

HR bootcamp – building your dream team

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Abstract

Close your eyes and imagine your dream team. What does it look like? How does it function? Now recognize that that can be your reality. This presentation will go over what you need in place before assembling your dream team. We will discuss how to attract the right people and identify the team members you really want (and those you don't) in the interview process. Effective onboarding and orientation are critical for establishing your new hire as a successful team member. And then, once you get them in the place, you need to be proactive about retention.

Key words: veterinary practice, practice management, veterinary team, recruitment, culture

Preparing

There are a few things you need to establish in your practice before you can effectively build your dream team. You must know and use your mission, your vision and your core values. This is your purpose, and it defines your culture. You need to have a comprehensive policy manual that has been run by an attorney. This both defines how you want your practice to function, as well as offering you protection against frivolous complaints. In addition to the policy manual, I recommend a code of conduct that literally describes the behaviors you expect from your team members. In a perfect world, what positions would you like to have within your practice in the future? Don't assign people to them at this point, just identify the positions and then give them each a job description. If you have a small practice or you don't have any management structure in place, you may be the one doing everything in each of these job descriptions right now. The goal would be to outsource them strategically once you have them identified and described.

Recruiting

Now that you have all the structure in place, how do you get that perfect team member to find you? You need to get the word out that you have a position available in multiple ways. Enlist your team members in the recruiting process. If they're a good fit at your practice, their friends may be too. They're also not going to refer someone to the practice who's not a hard worker because they recognize that would make their job harder. You should put a banner on your website, announce it on your social media platforms, and put a sign in front of your building. Reach out to schools in your area that educate veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and veterinary assistants. You can do paid advertisements on veterinary-specific and non-veterinary specific sites. I think of recruitment as an extension of marketing. Most people applying for a job will look at the social media and website accounts of that business. Make sure that your culture is reflected in those areas. You need a career page that is easy to find on your website and gives an applicant all the information they would need to know about being a team member in your practice. This allows you to keep any outgoing advertisements short and to the point.

Interviewing

Once you've got some applicants, enter the interview process. I recommend reviewing resumes and cover letters and then conducting quick 3-to-5-minute phone interviews. Candidates who move on from that stage move into a group or individual interview. Candidates who move through that phase then have a "skills assessment" at your practice. During this entire interview phase, you are looking for an individual who fits into your vision, mission and core values. It doesn't matter how good their skill set is, if they are going to have a negative attitude and suck the energy out of your existing team, they will not be an asset to your practice. Once you're ready to make an offer to the perfect team member, discuss your detailed job description, policy manual and code of conduct. This is also where you would do any personality testing, drug screens or background checks.

Onboarding, orientating and retaining

Congratulations, you found the right person and they've accepted your offer. Now the real work begins. You must have a structured and efficient onboarding and orientation process to establish that team member into the position swiftly. The trainee needs to understand the process and their role in it. They need a point of contact for check-ins and evaluations. Don't drop the ball in this phase. The last thing that you would want is for that perfect team member to leave your practice, so regular check-ins or stay interviews are important for that person and everyone on your entire team. Team members want to be empowered and know their path to growth and wage increases so be transparent about those opportunities. Maintain your positive culture. This involves you holding everyone accountable for the code of conduct. Bottom line, work diligently and purposefully to retain your team.

That dream team that you're picturing is just around the corner. Focusing on creating a positive culture, attracting the right people, using the interview process to identify the team member you want, onboarding and orienting them effectively, and then giving them a reason to stay will make your dream a reality.

