

Module Two

Case Study: Capital Veterinarian Clinic

Background

The Capital Veterinarian Clinic (CVC) of Sacramento, California, is highly-regarded for offering state-of-the-art veterinary services for every stage in an animal's life, from first vaccinations to a lifetime of preventive care, to keep the animal happy and healthy. CVC was founded in 1971 by Dr. Robert Stevenson. Dr. Stevenson, at the time a recent veterinary school graduate, was concerned about the level of animal critical care and technologically-based services that were available in the private sector in the Sacramento region. Compared to the care available in high-end facilities of a university veterinary hospital, many private veterinary clinics seemed to offer a somewhat substandard and outdated level of service.

Dr. Stevenson was determined to offer an exceptional level of care to the average pet owner, and as a result, he opened the Capital Veterinarian Clinic. CVC began to offer 24-hour service, seven days a week in 1974. Dr. Stevenson and a handful of young doctors and veterinary technicians worked non-stop for months to meet the growing demand for high quality veterinary services in the region. In response to the growth of the practice, CVC began offering internships to veterinary school graduates from the University of California Davis to fill its increasing needs for staff. Within 10 years, CVC had grown to become one of the top animal hospitals in California, and clients with animals needing specialized surgical intervention travel to the hospital for care that is often not available in small towns throughout rural California and the Southwest.

Now a full-service hospital, in addition to the typical patient visitation rooms of a regular veterinary practice, CVC offers four state-of-the-art surgical suites, CT and MRI equipment, a full-service intensive care unit and pathology laboratory, internal medicine specialist veterinarians, a physical therapy suite, and a top-of-the-line boarding facility.

Dr. Stevenson has long since retired, but CVC continues to be a thriving veterinarian practice, now in its 38th year of operation. The clinic employs 10 Staff Veterinarians who report to the Clinic Director, Dr. Marissa Sandoval. CVC also has eight Interns, each working under the supervision of a Staff Veterinarian who provides guidance and mentoring to develop and refine the Intern's knowledge and skills. The Staff Veterinarian teams are supported by a team of 12 Veterinary Technicians, who assist the vets in managing animal patient visits and performing certain skills independently, such as taking temperatures, cleaning and dressing wounds, applying splints, performing ear flushes, and drawing blood for analysis.

CVC also has 14 full-time and eight part-time Veterinarian Specialists who work in areas such as cardiology, dentistry, dermatology, emergency/critical care services, internal medicine, radiology, neurology, oncology, rehabilitation, surgery, and anesthesiology. These specialty veterinarians extend the capability of CVC to treat more seriously ill animals. Referrals to Specialty Veterinarians come from CVC Staff Veterinarians who identify the need for an advanced level of care, as well as from community veterinarians who value the specialists at CVC as extensions of their own care. All Veterinarian Specialists report to Assistant Clinic Director Dr. Ibrahim Al-Shamry.

The practice has an active boarding program, overseen by Kennel Manager, Henry Stoddard. The boarding program provides short-term kennel care for animals who are injured or who are recovering from surgery, as well as extended care for animals whose owners are away. CVC also offers “doggy day care,” a service that supervises dogs during daytime hours, while providing play activities that keep dogs socialized and exercised.

All clinic operations are supported by an administrative team that handles functions such as reception, appointments, billing and insurance services, human resources, marketing, and facility maintenance. The administrative functions are overseen by the Administrative Services Manager, Susan Simmons. Susan reports to the Financial Officer, Aziz Al-Murjan, who also supervises purchasing and information technology services.

Organizational Dynamics

The Senior Leadership Team of CVC is composed of the Clinic Director (Dr. Marissa Sandoval), the Assistant Clinic Director and Senior Veterinarian Specialist (Dr. Ibrahim Al-Shamry), the Senior Staff Veterinarian (Dr. Kim Chung), and the Financial Officer (Aziz Al-Murjan). The Extended Leadership Team includes all members of the Senior Leadership Team, plus the Administrative Services Manager (Susan Simmons), the Kennel Manager (Henry Stoddard), and the Supervisor of Veterinarian Technicians (Florence Meyers), along with one Staff Veterinarian and one Veterinarian Specialist, who serve on a rotating basis.

The CVC Senior Leadership Team, led by Dr. Sandoval, meet periodically (at least once a quarter) to review strategic operations of the clinic, and to make long-range decisions about the direction of the practice, clinic services, expenditures, compensation, and personnel. The Extended Leadership Team, under the direction of Dr. Al-Shamry, meets weekly to oversee daily operations of the clinic, including discussing and resolving routine operational, staffing, and client services issues.

The 10 Staff Veterinarians and 22 Veterinarian Specialists, along with the members of the extended leadership team, participate in a lucrative profit-sharing program that links total compensation to the success of the clinic. Each Staff Veterinarian and Veterinarian Specialist earns an annual salary (averaging \$75,000 per annum for full-time vets) which is augmented by an annual share of the clinic’s profits. Over the past 15 years, participants in the profit-sharing program have earned an additional 7% to 23% of their annual salary in profit-sharing income. CVC’s profit-sharing plan has made Staff Veterinarian and Veterinarian Specialist positions highly desirable, especially for Interns, who hope to join the CVC practice on a full-time basis. In the past five years, seven interns have been hired by CVC to fill open positions as permanent Staff Veterinarians and Veterinarian Specialists have left the practice, or as new positions have been created to accommodate business growth.

The Current Situation

1. Dr. Kim Chung, the Senior Staff Veterinarian, has been employed at the clinic for five years. She assumed her leadership position only recently, when the previous Senior Staff Veterinarian, Dr. Rachel Silverstein, stepped down after two years in the

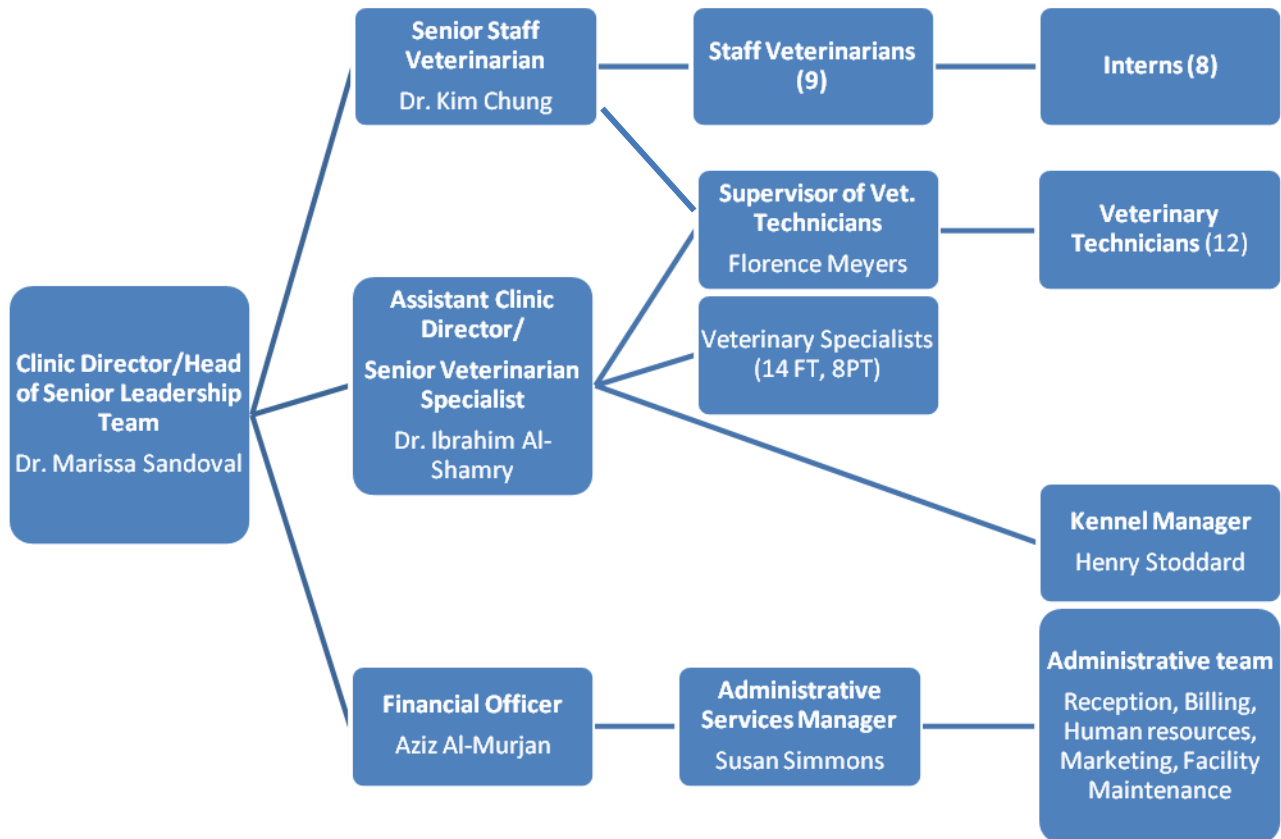
position. Dr. Silverstein is an excellent veterinarian who is well-liked by her clients. However, she is not a good manager, and during her tenure, the camaraderie of the Staff Veterinarians fell apart, as petty bickering arose about issues such as scheduling, access to Vet Tech support, and assignment of clients. Dr. Silverstein seemed unable to cope with the pressures of leadership and frequently burst into tears when confronted by unhappy colleagues. At the request of Dr. Sandoval, Dr. Chung assumed leadership even as the group of Staff Veterinarians divided into two warring camps. In the meantime, Dr. Silverstein returned to the role of a Staff Veterinarian. Frankly, Dr. Chung isn't quite sure where to start in terms of rebuilding the team, although she knows that she must take decisive action soon. Dr. Silverstein's continuing presence in the organization might present some challenges since she's been a lightning rod for dissension among the Staff Veterinarians.

2. After Dr. Silverstein stepped down as Senior Staff Veterinarian, some disturbing news came to light. Apparently, Dr. Silverstein had been taking supplies and medications to use for her own pets as well as for the pets of her friends and family. The shortage in inventory came to light when Dr. Chung took over responsibility for inventory reports. Confronted by Clinic Director, Dr. Sandoval, Dr. Silverstein brushed aside the accusations, saying that she had only "borrowed" some items for her own use, a perfectly acceptable practice, as far as she was concerned. Dr. Silverstein told Dr. Sandoval she knows that other Staff Veterinarians have taken supplies and medications for their own use, although she wouldn't specifically name who had done so. The Financial Officer, Aziz Al-Murjan, believes that it is a common practice among the staff since there is no other way to explain the inventory shortages.
3. The diversity of CVC is considered an asset, both by the leadership of the organization, and by the clients who bring their animals to CVC for care. However, tensions do exist between staff members of different racial and ethnic groups, particularly when the cultural practices of the different groups clash. For example, up until last year, the clinic celebrated Christmas with a large party that included family members of CVC staff. However, with the increasing number of employees from non-Christian backgrounds, the Extended Leadership Team at CVC decided that the clinic would no longer host a Christmas party. Instead, this year, the traditional gala event was replaced with a scaled-down end-of-the-year party, neutral in its religious affiliation, and held for staff members only. This led to bad feelings among some Christian staff members who believe that the Pakistani Muslim and Jewish members of the team "spoiled Christmas" for everyone else. Emotional words have been exchanged between a few of the Vet Techs about this issue.
4. The escalating tension among members of the Vet Tech team has caused Florence Meyers, the Supervisor of Veterinarian Technicians, to take action. A no-nonsense manager, Florence is known for being a tough task-master who expects the people reporting to her to follow the rules and stay out of trouble. She has been overheard reprimanding staff members in public, and her harsh criticism of the Vet Techs working for her has caused some to seek employment elsewhere. In fact, a Senior Vet

Tech, a capable woman named Sonia, recently left CVC, telling Dr. Sandoval that working for Florence was like working for Attila the Hun. In the case of the feuding Vet Techs, Florence decided to separate the “trouble-makers,” warning them that speaking about the Christmas incident during work time would not be tolerated. Because she secretly agrees with those who believe the non-Christian staff members have ruined the Christmas holiday, Florence came down hardest on the Muslim and Jewish Vet Techs involved in the conflict.

Artifact 1

Capital Veterinarian Clinic Organizational Chart



Senior Leadership Team Includes:

- Clinic Director, Dr. Marissa Sandoval
- Assistant Director, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Shamry
- Senior Staff Veterinarian, Dr. Kim Chung
- Financial Officer, Aziz Al-Murjan

Extended Leadership Team Includes:

- Members of the Senior Leadership Team
- Administrative Services Manager, Susan Simmons
- Kennel Manager, Henry Stoddard

- **Supervisor of Veterinarian Technicians, Florence Meyers**
- **Staff Veterinarian (rotating basis)**
- **Veterinarian Specialist (rotating basis)**

Artifact 2



Capital Veterinarian Clinic
41 Buxton Drive
Sacramento, CA 94203
(916) 555-1497

MEMO

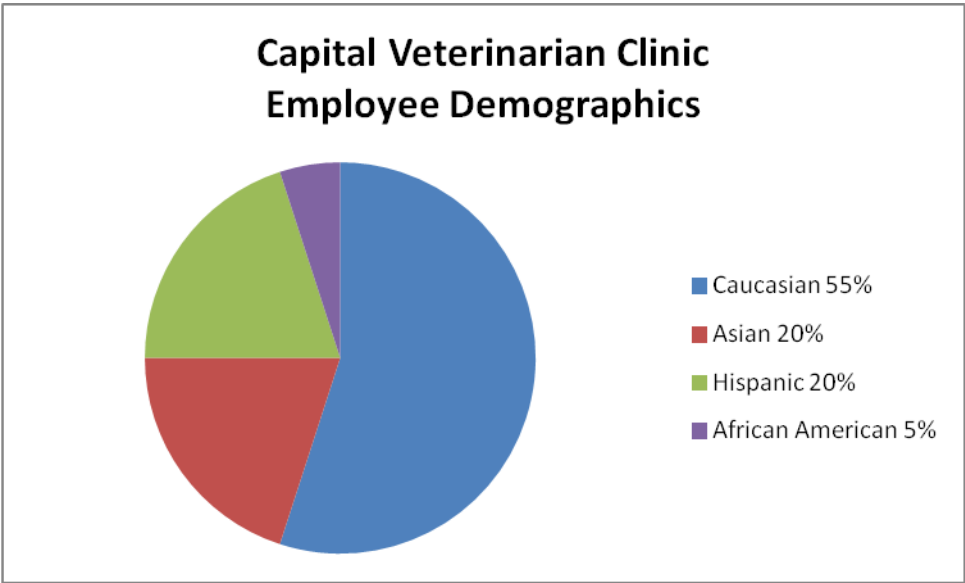
To: Dr. Sandoval; Dr. Al-Shamry; Florence Meyers
From: Heather Wilson, Human Resources Manager
Date: January 5, 2012
Subject: Incident Report: Veterinarian Technicians

On 1-4-12, two Veterinarian Technicians were involved in an incident that was witnessed by a client. Both Technicians were on break in front of the clinic when a heated debate erupted. A client was entering the clinic at the time and witnessed the incident. He was able to intervene and end the confrontation. When the client reported the incident to the receptionist, he was visibly disturbed. He asked to speak to the Clinic Director. Dr. Sandoval was in surgery at the time, so the client was directed to Dr. Al-Sharmry. The client reported that the Vet Techs were using racial slurs and derogatory language. He indicated that he felt the encounter could have escalated and become physical.

As a result, we will be holding a mandatory meeting for all Veterinarian Technicians on 1-7-12 at 8:00 p.m. We will be reviewing the staff handbook and in particular, the standards and protocol required by all employees of Capital Veterinarian Clinic. All Veterinarian Technicians will be asked to review and sign the CVC Code of Conduct.

In addition to the mandatory meeting, Human Resources will be scheduling one-on-one meetings with each member of the Veterinarian Technician Team.

Artifact 3



Artifact 4



Capital Veterinarian Clinic
41 Buxton Drive
Sacramento, CA 94203
(916) 555-1497

MEMO

To: Dr. Sandoval
From: Dr. Silverstein
Date: December 3, 2011
Subject: Resignation

I would like to inform you of my resignation as Senior Staff Veterinarian. Although I anticipated the role would be fulfilling, I feel that the position would be better-suited for one of the other Staff Veterinarians. I have found that having to handle all of the staff-related issues over the past two years has left me feeling overwhelmed and distracted. I am sure you would agree that this is unfair to the staff, as well as our clients.

In regards to the borrowed supplies, I won't point fingers, but I'm confident that I am not alone in this practice. In my opinion, use of the supplies in moderation for our pets, who are, after all, also patients, is just another perk of working at CVC.

As you know, I am very dedicated to providing the best care possible for our patients and their owners. I hope that you will allow me to continue to do so by reinstating me as a Staff Veterinarian. I eagerly await your response.