



The Veterinary Leadership Institute (VLI) has partnered with Veterinary Medical Association Executives (VMAE) in order to provide leadership content in an affordable manner for the Power of 10 programs across the country. In an effort to stay true to the VLI mission of providing programs that invite our audiences into a space that fosters growth and learning, we have developed these video modules using VLI content to be used in conjunction with this facilitator's guide. Though this guide is not meant to replace our highly trained VLI facilitators, it is our hope that this tool will allow you to engage your Power of 10 groups in a format where learning can take place by using small group conversation and discussion, experiential activities, reflection and large group debriefing.

Introduction: How do you lead an experiential conversation instead of give a didactic lecture?

Before we get into the specifics for each module, it is imperative that you understand your role as a facilitator. This role is often very difficult for those in the veterinary profession because we are used to receiving information in a didactic lecture format. Unfortunately, this format does not usually lead to learning and growth. Instead, we want to encourage reflection and conversation around the material presented so the participants can move from theoretical knowledge to practical application. For the facilitator, this is sometimes easier said than done because we get excited about what we are discussing and we want to share as much information as we possibly can instead of allowing participants to wrestle with the questions and come to their own conclusions. Below, you will find an excerpt from our "Attributes of an Effective VLI Facilitator" document that more specifically outlines the role of the facilitator in the group process.

By definition, to facilitate means "to make (by process or means) easy or easier." The VLI facilitator role, then, is to help make the learning process easier.

Facilitation is fundamentally different from teaching, training or presenting. Effective facilitators guide the interaction of the group members rather than provide advice and definitive direction. It is often easier to tell others what to do. Advice, however, is not facilitative, even if it is requested. Thus, our goal, as VLI facilitators, is to develop the ability to guide group interaction using questions rather than giving answers.

Facilitators believe that each participant is creative and resourceful and that they have more knowledge, understanding, and potential than they often give themselves credit for. Facilitators believe that the role of the participant is that of discoverer, traveler, detective, and explorer. The facilitator role, then is to help them uncover a deeper understanding of what they already know and to integrate new information through guided self-discovery.

Facilitators guide the participant journey based on a predetermined framework of group development as well as on information provided by the participants in the moment. Guiding participants takes a certain amount of fearlessness in the midst of uncertainty. It requires sufficient self-awareness to realize you don't have all the answers. Even though you have a toolkit of skills, facilitation requires the ability to flex with the process.

It is critically important that facilitators adopt a coach-like approach to their facilitation, rather than a directive approach where information is provided following the experiential exercises. In the figure below, facilitators would therefore be operating in the coaching-facilitation quadrant with minimal to no time spent in the mentoring-consulting quadrant, unless it is intentionally decided that a topic is best covered in this manner.

Key Attitudes/Behaviors

- 1. Understands that the VLI experience is not about what facilitators know, but rather about encouraging reflection and self-discovery among the participants.*
- 2. Holds a space for individual and group change/failure/growth.*
- 3. Has a true understanding of what facilitation is versus what teaching is in the academic world. This means that our facilitators help participants understand the value of the “what, so what, now what” learning opportunity- rather than being too direct in providing the “right” answer (i.e. “you should have gotten this out of that activity”).*
- 4. Operates without an “agenda,” facilitates for individual and group growth focused on where the individual/group want to go/grow, NOT where the facilitator believes the group should go.*
- 5. Is connected to but also separate from the group (i.e. is a friendly facilitator as opposed to a facilitator friend).*

Because it can be challenging to move from presenter to facilitator, we have formatted the modules so that reflection and conversation are built in. This facilitator's guide is

not meant to replace the training and practice of a veteran facilitator. Rather, it is meant to serve as a starting point and help you guide conversation and learning around specific topics for your Power of 10 groups. Your job is to use the prompts to guide each discussion using reflection, conversation and suggested questions/activities. As you become more comfortable with the format and the content of each module, you will begin to formulate your own questions and ideas about activities that will stimulate growth and learning for each of the modules. The more you facilitate conversation, the better you become at understanding where the group is, what the group needs and how to get there.

Before we get started, here are a few rules of engagement to consider.

1. **Creating a safe place for conversation and sharing of ideas is critical.** This is often best achieved by modeling the behaviors you hope to observe in the participants. Set the stage by saying, “We are interested in your thoughts and ideas about the topic we are discussing. There are no right or wrong answers to our questions.” Sarcasm, belittling of ideas, and forcing your opinion on others are best left out of the discussion.
2. **Do not be afraid of silence.** Based on our experience, veterinary audiences tend to be introverted and hesitant to answer questions for fear of being wrong. Thus, we have a specific progression for discussion: 1) allow participants time to write their own thoughts on paper for a couple minutes, 2) have participants share in a smaller group with 1-2 other people, 3) open up the discussion to the large group and only call on those who have volunteered to share their thoughts. Within this progression, silence is ok. Be patient and give your audience time to think about what they want to share.
3. **Be genuinely curious about what the participants think.** Often, we are so passionate and excited about the content we are sharing that we feel like we have to give a “lecture” in order for the participants to grasp what we are sharing and don’t allow for interaction and discussion. However, the material will have much more meaning when the participants are allowed to discuss it and challenge it. Instead of trying to convince them of a topic’s importance, use open-ended questions to invite conversation.

The facilitator guide below is set up to include a summary of each section in the module so you have an idea about what we were hoping to convey in each section as well as how the sections will flow. It then goes through a possible discussion strategy for the content and gives examples of questions we have used in the past to engage the participants in the content. This is not the only way to facilitate the conversation, but it is the strategy that we have used successfully in previous programs. Finally, we have given you several resources that will help you become more fluent in the content. It can be very difficult and scary to facilitate conversation around content you are not familiar with or are unsure about so the resources are meant to help you feel more confident. It is amazing, though, how being transparent with your participants can build trust. If you are not sure about the answer to a question, be honest about that.

One of our favorite strategies in this situation, a strategy that often leads to really rich conversation is to say, “That is a really great question. What do you guys think?”

Module #1: What is leadership?

Section 1 (0:00-3:49)

Summary of the Section: We set the stage for why it is important to be talking about what the literature calls “soft skills” or “non-technical competencies,” but what the Veterinary Leadership Institute calls “essential skills.” Using the metaphor of veterinary medicine as a treadmill, we invite participants to think about the reality of practice and why we, as a profession, sometimes struggle with learning about and practicing the skills sets outside of medicine, specifically what it means to be a leader within the veterinary profession. The section culminates by asking the participants to define leadership.

Discussion Strategy: At the end of the section, pause the video and give the participants about a minute or two to write down their definition of leadership. Make sure they do this by themselves initially. When everyone has had a chance to write down their definition, ask each participant to share that definition with someone sitting close to them. We often say, “Share your definition of leadership with someone sitting near you. Is there anything you would add/change/alter about your definition based on your conversation.” We usually give participants about 2-3 minutes for this conversation. If the participants are having really engaged conversations, allow them to continue until the conversation dies down. The next step, after smaller group discussion is to open up the conversation to the large group.

Ideas that usually come up during the large group conversation include different types of leadership and/or qualities or traits of good leaders (i.e. leadership requires inspiring people to get things done, leadership is getting things done, leaders must have integrity, leaders must walk the talk, etc). We usually talk about how leadership can be a fairly vague concept unless you have specifically defined it. We might add, “Think of a really poor leader you worked with. How did you know the leader was not good? What did he/she do that led you to believe he/she was a bad leader.” or “Think of a really great leader you worked with. How did you know the leader was great? What did he/she do that led you to believe he/she was a great leader?” In asking for these examples, we are encouraging the participants to think about specific behaviors that communicate whether the leader was effective or not.

The goal of this conversation is to help participants start thinking about how to define leadership and then tie the definition of leadership to the idea that effective leadership is about specific behaviors. We do this because if leadership is tied to specific behaviors then we can identify those behaviors and practice them in various situations so we can then have positive influence. The VLI philosophy on leadership uses a

servant leadership model which can be a little challenging, but can be summed up as follows: the leader's job is to know what he/she brings to the table, know what her/his followers bring to the table and then maximize those things such that the team can achieve the common goal. If the leader is doing their job, often, his/her followers are unaware of the positive influence the leader is having because the follower is working in strength with commitment to the goal.

Resources:

Leadership: Theory and Practice, Peter G. Northouse: This is an excellent resource on the different types of leadership and their pros and cons. We highly recommend reading it before facilitating this module as it will give you a broad perspective on the many different approaches to leadership.

Section 2 (3:50-10:44)

Summary of the Section: We summarize what we have heard in our programs about the definition of leadership and then share the definition of leadership we, at the VLI, like from Northouse's book, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, and discuss why we like this definition.

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

We then discuss why we, as an organization really like this definition.

1. Leadership is a process.
2. Leadership is influence.
3. Leadership requires a common goal.

Once we have defined and discussed leadership using the idea that **ALL** of us are leaders because we all have influence, we then move into thinking more deeply about what it means to have influence. The section ends asking the participants to write down what they think it means to have influence.

Discussion Strategy: Using the same framework as was used when asking participants to define leadership in Section 1, give the participants 1-2 minutes to write down their ideas about what it means to have influence. Then, allow them to discuss their thoughts with 1 or 2 people sitting near them. Finally, facilitate a conversation around what it means to have influence with the entire group.

This question, what does it mean to have influence, can be a little more challenging for participants to articulate an answer for. Ideally, we want them to come to the conclusion that influence is about changing someone's behavior. We try really hard to

ask questions that lead to that conclusion without telling them the “answer.” Questions to consider might be:

How do you know you have had influence in a situation or with a person?

What must happen for someone to have influence in your life?

What do you have to do in order to have influence in a situation?

Are you more susceptible to positive or negative influence? Why?

Sometimes, the word manipulation will come up in this conversation and veterinary professionals often have a visceral reaction to this idea. If we look at the first definition of manipulation, to manage or influence skillfully especially in an unfair manner, we can see why we don't like the word manipulate. It has a negative connotation. It is unfair. This is not what we are after with influence. We want to use our influence toward positive things.

Ultimately, the goal of this conversation is to help the participants understand that influence is about changing behavior. We often give several examples of what this looks like in practice within the profession (i.e. a practice owner wants to have influence with his employees in making sure they exhibit the behavior of arriving to work on time, the associate veterinarian has influence with her client by encouraging the behavior of no longer feeding her overweight pet table scraps, the veterinary technician wants to have positive influence within her team's culture by modeling gratitude throughout the day). The examples are endless so use things that hit home with you.

Resources: Much of our approach to the idea of influence comes from the work of John Kotter, a leading expert on change initiatives within organizations. We have listed several of his books as well as his website below.

<https://www.kotterinternational.com>

Leading Change, John Kotter

The Heart of Change, John Kotter

Section 3 (10:46-16:41)

Summary of the Section: Discusses the idea that veterinarians have been trained to make decisions based on the data. So, when we are trying to have influence and change behavior, our main strategy for doing this is using information and data to educate people so they will make different decisions. Unfortunately, this strategy does not work and the research done by Kotter shows us why. What works, though, is connecting with feelings. What we have to do is use our data to connect with feelings. Simon Sinek has also done great work in this area. We are at a crossroads in our profession because we are losing our voice as the “go-to” experts on animal health and welfare. We hypothesize that part of this is due to the fact that we do not know how to have influence. We are trying to change peoples' behavior with data and it

does not work. Instead, we have to practice the skill of marrying data with connection in order to regain our voice. Those who do not have data (breeders, animal rights activists, big box retailers, etc.) are really good at connecting with peoples' feelings because they have to be in order to get people to change their behavior because, often, what they are proposing has not basis in truth.

We then present a scenario (how do you get Betsy to put her dogs on heartworm prevention) so participants can try to develop a strategy/plan to use to get Betsy to change her behavior.

Discussion Strategy: Have the participants get into small groups of at least 3 people. Give them 5-7 minutes to develop a few strategies/plans on how they are going to get Betsy to change her behavior. Instruct them to be as detailed as possible and, if possible, defend their strategy/plan with a concrete rationale. After 5-7 minutes, have the groups share their strategies. It is also good to add at this point that the strategy that will work for having influence with a veterinarian who won't put her dogs on heartworm prevention might not work if it is a non-veterinarian client who you are trying to have influence with. You could ask the question, "What if Betsy was not a veterinarian? Would you use the same strategy? Why or why not?" Betsy will then share what was effective for her in the next section.

Resources: Simon Sinek has done great work in this area and provides many practical examples of how to put the idea of connection with customers into practice. His Ted Talk speaks directly to this idea of connecting with why and is a great place to start when thinking about the idea of influence as Kotter has defined it. His books are also very helpful on this topic.

Simon Sinek's Ted Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sioZd3AxmnE>
Start With Why, Simon Sinek
Leaders Eat Last, Simon Sinek

Section 4 (16:43-22:22)

Summary of the Section: We share the strategy that actually worked for Betsy in getting her to put her dogs on heartworm prevention.

Discussion Strategy: Not needed

Resources: None

Section 5 (22:22-23:37)

Summary of the Section: Concluding remarks about what was covered during the previous sections.

Discussion Strategy: Not needed

Resources:

www.veterinaryleadershipinstitute.org

<https://www.facebook.com/VeterinaryLeadershipInstitute/>

@VLI_Leaders

https://www.instagram.com/vli_leaders/