



## **The 10 HR Commandments for Veterinary Practices**<sup>®</sup> (What Every Veterinary Practice Absolutely Needs To Know)

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### **Abstract:**

Regardless of the size and shape of a practice, each and every owner, manager, and supervisor is constantly faced with the same age-old dilemma: “what is the best way to manage my employees”. Trying to keep peace and harmony in the workplace can be a daunting task when you are trying to provide the best possible patient care while also striving to grow the practice. Having to devote the time and energy required to deal with all the different issues that arise when people work together can be extremely challenging and frustrating. This article highlights practical management principles that will help every practice get the most out of its staff while preventing little problems from turning into big headaches. While some of them may seem basic, knowing how to apply them will be invaluable.

Whether you are the owner, the boss, lead technician, office manager, or the new associate veterinarian, there are fundamental “people management” principles to which each business should adhere. First, let me say I fully recognize that each and every practice is unique. Each has its own vision and mission statement, core values, operating philosophy, and protocols or standard operating procedures. How it treats its staff, and what it expects of its employees, will be different than for other practices. Some may offer different benefits, others may have different requirements for CE training, safety procedures may be different depending upon the size and type of practice, etc. There can be as many differences as there are procedures and protocols to follow. Similarly, some practices may be larger than others and employ more people.

Admittedly, it would be much easier to manage employees if they were all alike and all had the same expectations. However, in the real world, that is just not the case. Given the fact that everybody is different, how are you supposed to treat all employees fairly and consistently while addressing their individualities? Do you treat them all alike or do you give preferential treatment to the best performers? Should you be more hands-on or should you let them assume more responsibility for their jobs? Are they sufficiently motivated or should you provide more incentives? Should you rule with a heavy hand or should you allow them to police themselves? Whether you feel your team is operating at peak performance or just going through the motions, adhering to what I call “**The 10 HR Commandments of Veterinary Practice**” can help any practice achieve success while preventing little problems from evolving into major issues. The real trick is to figure out how to adapt them to your particular operation.

1. **Treat all employees fairly and equitably, but take care of your stars-** consistency is the key to good management, but your better performers will help you get to where you want your practice to go. Be sure they know you appreciate them.
2. **Establish your HR protocols and stick to them-**remind your staff what needs to be done and how to do it. Don't allow them to "do their own thing" when consistency is required.
3. **Think before you speak-**don't say something you'll regret, because it's hard to take it back once it's left your mouth. Be sure your staff receives the message you want to deliver.
4. **Employees are not mind readers-**Communication goes hand-in-hand with understanding, so don't assume your staff knows everything you want or expect from them.
5. **All employees want to do a good job until you teach them otherwise-**all employees start out wanting to perform well and don't change their attitudes unless something happens. Be sure to pay attention to signs of discontentment.
6. **More money is not the answer to all problems-**employees generally don't quit for more money; remember, the impact of a raise fades with each succeeding paycheck.
7. **Respect: Accept nothing more; expect nothing less-**"do unto others..." keep in mind, the two most powerful words in any supervisor's vocabulary are "thank you".
8. **Make sure everyone is using the same road map-**be sure to share your vision and how you hope to get there; your team must know what's important to you.
9. **Know when and who to ask for help-**get help, when needed, because nobody can do everything alone; remember the Chinese proverb "the sum of the strength of the fingers is greater than the might of the hand".
10. **Good management = good business-** your employees are your greatest asset; don't hesitate to let them know how you feel.