



Training Day

Using structured on-the-job training to enhance team performance

by Joel Gendelman, EdD, and Louise S. Dunn

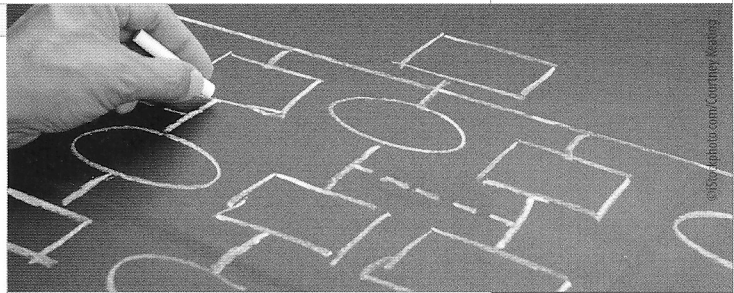
Note: This article is the first of a three-part series on training opportunities for veterinary practices. Next month's article will focus on effective virtual training.

Effective training in a veterinary hospital ensures consistent patient care, client service and profitability. Providing quality training for veterinary staff does not have to be difficult or expensive. Structured on-the-job training (OJT) can save time and money, as well as increase employee engagement and satisfaction.

"One of the most difficult areas of administration for practice owners and managers is employee training," says AAHA President Mark Russak, DVM. "Most veterinarians are not equipped with the right tools to train their staff correctly. A well-trained staff is essential to the delivery of 'High Tech-High Touch' client service."

One method to increase the effectiveness of your training is by using more experienced employees, as well as your practice's current materials and training resources. On-the-job training is just that: training that is provided on the job. Structured OJT is simply a more structured and mindful version of this. It is a prevalent way to provide training in most industries.

In essence, OJT is where Jane, a more senior employee, shows a newer employee, John, how to perform a task, shares a few words of wisdom and later watches John do it himself. It makes perfect sense, but there are several pitfalls with OJT.



Keys to success

The important elements of successful on-the-job training for veterinary practices are as follows.

- Have someone at your practice at the leadership level who is responsible and tracks employee training.
- Make training a part of your hospital's culture. Communicate your expectation that employees are responsible for their own training. Clearly articulate the benefits of training activities and task certification. Identify training timelines and the consequences of not meeting those timelines.
- The training must be closely aligned with the objectives, goals and policies of the practice.
- You must select the most appropriate people to provide the training by considering their ability to be "good" trainers and facilitators, as well as their level of skill in performing the task.
- Successful on-the-job training also uses and mirrors the tools of your practice. These include an

Before you begin training a team member, clearly identify the tasks that are part of the job that they were hired to perform.

Topical Parasiticide for Dogs and Cats

BRIEF SUMMARY:

See package insert for full prescribing information.

CAUTION:

US Federal law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

INDICATIONS:

Revolution is recommended for use in dogs six weeks of age or older and cats eight weeks of age and older for the following parasites and indications:

Dogs:

Revolution kills adult fleas and prevents flea eggs from hatching for one month and is indicated for the prevention and control of flea infestations (*Ctenocephalides felis*), prevention of heartworm disease caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*, and the treatment and control of ear mite (*Otodectes cynotis*) infestations. Revolution also is indicated for the treatment and control of sarcoptic mange (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) and for the control of tick infestations due to *Dermacentor variabilis*.

Cats:

Revolution kills adult fleas and prevents flea eggs from hatching for one month and is indicated for the prevention and control of flea infestations (*Ctenocephalides felis*), prevention of heartworm disease caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*, and the treatment and control of ear mite (*Otodectes cynotis*) infestations. Revolution is also indicated for the treatment and control of roundworm (*Toxocara cati*) and intestinal hookworm (*Ancylostoma tubaeforme*) infections in cats.

WARNINGS:

Not for human use. Keep out of the reach of children.

In humans, Revolution may be irritating to skin and eyes. Reactions such as hives, itching and skin redness have been reported in humans in rare instances. Individuals with known hypersensitivity to Revolution should use the product with caution or consult a health care professional. Revolution contains isopropyl alcohol and the preservative butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT). Wash hands after use and wash off any product in contact with the skin immediately with soap and water. If contact with eyes occurs, then flush eyes copiously with water. In case of ingestion by a human, contact a physician immediately. The material safety data sheet (MSDS) provides more detailed occupational safety information. For a copy of the MSDS or to report adverse reactions attributable to exposure to this product, call 1-800-366-5268.

Flammable—Keep away from heat, sparks, open flames or other sources of ignition.

Do not use in sick, debilitated or underweight animals. (see SAFETY)

PRECAUTIONS:

Prior to administration of Revolution, dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infections. At the discretion of the veterinarian, infected dogs should be treated to remove adult heartworms. Revolution is not effective against adult *D. immitis* and, while the number of circulating microfilariae may decrease following treatment, Revolution is not effective for microfilariae clearance.

Hypersensitivity reactions have not been observed in dogs with patent heartworm infections administered three times the recommended dose of Revolution. Higher doses were not tested.

ADVERSE REACTIONS:

Pre-approval clinical trials:

Following treatment with Revolution, transient localized alopecia with or without inflammation at or near the site of application was observed in approximately 1% of 691 treated cats. Other signs observed rarely (<0.5% of 1743 treated cats and dogs) included vomiting, loose stool or diarrhea with or without blood, anorexia, lethargy, salivation, tachypnea, and muscle tremors.

Post-approval experience:

In addition to the aforementioned clinical signs that were reported in pre-approval clinical trials, there have been reports of pruritus, urticaria, erythema, ataxia, fever and rare reports of death. There have also been rare reports of seizures in dogs. (see WARNINGS)

SAFETY:

Revolution has been tested safe in over 100 different pure and mixed breeds of healthy dogs and over 15 different pure and mixed breeds of healthy cats, including pregnant and lactating females, breeding males and females, puppies six weeks of age and older, kittens eight weeks of age and older, and avermectin-sensitive collies. A kitten, estimated to be 5-6 weeks old (0.3 kg), died 8 1/2 hours after receiving a single treatment of Revolution at the recommended dosage. The kitten displayed clinical signs which included muscle spasms, salivation and neurological signs. The kitten was a stray with an unknown history and was malnourished and underweight. (see WARNINGS)

DOGS: In safety studies, Revolution was administered at 1, 3, 5, and 10 times the recommended dose to six-week-old puppies, and no adverse reactions were observed. The safety of Revolution administered orally also was tested in case of accidental oral ingestion. Oral administration of Revolution at the recommended topical dose in 5- to 8-month-old beagles did not cause any adverse reactions. In a pre-clinical study selamectin was dosed orally to ivermectin-sensitive collies. Oral administration of 2.5, 10, and 15 mg/kg in this dose escalating study did not cause any adverse reactions; however, eight hours after receiving 5 mg/kg orally, one avermectin-sensitive collie became ataxic for several hours, but did not show any other adverse reactions after receiving subsequent doses of 10 and 15 mg/kg orally. In a topical safety study conducted with avermectin-sensitive collies at 1, 3 and 5 times the recommended dose of Revolution, salivation was observed in all treatment groups, including the vehicle control. Revolution also was administered at 3 times the recommended dose to heartworm infected dogs, and no adverse effects were observed.

CATS: In safety studies, Revolution was applied at 1, 3, 5, and 10 times the recommended dose to six-week-old kittens. No adverse reactions were observed. The safety of Revolution administered orally also was tested in case of accidental oral ingestion. Oral administration of the recommended topical dose of Revolution to cats caused salivation and intermittent vomiting. Revolution also was applied at 4 times the recommended dose to patent heartworm infected cats, and no adverse reactions were observed.

In well-controlled clinical studies, Revolution was used safely in animals receiving other frequently used veterinary products such as vaccines, anthelmintics, antiparasitics, antibiotics, steroids, collars, shampoos and dips.

STORAGE CONDITIONS: Store below 30°C (86°F).

HOW SUPPLIED: Available in eight separate dose strengths for dogs and cats of different weights. Revolution for puppies and kittens is available in cartons containing 3 single dose tubes. Revolution for cats and dogs is available in cartons containing 3 or 6 single dose tubes.

NADA 141-152. Approved by FDA.

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up-to-date and comprehensive procedures manual, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and references to job aids (e.g., Parasite Prevention Map on the CAPC website). These job aids may include a script for front office personnel to use in requesting email addresses from clients, or pictures to identify internal parasites in a feces sample.

- Create simple training manuals that outline the content and learning activities. Include assessments and checklists to guide the learning process.
- Your practice needs to track employee training and make it an important part of your performance management process.
- Everyone in your hospital who is qualified to perform a task takes advantage of teachable moments to provide structured practice to other employees who are not yet qualified on the task.
- Your performance management process must feed into the goals and objectives of future employee training.

Closely align your structured OJT with objectives, goals and policies

Before you begin training a team member, clearly identify the tasks that are part of the job that they were hired to perform. Do that for every position in your practice.

For each of these tasks, identify the inputs, desired outputs, resources, key steps to follow, and any cautions or special instructions. You can probably gather most of this information from your practice's job descriptions, its procedures manual, SOPs and other documentation. The rest you will need to develop yourself.

All team-member training should be closely linked to these tasks and their associated detail. Identify how long you feel is reasonable for the OJT trainer

to spend on each task and the relevant examples that they may use.

Select the most appropriate people to provide the training

Select personnel who are not only competent in the job, but are good demonstrators and facilitators. Provide these trainers with the right tools and guidance using those tools as training resources. Observe and certify OJT trainers as you would more formal trainers. Finally, track their performance by continuing to observe them facilitating OJT and assessing the performance of the team members they have trained.

Use the tools of your practice

Using the tools of your practice will decrease the time that your practice must invest in training, but will increase its relevance and your team members' ability to apply the training on the job. You may be able to procure job aids from your pharmaceutical companies and suppliers. Have members of your team help develop others. This will enhance their quality and increase team member buy-in.

Take a good look at the task documentation that you generated earlier. Make sure that you have included everything. These documents are vital resources that the staff at your practice will need when they provide structured OJT. The specific documentation will differ based upon the team member you are training and the task(s) that you are training them to perform. The moment that you ask a staff member to train a new team member, ask them and make sure that they have and are familiar with the resources they will need to successfully facilitate that training.

Create simple training manuals

With all of this information at hand, identify and document the key training events required to provide comprehensive training for each job function at the key junctures of your team members' careers with your practice. Then create, or ask the OJT trainer associated

with the event to create, a short training guide identifying:

- Tasks to be covered
- Specific references to the necessary resources to be used during and after the training
- Time needed to train on each topic
- Training strategy to be used for demonstrating each task and providing practice

This guide should include assessments to determine if the employee has mastered the tasks they need to perform. These assessments should not only be a short answer or multiple-choice quiz, but checklists that can guide the structured OJT trainer in evaluating the performance of the employee in independently accomplishing the tasks in their actual work environment.

The trainer should sign this checklist to document that they approve the team member's performance of this task. This should become part of the team member's file. You may also include room for special notes, such as how each team member learns best.

Track employees' training

Document that an OJT training event has occurred and that the team member is now qualified to perform this procedure independently. Include any notes that the trainer would like to add related to the team member's performance.

Structured OJT can be an effective and organic tool in your training toolbox. Below are several examples of its effective use. As with most efforts, the devil is in the details.

- Train a new hire, as well as team members wishing to advance their skills.
- Incorporate structured OJT as a key element of a performance improvement program for individuals needing additional training. Consider the benefit of an OJT coach to focus on specific skills or tasks.
- Cross-train your team to provide team members with relevant

and detailed training, as well as exposure to the team members and supervisors who supervise their activities.

- Instead of training an entire group of people on a new piece of equipment, train a select few and then have them train other team members using your structured OJT materials.
- Establish a training mindset in your practice. Instead of asking someone to step away from the computer and allow a more knowledgeable team member to process the activity, use this as an opportunity for structured OJT. This will get additional team members trained and productive.
- Becoming an OJT trainer may be considered a steppingstone for team members wishing to grow into a management or leadership role.
- Certifying team members for various skills or levels can be a type of recognition or reward program within your practice. Badges or pins can be awarded, pay rate changes can be issued, and status for job advancement or on-call replacement for a call-off are all possible options to consider as you develop your program.

Consider your practice's structured OJT program as an ongoing and evolving process. Incorporate subtle improvements made to any procedure or process, thus keeping the team up-to-date and operating efficiently. ■

Joel Gendelman, EdD, is president of business training and consulting firm Future Technologies, Inc. He has more than 25 years of experience developing training and talent management solutions for companies including Sandoz, Amgen, Kaiser Permanente, Microsoft, Nissan, Hewlett-Packard and Lockheed Martin. Joel is lead content development blogger for *TrainingIndustry.com*. He can be contacted at fitraining.com, and you may follow him on Twitter: @JGend.

Louise S. Dunn is owner of Snowgoose Veterinary Management Consulting. With her almost 40 years of experience, she works with veterinarians who want to develop results-driven strategic plans.

Compliance
with cat owners
presents its
own set of
challenges,
particularly with
owners of
indoor cats.