



CHANGING THE CULTURE

IN YOUR VETERINARY PRACTICE



WHY CULTURE IS IMPORTANT

Culture defines what 'good' looks like.

People make choices about how to behave based on what they see around them. The culture you have in your practice will determine the behaviors, actions, and reactions of your team. Individuals are only as good as the culture allows them to be, so give careful consideration to what your underlying culture promotes or discourages.

New hires make decisions on how to act based on your culture

The culture in your practice not only dictates the behaviors of your current employees, but it also teaches new hires how to behave. It is a constant and natural pressure for people to act a certain way each day. Learning to leverage how culture works for, or against, your goals as a practice is crucial.

You get to choose what kind of culture you want in our practice.

The choice is not whether or not to have a culture. Rather it is what type of culture you want your practice to have. If you don't actively decide what type of culture you want and need in your practice, you fall victim to the one that naturally evolves.

Culture is more powerful than any verbal or written policy.

You can have the most comprehensive set of policies, procedures, and training manuals available, but your culture determines whether or not these get followed or merely collect dust. Instructions and expectations only work to influence behavior when the culture supports them.

DEFINING THE CULTURE YOU WANT

Many veterinary practices have never taken time to consciously make a choice about what kind of culture they want. But, as leaders we get to decide how it should look and how it can and should grow.

Answering these questions as a team can help you define the culture you want in your practice.

What kind of environment do we want to work in?

What kind of team will help us be most successful?

What do we want our clients to say about us?



DEFINING THE CULTURE YOU WANT

What do we want to feel like at the end of a workday?

What difference do we want to make?

Why is a culture like this worth building?

When you answer the questions above as a team, you empower everyone to have a say, share values, and walk away with a personal connection to the new culture, vision, and direction of the practice.

ALIGNING BEHAVIORS

How do we now change the way we think, work, and act in order to align ourselves to this newly defined culture? As leaders, we have to go first and model our behaviors to drive the culture we wish to create. Knowing this means you have to be extra aware of your own behaviors in order to model appropriately.

Working through these questions with your team can help you begin to align behaviors with the culture you have defined.

What behaviors, by us as individuals, would make this kind of culture consistently happen?

How would we show up for our day?

How would we communicate with each other?

ALIGNING BEHAVIORS

How would we solve problems?

What would we do when things aren't going well?

How would we support each other to make these behaviors consistent?

What behaviors would destroy the kind of culture we want to build?



BUILDING LASTING HABITS

Habits are simply one of the processes our brain uses to become more efficient. They are central to what we do as leaders because they are responsible for a large portion of the activities that we do each day.

Working through this exercise will help you build new habits that align with the culture you have defined.

What habits, if I had them and did them consistently, would help to create the best culture for the practice?

Make sure your habits are connected to your desired outcome. For example: If I want to convey a culture of open communication in my practice, I may schedule morning huddles to discuss the day's schedule and plan. Therefore my habit would be to gather my team daily for a five-minute huddle before the day starts.

Write down your plan for executing your new habit by using as many details and steps as you possibly can.

BUILDING LASTING HABITS

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What environmental changes can you make to set yourself up for success?

*Support yourself with things in your environment that help you implement your new habit.
Example: I will make sure there is always an open room for my team's daily morning huddle.*

Remember ...

- 🐾 We can create a process for habit formation and repeat it
- 🐾 Its easier to build new habits than break bad ones
- 🐾 Focused repetition matters as much as anything
- 🐾 The more we build good habits, the more we build good habits
- 🐾 Supporting habit formation lets us rely less on willpower

SUPPORT EACH OTHER THROUGH CULTURE CHANGE

Use these topics of conversation as you support your team:

- 🐾 What are some of the things you are doing that help us achieve our desired culture?
- 🐾 What are some of the things that you might change to contribute even more to us moving in that direction?
- 🐾 How can I support you as you continue to help us achieve the culture we decided was important to us?

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