

TEAM COLLABORATION TOOLS

Stacee Santi, DVM
CEO/Founder Vet2Pet
691 CR 233, Suite B6
Durango, CO 81301
stacee@vet2pet.com

Sick of the never-ending thread of group emails? Thinking of getting another dry erase board? Then you definitely need to read this first!

It really doesn't matter who you are or what business you are in, the success (or failure) of your business will largely depend on how well your team communicates. In a veterinary practice, this is critical in every sense of the word. But are you using the most effective tools? If you are still emailing or printing memos, then you aren't.

Technology has come along way in the last few years for team collaboration tools. Prior to these innovations, teams were at the mercy of signing memos as proof that you had received the information. Not anymore...life is much better because everyone knows the better you communicate, the happier your team will be, the more productive your business will be and the better care your patients will get. Let's take a review of the top team collaboration tools on the market that have a relevant position in veterinary medicine.

Trello

Trello is like the virtual mother of all dry erase boards. Multiple boards can be created and each board has columns called "lists". Each list contains "cards". The cards hold conversations from multiple team members about a specific topic. A team member can flag a card with their image to indicate they are taking the lead on the topic. Each card can hold additional information such as due dates, check lists, and labels. Cards can be referenced in other cards if the conversations crossover. If you need to get a team member's input, just "tag" them on the card and they will receive an email and/or notification that they have been mentioned.

Pros: Free. Very customizable and can fit most situations. Task/goal oriented. Easy to use. App and web platform. Integrates with many other platforms such as Dropbox, Google Drive and Slack.

Cons: Not very conducive to general chatting.

Slack

Slack builds teams around topics. Using a #, you can create channels (topics) and invite certain members of your team to that channel. Then inside you can discuss, upload files, and have conversation threads. "Bots" can be integrated into Slack and there are some really fun ones! Hey Taco allows each employee 5 virtual tacos to give away each day to other team members for a job well done. A taco leaderboard can be displayed and tacos can be cashed in for prizes. It is amazing how much a person enjoys receiving a taco! This is especially helpful if you are looking for ways to compliment members on your team.

Pros: Lots of integrations available. Conversation threads inside of conversations. Great search feature. Easy to see all conversations at once.

Cons: Free version is fairly limited, Higher learning curve to use, there is a lot going on so easy to lose sight of tasks/conversations if you aren't checking regularly. Unable to assign tasks to other people easily.

Zoom

Zoom is a virtual meeting room that uses webcams to host a "Brady Bunch" style meeting. Using wifi, up to 100 participants can meet for 40 minutes on the free plan. Audio is easy to access by using the headphone jack on your computer thereby avoiding cell charges. But, you can call in for audio too if needed. Sharing your screen is no problem and you can easily record your meeting to the cloud and share the link afterwards without having to convert the file to a sharing platform. Great for meetings when team members can't be on site.

Pros: Free version is very good. International access. Easy to use. App for iPhone or iPad.

Cons: The meeting will end abruptly at 40 minutes unless you go with a paid plan.

Glip

Glip is very similar to Slack but easier to use and free. Instead of topic oriented approach of Slack, the conversations are team oriented. The task feature is very powerful with due dates, assignees and the ability to sort and reorder your tasks based on priority and due dates. Tasks can also be assigned to groups and easy to tell when completed. Team members calendars can be integrated and shared which makes scheduling a meeting much easier. Files and links can be stored and each member has a personal note taking section. Conversations can be converted to video chats with the click of a button. The giphy feature is hilarious and gives this a fun twist.

Pros: Free. Easy to use. Powerful task feature. Links and documents are stored in one place. Calendar integration.

Cons: Unable to have conversation sub-threads inside a team chat.

Google Docs

Google Docs (and Google Sheets) are live documents that can be shared and edited by multiple users. By simply sharing your document with another person, you can allow them to edit a live document. When the edits are made, the form is immediately updated for everyone. Hot links can be embedded in the document and comments can be attached to specific parts of the document. Since the form is live, it is easy to embed links which makes it easy for the reader to access information.

Pros: Free, easy to get started, easy to mark up and read input from multiple team members

Cons: Not particularly user friendly but once you figure it out, it's easy to use.

Whether you are the boss or the employee, nobody likes to be in the dark. Sharing information is a key component for every team. Tools like these make it easy (and fun!).