

How Veterinary Owners Can Find Time to Work On Their Practice

Nate: So, I don't know about you Andy, one of the most common difficulties we hear from clients in terms of implementing strategy and overall just growth, managing the practice as we all get stretched in many directions, but particularly true of the veterinary world, where even an owner has to wear many, many hats. It could be HR, that could be, you know, practicing provider. That could be psychologist, therapist, all the things that can happen as you manage a workforce in a practice. One of the topics that comes up often is finding time to work on the practice, rather than in the practice, and taking some time to step back. So something I always encourage folks to do is to meet with us, for the folks that work with us, quarterly, and reserving an hour and a half or two hours of time to talk about the practice and work on the practice together as designated time. But there's probably a lot of strategies and opportunities to do that, that that would work and would be advisable to continue the viability of a practice.

Andy: Yeah, there are only so many hours in the day. Payrolls are stretched thin. Retaining, attracting talent. There's shortages everywhere, right? So what ends up happening is you just work more hours, and you try to squeeze in more patients, because there's such a demand, okay? And the only way to grow is to see more people or expand hours. And so what you quickly realize time goes by and you never spend time to plan. You never spend time to look at the future. You never spend time to see if there's improvements that can and should be made in your practice that would improve operation, which would improve profitability, which might improve morale and culture. And there's so many ways to do it, but the concept is, yes, taking, making yourself take time, whether it's one hour a quarter, half a day a month, whatever that might be, time set aside each week to really be stepping outside of your practice and looking at it from above and saying, okay, what's working, what's not working, what could be better.

Nate: And there's probably parts of this or initiatives that you might have in mind, or even that your team might have in mind, that could be delegated, which is something that you know pretty much everybody could probably be better at, but identifying some key staff that can help you with some of this work on the practice can be equally beneficial and empower them. Give them a little bit of purpose, give them some insight and some accountability over what happens day-to-day, and taking ownership of making it a better place to work.

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Andy: I like to put it in three buckets. Typically, what makes or breaks you is your people, your process, or your technology, or some combination of the three, and so it's really important to look at the operation and the process of how you're doing things, and are we following best practices? Who's the leader of these practice? Practices? What's the patient experience from the time they walk in the door until they walk out of the door? Is our technology holding us back? Could we make an investment and be expanding the procedure mix that we offer? Could it leverage the DVMs and the practice owners to allow their, their staff to do more procedures and to see more patients in a day? Do we have the right people in the right seats on the bus. I just think people process technology, taking a step back, looking at that in your practice, can really set yourself up for success in the future.

Nate: You're right, and certainly there's an element of this that could fall eventually outside the practice too, right? Maybe that's helping outsource payroll. Maybe that's taking some of your management functions and hiring somebody or outsourcing it to some sort, some sort of service, be that a bookkeeping service, CPA firm. There's all sorts of options out there, more than ever, to help you manage your practice, and the key to taking advantage of those is consciously finding the time to take that step back and really think about things strategically, whether that's at whatever time of night you want to with, you know, metrics and reports pulled up on your phone, or if that's setting some time of day, maybe before the practice opens, or whatever time fits for you to make that a reality and have some control over the next steps for your organization.

Andy: I'm glad you brought that up, because that's a standing agenda item. It's okay. You've got limited resources here. What resources that aren't here can you tap into to free yourself up for more of what only you can do.

Nate: Exactly. It's a conversation and an item that should continue to be evaluated, especially with burnout rates in the veterinary industry as they are, and it's something to be conscious of that can really help improve the overall flow day to day, the overall mental fatigue that can happen to all levels within a practice and two, to obtain the objective of continuing to grow and develop in a way that's sustainable.

Andy: Burnout is real. Sometimes it feels like an overused term, but in the veterinary world, especially, it's real. And so I totally encourage taking the step back before you get to that point of, you know, circling with your key people and just saying, okay, how do we make this process better?

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And otherwise, like I said, the years go by and you never really take the time to step back and look at the operation as a whole.

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