

HOW TO HAVE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS IN YOUR VETERINARY PRACTICE

Difficult conversations are often avoided, leading to gossip and workplace tension. But when handled well, they strengthen trust and teamwork instead of damaging them. Use this four-step framework to keep discussions productive and solution-focused.

STEP 1: START WITH A PERMISSION QUESTION

Jumping into feedback unprompted can make people defensive. Instead, ask for permission to start the conversation: "Can we talk about something that's been on my mind?" This small step builds trust and encourages openness, making the person more receptive to what you have to say.

STEP 2: SHARE OBSERVATIONS, NOT LABELS

Instead of making judgmental statements like "You're always late," focus on factual observations: "I've noticed that when shifts start, we're often waiting on coverage." Facts encourage reflection, while labels trigger defensiveness. Keep the conversation about actions, not assumptions.

STEP 3: INVITE THEIR PERSPECTIVE

Conversations should be two-way, not one-sided. After sharing your observation, ask for their input: "What's your experience with this?" This keeps the discussion balanced, prevents misunderstandings, and allows for collaborative problem-solving.

STEP 4: PIVOT TOWARD SOLUTIONS

End by shifting the focus to what comes next instead of dwelling on past mistakes. Ask a forward-looking question like "How can we work together to improve this?" This ensures the conversation leads to actionable solutions, not just criticism.

START CHANGING YOUR CONVERSATIONS TODAY

Stronger communication leads to less gossip, more trust, and a healthier veterinary team. Try using this framework in your next conversation and see the difference it makes.

