



Employee Leadership

Article by Nels Lindberg, DVM

Set new hires up for work success.

You've done an excellent and thorough job throughout the entire hiring process. You've not just hired the right experience for the job, but the right person to join your team. As well, you've also worked through each detail of the onboarding process. So now, let's focus on what success looks like for your newest team member in his or her new career at your awesome veterinary clinic.

In doing so, we want to focus on three key aspects: 1) Key Results Areas, 2) Training and 3) Retention.

Implement KRAs

We have talked about Key Results Areas (KRAs) in prior articles. At our clinic, we have replaced our job description with KRAs. The two are similar in that they need to be

detailed and have extreme clarity. They serve as a written guide, which allows clarity and accountability, for both you and your new hire. And they define, in detail, what winning or success is for this new person.

We want a KRA to:

- State the main goal or overall mission of the clinic in order to build the foundation for successful daily habits.
- State individual duties from most to least important, setting the precedent of when and what to do each day, while giving guidance and direction to the new team member.
- Ask questions so that the team member can provide input and give opinions on his or her own daily routine, as well as the mission. Once a team member has been in the

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trenches, this person often forms new ideas on things we don't do or should do differently, and/or things that he or she may not necessarily like that could be changed.

Dr Ty, whom has taken over implementation and execution of KRAs at our clinic, shares, "In my opinion, it's very important when first implementing KRAs that you set down with each individual and go through each key point to make it clear this is how things will be done and set the standard. Then you must revisit each KRA over time to be sure nothing needs to change. Most importantly, there will be team members who struggle with change and everyone will have at least one task they have difficulty following. It's very important these issues are met head on (with love, grace and patience) every time or the KRA will fail."

Train for success

Training is our next aspect of helping people succeed at work. Oftentimes we get our people hired and then just turn them loose. We may take for granted what their skills

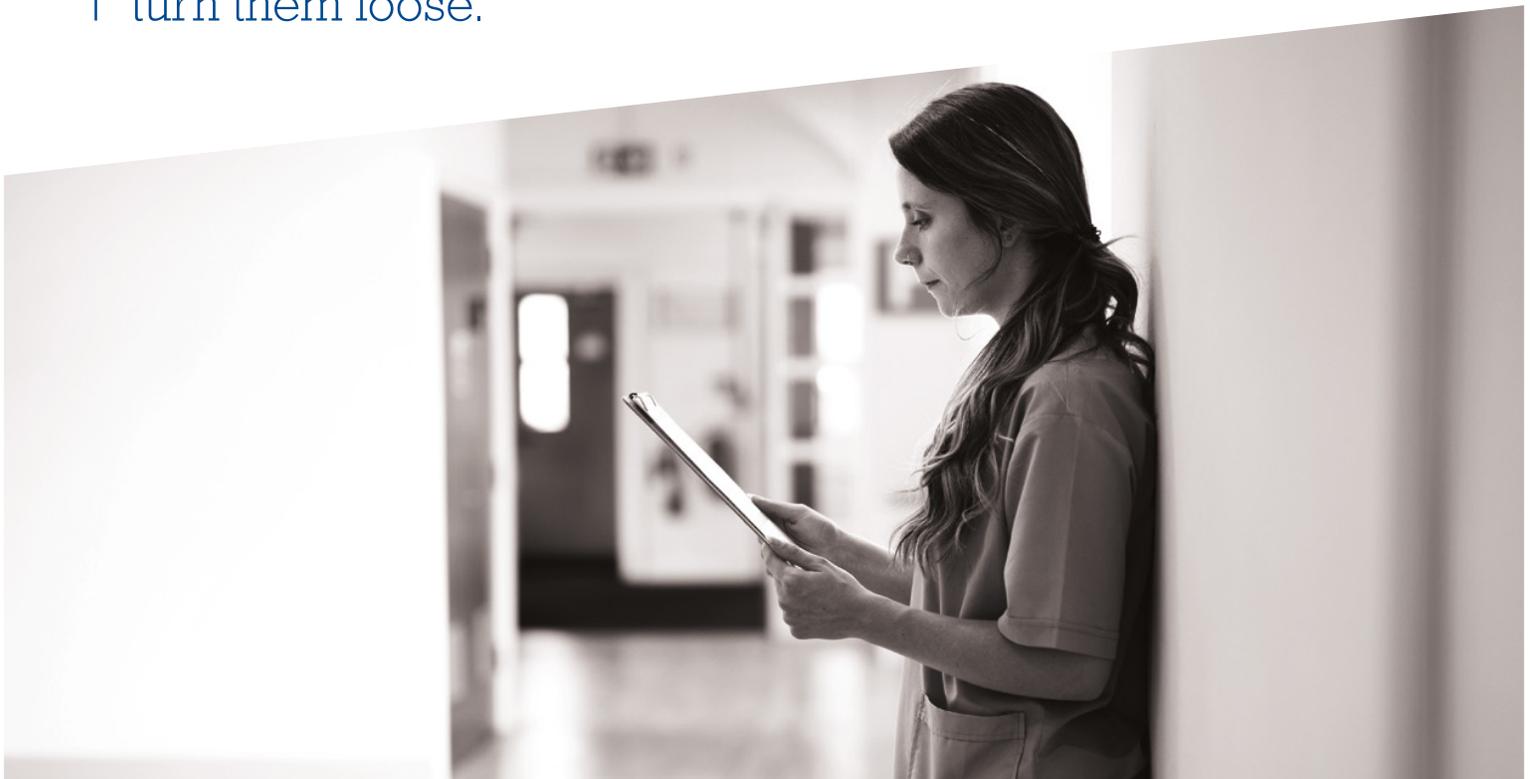
may or may not be. We assume they can properly restrain a dog to draw blood or halter a horse and lead it into a set of stocks. But, before we assume, we must begin some very intentional training.

For example, we want to take the time to work on a dog, without clients present. Go through all the basic restraint techniques needed to draw blood, trim nails and give vaccinations, while also reviewing the simple things, one being how to approach a dog.

Much like all other things in regards to training, we often focus on things we believe are important, but often overlook some of the smallest, yet most important, details given our assumptions of our team member's knowledge.

Take some time, as our Dr Ty did, and set up a training seminar with a local dog trainer and go over basic canine handling and behaviors. In all trainings, include some key factors of always explaining the "why" we do what we do. Understanding the "why" someone is doing what they

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are doing versus just telling them to "just do it" creates a higher chance of successful execution.

While we can do many things right throughout this entire hiring and training process, we often have people we allow "into our fold" that still leave our practices. Losing a person—after we have poured our heart and soul into them so that they may enjoy success at our clinic—can be devastating. Therefore, we must always be thinking about how we can retain our people.

Focus on retention strategies

Retention requires a focus on someone's strengths rather than weaknesses. We must strive to instill a culture where people carry out work that plays to their core strengths. In a strong culture, one person will be strong where one person may be weak. As leaders, we must ensure everyone is working on what energizes them, not what depletes them.

We must also create a culture of focusing on other people's needs. We aren't asking people to think less of themselves, but we are asking them to think of themselves less often. A 2012 study by *Wall Street Journal* (Europe) and iOpener Institute for People and Performance revealed that happier workers help their colleagues 33 percent more than their least happy colleagues. It is as simple as asking your people to always lend a helping hand.

"We've all experienced the boost that happens when we lend a helping hand to someone else, and this pay-it-forward principle holds true in the workplace," says Melody Wilding, licensed therapist and workplace psychology expert. "Whether it's taking on some simple tasks for an overwhelmed colleague or grabbing an extra coffee to give away in the morning, giving back to your team is a surefire happiness hack."

Lastly, people want to be a part of something greater and bigger than themselves. Therefore, we must also remove any barriers that may have a negative impact on the employee's success. We want for them to understand the big picture in order to perform most effectively by knowing our mission, core values and purpose of the clinic's being.

It should be our No. 1 mission to make sure our people we lead at the clinic enjoy what they do, are successful at it, and go home each day with a fulfilled heart. Most often it is us, as leaders, who fail to do the things discussed in this article that allows one of our people to fail and not succeed career-wise. Implement your KRAs, do some intentional training sessions, and give some focus on retention strategies.



Nels Lindberg, DVM, is a graduate of Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine and the owner of Animal Medical Center (AMC) in Great Bend, Kan. Dr. Nels is also owner of Progressive Beef Consulting Services and Research, and is a partner in Production Animal Consultation, an independent consulting group serving the protein industries. A Kansas native, Dr. Nels has published several articles in peer-reviewed publications and is frequently requested to speak at veterinary conferences and training events, sharing his expertise with numerous industry, professional and community organizations. Dr. Nels balances his busy veterinary practice with large animal consulting, public speaking, leadership training and business coaching. He and his wife Karen are parents to twins Nash and MacKenzie.

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