

# HOW TO BE A **SUPERVISOR AND A FRIEND**

In Your Veterinary Practice



# MYTHS ABOUT SUPERVISING FRIENDS

Veterinary practices are busy, often chaotic places where people work closely together to deliver the best possible care for pets and pet owners. Often, in smaller practices it's natural to get to know your co-workers well. Some of you may even become friends.

Yet, many managers think they can't be friends with people they supervise. And it can seem even more awkward when a friend gets promoted.

## 3 Myths About Supervising Your Friends

1

### **I have to stop being friends with people I manage or supervise**

Being in a supervisory role doesn't mean you can make and have friends in your practice. Neither does it mean you have to distance yourself or end a friendship when you get promoted. It can feel challenging, but remember, many qualities that friends and good leaders have in common overlap - like being willing to have tough conversations and finding ways to be supportive.

2

### **I must be authoritative so I can't be friends with them also**

As humans, we can't help but notice mistakes. In veterinary practices it's not uncommon for supervisors to feel like they're spending a lot of time cleaning up mistakes. But, if we want our team members to improve, we need to help them become more and develop new, positive habits. Employees are unlikely to experience meaningful change because a supervisor gets angry or is mean to them. Just as you would a friend, you can help all members of your team focus on moving in a positive direction.

3

### **People will always assume I am playing favorites because I am closer with some team members**

When you have friends you manage it may be normal for people to *initially* assume you have favorites. But, how you focus on leadership and coaching can quickly show people on your team that you care about their growth and success. When you are fair, your team members will notice.

# THINGS YOU DO FOR BOTH FRIENDS AND PEOPLE ON YOUR TEAM

If you think about things a good leader does for his or her team, you might come up with a list that includes supporting them, coaching them, delivering feedback, and helping them become more successful. **These are the same qualities you might identify in a good friend.**

Consider these things you can do as a friend and a supervisor:



## **Be honest**

Having difficult conversations can be difficult. But, wouldn't we rather hear tough news from someone we consider a friend who cares about our success and wellbeing?



## **Support them when they are struggling**

Just as we are quick to recognize mistakes, we also take note when someone on our team is struggling. Good friends - and good leaders - encourage practice and development.



## **Support them when they are successful**

On the other side of things, good leaders and good friends celebrate success. They recognize progress and help others see it too. And, they offer support and encouragement to keep moving forward.



## **Be a good listener and a good coach**

When you're a good listener, both friends and people you lead will learn that you want their ideas and their input. And, effective coaching is defined by asking good questions and listening to the answers.

### **Bonus Questions**

- What would you tell a friend who said they were unhappy at work?
- What would you tell a friend who said they were struggling with challenges at work?

# HOW TO BE A **GOOD LEADER** FOR YOUR FRIENDS AND YOUR TEAM

Being a friend and a supervisor is possible, and being self aware can help you become better at both.

Here are some things you can do that will benefit you, your friends, your team, and your practice:



## **Create a transparent process**

When you have a transparent process for promoting and paying based on performance, it's difficult for anyone to assume that the friendship got someone the job. You need to be consistent here as a leader. A clear process for how you get a raise or a promotion benefits every team, whether the manager has friends on it or not.



## **Make sure you set expectations for your friends**

Don't hesitate to talk to your friends about the realities of being on your team. Let them know that they cannot take advantage of the social relationship, as it will degrade the team and their ability to be successful, as well as your own.



## **Show the same intensity and interest for supporting everyone**

It doesn't matter where your friends and team members are on the performance spectrum. What we can't do is give people differing levels of support, coaching, investment or feedback. Doing so can give the impression that you're playing favorites.



## **Balance your time with social functions**

If the culture in your practice is social, be sure you are inclusive by inviting everyone out. Then, make it your practice to spend time with different people. Team events are great opportunities for you to bond, get to know people, and connect, all of which can make your team stronger.



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