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Reliability: A Career Accelerator

Early in your veterinary career, it's easy to believe that success hinges on how much you know. In reality, one of the most powerful ways to accelerate your career has little to do with knowledge and everything to do with behavior.

Reliability is one of the fastest ways to earn trust, build credibility and stand out, especially in environments where teams rely on each other under pressure. When you are new to the profession, no one expects you to have all the answers. But people do notice how you show up. Reliability answers key questions your new team is asking about you, such as:

- › Can we count on you?
- › Do you follow through?
- › Do you communicate clearly?
- › Do you take responsibility?

If the answer to these questions is consistently "yes," your value will increase quickly.

Trust before expertise

Leaders and mentors gravitate toward individuals they can trust. When you consistently do what you say you're going to do, you become someone others rely on. People trust you with information, responsibility and opportunities. They will be more willing to teach you, support you and advocate for you. In contrast, inconsistency creates hesitation. If colleagues aren't sure whether you'll follow through or communicate issues

promptly, they may limit what they involve you in. That can slow your growth, and you may not realize why.

What reliability looks like

Reliability is not about perfection. It's about consistency and accountability. Reliable professionals:

- › Show up prepared and on time.
- › Follow through on commitments.
- › Communicate early when something changes.
- › Own mistakes and learn from them.
- › Maintain professionalism under stress.

Veterinary medicine is full of capable people. What differentiates new professionals who advance quickly is not just what they know, but how dependable they are. There's also an internal benefit to reliability: self-trust. When you consistently honor commitments, you build confidence in yourself. You know you can handle responsibility. That confidence shows up in how you communicate, make decisions and handle challenges. Confidence rooted in reliability is steady and sustainable and not dependent on external validation.

Many new professionals undermine reliability by:

- › Overcommitting and underdelivering.
- › Avoiding difficult conversations.
- › Waiting too long to ask for help.
- › Assuming expectations instead of clarifying them.

Highlights:

- One of the most powerful ways to accelerate your career has little to do with knowledge.
- When you consistently do what you say you're going to do, you become someone others rely on.
- Confidence rooted in reliability is steady and sustainable and not dependent on external validation.
- Leaders invest in people who reduce risk.

Being reliable sometimes means saying no, asking questions or speaking up early. Those behaviors protect your credibility rather than harm it.

Strengthen reliability now

You don't need a leadership title to be reliable. You need intention. Start by:

- › Tracking commitments so nothing falls through.
- › Clarifying expectations before agreeing to tasks.
- › Communicating proactively.
- › Closing the loop when something is completed.

These habits build trust quickly. Hiring managers and practice leaders will take notice, because reliability signals maturity, accountability and readiness for growth. And keep in mind that in high-pressure veterinary environments, reliability reduces risk. Leaders invest in people who reduce risk.

You don't need to be the smartest person in the room. You need to be someone others can count on. And the sooner you can be that person, the sooner it will pay off.



Stacy Pursell is an executive recruiter for the U.S. animal health industry and veterinary profession. She is founder and CEO of The VET Recruiter and TVR Executive Search and the co-founder of Vetevate, a recruitment tool for veterinary practices. Stacy is a workforce expert and host of "The People of Animal Health" podcast. She is a certified personnel consultant (CPC) and certified employee retention specialist (CERS).