

Culture and Communication: Speaking up or Staying silent?

Questionnaire

With veterinary teams facing heavy workloads, new ways of working and ever-changing COVID guidelines, communication within the practice has never been more important. Frequent, timely and problem-solving communication not only help improve the safety and quality of the care delivered but can also help support team members' wellbeing.

Psychological safety has been identified as a feature of high performing teams across a wide number of industries and serves as a foundation for the patterns of frequent, open, and inclusive team communication we are so in need of in this time of challenge. Psychological safety rests on the premise that most of us strive to maintain and preserve our image: we tend to avoid behaviours that risk others seeing us as ignorant, incompetent, negative, or disruptive. A workplace with high psychological safety helps us take 'interpersonal risk': to ask the question, share the idea or raise the concern without the fear of losing face, or being punished or humiliated for doing so.

But how psychologically safe is your workplace? What are the warning signs of low psychological safety that indicate you need to dig deeper into team culture and communication to discover what's really going on?

Psychological Safety Measurement Tool:

Rate the following seven statements on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - neither agree or disagree, 4 - agree and 5 - strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither agree or disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5
1. People at this organization are able to bring up problems and tough issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I feel safe to take a risk in this organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. It is difficult to ask other members of this organization for help.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. No one at this organization would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Working with members of this organization, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. If I make a mistake at this organization, it is often held against me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. People at this organization sometimes reject others for being different.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

A positive response to the first five statements, along with a negative response to the final two statements, indicates strong psychological safety.

Note: This tool was developed by Amy Edmondson and is used here to help give you a ball park idea of the levels of psychological safety in your workplace. Interpret the results with common sense, make allowances for any recent events, such as COVID, and appreciate that others may perceive the same workplace quite differently to yourself.

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Still not sure how psychologically safe your workplace is? The following might be warning signs it is lower than it could:

- Team members don't ask many questions during meetings.
- Team members don't feel comfortable owning up to mistakes or place blame on others when mistakes are made.
- The team avoids difficult conversations and hot-button topics.
- Team leaders tend to dominate meeting discussions.
- Feedback is not frequently given or requested.
- Team members don't often venture outside of their job descriptions to support other teammates.
- Team members don't ask one another for help when they need it.
- There are hardly any disagreements or differing points of view.

We look forward to welcoming you to the webinar, digging deeper into some of your team communication and culture challenges and sharing some tips and behaviours to help foster and encourage a psychologically safe workplace with effective team communication and collaboration.

Find out how VDS Training can further support you, your team and your practice:



How to Strengthen your Consultation Skills - 21 October 2020, Half-day virtual workshop



Person-to-Person Complaint Handling - 29 October 2020, Half-day virtual workshop



Managing Challenging Client Conversations - 24 November 2020, Half-day virtual workshop

To find out more and book, visit www.vds-training.co.uk

Do you want to avoid the risk of poor workplace culture, and focus on communication, leadership, teamwork, resilience and workplace practices to build on what is working well and identify where improvements can be made?

Undertaking a **Practice Culture Survey** enables you to identify areas where there is a potential risk of stress and minimise these risks to you, your team and your business. We can help you to create a targeted training, development and coaching programme for all members of the practice team in any stage of their veterinary career.

To find out more and book, visit www.vds-training.co.uk

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