How to Be the Most Wanted Associate and Attract the Best Veterinary Clinics

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1. Introduction
There is no doubt that the current job market for associate veterinarians is tough. What makes it even tougher is that your new boss will probably be from a different generation. In fact, the clinic where you hope to hang your shingle may be a mix of attitudes, motivations, and the organizational mentality of several generations.

As a new associate to the practice, you may be faced with trying to fit into an environment where technology is considered a necessary evil, where mentorship is no more than a brief greeting in the morning and continuing education is based on the idea of keeping your eyes open and mouth closed. This may be a harsh assessment of the practice culture of your next job, and certainly not every practice follows these guidelines. But be aware that many of the veterinarians doing the hiring may assess your prioritization of work/life balance, your expectations relative to starting salary and benefits, and your overall approach to the rigors of equine practice just as harshly. Having some understanding and appreciation of the environmental factors that you are entering into may put you at the top of the most wanted associate list. Simply realize that time is a scarce and critical component in the business world. This should motivate you to be very concise and bold in your pursuit of the perfect job at the perfect practice.

Sometimes the process of searching for your next job can overshadow the conveyance of your best qualities. Also be aware that ability alone will probably not get you the best job. Even though some associates are more skilled than others, as a licensed veterinarian, there is a certain assumption about your abilities. To compete and be chosen for the most coveted position, there are other critical qualities for you to perfect and express. Presentation, dependability, motivation, and, of course, attitude, are not the only traits a competitive associate should consider, but they are the most essential attributes that busy practice owners consider when they search for the best associate for their practice.

2. Discussion
Keep in mind that at the basic level, the practice owner really only wants to know several things: Can you do the job, will you actually take the job if offered, will you fit in with the rest of the team, and will the clinic benefit from hiring you? Therefore, in your search for the perfect job, keep in mind that now is not the time for modesty, but it is also not the time for arrogance. Typically, when clinics need an associate, they want someone immediately. Put-
ting your best image forward from the start is critical. Consider how you look and whether that presentation fits into the environment. Certainly, these first impressions are essential, but also consider how you present yourself during the second and third encounters with the practice. The best practices are looking for an associate with a professional, confident image.

Of course, the best way to present your outstanding image is to be dependable. Practice owners want to know if you will show up for work as scheduled and if you will be on time for appointments. They also want to know if they can depend on you to be loyal to the practice and have the best interest of the business at the forefront of your workday. To get started in demonstrating your dependability, call when you say you are going to call, and be there when you say you are going to be there.

Unfortunately, if you fail to call or show up on time, it may be a reflection on your motivation. Veterinarians who work at the best practices go the extra mile. As a potential associate, be aware and demonstrate that you will be the one who goes the extra distance and performs the extra procedures. Combine that with the desire to learn more and the willingness to teach the technicians, and you will certainly be noticed.

Finally, the crown jewel of all qualities that is sought after by most progressive clinics is attitude. The premier adage in management, especially for small business, is to “hire for attitude, train for skill.” Most people know how they compare when considering the other qualities, but attitude can be a bit tricky. We do not always know if our attitude fits. At the minimum, a positive and confident attitude will be required. But, as we know, we are faced with a wide assortment of clients and fellow workers who have different likes and dislikes of how people act. Having the ability to recognize those differences and adjust accordingly will put you at the forefront of the candidate line.

3. Summary

As you venture out into the job market, keep in mind that to be the most wanted associate, you must demonstrate more than veterinary skills and ability. Practice owners want the best veterinarian available and do not have time or money for candidates who lack certain qualities. Your chance of landing in the perfect clinic will be enhanced with a little forethought mixed with confidence. Understand and refine the desired qualities that you possess, and do not be afraid to demonstrate the results as well as your abilities. If you demonstrate that you can provide value to the clinic, then you can be the most wanted associate and are that much closer to landing in the desired practice.