

Mattering at Work

Check the Pulse of Your Practice: Employee Engagement Survey

A survey to gauge current levels of connection and create deeper levels of engagement within your team.

To operate a successful equine veterinary practice, it is crucial to retain engaged employees. Workplace engagement is determined by the strength of the emotional and mental connection employees feel towards their work, their organization, and their teams (Quantum Workplace). In order to learn more about workplace connections, psychological well-being can be measured by perception of accomplishments, competency, recognition as well as desired involvement with the company.

Engaged Employees Are Ones Who Actively:

- Commit to their work purpose
- Choose behaviors they believe will best accomplish the purpose
- Ensure their work behaviors are performed competently
- Monitor progress to make sure their purpose is being achieved

Intrinsic Motivation at Work: What Really Drives Employee Engagement, Second Edition by Kenneth W. Thomas, Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Why This Is Needed In Your Practice

Maintaining long-term employees relies heavily on fostering engagement. However, our ability to address and resolve issues effectively can be hampered if we do not use targeted surveys to identify them. Practice leaders can begin to identify areas that need improvement, understand employee perceptions, enhance communication within the team, and increase job satisfaction—all resulting in improved performance and productivity.

Please note that as a **practice leader**, you need to ask yourself an important question before you start this process: Are you willing to reflect on the feedback and make long-term changes within your practice? If the answer is yes, understand that this endeavor will take time, effort and resources. If the answer is no, you should be aware that beginning this process without seeing it through will likely be more harmful to your practice culture than not starting it at all.

The **goal of this survey** is to provide employee feedback to a practice's leadership team in the area of engagement, call out the successes, and identify weaknesses to address. Once identified, the areas needing improvement can be addressed through support strategies found within the AAEP network and beyond. If given anonymously, use the survey to identify general areas of need within the culture and find strategies that will help develop the entire team.



“A company is only as good as the people it keeps.”

—Mary Kay Ash



AAEP **TRANSFORMING**
EQUINE PRACTICE

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Steps for Administering this Survey:

1. Before providing the engagement survey to the employees, make sure to clearly communicate if the survey is anonymous, who will be able to see their responses (if not anonymous), and what will be done with the results.
 - In a practice with a larger number of employees, this survey is ideally performed anonymously.
 - Be sure to communicate the timeline of when the survey will be distributed, deadline for completion, and when the results will be shared.
2. Distribute the survey to all members of your team.
 - This can be done on paper or consider leveraging a resource like Survey Monkey that will also help you analyze the data.
3. Once the survey is complete by the agreed deadline, tabulate your results.

Larger Practice - Anonymous	Smaller Practice - One-to-One
Total the scores for each question to get an overall score per question. <i>For example, if for Question #1, 4 people gave a "5", 3 people gave a "3", and one person gave a "1", the score total for this question = "30"</i> $(4*5)+(3*3)+(1*1) = 30$	Identify any questions with a score of 3 or less
From these scores, you can then identify your overall highest and lowest scored questions	Depending on how many questions scored 3 or less, discuss which ones to address first for better manageability.

4. Now that you have the results, pinpoint the areas of success and of need where you had the highest and lowest overall scores (consider focusing on your top and bottom 2-3 questions).
 - Review the resources in the area of need (below) to assist with developing follow up action items
 - Be sure to recognize your highest scoring questions as your wins. Celebrate these and keep up the good work!
5. Meet as a team if delivered anonymously, or individually with each employee to discuss survey findings and utilize suggested resources to help establish a collaborative plan for moving forward.
 - Celebrate your top wins and share your opportunities. Get input from your team on what needs to change going forward and agree to specific action items to address the concerns. This could look like another all-team meeting, or a leadership discussion and decision shared back with the larger group. The key here is sharing a plan with those who took the survey to demonstrate accountability and follow-through.
6. Once you have agreed to action items, agree on when you will check in on progress. 3 months? 6 months?
7. Follow up with your team on the check-in dates. How are you doing? What's going well? Where do you still need to improve? This follow-up demonstrates accountability and dedication.
8. Consider an annual to every other year cadence for survey administration.

Equine Practice Engagement Survey

Please consider your job in your practice over the past month and indicate to what extent you agree with each statement on a scale of 1 to 5.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I enjoy working with the people at my practice.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have a relationship of trust with the people at my practice.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I find meaning in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel effective and competent in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel that I know what to do in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel that my work efforts are appreciated.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel that the people I work with recognize my abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I like to take on challenges in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I want to be involved in my practice beyond my work duties.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have the resources I need to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5
11. At my practice there is open and honest two way communication.	1	2	3	4	5
12. At my practice there are established methods for giving and receiving feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
13. There is someone at my practice who encourages my development.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I align with my practice's core values and mission statement.	1	2	3	4	5
15. What else would you like the practice to know?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				

*Adapted from Dagenais-Desmarais, V., Savoie, A. 2012 What is psychological well-being, really? A grassroots approach from the organizational sciences. *J Happiness Stud.* 13:659-684.

The Follow-Up: Growing Engagement

Allowing employees to feel heard is the first step, but the most important part of this work is **implementing actual changes in the practice** that employees can recognize. The 2024 AVMA-AAEP Economic State of the Profession Report shows that veterinarians continue to rank the quality of their coworkers and mentorship opportunities well above compensation when considering the factors of accepting a job offer. Positive practice culture is a result of dedicated effort and commitment from the leadership team. Increasing engagement within the entire team will be a crucial aspect of working toward improvement for veterinary practices.

Specific Tools to Utilize Depending on The Area of Need

Interpersonal fit (Questions 1, 2, 11):

- [AAEP – The Key to Successful Teams for the Equine Practice Owner \(Physical and Mental Safety\)](#)
- [AAEP – Communication Boundaries for the Equine Practice](#)
- [AAEP – Equine Practice Mission and Core Values Toolkit](#)
- [AAEP – Reward and Recognition Assessment](#)
- [AVMA – Conflict Management for a Healthier Workplace](#)

Thriving at work (Questions 3, 5, 13):

- [AAEP – Perfectionism in Equine Practice](#)
- [AAEP – Opportunities for Growth, The Stay Interview: Guidance for Leaders](#)
- [AAEP – Courageous Conversations](#)
- [AVMA – Team retention: Linking Satisfaction and Wellbeing](#)
- [Decade One – where equine practitioners learn to thrive](#)

Feeling of Competency (Questions 4, 5, 10):

- [AAEP – Perfectionism in Equine Practice](#)
- [AVMA/AAEP – Veterinarian-Client Agreement for Effective Equine Care](#)
- [AVMA – Owing your Narrative with Bertice Berry Keynote Presentation](#)
- [MentorVet Leap](#)
- [Veterinary Leadership Institute - VLI Trek](#)

Perceived Recognition (Questions 6, 7, 12):

- [AAEP – Mattering at Work, Reward and Recognition Assessment](#)
- [EquiManagement – How To Have a Conversation About Compensation and Benefits](#)
- [Vetsources – 3 tips to Effectively Recognize and Reward Your Veterinary Team](#)
- [VMHA – Perfecting the Performance Review Process](#)

Desire for Involvement (Questions 8, 9, 14):

- [AAEP – Opportunities for Growth, The Stay Interview: Guidance for Leaders](#)
- [AAEP – Connection and Community, Page 5](#)
- [AAEP – Connection and Community Pillar, Video](#)
- [Equitarian Initiative Volunteer Opportunities](#)
- [AAEP – Volunteer Opportunities](#)
- [AAEVT – Guidelines for the Utilization of the CrVT](#)
- [Volunteer Opportunities with Your State's Veterinary Medical Association](#)



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