

EMBRACING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

9 HR Tools Every Practice Needs

Reactive hiring is expensive. Here's how to build the human resource infrastructure that supports lasting success.

BY PETER WEINSTEIN, DVM, MBA

Too often, veterinary hiring is reactive. Someone resigns. Another team member burns out. The practice gets busier. Leadership scrambles. An ad is posted. Interviews are rushed. Someone “seems nice” or “has experience,” and they are hired quickly — often without clear expectations, structured onboarding, or defined training. Six months later, the new hire is underperforming, disengaged, or gone. That cycle is expensive. It drains morale, productivity, and profitability.

Entrepreneurs must stop viewing human resources as administrative paperwork. People are your operating system. That operating system requires tools. Below are nine human resource management tools every veterinary practice needs.

1 Job Descriptions

Every position should have a written document that clearly defines the purpose of the role, essential responsibilities, required technical skills, behavioral expectations, performance standards, reporting structure, and growth opportunities.

Without role clarity, teams create their own definitions of success, and those definitions rarely align. Job descriptions reduce confusion, improve accountability, and create consistency in performance reviews and training. They also protect employers legally by

outlining job functions. Importantly, they answer the candidate's question: “What does success look like?” If you can't define that, you can't hire for it.

2 Personnel Policy Manual

A personnel policy manual establishes fairness, consistency, and professionalism. It should outline work



schedules, attendance expectations, PTO, compensation and benefits, dress code, workplace conduct, harassment prevention, communication expectations, review processes, discipline procedures, safety requirements, social media guidelines, and confidentiality expectations.

When policies are undocumented, leaders become inconsistent, which creates resentment and destroys culture. A written manual removes ambiguity and reinforces that decisions are based on policy, rather than emotion, favoritism, or circumstance.

Ask your attorney to draft or review your personnel policy manual to ensure legal and regulatory compliance.

3 Job Applications

A standardized application allows every candidate to provide the same information, from employment history and salary expectations to availability and professional references.

Applications create comparable data, support legal compliance, and reduce hiring blind spots. More importantly, they reveal attention to detail. Incomplete applications often predict incomplete work habits. The hiring process itself is your first performance assessment.

Again, seek legal advice to ensure that your application meets legal requirements.

4 Interview Questions

Many interviews are conversational and unstructured, but unstructured interviews are notoriously poor predictors of performance. Every practice should develop standardized interview questions that evaluate:

- **Technical capability:** “What anesthesia monitoring experience do you have?”
- **Problem-solving:** “Tell me about how you handled a difficult client.”
- **Accountability:** “Describe a mistake you made professionally and what you learned.”

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- **Team orientation:** “How do you respond when co-workers aren't pulling their weight?”
- **Adaptability:** “How do you handle changing priorities during a chaotic day?”
- **Culture fit:** “What type of leadership helps you perform your best?”

Behavioral interviewing is powerful because past behavior predicts future behavior. Stop hiring based on personality, work experience, or perceived skills alone. Hire based on demonstrated capability and values alignment. Also, avoid questions that could expose your practice to discrimination claims or other legal risks.

5 Salary Ranges

Too many practices determine pay emotionally: “We really like them — offer more.” “We need someone fast — raise the salary.” That's not a strategy.

Every position should have predetermined compensation bands based on market benchmarking, geographic competition, experience and certification levels, internal pay equity, production expectations, and financial sustainability.

Defined salary ranges improve hiring speed, fairness, and financial planning. They also reduce compression, where new hires make nearly as much — or more — than loyal team members. Nothing destroys retention faster than perceived compensation inequity.

With payroll having such a large impact on profitability, a hiring budget can help you stay on track to meet your profitability goals.

6 Onboarding Plan

The first 90 days often determine whether an employee stays. Yet onboarding in many practices consists of: “Here's your locker. Follow Sarah today. Ask questions if you need anything.” That isn't onboarding; it's improvisation.

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PETER WEINSTEIN
The Embracing Entrepreneurship columnist is a leader, disruptor, and change agent through his three companies: PAW Consulting, Simple Solutions for Vets, and Veterinary Ownership Advocates. He teaches business and finance at the Western University College of Veterinary Medicine.

A structured onboarding plan should include pre-arrival preparation, workspace readiness, technology setup, uniform preparation, team introductions, a clear first-week schedule, an assigned mentor, regular check-ins, and defined early performance goals.

Employees who feel welcomed and supported engage faster. Employees who feel forgotten leave faster. Retention begins on day one.

7 Orientation Plan

While onboarding teaches process, orientation teaches identity. New hires need to understand your practice's mission, core values, service philosophy, client experience standards, communication culture, medical philosophy, brand promise, organizational structure, and growth vision.

People want more than a paycheck. They want purpose. Orientation connects a job to a mission. That emotional connection drives loyalty.

8 Training Plan

The biggest hiring mistake in veterinary medicine is assuming experience eliminates the need for structured training. Every hospital does things differently. Without documented training systems, practices create variability, errors, and frustration. Every role must have a skills checklist, standard operating procedures, training timelines, competency verification, continuing education pathways, cross-training opportunities, and leadership development tracks.

Training should be systematic, not dependent on whoever happens to be available. And training doesn't end at 30, 60, or 90 days; it's a lifetime process that leads to careers, not just jobs. When practices invest in growth, employees invest back. Professional development is a retention strategy.

9 Hiring Team

Hiring should never rest entirely on one practice leader. A hiring team might include the practice owner, hospital administrator, department leader, senior technician, client service leader, or culture ambassador. This creates multiple perspectives and improves selection quality. It also signals that joining your practice matters enough that several people invest in choosing.

The Infrastructure Behind the People

Practices that build a strong human resource infrastructure consistently outperform those that hire reactively. Your practice doesn't just need employees; it needs people supported by systems that help them succeed. That's how entrepreneurial veterinary businesses build lasting excellence, and it starts long before the first interview. **TVB**