



Improving Your Team's Morale during Chaotic Times and Beyond

Help your team get through trying times, and look forward to better days ahead



Veterinary team morale is suffering

The past year has been extremely difficult for many veterinary practices. On top of abruptly shifting to new protocols, your team has likely dealt with unprecedented challenges. With more than 11 million U.S. households adding a new pet,¹ your phone is likely ringing off the hook with appointment requests. In fact, IDEXX Practice Intelligence data from 7,800 practices shows that 37% of first-time clinical visits were with a new pet owner.² Half of veterinary practices included in the AVMA COVID-19 Veterinary Survey reported a 25% increase, or more, in overall business activity and client numbers.³

While more clients can benefit your bottom line, the business uptick may be overwhelming. Long days, frustrated clients, and inefficient workflows can take a toll on your team. Unfortunately, with no end in sight, your team's morale may be at an all-time low.

According to the *Merck Animal Health Veterinarian Wellbeing Study 2020*, almost half of veterinarians reported low well-being, and less than half would recommend a career in veterinary medicine.⁴

1. Pets remain in high demand during COVID. *Today's Vet Bus*. Published October 2020. Accessed June 17, 2021. todaysveterinarybusiness.com/pets-appa-survey-covid/
2. Data on file at IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. Westbrook, Maine USA.
3. American Veterinary Medical Association. COVID-19 veterinary survey results. Published 2020. Accessed June 17, 2021. ebusiness.avma.org/files/coronavirus/COVID-19-veterinary-survey-full-report.pdf
4. *Merck Animal Health Veterinarian Wellbeing Study 2020*. Merck Animal Health; 2020. www.merck-animal-health-usa.com/offload-downloads/veterinarian-wellbeing-study-2020

Veterinary team member well-being and overall morale were large concerns prior to the past year's chaos. Veterinarians and support staff deal with depression, burnout, and suicide at alarming rates. As a leader, you want to do everything possible to safeguard your team's mental health during chaotic times, and beyond. Although trying days may seem to outweigh the good days right now, better times are ahead, and you can help your team see past the current challenges. This guide will help by providing practical tips you can institute today to help improve your team's well-being and morale.



Low team morale can impact your business

Low morale can negatively impact your business in many ways:

Decreased productivity—When your team members lack passion and drive, it affects their job performance. Gallup research concluded that highly engaged teams are 14% more productive than teams with low engagement, and disengaged team members cost their company approximately 18% of their annual salary.⁵

Risk for mental health issues—Poor well-being and low morale can progress to more serious mental health issues, such as burnout and depression, that can lead to veterinary professionals leaving the field, or worse, harming themselves.

Poor workplace culture—Unfortunately, bad vibes spread more easily than good. When one team member is feeling low, their unhappiness can pervade your entire team.

Decreased client satisfaction—Unhappy team members are less likely to smile, speak politely, and go out of their way to satisfy your clients. Interactions with an unhappy technician or client service representative can negate the good medicine your team provides.

5. Herway J. Increase productivity at the lowest possible cost. Gallup. Published October 15, 2020. Accessed June 17, 2021. www.gallup.com/workplace/321743/increase-productivity-lowest-possible-cost.aspx

Increased absenteeism—Team members with low morale are more likely to repeatedly miss work, which brings down the entire team. Other team members are left to cover their duties, which increases stress, anxiety, and negative feelings.

”

“A workplace filled with and driven by employees with positive attitudes vibrates continually to the tune of service excellence and passionate team success.”

—Ty Howard, founder, CEO, and editor-in-chief of
MOTIVATION magazine



Individual well-being contributes to team morale

Your team members have different personalities. Some may be taking the current chaos in stride, while others may be struggling. Your team's overall morale depends heavily on each individual's personal well-being, and one unhappy veterinarian or technician can bring your entire team down.

Use this well-being checklist to regularly check in with each team member to see how they are doing, and identify ways to head off potential problems.

Check each statement that applies:

- I feel I have a manageable amount of work each day
- I take regular breaks during my work day
- I take time off from work to rest and recharge
- I feel appreciated at work
- I understand how my role fits into the practice's overall goals and success
- Practice leaders provide opportunities for team bonding
- Practice leaders check in on my well-being regularly
- I feel that team morale is good
- I feel supported by my team

Use the unchecked items to help your team members identify ways they can better care for themselves and ways you can provide help. Boosting individual team member well-being can significantly improve your team's morale and your overall success.

In your busy practice, finding ways to improve morale can be challenging, but this guide can help.



8 ways to boost your team's morale

Going the extra mile to boost your team's morale is critical during trying times. Use these tips to keep your team happy.

1: Give specific praise

Your team needs to know how valuable and appreciated they are, and a simple "Good job today" doesn't always cut it. Share sincere, specific praise with each team member when appropriate. Instead of sharing generic praise, say "I noticed how much time you spent showing Sebastian's owner how to give insulin injections. She was really nervous about it, but she was a lot calmer when she left." Or, "Bailey is so much more comfortable after you spent time with him. Taking him outside for a potty break and ensuring he received pain medications significantly improved his mood." Your genuine praise can turn around a bad day and leave your team members beaming with pride.

2: Avoid overworking your team

When work becomes chaotic, life often follows suit. Long hours and workplace tension mean that your team members are home less often and are likely tired and stressed out when they are. They can't keep up with housework and family obligations, and the stress becomes a vicious cycle. Although maintaining a full team amid the current veterinary professional shortages can be challenging, try to schedule enough employees that you don't have to repeatedly lean on your core team to bear the extra load. They may happily pitch in to help, but the extra work will eventually take its toll.

Additionally, review your workflows to ensure they are efficient and don't take extra time out of your team's day. Eliminating inefficient steps, slow processes, and redundant tasks can help your team find more time in the day and relieve stress

Overworked team members are often tired and stressed out at home, which leads to a vicious cycle. Ensure your team takes time off and offer flexible scheduling.

3: Be flexible

When you ask more of your team, you have to be prepared to also give more. If a team member needs an occasional day off to care for a sick child or attend to a personal matter, approve their request, provided they will not take advantage of your generosity. If necessary, back up your scheduled team with on-call employees who can cover at a moment's notice.





4: Cater to your team's likes

Instead of cold pizza in the break room again, find unique ways to show your team how much you appreciate their hard work. Food is always a powerful motivator, but fun activities and unique gifts can be more meaningful, especially if they play double duty and help decrease stress. Try a trip to a nearby park, complete with hospital branded water bottles, or an afternoon yoga session with team T-shirts. Having fun together can melt away stress and do wonders for your team's morale.

5: Emphasize your core values and goals

Do your team members understand how their role fits into the practice's values and business goals? Although you may discuss key performance indicators (KPIs) with the team leaders only, every team member should understand how they contribute to your practice's overall success. Your team will be more motivated, and may find renewed purpose, if they know you are working toward AAHA accreditation or equipment that will allow you to offer expanded services. Even if you share only basic financial and growth goals, your team members will have the satisfaction of knowing how they contribute to your accomplishments.

Every team member should understand how their role fits into your practice's business goals and success. Knowing how they contribute can motivate your team and help raise morale.

6: Reward your team

Recognizing team members who go above and beyond helps reinforce positive behaviors and motivates your team to continue working hard. Small gifts, such as an insulated cup or a fun stethoscope tag can go a long way toward your practice's success. The next time you see a team member go out of their way to make a client happy, support another team member, or ensure a patient's comfort, recognize their effort with a token of appreciation.



7: Celebrate together

It can be easy to forget about, or put off, birthdays and work anniversaries when business is chaotic, but your team desperately needs a fun break during stressful times. No matter how busy you are, carve out an hour to celebrate important milestones with your team. And keep it simple. You don't necessarily need catered food to have a celebration. A potluck, pizza, or ice cream break can be just as fun. For extra special occasions, bring in a massage chair or manicurist as a special treat.



8: Check in with your team regularly

Scheduling one-on-one time with each team member lets them know you truly value their mental health and are invested in their long-term well-being. Knowing you care will lift your team's morale and help them look ahead to better times. Use the included well-being checklist to assess each team member's mental outlook, and pinpoint areas that could lead to future well-being and morale issues.

When times are chaotic, it can seem like there is no end in sight. But, brighter days are always ahead.

Well-being and morale are always important—in tough times and good. Use this practical guide to help improve team morale and keep motivation high. With your guidance, your team can stay strong during tough times and flourish when things improve.

Does your practice management software improve team morale?

Practices don't always consider the impact systems and processes can have on morale. Inefficient workflows can quickly damage your team's morale, especially during chaotic times. Neo® Software is a cloud-based veterinary software that can help streamline processes, allowing your team to complete common tasks up to five times faster.⁶ Built-in, stress-free training allows your team to quickly master Neo on their own, although support is always available to help. With its intuitive design and ease, Neo can significantly decrease your team's stress and raise morale.

"The training was excellent, and within 12 hours, our team was using Neo Software with no problems."

—**Dr. Gina Finney**, Neo customer, Valet Vet Mobile Veterinary Services

"Anything you need to do, the system will walk you through doing it. When I saw how easy it was to use compared to [our previous system], it really became a no-brainer for me."

—**David Anderson**, Neo customer, Practice Manager at Companion Animal Hospital

"The built-in training saves me time and ensures that everyone on my team feels confident and comfortable using Neo Software."

—**Candice Barber**, Neo customer, Office Manager at Acadian Animal Hospital

[Learn how Neo can boost your team's morale](#)

6. Data on file at IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. Westbrook, Maine USA.

© 2021 IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. All rights reserved. • 09-2589949-00
All ®/TM marks are owned by IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. or its affiliates in the United States and/or other countries. The IDEXX Privacy Policy is available at [idexx.com](https://www.idexx.com).

