

Should I Stay or Should I GO?!

Why veterinary team members leave veterinary practices

Rebecca Rose, CVT

CATALYST Veterinary Practice Consultants

Littleton, CO



Should I stay or should I GO?! Why veterinary team members leave veterinary practices

Statistics point to the fact that a large percentage (upwards of 50%) of your team is asking this exact question on a daily basis, “Should I stay or should I go?”

Veterinary hospitals experience turnover twice that of other industries; an alarming statistic. Is it any wonder managers are continually on the lookout for qualified, formally-trained veterinary technicians and team members? Attendees will outline the reasons team members leave.

While reviewing national and state information we will continue to identify trends in attrition. But don't despair, we will discover ways to improve retention, too!

Stay or GO?

Seriously, a sizable percentage of your team may be asking themselves, “What options are out there for me to grow my career and make more money? Should I stay, or should I go?”

Your veterinary team members are compassionate people, wanting to create a life that is fulfilling, including a gratifying job. It is alarming to hear general and veterinary specific statistics related to job satisfaction and attrition.

- 50% of workers surveyed explained they would change their job to be recognized for their efforts ([TLNT-Talent Management & HR](#))
- 45% of employees surveyed would switch jobs, even though they are satisfied with their current one ([Jobvite](#))
- 20% of veterinary team members surveyed will be leaving the field or are currently dissatisfied with their job satisfaction ([NAVTA 2016 Demographic Survey](#))
- 57% of NAVTA respondents had changed jobs within the first 5 - 7 years of becoming a veterinary technician
- 24% of NAVTA respondents had more than one place of employment
- **People quit their bosses, not their jobs** ([Forbes](#))

NAVTA Demographic Survey results 2016 (right)

Job Satisfaction	Percentage
I am very satisfied and will stay in veterinary technology	51.3%
I will probably stay in veterinary technology	28.6%
I will probably change to another field in the future	9.6%
I am dissatisfied and will definitely change to another field	1.8%
Undecided	4.7%
I have already changed to another field	4.1%

High turnover

The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) has surveys showing the rate of turnover within veterinary

practices. In their 8th Edition of *Compensation and Benefits* (published 2016), the mean practice turnover was 21%. Respondents reported a 22% turnover rate for veterinary technicians and a 31% turnover rate for other staff.

In the article *Tackling Turnover* (DVM360, 2008), employee turnover was upwards of 29.7%, nearly doubled that of other industries (15-19%). This can be broken down to 20% for associate veterinarians, 13% for managers and 35% for technicians, with turnover rates being the highest in urban and mid-sized practices.

Calculating turnover

What do you **think** your annual turnover rate is?

Calculate the annual turnover rate on an annual basis by determining the annual separations and the average monthly employment.

As an example, on a monthly average a practice employs 25 people. Within the past year, two technicians, a veterinarian, a receptionist and two kennel assistants left (voluntarily or involuntarily - it doesn't matter the reason). There were 6 separations within the year. Annual turnover is 24%. Another valuable calculation is to determine voluntary (resignation) vs. involuntary (termination) separations and percentages.

What is your annual **calculated** rate of veterinary team turnover?

Reasons for leaving

Of those who answered the NAVTA 2016 survey, top reasons for leaving practice included low pay (38%), lack of respect from the employer (20%), and burnout (14%).

Of the people who left veterinary hospitals, 45% went to work in human healthcare field, veterinary technology education and veterinary pharmaceutical sales.

Breakout Session

Break into smaller groups and identify reasons your team members leave. What do your exit interviews tell you? Capture your ideas and be prepared to share three concepts.

Greatest Challenge (right)

Lack of Leadership: where are we going and why are we going there? Lack of mission or vision. No defined common goal or purpose beyond the daily administration of animal health care.

Undermanaged: managers not having the time, support and/or knowledge to create an efficient, effective team culture, improve business acumen, provide appropriate feedback, define team roles (job descriptions), treat team members fairly, define expectations of employment, performance reviews and frequently recognize of a job well done (sincere *Thank you*).

Underutilized: formally trained team members (veterinarians, technicians, assistants, managers) are not leveraged to their MAXIMUM!

Lack of professional growth: little understanding or support in ways to grow a veterinary team, shattering the glass ceiling!

Toxic attitudes: bad behavior unchecked, few consequences

Burnout & Fatigue: two separate concepts, but often unrecognized and misunderstood

Little respect: this can be seen as not being included in decision making, underutilized, poor communication. Lack of respect is all encompassing, but worth a conversation to dive into the details.

Reasons to leave the profession

We have considered several reasons why a veterinary team member may choose to leave their job within a veterinary practice. Overarching concepts lie in lack of respect, leadership, management and underutilization. Wages may be a reason, but not always the driving force for a team member to leave.

Resources for Team Salaries

- 1) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS.gov)
 - a. Veterinary Technicians: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes292056.htm>
 - b. Veterinarians: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291131.htm>
- 2) Salary Expert
 - a. <https://www.salaryexpert.com/>
- 3) Veterinary Hospital Managers Association (VHMA) Compensation & Benefits Report
 - a. <http://www.vhma.org/blogpost/1273540/242804/VHMA-S-2015-COMPENSATION-AND-BENEFITS-SURVEY-IDENTIFIES-FACTORS-THAT-DRIVE-MANAGERS-SALARIES>

GREATEST CHALLENGE	%
Office Dynamics/Communication/Personnel	50%
Client non-compliance	39%
Lack of Resources Within the Clinic	11%
Other Challenges:	
Lack of/under managed	5%
Understaffed	5%
Client Finances	3%
Low wages	1%
Lack of Technician Utilization	1%
OJT cheaper to employ than CVT	.5%
Corporate Politics	.27%
No challenges	.77%
Miscellaneous	2.31

There is hope! Veterinary team retention can be achieved when measured and prioritized.

Yours in veterinary team retention,
Rebecca Rose, CVT
CATALYST VetPC

Resources

TLNT-Talent Management & HR: <https://www.tlnt.com/how-unhappy-are-todays-workers-new-survey-lets-us-count-the-ways/>

Jobvite: <https://www.jobvite.com/hr/how-to-prevent-your-employees-from-leaving-the-5-ps/>

National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America, Demographic survey, 2016:

http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.navta.net/resource/resmgr/docs/2016_demographic_results.pdf

Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ericjackson/2014/05/11/the-top-8-reasons-your-best-people-are-about-to-quit-and-how-you-can-keep-them/#5be118c55c45>

AAHA Compensation & Benefits, 8th Edition, 2016:

https://www.aaha.org/professional/store/product_detail.aspx?code=cben8&title=compensation_benefits_eighth_edition

Tackling Turnover, DVM360, 2008: <http://veterinarynews.dvm360.com/tackling-turnover>

Team Delivered Veterinary Care, 2017: <http://catalystvetpc.com/win-with-veterinary-team-delivered-care/>

Toxic Teams, Veterinary Business Advisers, 2018: <http://veterinarybusinessadvisors.com/protecting-your-practice-from-toxic-teams/>

An Epiphany, Burn Out verses Compassion Fatigue, 2016: <http://catalystvetpc.com/an-epiphany-burnout-versus-compassion-fatigue/>