Practice Culture and the Vet Nurse

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All vet nurses should have an interest in their practice culture.

Senior nurses / practice managers / head nurses – qualified nurses – trainee nurses – all will have some leadership responsibilities and all will be influenced by leadership.

Being aware of practice culture and actively trying to improve it will benefit everyone.

What is a culture of a workplace? Wikipedia

Organisational culture is the behaviour of humans who are part of an organisation and the meanings that the people attach to their actions.

Culture includes the organisation values, visions, norms, working language, systems, symbols, beliefs and habits. It is also the pattern of such collective behaviours and assumptions that are taught to new organisational members as a way of perceiving, and even thinking and feeling.

Organisational culture affects the way people and groups interact with each other, with clients, and with stakeholders.

Traditions

Traditions also contribute to your practice culture.

What unique traditions does your practice have?

What is it like to work at your practice?

The answer will help you gauge your practice culture.

Practice culture:

- How you things get done
- How you do your job
- The way team members interact with each other, their supervisors, the vets, clients
- How you dress, how you speak, what language is used
- How you have fun
Practice cultures may have a focus

Each practice culture is unique and may have different focus.

- Customer service focus
- Family friendly focus
- Excellent patient care focus
- Teamwork focus

Size of practice may influence the culture

- 1 vet practice
- 2-10 vet practice
- Multi-practice organisations
- Specialist centres
- Emergency centres
- University teaching hospitals
- Not for profit / charity

Role of nurses in the practice

Responsibility of nurses between – and within – practices varies.

Some nurses may:

- Perform nurse consults
- Perform initial physical examinations
- Communicate with clients about complex patient care
- Perform dental checks and scale and polish
- Run weight management clinics
- Run puppy preschools
- Discuss nutritional choices with clients

Why work towards a good practice culture?

- Practice is more productive
- Greater job satisfaction
- Better client outcomes
- Better patient outcomes

It’s a win-win – everyone is better off.

Levels of choices and commitment to work

1. Creative Excitement
2. Heartfelt Commitment
3. Cheerful Cooperation
4. Willing Compliance
5. Indifference
6. Malicious Obedience
7. Rebel or Quit

*Steven Covey, ‘The Eighth Habit’*

*Where are you at?*

- On your best day
- On your worst day

**Workplace relationships**

*What makes a practice a great place to work?*

- TRUST the people they work for and with
- Have PRIDE in what they do
- ENJOY the people they work with

**Trust**

Trust is the defining principle of a great workplace.

It is established when someone behaves reliably with competence and integrity.

Trust between:

- Employer – employee
- Employee – employer
- Employer – clients
- Practice – clients

**Trust – Mutual Respect – Friendship**

Relationships can build from trust to mutual respect to friendship.

Friendships are not essential to have a high performing practice as long as trust and mutual respect are established. However genuine friendships between staff at work can be very rewarding for individuals and the practice.

Practice cultures with genuine friendships can be very productive and enjoyable. There may be some risk of bringing personal issues into the workplace which can cause difficulties.

**Characteristics of a great practice culture**

- Trust – fosters integrity and honesty, mistakes are acknowledged / managed
- Open and respectful communication – encourages all team members to contribute and to not feel intimidated/embarrassed, encourages new ideas and creativity
- Value differences and talent diversity – everyone has strengths and weaknesses
- Team interests are put before individual’s – genuine collegial, collaborative, partnering behaviour, barriers are identified and shared responsibility for removing barriers
- Continuous learning
- Employees are empowered to make decisions about their job roles
• Encourages new ideas and creativity
• Encourages enjoyment and fun

Consider: what can foster a toxic practice culture?

Qualities employers / practice managers look for

Will this person fit in and contribute to our practice culture?

• Ability to work in a team vs caring only for individual
• A loyal honest trustworthy person vs dishonest, talking behind peoples backs
• Hard working vs lazy
• Striving to better themselves vs not trying to improve
• Knowing the importance of punctuality and appearance vs being late, scruffy appearance
• A friendly personality with other staff / clients vs not wanting to engage
• A good representative of the practice
• Keen multi-tasker vs disinterested clock-watcher
• Time efficient vs seeming busy but not finishing task / not using time efficiently
• Interested in overall practice performance / function vs only concerned with own responsibility

Behaviour = Practice Culture

Practice culture is defined by the behaviours of the members not by what someone thinks it is or by what is written in formal practice documents.

Practice culture is displayed every time you deal with a client or with another team member or perform a task caring for a patient.

Everyone contributes to the practice culture and it is worthwhile to consider how you can help improve your practice culture so everyone can benefit – vets, nurses, clients and patients.

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