VCNZ

Workplace Wellbeing: Making it Happen

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www.connectcomm.co.nz

With thanks to Lotte Cantley

Business Pain Points: E.g. 1: Holiday Cover

School holidays again – not enough staff

Can't find replacement staff

Declining leave requests

Working increasingly long hours yourself

E.g. 2: Team Conflict

Overheard arguing team members

You've previously noted one person being generally much more irritable

Tense atmosphere at work

Unresolved issues – what can you do? How much should you get involved?

E.g. 3: Client Complaint

Complaint from a long-term client (hard to get appointments)

Semi-acute and elective procedures - unacceptably long waiting list

You feel bad - but change is beyond your control

E.g. 4: Staff Stress

New graduate vet upset re potential error

Not enough support during an emergency

Crying in your room

Took time to sort it out (settle them down & make a plan)

In general – what motivates people?

It may depend on:

- Role and responsibilities
- Passion & values (important and meaningful to you)
- More task-focussed or relationship-focussed
- 'Get it Right' or a 'Get it Done' mindset
- Possible positive or negative outcomes (e.g. Risk, Money, Status..) ..."carrots and sticks"

Be smart about what motivates you, and others in your team.

Common Drivers: Carrot and Stick
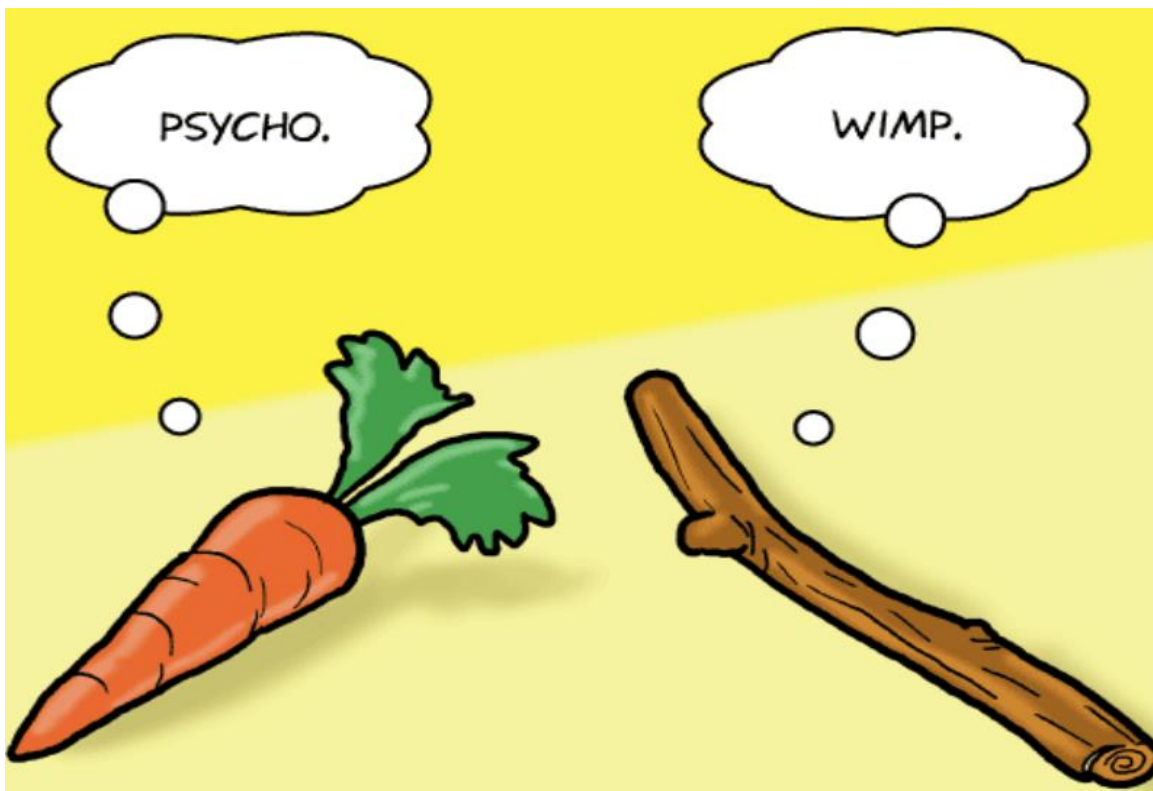
We want **more**:
- Positive place to work
- Attracting staff
- Retaining staff
- Satisfied staff and clients

We want **less**:
- Attrition
- Expense
- Legal troubles
- Low quality care
- Poor staff health and satisfaction

Carrot 1: Positive Workplace Culture *(i)*

Less distress and better wellbeing are linked to an environment with:

1. A high sense of belonging
2. A high degree of organizational trust
3. Candid and open communication

Vaisman (2023) and/or MERCK (2019)

Reputation:

A positive workplace culture is more attractive to staff

….a complex interplay of personalities, resources, climate, stressful events etc

Carrot 1: Positive Workplace Culture (ii) Challenges…

- Employees can feel powerless to improve organisational trust

- Unpack it: Is it them? Is it me?

- From a manager's point of view – Is it them? Is it me?

What can help with difficult conversations?

- Increase safety (privacy, small steps, save face, "you and me against the problem", careful 'together' language, aligned objectives etc?)

Carrot 2: Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is the #1 predictor of team effectiveness

Edmonson

Definition from the 'centre for creative leadership':

"Psychological safety is the belief that you <u>won't be punished or humiliated</u> for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. At work, it's a shared expectation held by members of a team that teammates will not embarrass, reject, or punish them <u>for sharing ideas, taking risks, or soliciting feedback</u>."

https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/what-is-psychological-safety-at-work/

Links to <mark>Collective Trust</mark>

Collective Trust

Collective Trust in a 'Unit':

- Honest and co-operative **behaviour** between co-workers - Gives a sense of Security.

- It's about Relationships.

- Trust increases a Collaborative Atmosphere. We can rely on each other & respond better to high demands.

- Improved flexibility

Increasing Collective Trust

Positive Focus – TRAIN yourself

- Recognise when positive practice occurs.

- Acknowledge and appreciate hard work and achievements (whilst prioritising wellbeing over excessive work)

Culture

- Senior leader role-modelling. e.g. leaders refrain from working when unwell.

- Foster a culture of care and collaboration: (team-building activities and social interactions, avoid stigmatising language around psychological illness)

- Encourage open communication within the team – LISTEN & Curiosity.

- Take part in wellbeing training and normalise support.

  - *https://mentalhealth-uk.org/burnout/*

Carrot 3: Positive Leadership

Positive leadership comprises of 4 positive factors that reduce attrition of veterinarians:

"The 4 Ps" :

- Psychological safety

- Purpose

- Path

- Partnership

McKay and Vaisman (2023)

These determine the likelihood of remaining employed at that organisation in the next five years

Stick 1: Health and Safety Legislation

The Health and Safety (H & S) at Work Act 2015:

The leaders/owners of a business must ensure it complies with
H &S obligations – including:

- <u>Up to date</u> knowledge of H &S matters
- <u>Understanding</u> the <u>operations</u> and <u>hazards</u> of the business
- Appropriate <u>resources</u> (eliminating and minimising risks to H &S)
- <u>Processes for receiving & dealing with information </u>about hazards& risks
- <u>Responding </u>in a timely way

In NZ - businesses have faced litigation/fines for:
poor management of risks to mental health
and employment litigation

Stick 2: Attrition (causes and costs)

Reasons people leave clinical practice :

- concerns re work-life balance   (AVMA)

- high workload

- poor workplace relationships

- moral and ethical conflict

→   impact on health & reduce job satisfaction

<div align="right">Arbe-Montoya et al., 2021</div>

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Costs: direct: recruit & train

          indirect : loss of valuable knowledge and client relationships

US: At least 23% vet team members leave their jobs each year

 (could cost the industry between $1 – 2 billion annually)

<div align="right">American Animal Hospital Association</div>

NZ estimate of the replacement cost of a veterinarian: $30 000-$50 000

Stick 3: Burnt out Staff at Work

Consequences of stressed, unmotivated, disengaged staff:

Increased clinical errors

Decreased

- Quality of patient care

- Client satisfaction

- Clinic profitability (clients move elsewhere - damage clinic's reputation and business success)

Stick 4: Bullying and Harassment

Toxic workplace conditions can foster bullying
(NB: spectrum of toxic/unprofessional behaviour)

Bullying and harassment of team members can result in:

Financial consequences for clinic (legal actions, staff turnover and reputational damage).

Staff who are absent (increased absenteeism and staff turnover)
Staff who are present (reduced productivity and morale)
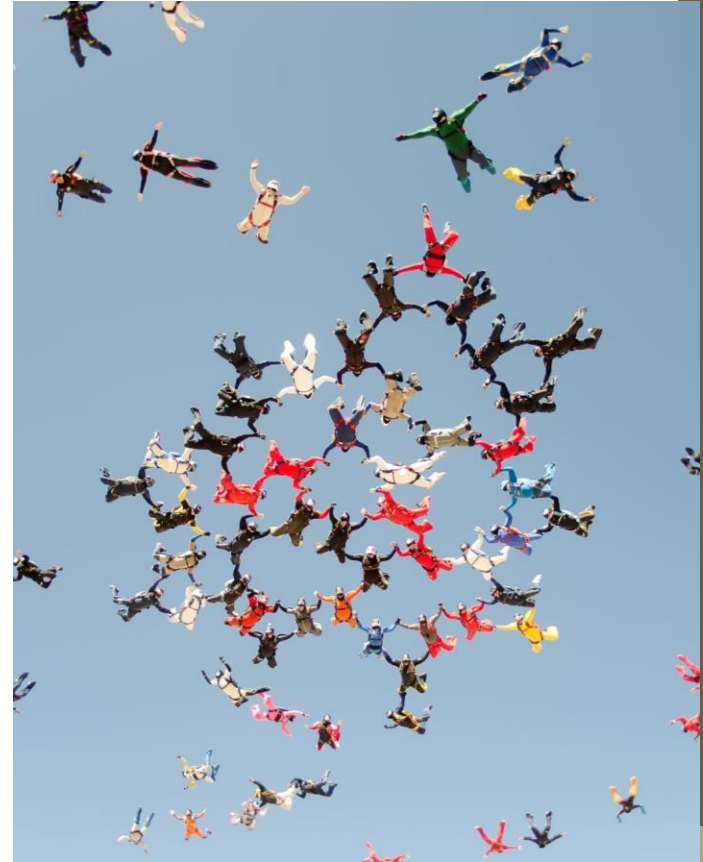
Engagement Summary

THINK first:

- What someone's driver might be? Which carrot or stick?

- Their personality and initial reaction:
  Aggressive/Defensive/Cynical/Dismissive

Then ACT:

Communication:

- Body language, assertiveness, boundaries
- Empathy even if you disagree (reflect their point of view first)
- Explore if any ambivalence

Strategies to address systemic issues

- "Wellbeing champions" – small group action team (your allies)

- Pick your battles

- Polite patient persistent

- Big picture (long-term) planning

- Offer solutions alongside the problem

- Engaging with 'low hanging fruit' early – often gets traction

Resources/Agencies

- Resilience at work program run by Kathryn Jackson at Career balance https://careerbalance.co.nz/about/

- Evaluate your team's Psychological Safety https://fearlessorganizationscan.com/engage/free-personal-psychological-safety-survey

- The Good Yarn programme – Evidence based mental health literacy programme https://www.goodyarn.org/programme/

- The Mental wellbeing by design process- can be adapted to Vet clinics https://www.forum.org.nz/assets/Uploads/June-2022-Protecting-Mental-Wellbeing-Guide-v2.pdf

Sarah The Vet

Ruminations on a veterinary theme: chewing the cud

'A team is not a group of people who work together. A team is a group of people who trust each other.'

Simon Sinek

Trust is like the air we breathe. When it is present, nobody really notices. But when it's absent everybody notices.

Warren Buffett

https://www.sarahthevet.com/2022/03/05/trust-in-the-workplace-part-1/

https://www.sarahthevet.com/2022/11/03/trust-part-2-how-to-create-and-build-trust/