

The Jedi Mind Trick

Andy Roark MS DVM

Tall Oaks Enterprises LLC

Greenville, South Carolina 29601

Calling on classic techniques in effective communication, persuasion, and negotiation, this session helps technicians motivate and provide feedback to their veterinarians.

Active listening, deep acting, and strategic planning all come into play when we set out to affect the behavior of organizational superiors. By considering these skills in-depth, our goal is to develop usable plans and techniques for initiating and carrying out conversations that matter.

This session is highly interactive and content will be strongly affected by cases presented by audience members. We will review active listening skill, discuss and learn negotiation skills, and learn to provide effective and appropriate feedback.

Ten Steps to the Jedi Way:

10. Give a Reputation

Our reputations are built by others, not by ourselves. We can help people by giving them reputation. Anwar Sedat the President of Egypt gives reputation when he states: "I love coming here. You all are the most compassionate people." As a client, imagine the swelling of pride when you hear "You obviously have a very strong bond with this dog." What if you said? "You're the best teacher. You never lose patience when I ask questions because I want to know things, even if you're busy."

9. Reciprocity Norms

What is a reciprocity norm. Let's take the average veterinary conference. Candy bowls in the exhibit hall! Why do vendors have candy there? So you will take it and feel obligated to chat with vendors.

Set the expectation of helping people so that they help you. "Do you need help with anything? Let me help restrain that cat for you. Now, would you be available to see a client for me?"

8. Make it about the Pet/Client/Practice

At my last practice. I wanted radiographs for a limping cat. The tech said "She'd be much more comfortable and a lot less scared if we sedated her. Her owners would probably think it was a great thing if I explained it to them that way. They want her to be comfortable more than anything." In hindsight, I know that she did not want to radiograph this painful cat, and I don't blame her at all. But she didn't say "I don't want

to do it.” She made it easy for me to make the decision to sedate the patient because she made it about the patient, the client, and better medicine.

7. Create a Star

When I first started at my current practice, one of technicians talked me up to the clients. They were stoked when I got there. It made my life so much easier. Front desk staff picks up the positive comments and heightens them so that every experience builds stardom.

6. Forget managing and lead

When I started out in a single vet practice I discovered the difference between management and leadership when the manager would ask “What do we need to do so that everybody can leave?”

5. Positive Reinforcement

We’re animals. It works exactly the same way. Praise and thank you goes a long way. An example of behavior that people want to change in practices that regularly comes up is reluctance to get on the phone with clients. You can encourage it the way it was encouraged with me. “Thank you for getting on the phone with that client. I really appreciate it. You’re the best. You’re so good at handling those things, you’re really the best when it comes to stepping in to help with client questions. Everybody says so.” – They expressed gratitude which felt amazing, and it gave me a reputation to uphold.

4. Increase perceived value/Benefit/Sacrifice

Benefits can be abstract and hard to nail down. It’s not impossible.

A client has called repeatedly and you want your vet to call this woman back.

Benefits: “Hey, I know you want to get home tonight and I don’t want you to get stuck here.” Or “hey, I worry that she’s getting frustrated and think it might be better if you got to her earlier.”

Reduce sacrifice: “here’s her phone number and I pulled the chart up for you in this computer in case you wanted it.”

3. Focus on their problem

We all want solutions to our problem. If they have a bleeding neck issue and you have a solution, you’re good to go. How does what you want solve the problem they are having?

2. Make it their idea

The technician in step 8 could have just talked about the pain and anxiety, and how the owners want the pet to be as comfortable as possible. When I then mentioned sedation, she could have jumped on it with praise and positive reinforcement. The hardest thing is not jumping in. You want to plant the seed and let it grow.

1. Ask

Don't be shy. You're a part of the team. Build a history of asking because you want to know. Getting the how we ask down part is trickier, but it just take practice.

Actively listen = paraphrase, but do not parrot. This makes conflict worse.

Acknowledge commonality

Develop your phrases: "It sounds like...", "If I understand correctly, you're saying ...", "I don't think I follow you, can you explain...", "Do I understand correctly?"

Make sure you are speak for yourself, not for others, your opinion and feelings carry more weight than the "I've heard others have this issue".

It can be tough sometimes, so use softening phrases like, "Perhaps...", "Suppose...", "What if...", "May I suggest...", "Would it help if..."

Most importantly, ask before the decision is made, don't wait.