

Creating careers, not just jobs

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Abstract

When the baby boomer generation first began looking for employment decades ago, they had the mindset that they would be starting a career, which would involve taking ownership, responsibility, dedication and a time investment in order to achieve personal satisfaction as well as having strong ties to the community and professional associations. The mindset of the millennial generation differs, however, as many are just looking for a job and value their leisure at a higher level than previous generations. This can create a challenge for baby boomers who want to recruit hires who have a similar work ethic and who will eventually take over the practice. This paper will make observations and suggestions about how this gap can be addressed so that employers can identify and attract new hires who associate work with being a career and not just a job, which allows practices to continue offering a high level of service to their clients.

Key words: practice management, boomers, millennial

Résumé

Lorsque la génération du *baby-boom* se cherchait du travail il y a quelques décennies, les gens avaient en tête qu'ils allaient commencer une carrière impliquant de se prendre en main, d'être responsable et dévoué et d'investir du temps pour avoir une satisfaction personnelle de même que des liens étroits avec la communauté et les associations professionnelles. La mentalité de la génération du millénaire n'est pas tout à fait la même. Plusieurs dans cette génération se cherchent seulement un emploi et valorisent plus leurs loisirs que les générations précédentes. Cette situation crée un défi pour les *baby-boomers* qui veulent recruter de nouveaux employés avec la même éthique de travail pour éventuellement prendre la pratique en charge. Cet article fera des observations et des suggestions pour combler cet écart de sorte que les employeurs puissent identifier et attirer de nouveaux employés qui associent le travail avec une carrière sans y voir seulement un autre emploi permettant à la pratique de continuer à offrir un haut niveau de service à leurs clients.

Introduction

As the veterinary profession transitions from the boomer to the millennial generation, the first experiences in a new professional position are critical to the future success of the recent hire and the practice.

Discussion

Attracting quality applicants requires understanding what motivates them. A very high percentage of millennials want a rapid progression in their career. Career progression must, however, be outlined by the employer. This approach requires written strategies and policies that provide a clear pathway. In a mixed or species-focused position, we outline what steps are required to move from associate to practice owner. This is a great place for you the employer to incorporate SWOT analysis to the hiring process. By identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that a new hire would bring to the practice, employers can better visualize the qualities of their ideal candidate. This also reduces the chance of mistakenly settling for a poor fit. The rules of developing a SWOT analysis suitable for your practice are be specific, be objective, be realistic, and keep it simple.

In communication with human medical administrators, a high quality interview process leads to the best outcomes. This is a suggested list of questions to discuss with the applicant's references before the in-person interview.

1. Who are they regarding being risk takers or being averse to risk?
2. Are they very social or socially reserved?
3. Are they patient or impatient?
4. Do they conform to rules or are they non-compliant with rules and structure?
5. Who are they on a scale of using logic versus intuitiveness?

Questions during the in-person portion of interview will allow for conversations about this information.

The successful practice seeking a long-term professional associate/future owner should attempt to do these things:

1. Build a solid relationship.
2. Recruit the whole family.
3. Take community and lifestyle into account (40% professional/60% personal).
4. Pay attention to details (gifts, recognize family during the welcome phase of their visit).
5. Introduce professional and support staff in the practice.
6. Recognize who in your community might have social interests in common.
7. Follow through promptly and often after the interview.
8. Be able to negotiate and be flexible.
9. Know your competition and what they are offering.

10. Have a good rapport with colleges of veterinary medicine and key faculty.
11. Attend recruiting fairs well in advance of actual hire dates.

Compensation needs to be in line with regional salaries and benefits. As we communicate our starting packages, it's appropriate to use financial data to set goals. This challenges the new associate and gives the employer a budgeting tool to look at how the business is doing. It can stimulate use of added compensation as a reward for added effort beyond the base performance.

One of the overlooked tools for attracting and retaining applicants is having technology, training, equipment, and working facilities in the business to support efficient high-end services. For example, our profession has enhanced our knowledge of safe animal handling strategies that benefit both the livestock and the operators. We also can change positions by imagining that we are the new hire and envisioning whether we could or would work in conditions with a risk of injury or a demanding time schedule.

As we continue to move to consolidation of the beef industry, our clients expect our role as an animal health provider to create value for our services. Technology creates tools that enhance the value of our profession. There is no part of agriculture that has not benefited from measurement information with the goal of constant improvement. In a competitive job market, this mindset will likely make the applicant want to join and remain being part of an establishment with an eye on future growth. We need to invest in the best tools that we can afford. Let's ask our clients and our millennial members what we don't have now that, once in place, will keep us relevant in our industry.

In this discussion, we must ask ourselves why people change jobs. The list does not provide many surprises. Who doesn't want a bigger salary or bonus? We all find professional fulfillment gives us the biggest reason to get up and go to work each day. There should be no lack of support to attend meetings and get training to provide better career opportunities. The jury may be out on whether social media has any impact on why someone is a value in the workplace. We as owners must have control of culture. One should also ask if there is a place for social interaction outside the workplace. It seems that we have generational differences in the workplace. Many of these differences can become a tool to open up appreciation of different perspectives.

As challenging as it may seem to be, our success for our associates requires formal feedback on a regular basis. The demands of time and lack of the purpose for these meetings can sabotage the best of intentions. We should have a list of topics that cover the best and most concerning areas of the workplace performance. A follow-up meeting is necessary to discuss improvement in areas of deficiency. The problem may be corrected with positive support by the employer. Experience may be the simple solution, as we all progress in mastering skills at different rates.

Boomers have been our default leaders in ownership and representation in both community and professional leadership. Now it becomes the millennials who must assume these roles. There is no one-size-fits-all. Our practice may be an example of "servant" leadership. We've had national office holders in the American Association of Swine Veterinarians, American Association of Feline Practitioners, the Academy of Veterinary Consultants, and the American Veterinary Medical Association. All these positions started at the local or regional level.

Millennials need to decide if they want to become part of succession to assume these leadership positions. This group of our society will take on any responsibility if there is a purpose. It isn't enough just to say "it's your turn" as the reason to step into these roles. There is much better technology available for time-efficient communication. Terms of service may be shorter to avoid volunteer burnout. Much like the job experience, we encourage only being a part of any group that has meaning and purpose. Life-work balance should be part of this equation.

Having provided the discussion for entry of our millennials into our profession and the role of boomers into their development, we must ask if we've done enough effort in "creating careers, not just jobs."

Conclusion

In our practice experience, success begins long before graduation with a professional degree. The well-grounded associate understands the education process to manage debt with a balanced lifestyle. A career begins as a vision of where they want to be at the conclusion of a lifetime of service.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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