

HOW TO DRIVE CHANGE IN YOUR PRACTICE

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In an engaging and entertaining session, we will talk about how to make sustainable change in your practice. Dr. Roark will share cautionary tales from practice to illustrate common mistakes in practice leadership.

Key points to success include: Anticipation of needs and concerns in other team members, empathy, precise word choice, and a sincere desire to understand those around us.

Proceeding:

Many seem to believe that only those given a leadership or management title are allowed to lead within a veterinary hospital. This is obviously not the case. Anyone inside a practice can choose to lead. It's an action, not a bureaucratic position.

According to an excellent post by Harvard Business Review in May, 2013, effective leaders use the following attributes to inspire and affect change¹:

They are seers — individuals who are living in the future, who possess a compelling vision of “what could be.” As human beings, we’re constantly looking forward, and we love to sign on with individuals who are already working on “the next big thing.”

They are contrarians — free of the shackles of conventional wisdom and eager to help others stage a jailbreak. It’s exciting to be around these free-spirited thinkers who liberate us from the status quo and open our minds to new possibilities.

They are architects — adept at building systems that elicit contribution and facilitate collaboration. They leverage social technologies in ways that amplify dissident voices, coalesce communities of passion and unleash the forces of change.

They are mentors — rather than hoarding power, they give it away. Like Mary Parker Follett, the early 20th-century management pioneer, they believe the primary job of a leader is to create more leaders. To this end, they coach, tutor, challenge and encourage.

They are connectors — with a gift for spotting the “combinational chemistry” between ideas and individuals. They help others achieve their dreams by connecting them with sponsors, like-minded peers, and complementary resources.

They are bushwhackers — they clear the trail for new ideas and initiatives by chopping away at the undergrowth of bureaucracy. They’re more committed to doing the right thing than to doing things right.

They are guardians — vigilant defenders of core values and enemies of expediency. Their unflinching commitment to a higher purpose inspires others and encourages them to stand tall for their beliefs.

They are citizens — true activists, their courage to challenge the status quo comes from their abiding commitment to doing as much good as possible for as many as possible. They are other-centered, not self-centered.

The front desk is the communication center for most veterinary hospitals. It is vitally important to customer service and communication success. Thus the value of a practice leader serving at the front desk should not be discounted.

Here are 6 tips for those who wish to assume a leadership role from the front desk:

1) *"Make the boss the hero. Learn to sell your ideas in the language of leaders. Just because you think something is important doesn't guarantee that anyone else will. Understanding your manager's priorities is a key to success..."*²

2) *"Be Consistent: If your desire is to minimize misunderstandings, then I would suggest you stop confusing people. Say what you mean, mean what you say, and follow-through on your commitments. Most people don't have to agree with you 100% of the time, but they do need to trust you 100% of the time. Trust cannot exist where leaders are fickle, inconsistent, indecisive, or display a lack of character. Never be swayed by consensus that calls you to compromise your values, rather be guided by doing the right thing. Finally, know that no person is universally right or universally liked, and become at peace with that."*³

3) *"Engage others: A high-performing team engages the efforts of every member, and effective team leaders seek out the best fit possible between members' interests and the tasks that need doing. Suggest writing down a list of chores and matching them up with individuals or subgroups. If no one wants a particular task, brainstorm ways to make that task more interesting or challenging. Help draw out the group's quieter members so that everyone feels a part of the overall project."*⁴

4) *"View Conflict as Opportunity: Hidden within virtually every conflict is the potential for a tremendous teaching/learning opportunity. Where there is disagreement there is an inherent potential for growth and development."*³

5) *"Establish goals: People accomplish the most when they have a clear set of objectives. It follows that any group's first order of business is to write down exactly what it hopes to achieve. The person who asks the question "Can we start by clarifying our goals here?"—and who then assumes the lead in discussing and drafting those goals—is automatically taking a leadership role, whatever his or her position."*⁴

6) *"Clarity of Purpose: Everyone who works for me knows that I care about them as an individual. They are important to me. They know that I'll go to great lengths to work with them so long as one thing remains the focus point – the good of the organization. So long as the issues being worked on are leading us toward our vision, they know they'll have my attention regardless of positional gaps or personal differences. Likewise, if things degenerate into placing pride or ego ahead of other team members or the organization as a whole, they know I'll have no tolerance whatsoever."*³

Regardless of what your title in the veterinary hospital may be, you should feel empowered to lead. You can inspire, empower and mentor. When we recognize the value of the front desk in communicating with clients, the value of leaders in that position is plainly evident.

- 1) Hamel, G & LaBarre, P. How To Lead When You're Not In Charge. Harvard Business Review Online. <http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/05/how-to-lead-when-youre-not-in/>
- 2) Petty, A. Five Tips For Leading Change When You're Not In Charge. Management Excellence By Art Petty. <http://artpetty.com/2009/01/30/five-tips-for-leading-change-when-you%E2%80%99re-not-in-charge/>
- 3) Myatt, M. 8 Tips For Leading Those Who Don't Want to Follow. Forbes.com. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemyatt/2013/01/07/8-tips-for-leading-those-who-dont-want-to-follow/>
- 4) Bielaszka-DuVernay, C. How To Lead When You're Not The Boss. Harvard Business Review Online. <http://blogs.hbr.org/2009/02/how-to-lead-when-youre-not-the/>