our knowledge and skills related to the pathogenesis, diagnosis and therapeutics associated with specific diseases. It is our IQ that gives us the psychological horsepower required to do this. However, understanding and remembering

this information only takes us so far in managing the inevitable feelings of uncertainty that we experience in practice.

Misconception #2: Maybe I'm Not Good/Smart/Talented Enough!

Having tried unsuccessfully to escape the fog of uncertainty by working through the first misconception, our minds start looking for an alternative explanation for our persistent feelings of doubt. And so, the second misconception that starts to form in many veterinarians' minds at this three-year mark is, "I've tried extra hard to learn this stuff, but I'm still not sure. Maybe I'm not good, smart or talented enough to be a veterinarian!"

Living under this assumption will have a negative impact on career fulfillment, on success and on our lives in general. This "happiness-limiting belief" serves as a seed for feelings of inferiority, emotional insecurity, and diminished ambitions and aspirations. If allowed to fester, such feelings can lead to helplessness, hopelessness and even depression.

COPING WITH UNCERTAINTY

To achieve the psychological security we crave, we need to work on two things: One, our ability to cope with uncertainty and two, our “self-theories.” Self-theories are beyond the scope of this article. Here we focus on the theory and practice of coping with uncertainty.

Once we take a history and perform a clinical exam, we often cannot be *exactly* sure about what is causing that cough, sneeze, vomiting, limp or scratch based on what we see, hear, feel, and smell. After all, few clinical signs are pathognomonic of only one diagnosis. This means that we will almost always feel at least some degree of uncertainty during most veterinary visits. Instead of thinking that more knowledge is the antidote, we must realize that some uncertainty is inevitable *regardless* of how much we know.

That doesn't mean it should overwhelm us, though. The good news is that a relatively small investment of time and effort spent recognizing and working on a different set of psychological skills and abilities can help us relieve more stress over a career than tenfold the time and effort spent working on filling relatively small knowledge gaps.

Thriving amid uncertainty requires a different set of psychological skills and abilities than IQ. I call this capacity “UQ” – the ability to be intelligent with and about uncertainty. Because life is inevitably uncertain, we all need UQ to prevent us from becoming paralyzed by indecision.

While our IQ helps us acquire and remember the conceptual models needed to understand an animal's various biological systems, our UQ helps us manage the uncertainty and doubt associated with determining what disrupts these systems and the probabilities that our interventions will correct these disruptions.

Combining IQ with UQ enables us to work amid uncertainty and risk. By developing our UQ we become more resilient in the face of uncertainty, which is the first step in preventing situational doubt from turning into self-doubt. Here's a look at how we apply these concepts in practice.

MANAGING UNCERTAINTY: THE PDS LINK

P Is for Problems

It is important to articulate to the client clearly and succinctly the “problems” discovered

We must realize that some uncertainty is inevitable regardless of how much we know.



during the office visit. Remembering, ranking, and repeating the historical and physical findings inspires confidence in the client's mind and provides a launchpad from which to discuss the options available to resolve them.

D Is for Differentials

Clients expect you to give them plausible explanations about what is – or could be – causing their pet's signs. This is the D step of the PDS link. Although much thought may go into formulating your differentials list, as far as the client is concerned the D step should result in a list of the three or four *most likely* causes of the signs. Articulating a short and succinct differentials list acknowledges to the client in a controlled and assertive way the inherent uncertainty of the situation. Not being 100 percent sure of your diagnosis is nothing to be ashamed of as long as you show that you “have a clue” about what is going on and that you have a way of dealing with this uncertainty.

S Is for Strategies

There are ultimately only three strategies available to resolve the clinical signs presented during an office visit: the reactive strategy, the proactive strategy and euthanasia.

- **Reactive strategy:** The premise of the reactive strategy is to treat based on a presumptive diagnosis and then “react” according to how the patient responds. The risk with this strategy relates to picking the wrong diagnosis, which affects both clinical resolution and client satisfaction.
- **Proactive strategy:** This strategy aims to manage the uncertainty about what is

causing the signs and/or to treat them more precisely. The ideal of the proactive strategy is to make and treat a 100 percent conclusive diagnosis using a gold-standard evidence-based intervention, although this is not always possible for both technical and practical reasons. It is useful to think of proactive diagnostics in terms of “buying information” in order to decrease the probability of treating (or euthanizing) the patient for the wrong condition. Of course, recommending a rash of diagnostic tests just because they are available without a clear plan about what information will be gained in relation to the differential diagnosis is speculative, unfocused and often wasteful.

CONCLUSION

Uncertainty occurs when the cause and the consequences of events are undetermined – and veterinary work is certainly full of uncertainty. To achieve both professional and personal success, we must be aware of the impact of uncertainty on our feelings of stress, self-doubt and self-confidence and understand the best ways to manage it. [VMD](#)

Dr. Faulkner currently divides his time between working in his own small animal practice in Suffolk, England, and coaching practice owners and managers. His consulting business, [The Colourful Consultation](#), helps veterinarians proactively pursue the four essential outcomes of veterinary practice: clinical resolution, client satisfaction, financial resolution and colleague satisfaction. For more information, visit [colourfulconsultation.com](#).

Creating Your Career Blueprint: The Early Years of Practice Ownership

Outlining a strategic plan early in practice ownership provides an overall sense of direction toward future prosperity.

By Veterinary Business Advisors, Inc.

The best way to create the future you want is to set goals and then plan appropriately for them. Road maps are essential to your career plan. Here are some key issues to consider during the early years of owning your veterinary practice.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Although your days are likely to be hectic as you care for clients and manage your team, it's important to step away from daily fire drills periodically to focus on long-term strategic planning. A strategic plan provides an overall sense of direction toward future prosperity. To be effective, your plan should be put into practice deliberately, modified when needed and reviewed regularly (often annually). The following components are typically included in a strategic plan:

- Mission statement/purpose
- Core values
- Long-term vision (three, or five, or 10 years)
- Strategic agenda (projects you undertake to move toward your vision)
- Project plans (for each item on the strategic agenda)
- Project milestones (and the metrics used to measure them)
- Accountability plan (who will be responsible for what)
- Budget

Plenty of free resources are available to help you create a viable strategic plan. The strategic planning section of the Small Business Administration website (www.sba.gov/tools/sba-learning-center/training/strategic-planning), for example, offers a 30-minute online training module and other resources for strategic planning.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Although “budget” appears as the last of the strategic planning components, it's very important because the funds generated by your practice will serve as the fuel for your success. There are far too many financial planning issues to include in a single article, but here are several high-level recommendations:

- Early on, get a handle on your cash flow. Are there times of the year when cash flow increases? Decreases? How predictable are those times? Are you paying your bills on a schedule that avoids late fees and takes advantage of any early-pay discounts?
- Monitor your own time. Working extra-long hours every week to be profitable isn't a sustainable strategy. What changes can you make to create a more realistic workload?
- Make sure you truly understand your profit and loss statements and other financial documents. If you don't, ask for help. Although there is nothing wrong (and plenty right) with having financial professionals assist with managing your assets and economic strategies, you need to understand thoroughly where your business stands.

An achievement-friendly environment and company culture are crucial to practice success.

- Look to the future:
 - » Determine the best retirement plan options for you and your practice team. If you have fewer than 100 employees and no other qualified plan, consider a Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees.
 - » Know that it's never too early to create a succession plan (in terms of both ownership and management) in case you become incapable of working or die; this helps to ensure a smooth transition.
 - » Finally, save for a rainy day! If you never need to use these funds, then you've got a nice financial cushion that can come in handy if you decide to expand your practice or make another large purchase – and you don't have to panic or go deeply into debt if an emergency does arise.

CREATING YOUR EMPLOYMENT ENVIRONMENT

The people in your practice can make or break its success, so creating a success-friendly environment and company culture is crucial. Core elements of this environment include mentorship, engagement and accountability.

A mentor is simply a more experienced person offering guidance to a less experienced person. A workplace mentor serves as a role model, sharing knowledge that will help someone else chart his or her own career path. Mentorships can be formal or informal, and the roles can be quite fluid. For example, a more experienced technician can mentor a newly graduated one in job-specific duties, but the roles could shift if, say, conflict resolution skills are needed and the new technician has significant experience in that area from another job or different context.



For your strategic plan to be effective, put it in place deliberately, review it regularly and modify it when needed.

A healthy workplace has an engaged workforce, and engaged employees are motivated and eager to participate in workplace activities and meet the challenges of the day. There are two types of motivation: external and internal.

External motivators – wages and benefits – are needed to get people to work. To motivate teams externally, analyze what similar clinics are paying in wages and benefits, and pay the fairest amount you can. You don't want to invest time and energy into an employee only to have him or her enticed away by a competitor who offered better compensation.

Internal motivators go beyond wages, and they can exhibit a much stronger pull. Internal motivators include:

- Autonomy (control and decision making)
- Mastery (learning)
- Purpose (achieving personal goals)

To motivate internally, provide autonomy, perhaps through flexible scheduling, incentivized earning programs and results-oriented managing (in other words, don't micromanage). Create a culture wherein practice team members can master their favorite specialties through continuing education and by teaching clients. Highlight purpose by noting the positive impacts staff members are having on people's lives, participating in charity events, and building a culture in which praise and encouragement are given often.

Finally, create a culture of transparent workplace accountability by clearly defining roles and focusing on teamwork (see **Using Organizational Charts Effectively**). Clarify the importance of each person's role in accomplishing team goals, share and celebrate successes, and brainstorm how to overcome challenges together. Honestly evaluate pro-

cesses, and encourage staff to make suggestions. Reward integrity.

MASTERING NEGOTIATIONS

As you hire staff, give raises, and otherwise manage your practice, having quality negotiation skills is important. Whenever two people have differing needs and interests – and each has what the other wants and needs – then a series of negotiations are likely to take place. Keeping in mind that the goal is a successful long-term relationship, not a quick short-term win, here are some helpful negotiating tools:

- Understand the other person's interests.
- Be well prepared with factual information.
- Determine how you can compromise.
- Treat the other person the way you'd want to be treated.

FINAL THOUGHTS

We offer two final pieces of advice. First, remember to take care of yourself. Creating a healthy balance between work and the rest of your life is crucial not only for your health and well-being but also for the rest of the practice and your clients (see **Making Time for You: Tips for Balanced Living**). Second, during the early years of your practice (and later on, for that matter), when you face challenges, reach out for help. Rest assured that other practice owners have been through similar scenarios and can provide guidance. You don't have to go it alone. **VMD**

VBA provides a full range of legal, practice management and human resource services tailored for veterinarians and veterinary practices of all types. For more information, visit veterinarybusinessadvisors.com.

Using Organizational Charts Effectively

From a practical standpoint, organizational charts can help create an effective employment environment. A formal written organizational chart can help the growth of your practice in many ways, including serving as a:

- Road map for putting together your management team
- Blueprint for hiring employees and developing their skills
- Method to improve the flow of information throughout the practice
- Framework to boost efficiency

Making Time for You: Tips for Balanced Living

Mark important milestones on your calendar, and arrange ahead to take time off to celebrate these events.

Learn to prioritize and say no when you simply don't have time to take on an additional task – or even something extra that would be enjoyable.

When you get home, leave work behind as much as possible. Try not to dwell on problems that happened or answer your email. Make your personal time truly yours.

Track your time at work for a week. What tasks could you delegate to free up time? What isn't a priority and can be put on a back burner?

Consider starting a workplace wellness program. Participate!

Lower your expectations at home. Incorporate more rest and enjoyable activities in your day whenever possible.



EXPLORING “America’s First Region”

Where to Eat, Unwind and Go in Historic Virginia Beach

By Kerry Lengyel

The Central Veterinary Conference in Virginia Beach (May 18–21) is around the corner. We know you’ll be up to your ears in learning while there, but don’t forget – you’re in Virginia Beach. Late spring promises mild temperatures and no shortage of oceanview restaurants, lively bars and pubs, and adventurous outings to museums, parks, beaches, and more. Here’s your guide to the best of the best to see and do during your stay.

WHERE TO EAT

Virginia Beach has much to offer the gastronomically inclined, including fresh seafood and unbeatable ocean views.

- **Citrus Breakfast and Lunch:** Touted as the best breakfast and lunch spot in Virginia Beach, Citrus Breakfast and Lunch is open seven days a week and offers an expansive menu that uses only fresh and local products. What a great way to start off the day!

- **Mannino’s Italian Bistro:** Enjoy the signature crab soup in addition to delicious Italian dishes at Mannino’s Italian Bistro. Mannino’s offers two locations in Virginia Beach – one with a fantastic view of the ocean.
- **Blue Seafood and Spirits:** Rated as one of the best seafood spots in all of Virginia Beach, Blue Seafood and Spirits is the place to go for some of the most creative dishes around. The place is quaint and small, so we suggest making a reservation before heading over.
- **Mahi Mah’s Seafood Restaurant:** Located in the Ramada Hotel, Mahi Mah’s has oceanfront views, a huge deck and even a sushi saloon. Enjoy a laid-back beach vibe while feasting on some of the freshest seafood and sushi in town.
- **Firebrew Bar & Grill:** Firebrew offers awesome happy hour specials in a relaxed tavern atmosphere. In addition to its self-service wine station and central open kitchen,



Extraordinary dining (above) and incredible adventures, such as the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Center (opposite page, top) and Cape Henry Lighthouse (opposite page, bottom) await you in Virginia Beach.

the restaurant cooks 100 percent of its food over open flames or on the grill or stovetop – with zero microwaves or fryers in sight.

- **Catch 31:** Stare out into the ocean while enjoying fresh, local seafood, succulent steaks and an incomparable raw bar at Catch 31. If you're looking for a more upscale restaurant serving coastal comfort food, this is the place for you.
- **DOC Taylor's Restaurant:** Brunch anyone? DOC Taylor's draws the weekend brunch crowds with its Southern eggs, grits and refreshing bloody marys. Set in an old cottage, you'll enjoy a homey atmosphere while getting a great start to your day.
- **Lager Heads:** This mellow restaurant serves some of the best burgers and brews in town. Enjoy nightly acoustic music on the patio while munching on one of its 10 signature burger creations and sipping any of the 20 beers on tap.



WHERE TO UNWIND

After a long day of learning and walking, you might want to grab a drink and put your feet up. Who would blame you? Virginia Beach offers pubs, taverns, oceanside bars and cocktail lounges galore.

- **Tinto:** As one of the best wine bars in Virginia Beach, you can't go wrong spending a few hours at Tinto. Pair charcuterie and cheese at this mom-and-pop eatery with a wide variety of wines for a perfect (and perfectly relaxing) night out.
- **1608 Crafthouse:** Find one of the largest selections of craft beers to delight your tongue and belly at 1608 Crafthouse. This gastropub offers a unique experience to sample some of the region's best offerings in an affordable setting.
- **Frog Sports Bar and Grill:** If you're hankering for a nice place to hang out, grab a bite and have a drink, then Frog Sports Bar and Grill is for you. A well-stocked bar manned by friendly staff complements the plethora of televisions, pool tables and dart stations.
- **11th Street Taphouse Bar & Grille:** This spot is one of the best after-work drink locations – which means it's also one of the best after-a-long-day-at-the-conference drink locations. The Grille offers beer, mixed drinks and wine in a fun and lively environment.
- **Lynnhaven Pub:** Who doesn't love a good dive bar? If you're looking for a local, low-key spot, Lynnhaven Pub should be on your list. Enjoy one of the various brews on the pub's beer list, which takes up three pages of the menu alone.
- **Ultra Craft Cocktails:** This upscale and sophisticated cocktail bar features an extensive craft cocktail selection. Sip on a delicious concoction in an intimate ocean-front environment with direct access to the Virginia Beach boardwalk.

WHERE TO GO

Why not stay an extra day (or two) before or after the conference and take advantage of some of the area's best attractions? Explore museums, walk the beaches, hike far-reaching trails or do just about a zillion other things.

- **Virginia Beach Boardwalk:** Named by Travel + Leisure as one of America's Best Boardwalks, this 3-mile concrete promenade is always bustling with tourists, locals, and people-watchers alike. So eat, shop, bike, blade or otherwise explore at will.

AMERICA'S FIRST REGION

In 1607, three small ships carrying about 100 English explorers made land on what was then known as Cape Henry and is today called Virginia Beach. After exploring the region's land and waterways, the adventurers made their way inland, eventually settling in Jamestown, Virginia – the first permanent settlement in the New World. Virginia Beach and Jamestown today serve as the boundaries for what is known as Hampton Roads, or America's First Region.

- **Military Aviation Museum:** Forty thousand guests travel from all over the world each year to visit the Military Aviation Museum. Take a flight in an open cockpit biplane, see World War I and World War II aircrafts that still fly and learn about the heroes of military aviation.
- **Sandbridge Beach:** If you want to spend some time in the sand while you're in Virginia Beach – but far from the madding crowd – check out the hidden jewel of Sandbridge Beach. This quaint coastal community located at the northern end of the Outer Banks offers golf, fishing, surfing, parks, shopping and, most important, 5 miles of pristine, peaceful golden sands.
- **First Landing State Park:** Noted as the site where English colonists first landed in 1607, this 2,700-acre park features hiking trails, cypress swamps and nesting grounds for a variety of birds. If you're a nature lover, you won't want to miss your chance to explore this natural wonder.
- **Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center:** With 10,000 animals and 800,000 gallons of water, the aquariums and habitats here offer extraordinary views of sharks, stingrays and many other aquatic species. You can also navigate the zipline aerial experience from the trees at Adventure Park.
- **Cape Henry Lighthouse:** Cape Henry marks the southern entrance to Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. Its lighthouse, built in 1792, is located within Fort Story military base. You can take a walking tour inside and around the lighthouse and can even explore the lantern room.
- **Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art:** Featuring regularly changing exhibitions in painting, sculpture, photography, glass and other visual media, this museum puts an emphasis on interactivity and hands-on fun. **VMD**

How (and Why) to “Untrain” Your Team

Success in practice today requires an adaptable team.

By Louise S. Dunn

From pharmaceuticals and treatment recommendations to the use of telemedicine, laser, and social media, changes in veterinary medicine and practice management today seem endless.



Louise S. Dunn

Change is difficult, and given the rapid delivery of new information, it's hard to keep up.

Nevertheless, succeeding in practice today requires teams that are amenable and adaptable to change. That means changing the way you think about team training, including recognizing the difficulty of breaking old habits and employing techniques to help your team “unlearn” the old and embrace the new.

“BUT WE’VE ALWAYS DONE IT THIS WAY”

When confronting your team with change, you may hear a resounding “But we’ve always done it this way.” The fact is we are often more comfortable sticking with what we know. It is far easier to make a situation fit our current “mental maps” than it is to venture into the unknown realm of change.¹

The dilemma is how to unlearn the old way of doing things and adapt to the new way. In many situations, management and team mem-

bers are operating with outdated or obsolete mental maps.³ To advance into a new way of doing things, three things must occur³:

1. Recognize that the old way of doing things is no longer effective.
2. Create a new way.
3. Ingrain new habits.

ROADBLOCKS TO LEARNING

Unlearning old methods or habits can be difficult for people who have been performing their job for a number of years. In addition, certain common policies and procedures can create a wall. Bureaucratic creep, or the overabundance of steps and checkpoints in standard operating procedures, makes change difficult because the process has taken on a life of its own and dismantling it becomes a major endeavor.

Another roadblock to learning occurs when people feel unable to change their situation or believe that outcomes are beyond their control – attitudes that can result from low self-esteem, chronic failure, or other negative stimuli. So how do you unlearn old ways of doing things?

UNLEARNING OR UNTRAINING

In order to train your team on a new way of doing something, the team must engage in the process of recognizing what has become

obsolete and participating in creating the new way by discussing their prior habits, preconceptions, and knowledge.⁴ Instructors cannot simply conduct a training session and then demand compliance because this does not dismantle the ingrained mental maps.

The following seven tactics can help dismantle those old maps and untrain your team⁵:

1. Instead of demanding compliance, foster a sense of willingness among the team to unlearn the old way and learn the new way.
2. Encourage pursuit of the unfamiliar, realizing that many team members will show resistance.
3. Conduct the training in a new location. Move away from the site where the team learned the old way to a new location where they can learn a new way.
4. Bring in outside trainers because like-minded people in a group will hamper the unlearning/learning process.
5. Provide a “psychologically safe” environment where team members can ask questions and explore ideas without fear of looking stupid or being dismissed.
6. Set clear and challenging goals, giving team members a sense of ownership and the ability to achieve those goals.
7. Identify a “champion” for the learning process – someone who can offer support, handle glitches and provide regular feedback to the team as they go through the learning process. [VMD](#)

References available at [VMDtoday.com](#).

Adapt or Face Extinction

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

—Charles Darwin



Think about Uber and Netflix. These successful companies did not explode on the business scene because they were the strongest competitors. Rather, they were the most adaptable. Pioneering organizations, such as these two, dismantled the assumptions and practices of their respective industries, experimented, and built new ways to conduct what had been considered the routine veterinary business models of taxi service and movie rentals, respectively.²

What are some routine business models that you may need to dismantle in order to take your practice to the next level? Is it your team-to-DVM ratio? Your use (or lack thereof) of social media? Adding telemedicine to your practice? Innovative medical and management ideas will force practices to consider changing from the old way of doing things or, more precisely, to consider adapting in order to advance and survive extinction.

Louise Dunn is an award-winning speaker, writer and consultant who brings over 40 years of in-the-trenches experience and business education to veterinary management. She is founder and CEO of Snowgoose Veterinary Management Consulting, which helps veterinarians develop strategic plans that consistently produce results.

Google Dividing into Two Search Engines: Are You Ready?

The search giant is experimenting with making its search index “mobile-first.”

By Kelly Baltzell, MA

Google is almost 20 years old! When it started, the only way we could access the internet was through our clunky, heavy desktop computers. Cellphones were just that – phones. The internet only became widely available when Apple introduced the iPhone. Talk about a game-changer! Information suddenly became accessible anywhere, anytime through our phones. Quickly, people started using their mobile devices to find information instead of walking over to a desktop computer. There are now trillions of searches made on Google every year and, according to Google, half of those searches are made on mobile devices. Google is taking action based on this trend.

A few years ago, Google started to notify searchers when a result would be mobile-friendly, or easily viewed on a mobile device. Before a search result, a small tag was placed that said “mobile-friendly.” In April 2015, Google upped the game by requiring websites to pass its Mobile-Friendly Test (search.google.com/search-console/mobile-friendly). Now Google is testing a mobile-only search engine and a separate desktop search engine. Basically, what this means is that when people are searching the internet, Google will prioritize websites that are mobile-friendly over websites that were created only for desktops.

Google has led business owners step-by-step to be ready for this switch. Veterinary practice websites that do not play by Google’s latest rules and are not mobile-friendly will suffer in search results in this new index.

Google is making this switch because it wants people to use Google and not another search engine. (People forget that Google is a business, too.) To keep people engaged with

Google’s new mobile-first index will begin indexing search results based on the majority of its users – those on mobile devices.

Google, the results given per query need to be accurate, fast, and easy-to-read on *all* devices. Here’s how to prepare for the switch:

1. **Make sure your website passes Google’s Mobile-Friendly Test** (see above).
2. **Eliminate all duplicate content on your website.** Google wants unique, creative content that lives in only one place on the internet. Google named this the Google Panda rule, and no businesses are exempt. To check to see whether your site has unique content, go to Copyscape.com.
3. **Review all of your practice information for accuracy** in the Google My Business directory (google.com/business/).

Don’t panic if your practice website fails the test. Just talk to your website or marketing provider to create a plan to come into compliance. In the meantime, desktop ranking will still be an option. However, Google has hinted that how well a hospital ranks in the mobile index will affect desktop placement in search. Now is the time to mobilize for this change, before it is out of beta! [VMD](#)

Kelly Baltzell, MA, is the CEO of Beyond Indigo Pets (beyondindigopets.com), now in its 20th year of business and a certified Google Partner. She writes for and speaks to veterinarians around the world. Talk to Kelly and the Beyond Indigo team about the latest Google changes.



Building an Effective Website from Scratch

Tips for website look, feel and content.

By VMD Staff

For most prospective clients, your website is their first glimpse into your practice. Beyond introducing you, your staff and your facility, your website functions as a marketing tool, encouraging people to learn more and ultimately make an appointment.

You've heard the saying, "First impressions are everything," and it's important to keep this in mind when you think about designing your website. If you're not going to hire a web designer to build your site, many tools are available online. Fortunately, it isn't too hard to build a simple, effective website on your own, but there are several things you must do to ensure your site is as impressive as possible.

HIGHLIGHT WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU DO

This might seem like a no-brainer, but how many times have you stumbled across a website and been unable to determine what the company actually does? Unfortunately, this is still somewhat common, even today.

Your website home page should feature your practice name front and center. Don't leave anyone guessing that you're a veterinarian. You want them to know it the second they see your home page. If you offer specialty services, be sure to highlight them. You want your home page to contain a brief, focused message that includes details about you and your team, your professional capabilities and the easiest ways to contact you. There's room to share more information on the other pages of your site.

MAKE NAVIGATION SIMPLE

After you've created your homepage, it's time to offer more detail on the other pages of your website. To make it easy for people to find the

information they're looking for, try to follow the "three-click rule" – a person should be able to find the information he or she needs just within three clicks.

Keep your navigation menu consistent across all pages of your website. You might find it helpful to create a toolbar that appears across the top of each page, listing all the pages that a visitor can jump to in a single click. You can also link to specific pages of your site by creating hyperlinks to other pages within the body of your website text. The mechanisms you choose to enable visitors to move around your site are up to you, but navigation should be as easy as possible.

KEEP IT STRUCTURED

Options abound when it comes to building your site from scratch, but try to keep it as structured and uncomplicated as possible. You want your site to be aesthetically pleasing while showcasing your practice. Think back to some poorly constructed websites you've seen. Did they have text boxes that didn't line up properly? Were there pictures or GIFs all over the place? Did the colors grab your attention only because they gave you a headache? These are all important considerations when nailing down the details of your site.

Regarding text, fonts such as Arial and Verdana are generally easier to read online. Try to keep the size of your text around 14 or 16 points, and don't use more than three different typefaces on a page. This helps keep your site design simple and streamlined.

When choosing colors, many health care professionals stick with a more neutral, open color scheme instead of bright, bold colors. You want to keep your prospective client's

emotions in mind when choosing a color scheme. If you're trying to portray a soothing office environment, for example, don't choose "loud" colors such as red or orange. Also, don't overdo it by picking 10 different colors. The colors you choose should blend well together, and there's no harm in using plenty of white space as filler to give your site a cleaner, more modern look.

CREATE CONTENT WITH YOUR BUSY AUDIENCE IN MIND


Having some clinical information on your website can be very useful to pet owners looking for general pet health and wellness information, particularly when your practice is not open. This type of content serves as a great resource and can also attract new clients to your practice.

That said, keep in mind that people expect to be able to scan a page quickly to get the information they need. You should make it easy to scan your pages by using paragraph breaks, subheadings, bullet points or images to break up large text blocks. Breaking up content makes it easier for an online audience to read, which can lead people to take action by calling you.

Keep your content short, simple, and relevant. Words matter and so does the order you put them in.

If you're not confident in your writing skills, hire a professional copywriter who can create content that will grab your readers' attention. No one wants to read a huge wall of text in which the author rambles, uses bad grammar or doesn't say anything that interests the reader. If you want people to keep reading, then keep the message engaging. **VMD**

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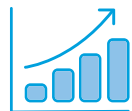
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