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IMPROVE CLINICAL AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES BY REACHING PEAK PERFORMANCE

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INTRODUCTION: WHY PERFORMANCE MATTERS

Every veterinary practice today faces two interconnected challenges: providing exceptional patient care while maintaining sustainable financial growth. Too often, these are treated as separate priorities. Yet, research and practice show that the quality of your team's clinical performance directly influences your practice's financial performance.

This session explores how performance coaching can be used as a powerful tool to unlock personal and team potential, enhance clinical capability, and drive measurable business results in a practical way. Drawing from research in psychology, leadership, and business, including the works of Daniel Goleman, Sir John Whitmore, Amy Edmondson, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and others, we'll see how coaching bridges the gap between *clinical excellence* and *practice profitability*.

WHAT IS COACHING AND WHY IT MATTERS

At its heart, coaching is not about teaching, it's about unlocking potential. Sir John Whitmore, one of the pioneers of coaching in business, defined it as:

"Unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them."

This distinction is crucial in clinical settings. Traditional training focuses on transferring knowledge and skills. Mentoring offers guidance from someone more experienced. Coaching, however, is different. It works by asking questions, encouraging reflection, and creating accountability so empowering the individual to take ownership of their own growth.

Coaching is particularly helpful in veterinary practices because clinical environments are complex, unpredictable, and emotionally demanding. Technical expertise alone is not enough and success (for the team, clients, patients and business) depends on resilience, communication, empathy, and teamwork. Coaching addresses both skill development and the mindset that underpins performance as well as increasing awareness.

A widely used model is Whitmore's **GROW** Framework:

Goal – What do you want to achieve?

Reality – Where are you now?

Options – What could you do?

Will – What will you commit to?



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This simple structure allows leaders and managers in clinical settings to hold focused, supportive conversations that lead to real performance improvement.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CLINICAL PERFORMANCE

Daniel Goleman's research highlights that emotional intelligence (EI) is the single most important factor in leadership effectiveness. In fact, he found that up to 90% of the difference between high-performing leaders and average ones is explained by EI rather than technical skills or IQ.

The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence: self-awareness or recognising your emotions and their impact; self-regulation - managing disruptive impulses and adapting how we behave; motivation – intrinsic or staying driven beyond money or status; empathy - understanding others' feelings and perspectives; and social skills - building rapport, trust, and collaboration.

A nurse or vet with high empathy will build more trust from the clients than those without which will improve their compliance recommendations and so the treatment of the pets. Similarly a practice leader with high social skills will increase collaboration across a diverse team and therefore reduce errors.

Coaching actively develops emotional intelligence by encouraging reflection, self-awareness, and feedback. Over time, this directly improves both client satisfaction and team cohesion leading to better patient outcomes and stronger financial outcomes.

LINKING CLINICAL CAPABILITY TO BUSINESS GROWTH

Veterinary practice is a service business. Clients don't just buy treatments; they buy confidence, trust, and experience. Research (Heskett's Service-Profit Chain) demonstrates that employee satisfaction drives service quality, which drives customer loyalty, which ultimately drives profitability.

In practice: a team that feels supported and coached delivers a more positive client experience; clients who feel heard and cared for are more likely to accept treatment plans, refer friends, and stay loyal; greater treatment compliance leads directly to better patient wellbeing and to revenue growth.

Investing in the personal and professional growth of your clinical team is not a cost, it's an investment with measurable financial returns.

OPTIMISING TEAM PERFORMANCE THROUGH COACHING

No practice can succeed without an effective team. Yet, teams do not automatically perform at their best. Bruce Tuckman's classic model of team development (Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing) shows that conflict and friction are normal stages before high performance is reached.

Coaching helps accelerate the journey to "Performing." By facilitating communication, clarifying roles, and building trust, leaders can reduce time lost to misunderstandings and inefficiencies.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Harvard professor Amy Edmondson describes *psychological safety* as the shared belief that a team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. In clinical environments, where mistakes can have serious consequences, psychological safety is critical. Without it, staff may hide errors or avoid speaking up, undermining patient care and practice performance.

Coaching encourages open dialogue without blame, builds resilience in staff facing difficult cases or patient interactions and enhances motivation by aligning personal goals with the mission of the practice.

MAXIMISING PROFITABILITY THROUGH PEOPLE



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The business case for coaching is strong. Consider these benefits:

Coaching clinicians on communication and confidence directly increases uptake of the best option diagnostics and treatments.

Engaged, motivated staff stay longer, saving the high costs of recruitment and training.

Clients cared for by an empowered, positive team are more likely to recommend the practice.

So coaching can increase income, decrease recruitment costs and increase client numbers. Performance coaching also instils the discipline of consistent improvement, daily reflection, and accountability. Over time, these small actions accumulate into significant clinical and financial gains. It also increases the individuals and the teams ability to cope with an ever changing world

To track coaching impact you could measure client net promoter scores, employee net promoter scores, average revenue per vet, and uptake of recommendation rates.

REACHING PEAK PERFORMANCE: MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS

To sustain improvements, practices need a clear framework for peak performance. Several powerful models can be applied here:

Flow occurs when people are fully absorbed in a task that challenges them appropriately while matching their skills (Csikszentmihalyi). In clinical practice, creating the right balance between challenge and support helps clinicians experience flow leading to better outcomes and greater job satisfaction.

Growth Mindsets (Carol Dweck) can be fostered by encouraging reflection and seeing mistakes as opportunities to improve. A *fixed mindset* sees ability as innate; a *growth mindset* sees ability as developed through effort and learning.

The Peak Performance Chain demonstrates how individual coaching forms the foundation of a successful business. It states that personal growth leads to clinical and personal excellence which creates team effectiveness and therefore client satisfaction which results in financial profitability.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION: EMBEDDING COACHING IN PRACTICE CULTURE

How can a practice make coaching part of everyday operations?

Regular one-to-one coaching conversations - not just appraisals, but short, focused sessions.

Use of frameworks like GROW - to structure conversations around goals and accountability in a non personal but individualised way.

Leadership modelling - leaders who demonstrate emotional intelligence set the tone for the whole practice.

Linking coaching to business outcomes - making clear how personal performance connects to patient care and profitability so individuals know their worth.

Creating a culture of feedback - normalising constructive feedback to build psychological safety.

CONCLUSION: CLINICAL GROWTH FUELS FINANCIAL GROWTH

Reaching peak performance is not about working harder; it's about working smarter through the power of coaching. By developing emotional intelligence, fostering resilience, and building a culture of



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continuous improvement, practices can simultaneously raise the bar on clinical outcomes and financial success.

Key takeaways:

- Coaching empowers individuals to own their growth, rather than being passive recipients of training.
- Emotional intelligence is the foundation of leadership and team performance.
- Personal development drives both professional success and practice profitability.
- Psychological safety, flow, and growth mindset are critical elements of a high-performance culture.
- The Service-Profit Chain proves that investing in people delivers measurable financial returns.

When a team grows in capability, confidence, and collaboration, patients notice - and so does the bottom line.

Coaching is not a “nice-to-have.” It is a strategic driver of clinical and financial excellence.

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