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SOUTHERN EUROPEAN VETERINARY CONFERENCE
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GROW AUTHENTIC BRAND ADVOCACY BY FOSTERING TEAM ENGAGEMENT AND UNITY

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INTRODUCTION: FROM PERFORMANCE TO ADVOCACY

In the first two sessions, we explored how coaching enhances performance, confidence, and autonomy. This session takes the next step: showing how these individual and team improvements translate into something bigger - a culture of engagement and unity that drives authentic brand advocacy.

When clients choose a veterinary practice, they are not only influenced by treatments and outcomes; they are also guided by how the practice makes them *feel*. A united, motivated, and engaged team delivers not only clinical excellence but also the consistent, positive experience that builds loyalty and referrals.

This lecture explores how coaching cultivates team motivation, shared vision, and psychological safety - the foundation for transforming staff into ambassadors of the practice's values and brand.

COACHING TO IMPROVE MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Motivation is at the core of engagement. While incentives such as pay and benefits play a role, true engagement comes from intrinsic motivation - the inner drive to find meaning and satisfaction in work. Coaching directly addresses the key intrinsic motivators of recognition, responsibility and achievement as well as autonomy through ownership, competence through skill building and relatedness by stronger connections.

Coaching recognises that each team member is motivated differently. By exploring personal values, coaches uncover what truly inspires an individual. Coaching helps staff take responsibility for their own development, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation. Through reflective questioning, coaching builds belief that personal growth contributes to team and practice success and so gives encouragement.

For example - A receptionist who feels undervalued may disengage. Coaching that highlights their role in client experience, aligns it with their personal strengths, and recognises their impact reignites motivation.

VISION AND VALUES: THE FOUNDATION OF UNITY

For a team to work in harmony, it needs more than tasks and targets - it needs a shared vision and shared values. Vision provides direction and values provide identity. Together, they create the culture of the practice.

To align your team with your vision ask open questions to connect personal aspirations with the practice's vision e.g. "How does your role contribute to where we are going as a practice?". Teams coached to reflect on daily actions can see how behaviours align, or clash, with stated values and so



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values are embodied. These shared values ensure that every patient interaction reflects the practice's ethos, turning consistency into brand trust.

Great organisations preserve their core values while adapting practices to achieve their vision. For example, a practice that values *compassion* ensures all staff - from clinicians to administrators - are coached to consider how each action communicates empathy. Patients then experience a consistent brand of compassionate care.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY: THE CORNERSTONE OF ENGAGEMENT

Amy Edmondson's research on psychological safety shows that teams are more engaged and effective when they feel safe to speak up, share ideas, and admit mistakes without fear of blame. In clinical settings, this is critical because fear of speaking up can lead to errors, disengagement, and fractured team dynamics.

Encouraging open dialogue through non-judgmental questioning; reinforcing that mistakes are learning opportunities, not failures; recognising vulnerability and promoting empathy all build trust and therefore increase psychological safety.

Some practical strategies to create psychological safety could include: Leaders modelling humility e.g. "What could I have done better?"; debriefing the team openly after busy or difficult days; and giving recognition for contributions to team learning as well as for results.

When psychological safety is present, staff are more likely to engage fully, innovate, and support each other - all essential for unity and authentic brand advocacy.

MOTIVATION THEORIES APPLIED TO BRAND ADVOCACY

Authentic advocacy comes when staff are motivated not because they are told to promote the practice, but because they *want to*. Coaching draws on motivational theory to foster this authentic commitment.

At higher levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs esteem and self-actualisation mean that people seek meaning and purpose. By using coaching questions we can demonstrate to individuals how valued they are and how their role contributes to patient outcomes and the practice mission. Coaching gives autonomy, which gives them ownership and the team are more likely to advocate for the brand if they feel ownership in how it is represented. Relatedness is a motivator and a natural extension of strong team bonds is loyalty making brand advocacy more likely. In one to one conversations we can create responsibility and accountability to ensure achievement and then also give recognition helping to maintain motivation and therefore increase the likelihood of recommendations.

An engaged and unified team is more than the sum of its parts. When staff feel motivated, aligned with vision and values, and safe to contribute, they naturally become **brand** advocates. Brand advocacy happens when the team genuinely believe in the practice's values, they communicate positivity to clients and the community without being prompted and build trust through consistent patient and client care that reflect the brand. Gallup's *State of the Global Workplace* (2021) found that highly engaged employees are 23% more profitable and significantly more likely to act as brand advocates.

Coaching aligns personal motivation with collective goals, builds confidence to represent the brand authentically, and strengthens unity through shared values and reflective practice. For example, a veterinary nurse who feels engaged and aligned with the vision will naturally reassure clients, embodying the brand's ethos without needing a script.

CONCLUSION: FROM ENGAGEMENT TO ADVOCACY



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Authentic brand advocacy is not achieved through marketing campaigns alone - it is built from the inside out. Coaching provides the tools to cultivate motivation, align vision and values, foster psychological safety, and create unity.

Coaching improves motivation by addressing our intrinsic needs.

Vision and values unify the team, turning consistency into trust.

Psychological safety fosters open dialogue and learning, the basis of true engagement.

Engaged and united teams become authentic brand advocates, strengthening both reputation and patient loyalty.

When your team is engaged, united, and empowered, they don't just represent your brand - they *are* your brand. Clients (and patients) can feel the difference, and that is what drives authentic advocacy and long-term success.

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