

Reap What You Sow

By: Louise S. Dunn

 My final piece of gardening advice and how to apply it to your veterinary practice is actually a version of that famous proverb, "You reap what you sow." Simply stated, your actions have consequences and what you do will come back to you. Pretty easy to understand this proverb if you were a gardener or a farmer.

If you plant potatoes, you are going to gather potatoes. Don't be looking for carrots where you planted potatoes. Too bad many business leaders don't understand this concept. They "plant" things - like poor communication, indecisiveness, deceitfulness and lack of accountability; and expect to reap employee engagement, high productivity, loyalty and trust. What I am talking about here goes well beyond the "carrot and stick" method of leading a team (although carrots are something you can sow it is impossible to reap them if you planted bitter herbs).

It is time to assess what you sow, what you have sown and what you are going to reap from your leadership activities. To do this, we must see if you are sowing certain seeds such as vision, goals, inspiration, responsibility and leading by example.

VISION

Are you sowing a clear vision? Lack of clarity will only result in confusion. If you are unclear or not communicating your vision you cannot expect to reap any benefits from followers because they cannot follow what they are confused about.

Are you sowing your vision with passion? Passion is infectious. If you do not express a passion for your vision you are not going to attract any followers. People follow their passion and if their passion is the same as your passion then they will give you all the blood, sweat and tears necessary to make your vision come to life.

Are you sowing a vision for success? If you are simply telling people to show up to work and you will pay them, well then, sure, you will get people who want a paycheck. But if you tell people you have a belief and that they can be a part of it and together you will experience the success of the vision, well now you have a loyal team ready to perform.

GOALS

Are you sowing goals? Goals aren't just about your personal whims. Goals are strategic actions with a definite focus on the future growth and success of your business. Sowing goals with a purpose for the business, the pets, the clients and the team will guarantee that you reap the success of those goals.

Are you sowing goals with help from others? Involving the rest of the team in establishing goals means that you will gain buy-in and actively engage team members in meeting the goals. Operate as a dictator and you may reap a rebellion of feet walking out the door, or worse, field workers who don't care what is growing where.

INSPIRE

Are you sowing a team? Building a team means developing others and collaborating with them, not micromanaging them. Building a team means you are setting clear expectations, gaining commitment from others to be a part of the team, and holding them accountable. If you are not sowing a team culture you are tossing your seeds on poor soil and may not be able to harvest anything substantial because you just won't have the efforts of others helping you to succeed.

Are you motivating others? Motivation is a hard concept to grasp and lack of inspiring or motivating others means you are not going to reap many rewards from the workforce - other than warm bodies showing up for their paycheck. What really motivates a team is a sense of purpose. Their belief about why they are doing what they are doing. It is the "why" they do it behind the "what" they do.

RESPONSIBILITY

Are you sowing responsibility for your own actions? Being a leader and sowing seeds of a successful business means you are going to have to have some tenacity, take some calculated risks and then have the guts to evaluate your actions and the flexibility to change course. A responsible gardener or farmer takes responsibility for what actions he must do to plant the field - be it the equipment that must be purchased, the choice of crops to plant or the amount of help needed to complete the work, the owner of field must take responsibility.

Are you sowing responsibility for your team's actions? Are you communicating with your team, evaluating, assessing, directing, and coaching...or are you pointing fingers and placing blame. A gardener cannot point at the moth-eaten heads of cabbage and call them stupid for letting the bugs eat them - nor can you blame your team for every failure to produce. Sometimes, there are actions the leader must take to provide resources and feedback to ensure that the team has what it needs to produce. Sow the blame game and you will reap more than you bargain for.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Are you sowing consistency? People will follow someone they can trust and respect. If you are sowing consistency one day and lack of consistency the next day, then your field will sprout inconsistency because it is a weed that will overtake everything else. Owners fall victim to this weed when they start behaving as if they have a right to do anything they want simply because "they are the owner."

Are you sowing respect? You cannot receive respect unless you give respect. Team members will pick up this very quickly. If you show a lack of respect for a client or decisions that a client makes, your team will start to gossip about crazy clients too. If you have no respect for the kennel person, your team will not respect the work that the kennel person is responsible for. If you sow unethical seeds, well, you see where this is going.

THE HARVEST

One of the best ways to nicely package all those factors mentioned above is to view this video of Simon Sinek. Watch the video and then look back over the list of what

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- [Help! How to Deal with Problem Employees](#)
- [Ownership: To Own or Not- What kind of Question is that?](#)
- [Designing with Feng Shui](#)
- [Springing Forward with Marketing Efforts](#)
- [Too Aggressive to Care For?](#)
- [Reap What You Sow](#)
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you are sowing. <http://thinksimplenow.com/happiness/how-great-leaders-inspire-action/>
Walk the talk, talk the walk and reap what you sow. It all comes down to trust. Can the team trust your vision, trust that the goals are for the greater purpose, trust that there is a purpose, and trust that you respect them?
Trust is the foundation of a relationship. Sowing trust means you gain the hearts of your team members and not just their warm body showing up to perform a routine. Trust begets a desire to participate, contribute and be involved. Trust means that you and your team know "why" you are there working as hard as you do and that the "how" you do it and the "what" you do fall into place because you trust each other to operate within guidance of the "why" you are doing it.
So, what are you sowing? Take some to look into your bag of seeds before you start throwing the seeds out onto the ground. If you don't take the time to look you may be very surprised come harvest time.

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