VetLead

HOW TO CREATE A
FULLY ACCOUNTABLE TEAM

In Your Veterinary Practice

WHY ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS

A manager's job is not about putting out fires

Many supervisors feel like all they do is come to work to solve problems. When we start building accountability on our team, we see those issues start to dissipate and we can begin focusing on other things.

The team can do more, faster.

In many hospitals, decision-making is slow. An accountable team can do more, and make decisions faster because they are at the source of the challenge.

Employee engagement increases

Nobody wants to go to work to be micromanaged. As we build an accountable team it becomes more engaged and will take more ownership of their actions and outcomes.

Someone gets to think about the future

As our team becomes more accountable, we are spending less time putting out fires and trying to get through the day. This creates space for us to think about the future of our practice, and what we want it to look like in the future.

Decreased stress

Veterinary practices are chaotic places where it is easy to become stressed. As accountability increases, stress decreases because we get better at solving problems in the moment and don't simply look to blame others.

Happier leaders

Leaders don't show up thinking, "Today I get to deal with someone else's problems and solve challenges I didn't create." As accountability grows, leaders will enjoy being productive and accomplishing more, and that is good for everyone.

DEFINING ACCOUNTABILITY

How do we make accountability an essential part of our culture? First, we need to create a clear picture of what accountability means and for what actions everyone in our practice should be accountable. Our definition of accountability should be used to guide the communication and coaching we provide to our employees.

Once we define accountability, we can support employees who are moving in the right direction, and have meaningful, explicit conversations with those who are struggling to get there.

Accountable

FUTURE

OWNERSHIP

SOLUTION

PROACTIVE

REACTIVE

PROBLEM

BLAME

PAST

Victim

3 WAYS TO **CREATE** ACCOUNTABILITY

1   Ask accountability-based questions

When someone comes to us with a problem, we can create accountability with the questions we ask. Instead of telling the answer, ask questions like, "If we wanted to fix that by the end of the week, what would we do?" or "What ideas do you have about how we can do that better?" This creates an environment in which team members become more engaged and begin thinking about how to solve problems themselves.

2   Call out and support accountable actions

When we see someone do something that is results-oriented or represents a proactive approach, we can create accountability by recognizing and supporting them. If we say, "When you do that, it helps us become better as a team," it lets the person know what to do more of and accountability grows.

3   Address victim behavior and mistakes with questions that help people think about accountability

When someone makes a mistake it is easy to point out what they have done wrong. Instead of calling attention to it and placing blame, we can create accountability by asking specific questions like, "What's your process for doing this?" or "What are the steps you could take to be more successful in this area?"

4 WAYS TO DESTROY ACCOUNTABILITY

1   Assign blame

When our team members know they'll get blamed when something goes wrong they are less likely to try new things or take initiative. This creates a culture in which people thinks it's not worth being proactive, and accountability can't grow in that kind of environment.

2   Want all the ownership

One of the most difficult things we can do as leaders is give up control. It is easy to think, "What if I let them do this, and the result is terrible?" But, starting with the team's solutions builds commitment and accountability, and we can help them shape their ideas after they have them.

3   Confuse preferences with principles

We may have preferences as leaders about things like what pictures hang on the wall of our reception area, but that doesn't mean we have to go replace the one that is there. Principles, on the other hand, are things like how we treat our clients and pets, and they can be discussed and adopted by everyone.

4   Give unbalanced feedback

As humans, we are quick to criticize, but less likely to provide positive feedback. If our team feels like all they hear from us is what they're doing wrong, they will become less engaged and less accountable. Instead, we can make an effort to "catch people doing something right" and offer positive feedback every day.

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