

# You're Hired!

The comprehensive  
recruiting guide for  
veterinary practices.

BY DIGITAL EMPATHY



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# Why Read This Book?

So many veterinary practices repeatedly make the same recruiting and marketing mistakes. Breaking the cycle requires a working understanding of the modern candidate's journey and a smarter approach to building your recruiting pipeline, which we've outlined in depth. Don't waste any more time or money attracting and hiring the wrong people for your practice—a few changes to your approach now can greatly impact your practice's future and help you build the successful, thriving team you've always envisioned.



# The Challenge

If you are reading this, you are likely facing the same challenge that many practices we advise are also facing— attracting talented veterinarians and veterinary technicians has become incredibly difficult. This problem usually boils down to two principal reasons: The supply shortage and failure to consider the candidate’s journey. We’ll break down both issues in detail in this chapter.

## The supply problem

We do not currently have enough veterinarians or credentialed veterinary technicians to meet the overall demand. At last count, only 116,000 veterinarians practice in the United States— a number that already fails to meet the needs of our country's pets and working, farm, and food animals. An additional 41,000 are needed by 2030 to keep up with growing demand, but we are estimated to fall short by 15,000, based on current trends. The veterinary technician shortage is even more dire as

most leave the profession shortly after entry because of low pay, poor utilization, and high job stress.

This macroeconomic problem must be solved by increasing the number of graduates who can enter the workforce, reducing the student debt burden, increasing pay, and reducing work stressors. While the profession works to find solutions to this larger problem, focus on addressing the second reason you aren’t attracting the candidates you want.



## The candidate journey

Talented veterinarians and licensed technicians have the advantage—they can pick and choose from endless job openings as nearly every veterinary practice vies for the attention of job seekers. Thinking about the candidate journey—the typical job seeker’s experience from advertisement to offer—can give you a new perspective on the process.

### Stage 1: Awareness

Job seekers typically begin their journey by searching for open positions that match their criteria, such as location, compensation, and benefits. Candidates may look for open positions advertised on job boards, such as [Indeed](#), the [AVMA Veterinary Career Center](#), [AAHA Veterinary Jobs](#), or [NAVC Retriever](#), and then make a list of potential employers to evaluate further.

Projected practices competing for the job seeker during stage one: 100 to 200+

### Stage 2: Consideration

Next, job seekers begin researching potential practices online, which usually starts with their websites. As a potential future employee, they want to know what you’re all about. They will be looking for the answers to questions such as:

- What’s your philosophy on medicine?
- How do you take care of your team?
- What core values and differentiators make your practice unique?
- Are these values and attributes aligned with their own?
- How does your website make them feel?

Most practices with hiring problems struggle because their website fails to stand out. They don't make a memorable impression or speak directly to the real questions that job seekers ask. Websites are often an afterthought in the veterinary profession—they are treated as simply another box to check off the list of things businesses are supposed to do. But your website is a central part of a candidate's journey, and creating one that does not look, feel, or speak like the others is mission critical.

Veterinary practices with websites that tell a compelling story and stand out are disproportionately successful at advancing candidates to the next stage in the journey. If you post open positions on popular job boards but consistently fail to attract enough applicants to create the ideal candidate pool, your website is probably to blame.

Projected practices competing for the job seeker during stage two: 10 to 20

### **Stage 3: Application**

Interested job seekers who make it this far will apply from your website or through a job board. Interview coordination is the next step, assuming your practice is interested in the applicant. In 2023, veterinary job interviewers no longer control the conversation—because of their bountiful options, candidates often interview you as much as you interview them.

While candidates assess your suitability for their needs, you should also determine whether they are a good fit for your practice. Attracting the right people is the most important ingredient for your business's wellbeing. You can accomplish this by speaking directly to their needs and showing them how you care for and develop your team members. Try thinking about this from a human needs perspective—when you can frame everything from a purpose-driven vantage point and define your "why," your words will resonate more powerfully and memorably with like-minded applicants.

Take time to understand what is important to candidates, and be open to making changes in your practice that provide mutual benefits to the job seeker and practice. Take professional development, for example, which is a major concern for many veterinary team members.

Developing a formal mentorship program for first-year employees that pairs them with a senior employee who trains them weekly on the job and meets with them monthly to discuss their goals, challenges, and progress may seem like an investment up front, but will pay off in the long run by providing what your ideal candidates need.

Projected practices competing for the job seeker during stage three: 3 to 5

**The chances are good that your candidate will sign on the dotted line if you created *a positive emotional experience*.**

#### **Stage 4: Selection**

If it looks like a good fit from both sides, the applicant will receive an offer from your practice. Whether they accept is likely an emotional choice on the applicant's part rather than a logical one. Their decision is often based on how their experience with your practice made them feel. Ultimately, this is the critical point to digest when engineering your employee funnel—**how you make someone feel at each successive stage predicts their actions.**

Projected practices competing for the job seeker during stage four: 1 to 2



# A note on passive recruiting

Global LinkedIn research shows that only 12% of people actively seek jobs. To get great talent into your pipeline, you may need to actively seek out talented professionals on LinkedIn or other social media networks. Include the following when you “cold call” a candidate on social media platforms:

- Why you’re reaching out
- What you find compelling about them
- Unique and compelling aspects of your practice and the position
- Clear next steps if they are interested in moving forward

# The Action Plan

## The Job Boards

The first step to building a healthy prospective talent pipeline is to address the top of the funnel, where candidates begin their search. This means ensuring that you have prominent listings on the job boards most used by your target audience. As we mentioned previously, you may want to start with the following boards:

- [Indeed](#)
- [AVMA Veterinary Career Center](#)
- [AAHA Veterinary Jobs](#)
- [NAVC Retriever](#)

## The Headline

Everything you do digitally should be about standing out, including your job advertisement headline. Don't underestimate the importance of this single line. A headline is typically limited to 35 characters, so you need to make them count. Yours should clearly represent the position, along with your most important differentiator. Here are a few potentially high-performing headline examples:

- Associate Veterinarian - Independently Owned, Patient Focused
- Associate Veterinarian - Love Your Work, Love Your Lifestyle
- Licensed Veterinary Technician - More Responsibility, Better Pay
- Veterinary Assistant - Generous Pay, Career Advancement Opps



## The Advertisement

Your headline got their attention, now you need to capture and hold their interest. The position description should do the following:

- Clearly articulate the unique values and attributes of your practice
- Powerfully answer the question, "What makes this the right practice for me?"
- Lay out the job requirements and expectations

Here is an example of an effective job description:

*There are 25,000 veterinary practices in the United States, each filled with wonderful, compassionate, talented animal lovers. We're a little biased, but we like ours the best, and we want to tell you why.*

*To us, building an animal hospital is about so much more than creating a high-functioning medical facility. It is about dedicating the time and space to truly take care of people, too. This means building a team and a culture where human needs come first, where your development and satisfaction are true priorities instead of buzzwords, and where you can walk into work with a real smile.*

*(continued on next page)*

*We are driven by our core values:*

*Every pet, every time.*

*Every animal is innocent and worthy of our protection and love. We make a simple promise to them to provide our best every time. They are the reason we come into work and they are at the core of everything we do.*

*Stay ahead of the curve*

*Veterinary medicine thrives with continuous innovation. We feel uncomfortable doing things “just because that’s how they’ve always been done.” We are constantly learning, training, growing, and challenging ourselves to reach new heights.*

*Kindness, always*

*We aren’t perfect. Nobody is. But we do believe that everyone deserves kindness, even on bad days. In fact, especially on bad days. We always try to show compassion for people, no matter the circumstance, and that goes double for our team.*

*Well, that’s us in a nutshell (we hope you aren’t allergic). If this feels like a place you can see yourself and if you believe what we believe, then we would love to hear from you. You can apply through our website here:*

*[www.yourdomainhere.com/apply-now](http://www.yourdomainhere.com/apply-now)*

It pays to stand out whenever you compete over scarce resources, whether attracting a mate or an employee. A job description like the one listed above evokes emotions that will bring in a wider applicant pool.

## Your Website

A candidate likely decides whether they are interested in an interview based on the experience they have on your website. More than that, they will decide based on how your website makes them feel.

Creating a unique and story-driven website is one of the easiest and most effective ways to boost your recruiting pipeline. Most veterinary websites look, feel, and speak the same as everyone else, failing to stand out and speak to the practice's core values and attributes. A dearth of interviews is a telltale sign that your website is not resonating with applicants. The core problem is that most veterinary websites are not built to differentiate the practice, but are simply designed to provide information.

Here are five examples of websites that effectively differentiate their practice. Take a look, experience them as a job candidate would, and notice how different it feels from most others you have seen:

- <https://twinoaksveterinaryhospital.com>
- <https://chahpets.com>
- <https://alohavethospitaloc.com>
- <https://northpointeveterinarycare.com>
- <https://limestonevetclinic.com>



Don't worry, we *fix* cookie cutter websites!

## The Plan

Your website must help you stand out from the crowd and tell your story. The easiest way to accomplish that is to partner with us because our team does exactly that every day. You can contact us [through this link](#) and schedule a meeting with one of our talented team members. For the do-it-yourselfers out there, here is a step-by-step guide to creating a truly powerful digital experience.

[Schedule a Quick Meeting](#)

## Discovery

The first step is to understand your practice's differentiating qualities. Schedule an all-hands meeting with your team, and ask everyone to brainstorm the following questions:

- What, at the core, makes our practice special?
- What are we deeply proud of?
- What are we passionate about? Why?
- What really seems to resonate with our favorite clients?
- What do we want to be remembered for?
- What else is unique and important about our practice?

You can typically distill the answers to these questions into two to four unique differentiators, which may address how you care for clients, your culture, or your approach to medicine. **Whatever it is, own it, because that's what makes you, you.**



## Storyboarding

Attracting the right people to your veterinary practice starts with a compelling story. You aren't simply any veterinary practice—you are proud of what makes you unique. Once you know what your differentiators are, you can create a cohesive narrative that weaves them all together. Check out the example websites on the previous page to see how that is done—and note that hiring a professional writer is the best way to do your differentiators justice.

*Attracting the right people to your veterinary practice starts with a compelling story.*

## Design

Form should follow function, so we always start by understanding your story before designing your website—and you should follow the same process if you are designing your own. Your design team should create an aesthetic that purposefully elevates and accentuates the main points within your story.

For example, if one of your differentiators is the depth of medicine that you practice, your designers should create a design element that plays on the theme of depth. Design's job is to mirror and accentuate the emotional force of the copy. **It is critical to ensure your design makes people feel what you want them to feel.**

## Development

Your web development team should handle all the heavy lifting. When your chosen team is building the site, ensure they do so "mobile-first." We actively manage around 500 veterinary websites, and across our portfolio, we see that approximately 85% of site traffic is viewed on a mobile device.



## Team Page

Your team page is one of the most important pages on your website, yet most veterinary team pages are boring. The lack of personality makes these websites feel like they don't have a soul. To combat the boring, cookie-cutter feel, create a design that highlights why your team is so special through imagery and engaging graphics. Most importantly, ensure team biographies read like stories rather than resumes.

When candidates click on your personal biography, they want to understand you and decide if they feel comfortable spending significant time getting to know you. Camaraderie is hugely important in veterinary medicine, and everyone wants to work with people they like and understand.

Each team member's biography should tell their story—the story of how they got here, how they realized they were destined to join your team, and how that realization has shaped their life. An authentic biographic story can be one of the most powerful experiences on your website. This can be instrumental in the hiring process, so don't sell yourself or your team members short.

## Careers page

Your careers page should include the following components:

- A striking and authentic first impression
- A compelling introduction that speaks to your differentiators
- A distillation of your most important benefits
- An intuitive way to search and apply for open positions



### Your first impression

The very top (i.e., the fold) of your careers page should be visually striking and include your call to action. For example, you might have a background image of your team collaborating on a case with minimal but impactful text laid over the image, such as:

*Don't just change lives. Change yours.*

*We invest in you. We support you. And we believe the right organizational priorities can make this an incredible profession.*

### Your introduction

The introduction on your careers page should read similarly to the job advertisements you've already thought about. This section serves to highlight the things that make your practice unique—your differentiators—and set you apart from all the other potential employers out there. Think about how you want job seekers to feel when they visit this section, and the questions you should answer to push the right people to apply.

## Your benefits

You don't have to list every benefit your hospital offers, but you should highlight the best, most unique, or most appealing. If your practice offers paid parental leave, floating holidays, birthdays off, work-from-home opportunities, or any other rare "unicorn" benefits, ensure you feature them here.

## How to apply

Include an intuitive and easy-to-find "apply now" or "search for open positions" button so job seekers on your website have an easy, no-fuss way to directly apply in the moment—directing them to another website or asking a modern job seeker to call or email will deter many valuable potential candidates.

Keep forms short and allow sections to attach a cover letter and resume so the process is easy and fast.

## Blog

The blog section on your website provides an opportunity to explore subjects important to you as a practice, or to the employees you are hoping to attract. Updating a blog routinely will also help you rank better in searches and increase your visibility to job seekers. Choose blog topics that align with your values and continue telling your story, including employee profiles, community outreach projects, patient success stories, hospital updates, client education, and information relating to your company culture.

Most importantly, choose or hire a skilled writer so your posts appear consistently professional.

# The interview experience

Inviting prospective candidates to visit your hospital, meet your team, and determine whether they are a good fit is a huge step in the recruiting process. Elevate the interview experience by sticking to your practice values and highlighting what makes you unique, which will help the right candidates find their way to you.

## Interview goals

You have two goals as an interviewer. First, you must create an exceptional experience for the interviewee. You want to leave them feeling excited about your practice. Strive to provide a clear picture of your practice culture, and help them see why they should choose to work with you. For both sides to find the best fit, this means providing honest answers to questions while highlighting your unique draws.

Second, critically evaluate your candidate based on your practice's needs. Every candidate has different strengths, weaknesses, expectations, needs, and values, and you want to evaluate how these factors fit with the role you are trying to fill. Good interview technique will help you decide if you want to move forward with an offer.

## Making a good impression

An exceptional interview experience makes job seekers feel comfortable and gives them a true feel for their future working environment and conditions. Think about the interview as a two-way street—the candidate is evaluating you as much as you are evaluating them. Use these strategies to set the stage for a positive, honest conversation.



## Scheduling

Many veterinary job seekers are already employed in the industry—typically in busy practices that cannot afford to lose a team member for a full day. While you are also busy, working in interviews on weekends or the candidate’s scheduled days off will go a long way toward making a good impression. Flexibility and accommodation show that you value their time and understand their desire to avoid being dishonest with their current employer about taking time off—which is the type of person you want to attract. Set aside enough time so that you aren’t rushed or distracted, which your candidate will detect in your tone and behavior, and prepare by reviewing their resume and qualifications.

## The interview

Remember that candidates who sign on after receiving an offer most likely do so because of how you made them feel during their interview experience. Ensure the whole team knows about scheduled interviews so they can greet the person by name when they arrive and tour the facility, making them feel like the VIP they are. The interview itself should feel like a casual conversation—not a formal inquiry—and your candidate should have plenty of opportunities to question you as well.

Open with a discussion about who you are, the practice culture you strive for, and what they can expect in day-to-day practice life. Include how you will support them in their career growth, and what features—your differentiators—make your hospital a better place to work than the practice down the street. Your interview questions should be carefully crafted to open a dialogue rather than create anxiety in the interviewee by putting them “on the spot.”



## Evaluating candidates

The interview allows you to shine and gives your candidate the opportunity to do the same. Good interview techniques will help you understand the candidate and how they will benefit your practice while simultaneously diffusing any nerves or defensiveness.

## Interview structure

Your interview questions will vary from candidate to candidate, but the interview structure will likely remain consistent across your job seeker pool. The interview experience begins long before your candidate's arrival in the clinic, so consider including some of the following:

- **Screening email or phone interview** — A short screening email or phone call can ensure your job seeker has a good understanding of the position, pay, and benefits as outlined in the job advertisement, and give them a chance to express their interest.
- **Welcome email** — Include an itinerary for the day, including when to arrive and whether you expect them to stay for a shadow or observation experience. If the candidate is coming from out of town, consider scheduling a lunch or dinner meeting to conduct the interview and offer to offset some of the travel costs.
- **Interview session** — This is the meat and potatoes where you will ask your questions, and the candidate will ask theirs to gain a mutual understanding of how well they will fit with your goals.
- **Post-interview shadow or mentor experience** — Asking your candidate to stay and observe the hospital operations helps them understand your practice and can provide valuable insights into your case management and communication strategies. Have them see appointments with a trusted associate who will ask questions about what they might do with the same patient or client.



## Interview questions

Only around 11% of employees who fail at their jobs do so because they lack technical skills. Instead, most struggle with coachability, emotional intelligence, motivation, or temperament, which can be difficult to evaluate during an interview. In veterinary medicine, these and other soft skills are critical, and you should design your questions to more easily evaluate them in your candidates.

First, think about what attributes your most successful team members possess and which are important to your clients or for interacting positively with the rest of the team. Compassion, communication, adaptability, problem-solving, self-awareness, empathy, and drive are a few examples of qualities you might try to assess. Next, ask open-ended questions that will give you insights into how the candidate thinks, feels, and makes decisions.

Some example questions include:

- How do you deal with difficult clients?
- What would you do if a client couldn't pay for services?
- Tell me about a time when you had to solve a problem with a team.
- What would your co-workers say is your best quality?
- What made you decide to become a veterinarian?
- What about our hospital appeals to you?
- Tell me how you resolved a personal conflict in a previous workplace.
- How do you build a relationship with clients to keep them coming back?

Of course, some questions will center around hard skills and logistics so you can better assess what the candidate will need from you to succeed and how likely they are to hit the ground running.

Consider adding these additional questions:

- Describe your surgical comfort level.
- How do you feel about on-call responsibilities?
- What kind of schedule are you hoping for?
- Do you enjoy working collaboratively with colleagues to handle difficult cases?
- Where are your clinical weaknesses?
- What do you expect from us in terms of mentorship?
- What are your special interests, and how can we help you pursue them?



## A note on working interviews

Working interviews are often considered standard for veterinary staff, but asking new team members to step in and prove their skills under extreme pressure won't always give you an accurate picture of their competency. Any candidate who is a licensed veterinarian has the skills and knowledge to function in your practice—if you need more information about specific skill areas and how much mentorship you can expect to provide to get them up to speed, simply ask.

### Follow-up

Nothing is worse for a candidate than to feel ghosted by a potential employer. If you have a strong interest in the candidate, don't waste any time drawing up an offer and reaching out before another clinic snags them. If you felt they weren't a good fit, take a few minutes to let them know you're going in a different direction and why. Gentle honesty can go a long way toward gaining the job seeker's respect—which keeps them in the running should anything change in the future.



# The Final Word

Humans live an emotional, intuitive life and make choices based on how people and situations make them feel. Every step of the candidate journey, from the job advertisement headline and website copy to the final interview, is an opportunity to make a great impression on prospective candidates and attract the right people to build your business. If you're overwhelmed by the website design process or simply want to compete with the best of the best, you've come to the right place. Contact one of our helpful team members [here](#) to find out how we can help you elevate your veterinary practice and show candidates that you are one-of-a-kind.

