

**WORK FORCE CRISIS: "RETAINING STAFF"**

**Please Don't Go!**

THE VETERINARY INDUSTRY IS FACING A WORK FORCE CRISIS. RETAINING AND GROWING YOUR STAFF HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT.

Presented by **Leslie Boudreau** BASVT, RVTg, CVPM, SPHR, PHRca

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**What's my Why?**

- Thanks to the VMAE for asking me to present to you today!
- Disclaimer: These are my opinions not necessarily those of the VMAE.
- I'm passionate about Veterinary Practice Management and Talent Management!
- I've been in the profession since 1983 and an RVT since 1995.
- I serve on the Board of Directors for VHMA and I am a past president of CaRVTA.
- I'm living through the veterinary "Workforce Crisis" with you!
- Currently serving on the VHMA Work Force Crisis Task Force.

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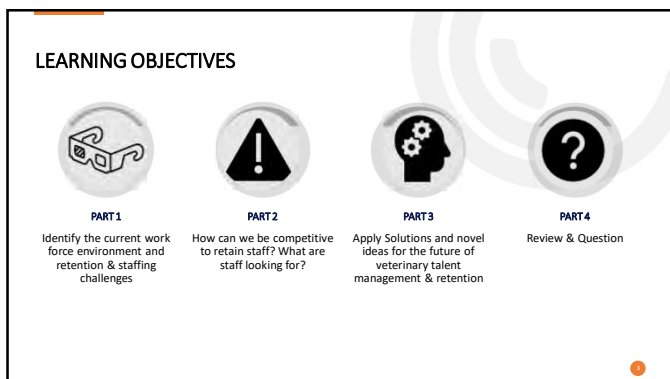
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**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**




**PART 1**  
Identify the current work force environment and retention & staffing challenges



**PART 2**  
How can we be competitive to retain staff? What are staff looking for?



**PART 3**  
Apply Solutions and novel ideas for the future of veterinary talent management & retention



**PART 4**  
Review & Question

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Poll Question #1

What is your role in your practice or in industry?

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Part I.

Why are we calling this a workforce crisis?

Employee retention is defined as an organization's ability to prevent employee turnover, or the number of people who leave their job in a certain period, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Increasing employee retention has a direct impact on business performance



*Staff at the Orange County Emergency Pet Clinic, Garden Grove, CA*

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We went quickly from this...

...to this!

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Poll Question #2

Are you currently hiring a veterinarian or plan to hire a veterinarian in the next 6 months?

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HOW SERIOUS IS IT?

On average, it takes 10 months to hire a veterinarian.



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HOW SERIOUS IS IT?

There are 19 jobs for every applicant.

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**HOW SERIOUS IS IT?**

One out of every three people plan on leaving their job in the next year



The Hay Group

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**WHERE ARE ALL THE WORKERS?**



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**“TURNOVER TSUNAMI”**

- 50% of employees plan to look for a new job once the pandemic ends, according to SHRM.
- While not all of these people will ultimately make a switch, many will actively look for change.
- For many veterinary hospitals, the Tsunami has already started.

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## WHAT'S YOUR TURNOVER RATE?

**Example:** In 2021, your company had 100 employees at the beginning of the year and 98 employees at the end of the year. During the same year, five employees left your company. This gives you the following calculations:  $[5 / (100 + 98 / 2)] \times 100 = .05$ . Using this formula, you can conclude that your employee turnover rate for 2021 was 5%.



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### Poll Question #3

What do you think your turnover rate is?

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## HOW DOES YOUR TURNOVER RATE COMPARE?

What was your employee retention rate pre-pandemic and during the pandemic?

According to an American Veterinary Medical Association article — **veterinary medicine as a profession has one of the highest turnover rates:**

**up to 50% annually at some practices.**

Employee retention is a hurdle that veterinary practices are constantly working to overcome. **Compassion fatigue, burnout and practice culture** all contribute to turnover.



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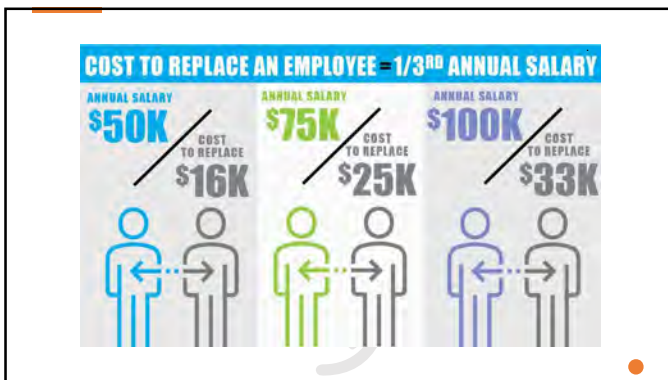
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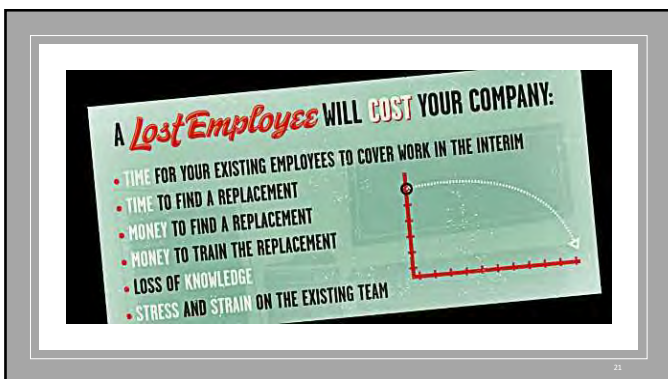
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### Wages are Rising

- 16% average Increase in staff wages in 2021
- Competitive wage matching
- Hiring Bonuses
- Minimum Wage Increases causing wage compression

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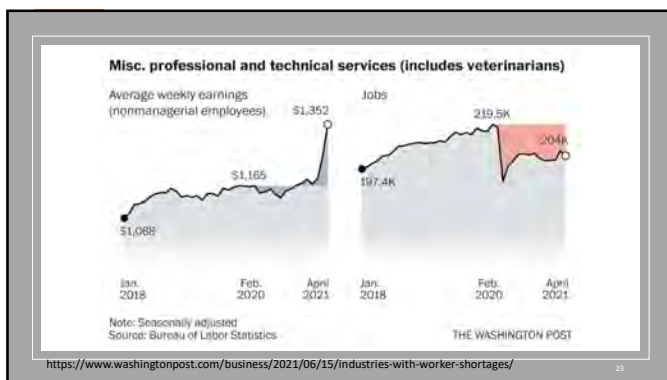
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### Wages

- Money may attract people to the front door but it takes more than money to keep them from going out the back.



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**PART II:**

HOW CAN WE  
BE  
COMPETITIVE?  
WHAT ARE  
STAFF  
LOOKING FOR?

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Working with animals cannot be the only selling point any longer!

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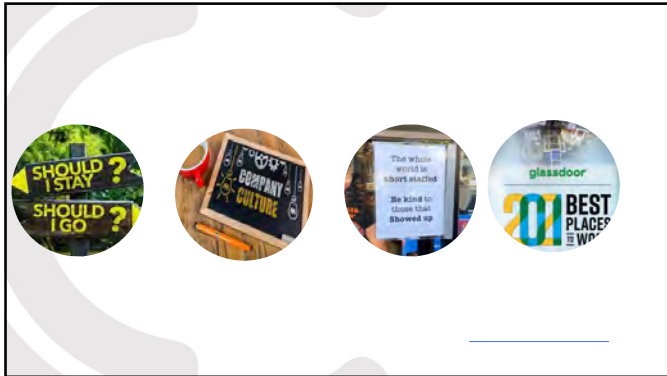
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## Paying a Living Wage

Inflation is rising faster than normal

- Usually 3-5%
- Most recently 7%
- Basic Economics = Supply & Demand Concept
- Staff are in short supply so cost more
- Paying a living wage is crucial to retention



<https://livingwage.mit.edu/>

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## Living Wage Calculation for San Diego County, California

The living wage shown is the hourly rate that an individual in a household must earn to support his or herself and their family. The assumption is the wage provider is working full-time (2080 hours per year). The tool provides information for individuals, and households with one or two working adults and one to three children. In the case of households with two working adults, all values are per working adult, single or as a family unless otherwise noted.

The state minimum wage is the same for all individuals, regardless of how many dependents they may have. (Data are updated annually, in the first quarter of the new year. State minimum wages are determined based on the posted value of the minimum wage as of January 1st of the current year. Political Committee of State Legislatures, 2019). The poverty rate reflects a person's gross annual income. We have formatted it to an hourly wage for the sake of comparison.

For further detail, please reference the [livingwage.mit.edu](https://livingwage.mit.edu/) form.

	ADULT				JAN 1, 2019 (1 WORKING ADULT)				JAN 1, 2019 (2 WORKING ADULTS)			
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	
Living Wage	\$21.20	\$42.37	\$32.44	\$40.31	\$32.44	\$51.97	\$43.64	\$50.54	\$34.25	\$23.97	\$26.58	\$34.09
Poverty Wage	\$6.15	\$6.2	\$10.84	\$12.60	\$8.29	\$16.44	\$12.40	\$14.75	\$8.14	\$7.2	\$6.90	\$7.36

<https://livingwage.mit.edu/>

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## Assess your Benefits

Benefit	% of practices Providing	Median Hospital Share**
• Health Insurance	• 82%	• 60%
• Dental Insurance	• 67%	• 50%
• Pet Insurance	• 8%	• 100%
• Veterinary Care Discount	• 99%	• 50%
• Dues (Voluntary Assoc)	• 66%	• 100%
• License/Certification	• 79%	• 100%
• Retirement Plan	• 82%	• 3%
• Uniforms/Clothing	• 85%	• 100%
• Tuition Assistance	• 37%	• Na
• Paid Time Off	• 88%	• Dependent on length of service



2021 VHMA Report on Compensation and Benefits for Non-DVM Staff,  
\*\*If they provide a benefit only (non-zero reporting)

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## Assess your Benefits – What do they want?

- Paid Holidays
- Flex Spending Accounts
- CE Budget
- Cell Phone
- Child Care
- Disability Insurance
- EAP
- College Savings Plan
- Life Insurance
- Be Creative?

**EMPLOYEE BENEFITS SURVEY**

To help us provide benefits that meet your needs, please complete this survey and submit it to: [Employee Name]  
or Human Resources by [date to return survey]

Benefit	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>Health Benefits</b>					
I am satisfied with my health plan options.					
I am satisfied with my dental plan options.					
I am satisfied with my vision plan options.					
I am satisfied with my long-term disability insurance.					
I am satisfied with my short-term disability insurance.					
I am satisfied with my options for life insurance.					
Overall, I am satisfied with my health benefits.					
<b>Financial Benefits</b>					
I am satisfied with my retirement plan.					
I am satisfied with my salary.					
I am satisfied with the Employee Stock Purchase Program.					
I am satisfied with my opportunities for promotion, raises, and bonuses.					
Overall, I am satisfied with my financial benefits.					
<b>Paid Time Off</b>					
I am satisfied with the number of vacation, sick, and personal days that I receive.					
Overall, I am satisfied with my paid time off.					
<b>Additional Benefits</b>					
I am satisfied with my continuing education and training opportunities.					
I am satisfied with my tuition reimbursement options.					
Overall, I am satisfied with my additional benefits.					


2021 VHMA Report on Compensation and Benefits for Non-DVM Staff,  
\*\*If they provide a benefit only (non-zero reporting)

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## Employees stay when they are:



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Poll Question #4

Are you currently hiring a credentialed technician or plan to hire a credentialed technician in the next 6 months?

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Technician Utilization

- Average Life of an RVT is 5-7 years
- A 2016 NAVTA survey found that when technicians are not fully utilized, they have decreased job satisfaction & burnout
- Proper utilization = **increased retention**

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Veterinarian




- Diagnose
- Prescribe
- Surgery

Credentialed Veterinary Technician



- Use skills and knowledge to assist veterinarian in all areas of veterinary medicine

Veterinary Assistant



- Assist veterinarians & technicians

Courtesy of Abby Hathaway, CVT-VT Utilization 2020, WVC

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How are you differentiating yourself?

• Applications

• Technology

• Work environment

• Align with culture

• Onboarding

4-898-0568 (Call or Text) | FAX: 714-891-7383 | 15021 Edwards Street H

WE ARE OPEN [Click Here For Our Statement on COVID](#)

AL HOSPITAL

untinston Beach

Emergency

Medication/Supplies

Request Appointment

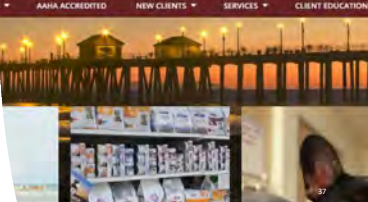
Pay Online

AHA ACCREDITED

NEW CLIENTS

SERVICES

CLIENT EDUCATION



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PART III

What solutions and novel ideas can be implemented to keep staff happy and engaged at work?



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INNOVATIVE EMPLOYEE RETENTION STRATEGIES

CAREERCLIFF.COM

Hire for your culture

Focus on long-term benefits

Be charitable

Show your appreciation

Foster teamwork

Value tech

Solve problems

Offer flexibility

Provide work-life balance

Focus on personal development

Encourage, support innovation

Compensate excellence

Embrace employee growth

Reduce workweeks

Let some staffs work from home

Don't micromanage

Show career growth

SOURCES: TONGI.COM; ADRECCOURA.COM

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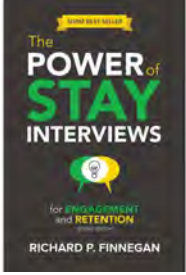
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**Retention and Exit Surveys**

Make **retention surveys** and **exit interviews** a top priority — and if this means spending more money on staff, tools or both, then make it happen.

Organizations that assume what their workforce is feeling are often shocked to discover that their beliefs are rooted in wishful thinking instead of **reliable data**.

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**Employee-Centric Culture**

Focus on practical and meaningful ways to build an **employee-centric culture**.

**Compensation** is always going to matter, but it has never been the number one thing that most employees focus on when it comes to joining an organization or staying in one.

Organizations that establish and evolve a **culture** that is characterized by **transparency, inclusion, respect, support, and empathy** are much better positioned to recruit and retain vs. those that might offer higher salaries, but only pay lip service to these values and principles.



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**Making Workers Happy**

Do everything possible to make workers successful and happy.

**"Successful"** means equipping them with the technologies and tools they need to be productive, efficient and organized.

**"Happy"** means paying attention to their wellbeing and protecting them from micromanagers.

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### Reward and Recognize Employees

This doesn't necessarily mean doling out bonuses and other financial benefits like gift cards.

In some cases, simply giving an employee or team a **"shout out"** during a meeting (in-person or virtual) can be enough.

Research commissioned by the Achievers Workforce Institute found that **3 in 4 employees want more recognition** for their work.

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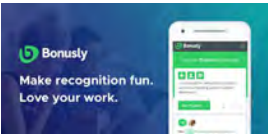
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**Bonustly**  
Make recognition fun.  
Love your work.



### Solutions & Ideas Moving Forward

- Engagement Platforms
- Employee Recognition
- Feedback Boards
- Team Huddles
- Celebrate Achievements (personal too)



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### Mobility Opportunities, Training, and Mentorship

Provide **mentorship, training, and mobility** opportunities.

Organizations that do not facilitate it internally will face it externally.



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Train people well enough so they **can leave**, treat them well enough so they **don't want to**.

— Richard Branson

ALL QUOTES



### Solutions & Ideas Moving Forward

- Grow your team
- Create career paths
- Advancement opportunities
- Lifelong learning/new skills
- CE Benefits
- Tuition reimbursement
- Regular check-ins

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### Solutions & Ideas Moving Forward

- Develop a talent strategy
- Anticipate Hiring Needs
- Recruitment
- Teaching Hospital
- Partnerships



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✓ Flexible work arrangements will be a major consideration when evaluating future job opportunities.

44%	Strongly agree
33%	Somewhat agree
20%	Neutral
2%	Somewhat disagree
1%	Strongly disagree

✓ Flexible work arrangements would or do allow me to be more productive.

47%	Strongly agree
31%	Somewhat agree
18%	Neutral
2%	Somewhat disagree
2%	Strongly disagree

### Solutions & Ideas Moving Forward

- Work from Home
- Flexible Schedules
- Telemedicine
- Outsourcing
- Job sharing

<https://www.zenefits.com/workest/7-big-statistics-about-the-state-of-flexible-work-arrangements/>

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**Solutions & Ideas Moving Forward**

- Respect your staff's mental health
  - Birthday or Floating PTO Day
  - Employee assistance program (EAP)
  - Zero tolerance for abuse

**Employee Assistance Program**

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**Support your team Food & Fun Help**

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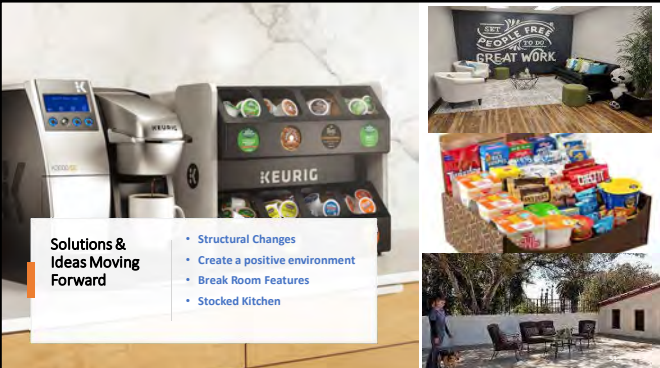
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**Solutions & Ideas Moving Forward**

- Structural Changes
- Create a positive environment
- Break Room Features
- Stocked Kitchen

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STILL HAVE CHALLENGES AHEAD

You're always going to lose staff



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STILL HAVE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Proactive Hiring & Training

- Cross Training
- Use Part Timers
- Relief Services
- On Call Staff
- Over Staffing



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