Veterinary Practice Core Values Glossary

Examples and terms to inspire your practice's core values

VetNetics
IT'SBUSINESS&IT'SPERSONAL

Introduction

The values you hold, instill, and promote as a veterinary practice have more of an impact than you might think, and failing to develop a set of core values – alongside the reasons for them –can put you at a disadvantage on many angles.

Practice values aren't just buzzwords to put on your recruitment page. They shape the workplace culture of your employees and guide them on the best way to interact with each other and with customers.
They are the guiding principles that hold your team to justifiably high standards to ensure you're growing with purpose and staying true to your practice's shared vision.

So, what should your practice values be?

Unfortunately, I'm not the one to tell you what your values should be.
Every practice will have a different shared purpose, and so will also have different values.

With so many value options to choose from, I want to help your team agree its core values with this glossary. Use this list of terms to get inspired by when building your practice's core values and note which ones resonate the most with you and your team and, the purpose (your WHY) of your practice's existence.
Take these values as they are, or roll them up into more personal practice principles.
After reading through this glossary, I hope you'll be well-equipped with a set of crucial, authentic core values for your practice that your team hold each other accountable to as their 'Rules We Live By'

Accountability

Acknowledging and owning up to the responsibility you have to your patients, customers, community and team.
Examples of accountability in action include making things right when you're responsible for a mistake, admitting when you are wrong, and seeing tasks and projects through until they are done, and done well.

Belonging

Ensuring everyone involved in your practice in any capacity, feels like they have a place – from a face to be seen, to a voice to be heard.
Practices that value belonging seek out multiple opinions to ensure all involved in the practice truly feel valued.
Examples of belonging in a practice include investing in building diverse teams, using inclusive language and actively seeking ideas and opinions from all.

Boldness

Taking notable, effective, and occasionally uncommon actions to ensure your practices' service has a direct impact.
Being bold means thinking outside the box and balancing bravery with a results-driven mentality.
Examples of practice's being bold could include teams focusing specifically on high-impact work such as dental campaigns or encouraging people to speak out against group-think during a team project

Care

Care can refer to dedication to the well-being of patients and customers as well as a person or group of people, or to a commitment to being attentive, calculated, and considerate in the way work is done.
Examples of care in practice include offering employee wellness & mental health
benefits, as well as donations to or fundraisers for charities.
In its other sense, it could also mean taking your time with a project, rather than rushing something to the finish line unnecessarily.

Collaboration

Working together towards a common goal. Collaboration is valued by team members who want to feel like their input matters, who want to provide phenomenal patient care and customers who want to feel like they're more to you than just another client.
Examples of collaboration include investing in team development programs, software, and workspaces environments, recruiting for more customer-facing roles, and actively requesting feedback from customers.

Commitment

Dedication to your practice mission, vision, and values. A practice that is committed is unwavering in its support for those who support its existence – namely, customers and team members.
Examples of commitment in the work-place include building clear career paths so that the team feel like they have the ability to grow, or investing in customer support and education.

Community

Belonging and community is all about belief – a belief in a shared purpose and in the people. These 'tribes' are built on respect for the leaders and, for the other team members.
A practice that values community can be actively involved in the neighborhood in which they are located.
Examples of embodying the value of community include hosting events for your customer, maintaining a strong presence in your location's community through sponsorships or attendance at local events.

Communication

Making yourself heard, and making sure you hear others. Practices that value communication place importance on forming and maintaining relationships through conversation and involvement.
Examples of commitment in action include setting up clear paths for your clients to reach your practice for requesting support or leaving feedback, sourcing team opinions of their work environment with an employee NPS survey, and keeping your clients frequently updated with service updates.

Courage

The willingness and ability to overcome fear in order to do something meaningful. In the workplace, courage can be evidenced by anyone.
However, a culture of courage is what it takes to fully embody this ideal.
Examples of courage in the workplace include speaking up during a meeting to share an unpopular but valid opinion, taking action that is morally or ethically good for the practice but may not be the best immediate financial decision, and encouraging team members to speak
up if they see inappropriate behavior that needs to be addressed.

Customer-Obsession

Customer obsession is a complete and total dedication to your customers. Practices with a customer-first mentality are proactive and consistent in their communication with customers, and dedicate more resources than expected to developing and improving services that produce an experience for customers.
Practices show customer obsession by investing in building customer care support and frequently send out surveys and NPS questionnaires, and allowing for and responding to every customer complaint or comment.

Delight

Similar to customer obsession, delight can be defined as acting on that customer obsession to impress your customers and make them smile.
Delight could also be a general outlook practices have towards everybody they interact with – from clients, to suppliers, to team members.
Practices can showcase delight by putting the "wow" factor above all else. Examples include going above and beyond to make amends when a mistake is made, sending gifts to customers or, holding social events, first aid courses etc

Diversity

Making a practice commitment to build a diverse and inclusive environment that's reflective of your customer base. You've likely heard that diverse teams are proven to perform better than teams that lack diversity. But creating a practice culture where everyone's unique ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are valued is also the right thing to do for your team, customers, and job applicants.
Making diversity a core value at your practice may evolve your recruiting processes to be more inclusive, and investing in career growth opportunities for under-represented minorities. Once you've made changes internally, sharing your value of diversity externally can help signal to customers and candidates that they're welcome at your practice.

Education

The quest of knowledge and understanding. This value is not exclusively reserved for Vets and Nurses.
Education can be the value of a practice that places an emphasis on employee education, or even by an article that educates its pet owners with meaningful content.
Practices can showcase a value of education by providing employee support to invest in advances certificates or further education in management and leadership skills, mental health first aid etc

Employee Development

Investing in fostering your team's professional and personal growth. Practices that value employee development recognise that a practice performs better when its employees feel happy, appreciated, and fulfilled , not overworked and undervalued.
The resulting positivity often spills over into stronger outcomes , and can have an impact on customer satisfaction as well.
If a practice values employee development, it may invest in employee health and wellness benefits around health, education, work-life balance, and other perks that make employees feel like they have room to grow and succeed in the practice.

Ethics

Having strong principles to guide a practices' decisions and actions.
If a practice values ethics, it will never betray the idea of doing what is right. This includes making respectful, moral decisions pertaining to patient ,customer, team and, supplier relations.
Practices that put ethics as a core value might prove it by promoting fair wages and sustainability focus, by putting procedures into place to ensure all laws and regulations are followed, and making decisions that will benefit all in the long run.

Excellence

Holding oneself to extraordinarily high standards.
Practices that strive for excellence are constantly raising the bar and aiming to continuously improve quality of care for animals and customers and, team.
This focus on operating at the highest standard of care holds every individual accountable for doing their best work.
If a practice values excellence, it likely has instilled rigorous protocols, sources high-quality drugs and equipment, and invests in a dedicated customer care team to ensure all customers use its services and products such as health plans to the fullest extent.

Focus

Showing unwavering dedication to the initiatives and projects that matter the most.
Practice's that value focus are results driven and dedicated to their end goal.
Practices that have the word “focus” in their values typically have another word associated with it, like “customer,” “results,”or “team,” or even ideals like “focus on doing what’s right.” So, consider pairing this value with another one.

Fun

Fun can be a value of a focused team at a practice startup that wants to change the world and have a good time doing it, a practice that provides puppy socialisation classes, and anything in between.
A term like this will certainly attract applicants who want a healthy work-life balance and value a welcoming workplace culture.
Practices that choose fun as a value might
show it by providing creative ways for team members to brainstorm, such as whiteboards and other art supplies, and encourage and support team social get-togethers
after work.

Growth

A practice that includes growth as a value is unwavering in bettering itself by setting ambitious but achievable growth goals.
A practice that values growth looks back on the previous day as the baseline from which to improve.
Growth is seen in practices in many forms – growth in clients, turnover, profit, employees, customers, branch locations, services – to name a few. A practice that takes its growth seriously will make these goals specific, timed deadline-driven, and adjustable in the face of goal-altering situations.

Honesty

Sincere, truthful, and right.
Practices that value honesty never try to skirt the truth,whether it be in owning a past mistake or in recognising and embracing an unavoidable shift in the industry such as remote consulting.
Practices can showcase honesty by quickly admitting and explaining any mishaps to their customers.
Honesty with team members is also important, and practices can express it by holding regular whole team meetings, business updates and shared planning sessions.

Health

Being of sound mind and body.
Practices that value their teams health and prove it by offering a benefits package that include flexible working, regular breaks, health insurance, gym membership, and options for mental health counseling, alongside placing a strong emphasis on work-life balance in the workplace, allotting for mental health days,
and even providing healthy snacks in the break room.

Human

People-obsessed, natural, and un-complicated.
Practices that describe themselves and their approach to care as human, might put a personal approach, to their customer and team interactions, and aim to be straightforward in their communication.
It's not the eradication of process and procedure, but instead the choice to rely on it only when simplicity and a conversation aren't sufficient.
A practice could show its humanity by limiting the steps (or eliminating) to make it easier to speak to customer support, post operative care etc, or eliminating employee red tape when one of your team needs to speak to a team lead.

Improvement

Always trying to better oneself. Practices that place an emphasis on continuous quality improvement recognise there's nowhere to go but up – for the sake of patients, customers and their team.
To show that improvement is one of your values as a practice, you might implement a continuous improvement system, hold team goal setting reviews more than once a year and, actively seek out customer feedback on how to make your services better.

Innovation

Focused on developing a new way to approach a problem. Practices that are innovative display creative thinking and optimism, and are constantly developing new solutions, and workarounds that can change patient and customer care.
Innovation is often associated with tech companies, but the term can apply to any practice.
If innovation is one of a practice's core values, that practice might commit to conducting multiple trials before deciding on a solution.

Integrity

Honest, ethical and accurate are terms to describe practices that value integrity. These veterinary practices will never do wrong by their patients or customers and want to have the term trust associated with them.
A practice that values integrity can embody it by conducting business ethically and legally, providing documentation to customers and explaining how diagnostics where reached, what the prognosis is, talk openly about anticipated costs of care and, openly address any mistakes or malpractice by the practice.

Leadership

Guiding your practice and its customers, employees, and the veterinary sector. The product of leadership is relationship, and leadership can be seen in so many ways – from being a market leader with unmatched clinical care, or being committed to leading employees. Leadership is exemplified by practices when they take actions like introducing services that put them at the top of their industry as market leaders, thus initiating industry-wide change. (e.g. think about the first time pet health plans or lacopsy surgery were introduced.) On a smaller scale, leadership from an employee standpoint could include pairing up new hires with mentors to get those new hires up to speed faster and with less stress.

Mindfulness

Being self-aware and considerate as an practice.
A practice that is mindful shows an understanding of how its actions impact others, whether those people are involved in the business or not.
For example, a company in the biotech fields might choose mindfulness as a value if it is taking precautions to ensure its work does not negatively impact the people directly involved in development, or the environment as a whole.
Alternatively, if the work being done at the practice is particularly difficult, complex or taxing, a mindful practice would take that into account and provide resources for employees so they feel supported and well-rested.

Openness

A willingness to embrace new information or ideas and change as a result of their validity and relevance.
This value does not clash with other values – such as committed or disciplined – if the openness does not detract from your practice's mission and purpose.
Practices that are open may show a positive reception to an employee's or a customer's feedback and make a change to the practice as a result. Additionally, openness can be seen in a vet practice that is forward-thinking and actively looking for new solutions to long-lasting problems.

Passion

Obsession with what you do – sometimes to a fault. Businesses throw the word "passion" around a lot these days, to the point where some would argue it has lost its meaning. However, that does not mean that truly passionate practices cannot claim it as one of their values.
Passion simply means living up to what you claim to be all about as a practice. If you're passionate about sustainable preventative health care, instill that
passion into every decision or service your practice provides.

Professionalism

Handling workplace situations with respect, and high standards.
Valuing professionalism means avoiding a casual approach to conducting business and, showing your your customers that their satisfaction is of the utmost importance.
Professionalism can be seen by practices insisting on meeting in-person or over a video call rather than over the phone with clients to discuss diagnostic results and employees, focusing more on substance than style in content and documentation creation, and reminding the team that they represent your practice both inside and outside your hospital walls.

Quality

Meeting exceptionally high standards.
Quality is a value of practice's that pride themselves in their clinical results.
Examples of a hospital displaying the value of quality includes setting up multiple quality checks in the clinical process, continuous improvement system to ensure patient, customer and team care is always being improved and rectifying problems to ensure both corrective and preventative solutions are implemented effectively.

Respect

Admiration, regard, and consideration for someone or something.
A practice that will not tolerate incivility, bullying, and disruptive behaviours that negatively impact the practice's culture of safety, satisfaction, engagement and patient outcome, will frequently prize the value of respect.
In a practice, it's typically respect for patients, customers, team members, and community.
It can be found in countless different places in a practice – how good employee's benefits are, show how much a practice respects the people who make it succeed.
Another example is pricing: a fair price point that respects the work put into the care provided, in addition to the honest benefits and prognosis that the patient and their owners will see, shows respect for customers.

Service

Emphasising the desire to help and support those around you, and to put them first always.
Service can be applied in several ways as a practice value, applying to patient and customer care and support, team collaboration, to community service.
However, it largely ties back to putting others – particularly those who have a relationship with your practice-above yourself.
Practices living up to the value of service might host a "day of service" for team members to spend a day engaging in community volunteer work, or place an emphasis on hiring employees with am proven customer-first mindset.

Simplicity

Taking an approach that is not complex or convoluted.
In a practice that values simplicity, tasks are completed in the most straight forward way possible.
Valuing simplicity doesn't mean you're not creative – it means that you value your teams' and customers'
time and don't want to get bogged down by too much 'red-tape'.
Simplicity in a practice could appear in many ways, such as having a short meetings policy for teams, or listing prices transparently on your website so your customers know the costs of standard care.

Sustainability

Ensuring your work (or the results of it) do not overtly deplete the earth's resources or cause damage to the environment.
Support team wellbeing and development through sustainability education and projects, and encourage formation of a 'Green group'.
Recognise that good health and wellbeing supports all aspects of practice operations. Empower your team to make changes.
Sustainability for example can be seen by practices pledging to reduce fossil fuel use for energy and heating by remembering to turn appliances off and switching to renewable energy .Reduce disposable materials usage, including single-use plastics, such as disposable surgical textiles, where possible.
Practise responsible antimicrobial and parasiticide use. Avoid drug wastage through good stocking principles and dispose of drugs correctly.

Trust

A two-way street of believing in your colleagues and ensuring they can believe in you.
While some companies are only in business for profit, vet practices that value trust, want their customers to believe they have their animals, and their, best interests at heart and the same goes for team members.
A practice that values trust ensures its team members always follow through on the commitments they have made to customers and their teams – and owns up to it after falling short.

Conclusion

I hope these terms help you come up with ideas for a set of unique, authentic core values for your veterinary practice.
Now that you've read through this guide, sit down with your team and determine what you believe your shared core values should be.
Then, make sure you have the pieces in place to ensure these values are brought to life every day by your veterinary practice teams.

VetNetics
IT'SBUSINESS&IT'SPERSONAL