

Personnel Management: Making it Work in Practice

John C. Simms, VMD, MS
Burnt Mill Veterinary Center
15154 Burnt Mill Rd.
Shippensburg, PA 17257
Phone 717-423-6536
Fax 717-423-5811

Introduction

After almost a quarter century since graduation from veterinary school, it is somewhat of a challenge to offer valuable information to an audience that does the same work that I do in a very similar work environment. The progression from employee to solo practitioner to partnership to multi-person practice is very familiar to many. We often advise the producers we serve to concentrate a lot of effort on managing feed costs because it is a significant cost of production. We should take our own advice and apply it to our own significant cost of doing business—payroll and personnel. I would like to share with you some ideas that I've done (some regrettably), ideas that are presently employed, and things I will do in the future (hopefully).

As with any large task, breaking it into manageable, smaller parts makes the whole project easier to deal with. These parts come in the form of questions that we must answer in order for present and prospective associates to understand the employers and the practice setting and mission more fully. Truthfully analyzing and answering these questions, then clearly conveying the answers to personnel, present and future, will save the practice management the drudgery of revolving door associates and spare the employees the unhappiness of involuntary career changes.

- Who am I?
- What is the business?
- What do I want from those who work with me?

Who am I?

We all would like to think that we know the answer to this silly question. I certainly did. When it comes time to put this answer into language that a stranger would understand, it proves to be a daunting

task. Applicants for any level position would be much more capable of making a rational decision about their suitability for the position if they knew more about the employer. Self-help, identification, and motivation books abound in any bookstore (Oh yes, for those of us with the windshield complex, most of these are on tape!). Exploring these will help define in understandable terms who we are and help applicants decide if they want to continue pursuing the position. Many times these invasive books tell us things we'd rather not admit. It is far better to expose what may be deemed an undesirable trait early in the interview process than to have it surface as an explosive surprise in the future. We cannot expect to verbalize these traits unless we define what they are. Amazingly this can be invaluable information for spouses, sweethearts, family and even you.

Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*¹ discusses several personal characteristics that we should make known to prospective associates. The *inside-out* approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness means to start with the most *inside* part of self (your paradigms, character and motives) before attempting to make or keep promises to others.

The production/production capacity or P/PC principal is basically the story of the goose and the golden egg. The balance of these two fundamentals keeps practices and all small businesses in existence. If you are a practice that continually goes after the golden egg i.e. production, and fail to nurture the goose i.e. production capacity (based mainly on the people in the practice), then the goose will surely deteriorate.

It is important to decide if you are a proactive or reactive person. Proactive people are driven by values which are carefully crafted, selected, and internalized. Reactive people are driven by feelings, circumstances, and by their environment. Reactive people may be affected by the weather while proactive people carry their

own weather with them.

Covey's famous time management quadrants are shown in Figure 1. I venture to say that most of us would agree that quadrant 1 is over populated with veterinarians. Quadrant 2 is a goal for all of us. Analyzing where we spend the majority of our time and conveying that information to prospective associates may be the most significant information we can relay to them. It may also help us to shift quadrants if we feel uncomfortable about the quadrant where we find ourselves. It is difficult to discuss Covey's principles in summary fashion without going into great depth, but these are the main topics that I feel we all have to assess within ourselves to adequately describe to others who we are.

There are no wrong answers in trying to define and communicate who we are. By experiencing this sometimes painful analysis, surprises and misunderstandings can be minimized, if not eliminated, in the future.

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	I ACTIVITIES: Crises Pressing problems Deadline-driven projects	II ACTIVITIES: Prevention, PC activities Relationship building Recognizing new opportunities Planning, recreation
Not Important	III ACTIVITIES: Interruptions, some calls Some mail, some reports Some meetings Proximate, pressing matters Popular activities	IV ACTIVITIES: Trivia, busy work Some mail Some phone calls Time wasters Pleasant activities

Figure 1. The time management matrix.

What is the business?

The personal characteristics of the business are on an equal level of importance with the personal characteristics of the people in the business. *The E-Myth Revisited*² by Michael Gerber is another excellent source of ways to answer this question. The more those perspective associates know about the traits of the business beforehand, the surprise factor can be minimized later.

There are three types of owners of practices. The entrepreneur type is a visionary dreamer who is creative and innovative. They live in the future and are happy dealing with the unknown. They are the Henry Ford of Ford, the Ray Kroc of McDonald's types who have an extraordinary need for control. To the entrepreneur, most people are problems that get in the way of the dream.

The pragmatic personality is a manager type. They live in the past and crave order and the status quo. What the entrepreneur creates the manager puts in orderly rows. They clean up the mess left by the entrepreneur, but without the entrepreneur there would be no mess to clean up. Without the manager type there would be no business. Without the entrepreneur there would be no innovation.

The technician is the doer of the group. They love to get things done while living only in the present. They are not interested in ideas or innovation but only in how to get things done.

Which of these business personalities are you? Who would you tell a prospective employee that you are? The truth of the matter is that all three exist in most of us. Figuring out the percentages is a challenge. Unfortunately we are often 10% entrepreneur, 20% manager, and 70% technician. The practice tends to follow the trait of the owner. It is imperative that both the employer and employee realize that the relationship that may be established is primarily created to balance the deficits created by the business personality of the owner(s). All of these characters don't want a boss, but all want to be boss.

What stage of development the business aspects of the practice is in must also be assessed and communicated to prospects. In the infancy stage the technician is the owner. The technician's entire life is the business. They are one and the same. The technician prides himself with keeping all the balls in the air at once. It's great! Eventually it overwhelms him and the business becomes the boss. Sound familiar?!

If one should survive infancy, adolescence is the next developmental stage of the practice that is really a small business. It becomes obvious that the technician now has reached puberty and needs help. What kind of help? Technical help, of course! Here is where we get lost in the quest for sanity. Now we must support someone else. To survive we must be even more consumed by the business.

A mature practice operates like McDonald's, Federal Express, or Disney. Their philosophy is to work at the business not in it. They look at what they want the business to look like in the future, and model today after it. Technicians in infant businesses look at today and hope the future will be just like it.

What category are you going to tell the prospective employee that your business is in? It is imperative that you and the prospect understand where that is. The business personalities must also be communicated. Technicians believe that the product is what is delivered to the client. An entrepreneur sees the whole practice as the product-every procedure, dispensed medication, office visit, and consultation. They build a turn-key practice that would survive well without them.

Which are you? Managing the people in your practice will depend on which category you choose to be in.

What do I want from those who work with me?

Addressing the first two questions creates a firm foundation on which to build a solid employee/employer relationship. Now how do we entice employees to deliver what we want? The following ideas must be communicated to all employees at the very beginning of their tenure.

There must be a clear understanding that it's the idea behind the work (the mission) of the practice that is more important than the work itself.

A strong commitment to the practice is essential.³ It makes the work more satisfying, enjoyable, and empowers employees to do their very best. Clients are more demanding than ever which puts more demand on the practice and the people in it. People who just show up and keep their jobs because they can "fog a mirror" are goners. Lay hand professional employees who can't re-commit quickly when there is a change in the practice should probably quit. Resisting change wastes energy and sitting on the fence wastes precious time.

Act like an owner. Assuming personal responsibility for the success of the entire enterprise is a win-win situation. Employees can help cut costs, serve clients better, increase productivity, and be innovative. If they operate as if they are self-employed, they will become self-motivated and carry the responsibility for their own career mobility.

Employees are responsible for the management of their own morale. They must assign themselves responsibility for their attitude control. Low morale drains precious energy and destroys self-confidence.

The other side of the coin is what the practice and employer must provide for the employee. Nothing deflates a person, especially a new graduate, faster than limiting their self worth by how we equip them and support them. A client soon calculates your opinion of a new employee when he drives into the farm in the '75 Plymouth with a door bashed in by your teenage son and a trunk lid with a mind of its own. Clients are anxious to get your opinion of the new employee without asking. A simple eye roll to the ceiling and a sigh as the client tells you how your new employee treated his cow is enough to show a lack of respect and support. An employee that feels the need for assistance with a rough calving or medical case should always get our help. Discussing cases and listening to their suggestions helps employees feel that they are an important part of the team. Respecting their time off, even if they don't have much respect for yours, also adds to their self worth equation.

Training a new employee must occur with great discretion. Finding their weak points can usually be

accomplished while they assist an experienced practitioner during the introduction and "learning the ropes and roads" phase. Trying to train and practice technique while a client watches does little for the client-new employee relationship. Rectal palpation is a particularly difficult technique to teach but unfortunately, it is often the measuring stick that a client uses on the new person. We've developed a communication code while palpating that allows the novice to learn what the experienced person is palpating, but is foreign to the client. Everyone has appreciated this effort while it also leaves a favorable first impression with the client. Sensitivity and communication during this delicate time will leave a lasting impression on the employee and the client.

I am a firm believer that contracts are a necessary part of any business relationship. The abstract topics of "Who am I?" and "What is the business?" may make contracts less important if they are conveyed honestly and completely. Nonetheless, a written agreement outlining the nuts and bolts of the terms of the relationship can often avoid problems during the relationship. These documents need to be clearly understood by both parties i.e. find a lawyer who is willing to write in English. We define in detail what is expected of the employee and what the employee can expect from the practice. In a concise five page document the following items are addressed: dates of the agreement, compensation, benefits, vacation, continuing education, non-compete agreement, assignment of duties, employer responsibilities for expenses and equipment and office space, emergency call schedule, professional memberships, terms of disability, and termination details.

Keeping the professional staff informed about the business aspects of the practice has had positive responses from them. The computerized day sheet is made available to each employee daily. This keeps them abreast of their gross productivity and that of others. This report can be broken down into procedure or general income categories. It has been my experience that many practice owners keep this information a well-kept secret. I've found most employees have a keen interest in it and they always know what I now about how things are going. They feel very much a part of the team and more responsible for its well being.

Summary

Most of what is offered here has been the "warm and fuzzy" aspects of personnel management. If we pay closer attention to our personal and business characteristics and communicate them effectively to our employees, the incidents of surprises and misunderstandings will be greatly diminished. Less is more. The fewer times we must actually "manage" personnel with hard ball tactics, the more enjoyable practice can be for ev-

everyone. It doesn't just happen by itself. Asking tough questions of the business and ourselves and analyzing the answers honestly requires more effort than pursuing the traditional management techniques. The results, however, are much more rewarding for everyone—less employee turnover and fewer disgruntled employees.

"We're all in this alone."

- Lilly Tomlin

References

1. Covey, Stephen R., *The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People*, Simon and Schuster, New York, New York, 1989.
2. Gerber, Michael E., *The E Myth Revisited*, Harpercollins Publishers, Inc., New York, New York, 1995.
3. Pritchett, Price, *New Work Habits For A Radically Changing World*, Pritchett and Associates, Inc., Dallas, Texas.

Micotil® 300 Injection

Tilmicosin Phosphate

CAUTION: Federal (U.S.A.) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

Human Warnings: Not for human use. Injection of this drug in humans may be fatal. Keep out of reach of children. Do not use in automatically powered syringes. Exercise extreme caution to avoid accidental self injection. In case of human injection, consult a physician immediately. Emergency medical telephone numbers are 1-800-722-0987 or 1-317-276-2000. Avoid contact with eyes.

Note to Physician: The cardiovascular system appears to be the target of toxicity. This antibiotic persists in tissues for several days. The cardiovascular system should be monitored closely and supportive treatment provided. Dobutamine partially offset the negative inotropic effects induced by Micotil in dogs. β -adrenergic antagonists, such as propranolol, exacerbated the negative inotropy of Micotil-induced tachycardia in dogs. Epinephrine potentiated lethality of Micotil in pigs.

For Subcutaneous Use in Cattle Only. Do Not Use in Automatically Powered Syringes.

Indications: For the treatment of bovine respiratory disease (BRD) associated with *Pasteurella haemolytica*. For the control of respiratory disease in cattle at high risk of developing BRD associated with *Pasteurella haemolytica*.

Description: Micotil is a solution of the antibiotic tilmicosin. Each mL contains 300 mg of tilmicosin base as tilmicosin phosphate in 25% propylene glycol, phosphoric acid as needed to adjust pH and water for injection, q.s. Tilmicosin phosphate is produced semi-synthetically and is in the macrolide class of antibiotics.

Actions: Activity — Tilmicosin has an *in vitro** antibacterial spectrum that is predominantly gram-positive with activity against certain gram-negative microorganisms. Activity against several mycoplasma species has also been detected.

Ninety-five percent of the *Pasteurella haemolytica* isolates were inhibited by 3.12 μ g/mL or less.

Microorganism	MIC (μ g/mL)
<i>Pasteurella haemolytica</i>	3.12
<i>Pasteurella multocida</i>	6.25
<i>Haemophilus somnus</i>	6.25
<i>Mycoplasma dispar</i>	0.097
<i>M. bovirhinis</i>	0.024
<i>M. bovoculi</i>	0.048

*The clinical significance of this *in vitro* data in cattle has not been demonstrated.

Directions — Inject Subcutaneously in Cattle Only. Administer a single subcutaneous dose of 10 mg/kg of body weight (1 mL/30 kg or 1.5 mL per 100 lbs). Do not inject more than 15 mL per injection site.

If no improvement is noted within 48 hours, the diagnosis should be reevaluated.

Injection under the skin behind the shoulders and over the ribs is suggested.

Note — Swelling at the subcutaneous site of injection may be observed but is transient and usually mild.

CONTRAINDICATION: Do not use in automatically powered syringes. Do not administer intravenously to cattle. Intravenous injection in cattle will be fatal. Do not administer to animals other than cattle. Injection of this antibiotic has been shown to be fatal in swine and non-human primates, and it may be fatal in horses.

CAUTION: Do Not Administer to Swine. Injection in Swine Has Been Shown to be Fatal.

WARNINGS: Animals intended for human consumption must not be slaughtered within 28 days of the last treatment. Do not use in female dairy cattle 20 months of age or older. Use of tilmicosin in this class of cattle may cause milk residues. A withdrawal period has not been established for this product in pre-ruminating calves. Do not use in calves to be processed for veal.

CAUTION: The safety of tilmicosin has not been established in pregnant cattle and in animals used for breeding purposes. Intramuscular injection will cause a local reaction which may result in trim loss.

How Supplied: Micotil is supplied in 50 mL, 100 mL and 250 mL multi-dose amber glass bottles.

Storage: Store at room temperature, 86°F (30°C) or below. Protect from direct sunlight.

Literature revised December 30, 1996

AH 0230
NADA 140-929 Approved by FDA
WS 1670 AMX

Elanco Animal Health
A Division of Eli Lilly and Company
Lilly Corporate Center
Indianapolis, Indiana 46285

ELANCO

Micotil

It's time.