

STRUGGLING TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN? OUR FUTURE COLLEAGUES ARE TELLING US WHAT THEY WANT, IF WE'D ONLY LISTEN

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When it comes to looking for a new role, research proves that actually vets just want fair pay for fair hours. They are increasingly looking to achieve a positive work - life balance through flexible working, allowing them to accommodate other interests, hobbies and family commitments. This session will share UK and Australian research with undergraduates and newly qualified vets to help you better shape your own employment and support provision to match the changing needs of your team. The UK experience proves that if you want to build a stable, strong team, it's time to connect with future colleagues today.

Vets' expectations have changed, but practices haven't

The last major national study in the UK into veterinary recruitment, 2015's vetfutures research project, concluded that the three factors with the greatest bearing on choice of career for students and new vets are:

1. Intellectual satisfaction
2. Location
3. Supportive environment

These findings are backed up consistently by Onswitch's own research with newly qualified vets and undergraduates - they are looking for a fulfilling job with a social support network (family and friends nearby) and with enough experienced colleagues to ensure that help and encouragement are available as required.

Gallup has been measuring employee engagement for decades. Its data is very clear - building strong connections between employees and their work / colleagues delivers benefits for both parties. Creating a team-centred culture is crucial in recruiting and retaining great people, but it's not just forcing people to take turns bringing cakes in once a month, it's about building a relationship of trust.

Measuring engagement with the Gallup Q12

Gallup research has quantified the massive impact employee engagement has on attendance, productivity, profitability and accident rates. The Gallup Q12 survey is used across the world in businesses large and small - a simple questionnaire is hosted online and filled in anonymously by the team, with space for suggestions and comments. The wording and order of the twelve questions have been crafted to return the most accurate measurement of employee engagement, and ensure data is robust and comparable over time. Each of the twelve questions is answered on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree), thus capturing the nuances of personal experience and highlighting strengths and opportunities for the practice.

Employee engagement is a key metric for all businesses to measure and track. Gallup research proves that engaged individuals have:

- 37% lower absenteeism

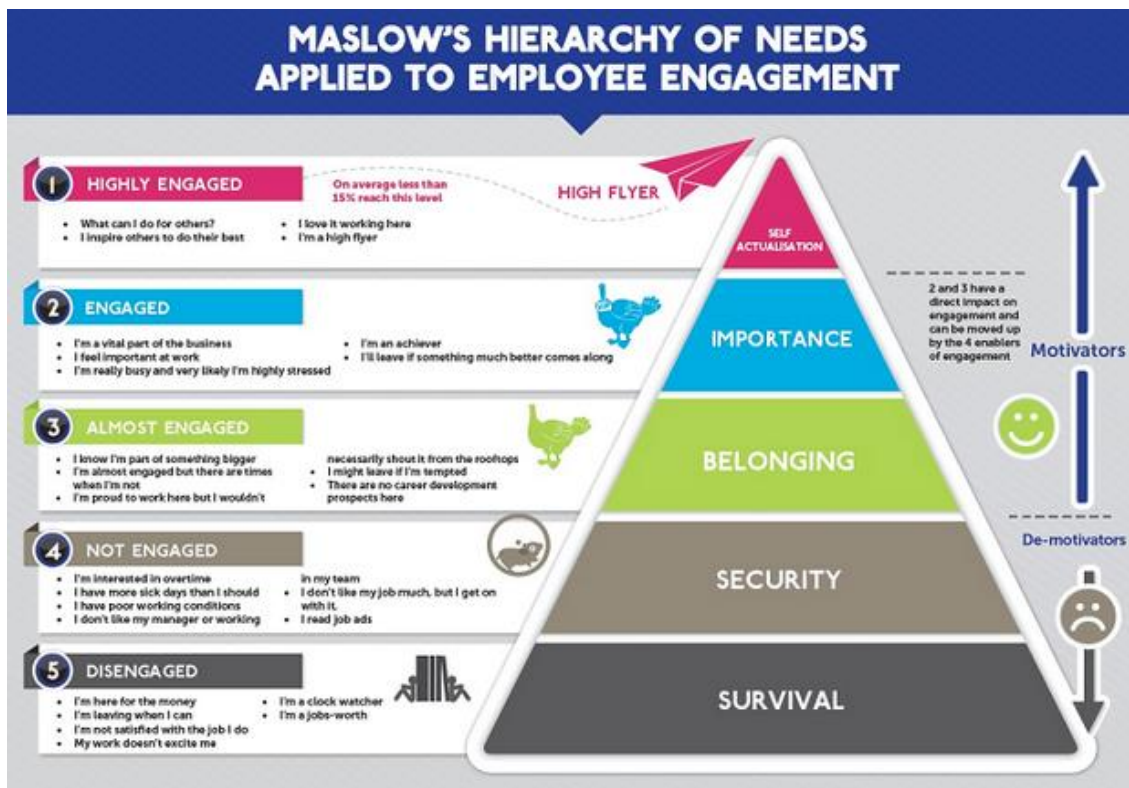
- 21% greater productivity

Engaged teams perform better too, with:

- 25% less turnover
- 22% improved profitability
- 41% fewer patient safety incidents
- 10% higher customer metrics, delivering a superior experience for clients

Engaged people are motivated by the values of the business and work together to deliver great things. However, contrary to popular belief, engagement isn't delivered through generous salaries and benefit schemes, it comes when people feel respected and listened to, when they can see that they are supported by managers and colleagues and feel inspired to push for excellence. In the veterinary sector recruitment is time consuming and costly, so it makes sound business sense to invest the required effort in keeping the good people you already have. Engaged people will also recommend your practice to their network, bringing in like-minded great people without the time, expense and effort of a full recruitment cycle.

Maslow found that levels of engagement can be linked to a basic hierarchy of employee needs - having just enough personal boxes ticked results in a very low level of team belonging, with disengaged members of the practice team just barely surviving at work:



Practical steps to boost engagement

- Commit time, money and focus to developing a comprehensive induction programme, for every new member of the team. This programme should place equal importance on

how to do things, not just what to do; setting out practical examples of what great customer care looks like (always use the animal's name when sending out booster reminders, for example). It should include hands-on training in optimising the customer experience both over the phone and face to face, with regular refresher sessions undertaken by the whole team.

- Find out when your busiest times of day are on the phones (it's probably Monday morning!) and put extra staff on accordingly.
- Answer the phones away from the front desk so that your customer care teams have dedicated jobs and can give their full attention to either answering calls or helping owners in the practice; not doing both at once, and consequently doing neither particularly well.
- Ensure that everyone in the team is engaged with, and motivated by, your business' vision and mission. If you don't know what makes your practice special and unique, how are your team, or your clients, supposed to? Your vision should shine through every aspect of your communications and service and underpin everything you do; brought to life in every communication with your clients by the team (remember how crucial people are to the customer experience.)
- Annual appraisals and bi-annual development reviews should be in place for every member of the team; with performance goals clearly pegged to customer care delivery and fit with the practice vision.
- Regular team meetings keep everyone informed of practice priorities and values, whilst ongoing training, both face-to-face and online (using tools such as www.cxclub.care) ensures that vets, nurses and customer care colleagues all have the skills and the confidence to market the practice effectively in every conversation with every client.