HOW TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR PRACTICE BECOME MORE ACCOUNTABLE

WHY ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS

Accountability is a way of thinking that allows teams of people to do amazing things because they are not mired in unamazing conversations. They do not spend time blaming or criticizing, making excuses, or wishing things were different. They spend time thinking, improving, trying, and learning. They become immersed in what could be and work toward it rather than dwelling on what wasn't.

A Manager's Job Isn't About Putting Out Fires

Often leaders in a veterinary practice feel like they spend all of their time dealing with needless chaos. As you build accountability, watch that shift to teams thinking about how to do more, better.

The Team Can Do More, Faster

In many hospitals we see a decision-making process that actually slows things down. An accountable team can solve problems more quickly, at the source.

Employee Engagement Increases

Nobody wakes up in the morning and thinks, "I can't wait to go to work and be micro-managed." Yet when a veterinary clinic doesn't have a culture of accountability, micromanagement happens and engagement disappears. In contrast, as accountability increases, people take more ownership in the work they do, become more excited about their work, and get to contribute to a stronger practice.

WHY ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS

As a leader, you get to make a difference in how people feel, how they perform, how they treat others around them, how happy they are at work, and in many ways how their life feels. You are entrusted with the opportunity to actually make that kind of impact on others.
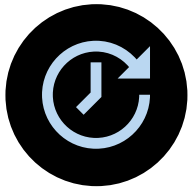
Someone Gets to Think About the Future

As your team becomes more accountable, you as a leader can spend less time dealing with petty issues and more time thinking about how your practice can look in the future, and how you can affect positive change.

Stress Decreases

Veterinary medicine is a chaotic world. Every hospital wants less stress in an industry full of change. Stress affects everyone and permeates the culture of your practice. Accountability in teams can ease that burden as team members take more ownership of the culture they create together.

Happier Leaders

No leader walks into the practice every day thinking, "I really want to deal with problems I didn't create and deal with challenges that didn't have to happen." Most leaders don't embrace the thought of having to check up on others and make sure they don't screw up. When a team becomes accountable, leaders are more engaged, more excited about the future, and more capable of having conversations that move your clinic into the future. When a team becomes accountable, leaders are more engaged, more excited about the future, and more capable of having conversations that move your clinic toward greater success

DEFINING ACCOUNTABILITY

Often when managers think about accountability it is in the context of "I'm going to hold people accountable for their actions or their mistakes." But, this approach can decrease accountability on your team. Instead, consider these different ways of thinking. When people are accountable they have an accountable mindset rather than a victim mindset, and teams are solution-focused rather than problem-focused.

ACCOUNTABLE

FUTURE OWNERSHIP

SOLUTION PROACTIVE

REACTIVE PROBLEM

BLAME PAST

VICTIM

3 THINGS LEADERS DO TO CAUSE ACCOUNTABILITY

Creating a culture of accountability won't happen overnight, but it will happen if you, as a leader, can do these things consistently.

1

Ask Accountability-Based Questions

When a team member comes to you with a problem, complaint, or question, one of the best things you can do to build the culture you want is to ask accountability-based questions. Build questions on ownership, being proactive, the future, and finding solutions. For example, "If we wanted to do this better a week from now, what steps could we take to get there?"

2

Call Out and Support Accountable Actions

When you see a team member do something proactively, find a solution to a problem, or take ownership of something that can make your clinic better, let them know immediately. Be specific. For example, instead of saying "Good job," try saying, "When you do that, it makes our entire team better." Letting people know you appreciate accountable actions makes them want to do more of them, and being specific helps people know what good looks like in your practice.

3

Address Victim Behavior and Mistakes with Questions that Help People Think About Accountability

Asking good questions when a team member makes a mistake shifts the focus from blame to accountability. For example, instead of saying, "You filled that med incorrectly," ask "If you want to make your med filling process flawless, what would the steps be?" Accountability is built when we focus not on what we did wrong, but what we can do next.

4 THINGS LEADERS DO TO DESTROY ACCOUNTABILITY

It's easy as a leader to destroy accountability on your team. Build a set of habits that help you avoid these four things and keep your hospital's culture moving in the right direction.

1 Blame

If people feel like they will be punished because they made a mistake, the will be hesitant to take risks or even try new things. This causes your team to be reactive instead of proactive, and growth in your practice can stall.

2 Wanting All the Ownership

One of the biggest challenges you might face in your veterinary practice is giving up control. It's natural to worry, "If I let my team make decisions and find solutions, what will happen if they're wrong or mess it up?" But, as a leader, you can help your team shape their ideas and solutions as they work through them. Starting with your team's ideas can build commitment. Not letting them pursue solutions can crush it.

3 Confusing Preferences with Principles

When you allow your team to take ownership of projects and solutions in your practice it helps build accountability. But, remember the result may not be exactly as you would have done it. Focusing on your preferences after the fact can destroy engagement. Instead, stick to strong, foundational principles like, "We're going to provide our highest level of service," or "We're going to communicate well as a team," even if they do those things a little differently than you might.

4 Unbalanced Feedback

It's easy to speak up when we see someone doing something wrong, yet often we don't apply the same willingness to deliver positive feedback. If you need to take a few minutes every day to catch someone doing something right, it's worth it.

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