

## Zap the generational gap!

Tips for embracing the unique strengths of younger veterinarians

By Meagan Johnson



Equine practices risk losing young vets to small animal practices when the toll of long hours, no days off and less pay leads to burnout. In this article, we will examine some small steps you and your practice can take to keep young equine veterinarians committed and devoted to the care of horses.

### Meagan Johnson Feedback is my favorite word

Younger generations have a higher desire for feedback and collaboration than previous generations.

- Greater than 65% of Generation Z (born between 1997–2012) want weekly feedback at a minimum (and preferably more often).<sup>1</sup>
- 74% of millennials (born between 1981–1996) name collaboration as one of the top two priorities they want in a workplace.<sup>2</sup>

What can practice managers do to create the culture of feedback and collaboration millennials and Generation Z crave?

Over 70% of Generation Z are motivated to go above and beyond when they feel their employer cares about their welfare.<sup>4</sup> Greater than 80% want to work for someone whom they can relate to both professionally and personally.

An HR manager I recently interviewed told me he abolished the yearly review. He said, “Young people do not care about feedback that is a year old. They care about the day-to-day relationship they have with their employer.”

One tool he uses to solidify the employer/employee relationship is the Stay Interview, which helps managers understand why people stay and why they leave. Additionally, it is an effective tool that allows people to feel heard and their opinion has value.

Some sample Stay Interview questions:<sup>3</sup>

- What do you like most about working here?
- What kind of feedback would you like about your performance that you are not currently receiving?
- What have you felt good about accomplishing during your time here?

- When was the last time you considered leaving your job and what was the reason you thought about leaving?

To learn more about what questions to ask and how to conduct a Stay Interview, search “stay interview questions” in Google.

### Give younger veterinarians a mentor

According to a Deloitte study, millennials who are at their current job or organization for longer than five years are two times more likely to have a mentor. And according to Price Waterhouse Cooper, 98% of millennials feel that working with strong mentors is very important.

We often think of a mentor as someone from our personal life—a coach, a teacher or a community leader. Today, younger people are looking for mentorship in the workplace. According to a study by Springtide Research Institute, over 70% of Generation Z are motivated to go above and beyond when they feel their employer cares about their welfare.<sup>4</sup> Greater than 80% want to work for someone whom they can relate to both professionally and personally.

### WLB (work-life balance)

Young practitioners want and expect a healthy balance between work and personal time. This does not mean they do not love their jobs. Young equine veterinarians have chosen this career because they are passionate about horses and their welfare. Here are four steps to take to ensure everyone in your practice is experiencing WLB equilibrium:

- **50% of Millennials have children.** They want family-related benefits such as childcare providers and paid parental leave.
- **Holistic wellness initiatives.** Help your young practitioners with stress management. Provide wearable devices (i.e., fitness watches), mental health support and accessible healthy food options. (This also ties into the Generation Z desire to work for someone who cares about them.)
- **Tuition reimbursement.** The younger generations have more student debt than previous generations. Additionally, they are experiencing higher levels of financial stress than older generations. Even partial assistance is a great stress reliever to someone who is just beginning their career.

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## Zap the generational gap!, continued

- **Guaranteed day off.** I heard this comment from every young equine veterinarian I interviewed. The knowledge that there is one day that is a guaranteed day off makes the 10- to 12-hour days doable.

It can be challenging to change our methods or challenge the “way we have always done it.” I encourage everyone to embrace the younger generations and appreciate the opportunities they bring to your practice. At the end of the day, young and seasoned generations all want the same

thing: to take care of the client and their horses to the best of their ability.

### Footnotes:

1. Shenton Chris, *Gen Z in the workplace: Culture needs to be ‘frequent feedback’ focused*, <https://www.weekly10.com/gen-z-and-workplace-feedback>, 5/15/20

2. 4 Workplace Elements Sure To Engage The Millennial Worker, <https://www.hrcloud.com/blog/4-workspace-elements-sure-to-engage-the-millennial-worker>, 4/28/15

3. Stay Interview Questions, <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/pages/stayinterviewquestions.aspx>

4. Deichler Andrew, *Generation Z Seeks Guidance in the Workplace*, <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/organizational-and-employee-development/pages/generation-z-seeks-guidance-in-the-workplace.aspx>, 6/28/21