

Good Veterinary Workplaces: Taking action

Shaping practice culture as a team

Thank you for being involved in the first 'Good Veterinary Workplaces – Taking Action' webinar.

You are well on your way to knowing how best to approach change in your practice, however big or small. We hope you found the talks useful, inspirational, and interesting.

We want you to be able to take something from each talk and put it into action, even if it is just a slightly different mindset or viewpoint that helps in the future. So, along with the help of the speakers you saw earlier, we have put together some bits and pieces to bookend your experience.

There are some feedback questions too, so [please complete](#) the survey if you would like to see anything done differently next time – these sessions are led by, and created for, the veterinary community, so we value your input.

Takeaways from the talk

Hopefully you got...

- Inspiration to help you enhance an area or process of your workplace that may need updating
- The tools to enable the team to handle changes pragmatically
- Tips for establishing, or refining, a safe-space environment for teams to share ideas, qualms, and concerns at work

Speaker messages and activities

Thoughts from Ami Sawran

In terms of shaping your workplace culture, a simple place to start is by asking yourself what are the most chronic gripes in your team meetings? Can you think how to change them?

Open communication is crucial – lay out with the team your expectations for positive workplace culture. People can leave if not feeling listened to, so try and change the shift in importance for 121s, team meetings etc, where everyone can air concerns or suggestions.

Feedback is the greatest tool in your workplace. How much of a feedback culture do you have in your workplace? This is important but be aware that people like to offer feedback in different ways. You could start a feedback box so that people don't feel like it's as confrontational as speaking up. Sometimes, 'can I have a chat' creates a stressful thought process.

Remember though, you aren't responsible for all members of the team's happiness - you can't set yourself on fire to keep everyone else warm!

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Team activities:

Do a 'walk around'. Actually check how accessible your workplace is, look out for things that could be better (staff only area, admin space etc). See what could be changed that may improve staff happiness/culture.

Once you have discussed, as a team, any changes, TRIAL them. Nothing is permanent. Revisit them regularly and set a time limit for initial feedback/getting used phase. This will help to maintain your new normal. Monitor initiatives, be ready to receive feedback, and see what it leads to.

Thoughts from Elly Russell

Culture is easily embedded over time, but it can be shifted too. Ask what are the 'pebbles in your team's shoe'? The irritations, the pet peeves (no pun intended!).

Get familiar with promoting descriptive, specific feedback so that 'positive' feedback isn't just saying well done! That way feedback should be neither negative or positive: it's just closing the loop on the impact of behaviours and how that aligns (or doesn't) with intentions behind those. Makes it about the action and the impact not the person.

To understand how important frequent feedback is, think about trying to change the course of a rocket that has been launched to the moon. If it's off course even by a tiny bit, and we do nothing, by the time it's near to the moon it's miles off and takes a massive effort to course correct. Early intervention means little nudges can put it on the right course.

Team activity:

During your next all staff meeting get a big sheet of paper and all write down things you want to improve. These can be large or small. Try to implement at least one thing but talk about them all and hear everyone out. It can be helpful just talking it through, but hopefully you will get seismic change. Do this every month or two, making change happen each time.

Thoughts from Malcolm Morley

"Good workplaces foster a positive workplace culture by communicating and promoting shared values and attitudes to improve teamwork, raise morale, increase productivity and efficiency, and enhance retention."

This is directly from our Good Veterinary Workplace policy position, and it sums up what a positive culture can lead to so well. However, it can be easier said than done, so I hope you feel more confident in shaping your workplace culture a bit more after today. Try not to get overwhelmed by a mass of things to change and note that the most common action point is 'communicate'. Communication between all team members is fundamental and allows everyone to have their voice heard.

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Thank you for coming along to February's webinar, it was great to see so many of you logged in and adding your thoughts to the chat.

Don't forget, our next Taking Action webinar is at **1pm on Wednesday, March 15** with Dr Abosede 'GB' Ajayi, 'Speaking up and listening up – Creating psychological safety in practice'. [Register here](#).