

Building blocks for positive team culture

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Abstract

This session will explore fundamental principles and actions that contribute to positive team culture. Building on best hiring, retaining and performance development practices, understanding team dynamics, setting ground rules, holding everyone accountable and being honest with positive intentions can set the stage for practice culture that contributes to overall practice success. Overwhelmingly, high functioning teams are those with contributive and open team communication and shared values.

Key words: positive, culture, team, communication

Putting our own wellness and the wellness of your team, high on the priority list of things to do each day means forming true habits that actually become “involuntary” acts. Being mindful of self and others is the open door to building positive culture. Creating open and honest workplaces and teams needs great leadership, lots of courage and desire by all to enjoy being together and working toward a common goal.

Culture has so many definitions. It is truly difficult to try and make meaning of it that is relevant and specific to ourselves and our situations. Culture is simply what you and your people (work, family, friends, teams, etc) make of it. It is about the “feel” of it, the intangible, the nuance, the intrinsic value. This is a daunting subject in a world of medical, empirical thinkers (e.g. veterinary medicine). Yet, we all inherently know what it is, because it has individual relevance to each of us and we know when it’s good and when it ain’t. As human beings, we have a need to belong and be accepted. This is what positive culture does (and what negative culture does not), it gives us a place to be, to belong and to be accepted. Culture is built on the backs of the people in it. It cannot be told or directed or micromanaged. It needs to be led, to be nourished and to be felt by everyone. Veterinary teams have a foundation of caring and compassion and that needs to be well mixed with other ingredients; good leadership, good communication, joy, resilience and grit. Positive culture is what we all want. Using good communication skills, with positive intent and proactive leadership will get us there. But it does take effort and courage and self reflection,

Consider the following:

Does everyone speak the same “communication” language?

Get training in communication that is meaningful for everyone. Good communication sets a solid foundation for positive culture.

What is your WHY? Have lots of group discussion around *why* you do *what* you do.

What are the values? The goals? This is not what the leaders tell you it is, it’s what everyone believes it is.

What is the way you all want to be each day. What is your vibe? Foster and grow it.

What ONE word describes your work environment. How would an outsider spending a day with you talk about your culture or the “feel” of your practice?

Create a charter of conflict. Knowing how to dispute, disagree and talk back is a key component of building culture. For sure, a culture killer is gossip, finger pointing, negative thinking and talking and overall “this sucks” feelings of angst.

Lead with courage, with confidence and with positive intent. Your inside voice must match your outside one.

Define your leaders. Recognize each person’s leadership skills and have them spend more time doing that. Build strength based teams.

Who leads behavior? Who leads intent? Who leads the business? Does everyone know what everyone else does?

Create an asset inventory of your people. What does what the best? Put everyone’s skills on the table and talk about sharing them, teaching them and continuous development of them.

Be kind. For gosh sakes, be this, every day. Every. Day.

Focus on joy. Your joy, your coworkers joy, your clients joy, your patients joy, your family joy, your own animals joy.

Embrace failures as ways to learn. Celebrate them & learn from them.

Communication skills are not things some people are just born with. They are individual skills that can be taught, learned and practiced. When we develop each of them separately, then start putting them together, this leads to meaningful dialogue and more rewarding interactions.

When grouped together in the context of each persons’ personality and professional persona, they create a relationship with clients, with colleagues, with friends, and even with family, that becomes positive and regenerative. That’s the win! When we have good relationships with clients, patient care is improved and compliance is high. When we have good relationships with colleagues, friends, and family, we feel better, we do better and in many ways, we feel better.

Reference

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