

## **Capturing the Heart of Your Team: The Importance of Training New Members**

By now you have selected the best candidate for your team. What comes next? It is “Sealing the Deal” with your new team member so that they become, and continue to be, a dedicated, long-term team member of your practice. For the next 3 months, this series will center on just how to do that! We will be focusing on team training, and how proper training of these team members will advance your practice to the next level.

For the first article in the series; we’re focusing on the New Team Member.

Training and Development is the framework to the success of any new team member. When new team members are interested and committed to what they do, their organizational skills, knowledge, and abilities grow. And in turn, happy team members produce their best work. When training is done correctly from the beginning of employment and tracked throughout their tenure, your practice will yield higher profits through reduced costs, increased team member retention, improved production, as well as other positive tangible results.

Before the training process begins; you need the existing team members “on the bus” in their role in the training process. This is one of tools you will learn from “Good to Great” by Jim Collins. He shows that taking your business from good to great doesn’t require a high-profile CEO, the latest technology, innovative change management, or even a fine-tuned business strategy. It takes culture and discipline.

Payroll is the number one cost of in your business. There are both tangible and intangible payroll costs to your business. Did you know that if you lose an \$8/hour team member, it will cost you \$13,500 to replace that person, or 81% of their annual salary, according to the Well Managed Practice Report? When there is a lot of turnover you will often see stress increase on current team members, as well as a decrease in your client experience. You as a business owner must be aware and be willing to make a change. Here are some tips to help end this vicious cycle.

So how can you train your new team members in the most effective manner to assure your great, new candidate stays on board?

The first important step is a complete orientation program. It starts with an explanation of the vision, mission and culture of the practice. All team members need to not only buy in - they must believe and works toward those goals and mission within the culture. Regardless if it is your first day or you are the most tenured team member, you are an ambassador or representative of the practice. Orientation is not just the leader’s role. The entire team needs to make sure the following items are covered to guarantee the process starts off on the right foot.

- A company history review
- Identification of your culture and mission
- Review of your practice’s structure
- A practice tour
- A Meet & Greet with other team members
- A overview, a written document, of HR policies including:
  - Compensation
  - OSHA
  - Emergency contacts

“Together we will make your practice team soar.”

- Uniforms and/or dress code
- Guidelines on how the new team member is going to be held accountable as a team member

The next step is what is referred to in HR circles as “on-boarding,” or making that emotional commitment to your practice.

- “Sealing the Deal” with the new team member. To effectively do so, you can:
  - Develop A Buddy System
- This should include seeking out feedback for the new member from other existing members
- The Buddy System, if done correctly, can assist the practice in finding their abilities when it comes to things such as conflict resolution, learning, and speaking.
  - Build a Happy Team member. What can you be doing to keep energizing your team?
- Drive Learning Training has notoriously been a de-stressor in the business. It gives the member a sense of accomplishment.
- Hold Weekly Meetings. But these weekly meetings should not just discuss housekeeping issues; these meetings should focus on CE programs, and other informative opportunities.

Once you’ve established your new team member’s training or learning style, you can educate them in the format that assures they excel personally and professionally. So take the time to define and match the teaching and learning styles of the individuals involved. Most adults learn best by a combination of 3 or 4 styles.

You will also want to know if your student prefers hands on learning. What about asking if they prefer the class room style or being part of a large group? Most people in our profession prefer small or one-on-one.

- Active Learners = people who tend to be hands-on, like to try things and learn by explaining or repeating newly-acquired tasks to others
- Reflective learner = people that tend to prefer to work alone and think about things in-depth
- Sensing or Factual = people that like to learn by an established method such as “cheat sheets,” and also do well with hands-on activities
- Intuitive or Investigation = people that like to do things on their own, they like math, and tend to catch onto new things quickly
- Visual = people that prefer pictures and materials in written form, and like demonstrations (i.e. when teaching to read a fecal, you should give a picture of what parasite eggs look like)
- Verbal = people that need to hear the information in order to understand it, and do better when they take over the explaining
- Sequential/Step-by-step = people that do well with logical information (i.e. when showing how to read a fecal, give them step-by-step instructions on accomplishing this task)
- Global = people that need to know what the big picture is to excel (i.e. they read a fecal and can understand WHY it’s important)

Remember, a tenured team member is the best fit for your practice; they are emotionally committed to your practice and it’s vision & goals. You then have the best odds to be successful in ***Capturing Their Heart*** and you’ll have a dedicated team member for a very long time.

### **Next month: How Do You Keep Your Team Energized?**

*After twenty one years of managing in the veterinary field, Louise S. Dunn started Snowgoose Veterinary Management Consulting, which provides technical assistance to practice teams to meet their strategic*

*plans. SVMC works with a wide variety of practices. They range from large specialty hospitals ranging from 1-100 team-member companion animal referral centers, mixed animal hospitals to single veterinarian practices. Ms. Dunn has held practice management workshops at many veterinary schools. She is widely published and speaks internationally and nationally. (Including ACVIM, TNAV, CVC, WVC, AAHA, VSIPP and AVMA.) She serves as an officer of VetPartners, is a member of the AAHA Leadership Practice Management Advisory Committee, the VHMA, VESPA and AVMLA. Louise brings a unique combination of business, in the trenches experience, knowledge and tools to the veterinary industry. Her passions include her family, veterinary practice management, kayaking and the New England Patriots. Louise was named WVC 2007 Practice Management Educator of the year.*

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