



Quality Improvement Case Example:

Name of the initiative: Re-finding our Joy in Work

Initiative start date: September 2022

Submitted by: Bracken Veterinary Centre, Active Vetcare, CVS.

Introduction

Bracken Veterinary Centre is part of the Active Vetcare group of practices, owned by CVS. We are a Greenfield site and opened in November 2017, with 5 team members. As we emerged from the restrictions of Covid, our leadership team observed that there was a decrease in morale and became concerned about the risk of burnout. Reflecting on the history of the practice, we realised that we had been operating under Covid enforced restrictions for approximately half the time the practice had been open, and due to our continued growth, only 8 of our team (now 20 members) had worked here before Covid.

During the early days of Covid, a 'telling' approach to leadership had been necessary to rapidly adapt our ways of working to keep the team safe and navigate the ever-changing regulations. This was counter to the shared leadership model the practice had been founded on and contributed to the decreased morale felt by the team.

Aims of the initiative

We realised that to improve our workplace culture and re-find our joy, we needed a plan. Following attending the 'What Matters to You? Finding joy in work as an antidote to burnout' ¹ session during the 2022 Society for Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) and Veterinary Management Group (VMG) Congress, this framework was proposed as a way of addressing the issues we faced to improve workplace culture. This initiative is based on the framework for improving joy in work, a proven method developed by experts at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) to overcome burnout in human healthcare ².

Jenny Brown, our Senior Clinical Director championed the initiative by presenting the concept to the leadership team and running a mini session to see if it would be of value. Together, the leadership team brainstormed what we felt the problems were and how we could address them.

We wanted to find a way to empower our team to identify and action solutions to the challenges they face, as they know the work best, and make them part of the decision-making process again. Leader inclusiveness improves psychological safety and engagement in quality improvement work ³.

Actions

After seeking advice from Angela Rayner and Mark Moreton, who had presented at the SPVS VMG Congress, two training days incorporating the 'What Matters to You?' session was held, with half the team attending each day to encourage attendance without a perceived addition to workload from taking time away from clinical work. Jenny facilitated these training sessions for the rest of the practice teams.

These sessions were held in October 2022 and were structured to include the following:

- Reviewing and resetting our vision, mission, and purpose.
- Sharing and addressing the concerns the teams had raised.
- Some technical training on equipment and phone call answering.
- A presentation on cognitive overload and decision fatigue.
- A 'What matters to you' session.

To help with the 'What matters to you' session, we used the following resources:

- RCVS Knowledge What Matters to You – Conversation Guide for Leaders⁴.
- IHI Framework for Improving Joy in Work.²

For the 'What Matters to You' session, we asked the team what mattered to them, what was great about working at Bracken Veterinary Centre, and what things frustrated them on a regular basis. We recorded all their answers on a flipchart and then asked them to identify two 'pebbles in their shoes' that we should address first and to come up with suggested solutions.

Day	Pebble	Solution
1	Paper towel dispenser style	Replace them with a different style
1	Flea and wormer dispensing	Dispense a 6-month supply at vaccine and 6-month check
2	Medical pet shirt stock levels	Buy a set of storage drawers, write minimum stock levels on drawers
2	Consult room restocking	Review consult room stock sheets and update, and restock according to these

Table 1: Pebbles and solutions

A 'Joy-o-Meter' good day measure was introduced, where team members were asked to place pink and blue balls into a bucket at the end of the day. The coloured balls indicate how their day had been (blue = bad day, pink = good day).

Results

Prior to introducing the framework, we asked the team to answer a survey to get a baseline idea of how people felt about working at the practice. At the time of answering the survey, team members were unaware of the planned contents of the training days. This was followed by a repeat of the same survey after 6 weeks. The 'before and after' surveys showed quick results:

Before the initiative:

- Only 70% of team members felt their wellbeing was being considered.
- Only 72% of team members felt the ideas for improvement they raised were considered and actioned where possible.
- 72% of team members felt their voice was heard as an employee,
- 90% of team members would recommend the practice as a place to work.
- Only 78% of team members would strongly recommend the practice as a place for an animal to receive care.

6 weeks after the introduction of the initiative:

- More than 95% of team members felt their wellbeing was now considered.
- 93% of team members felt the ideas for improvement they raised are now considered and actioned where possible.
- 92% of team members now feel their voice is heard and an employee.
- 100% would now recommend the practice as a place to work.
- 100% would strongly recommend the practice as a place for an animal to receive care.

Using the 'Joy-o-Meter', progress from addressing the initial concerns was monitored. This showed a decrease in the number of bad days (figure 1). A slight increase in bad days indicated a short period where sickness was affecting morale, allowing the leadership team to address these concerns.

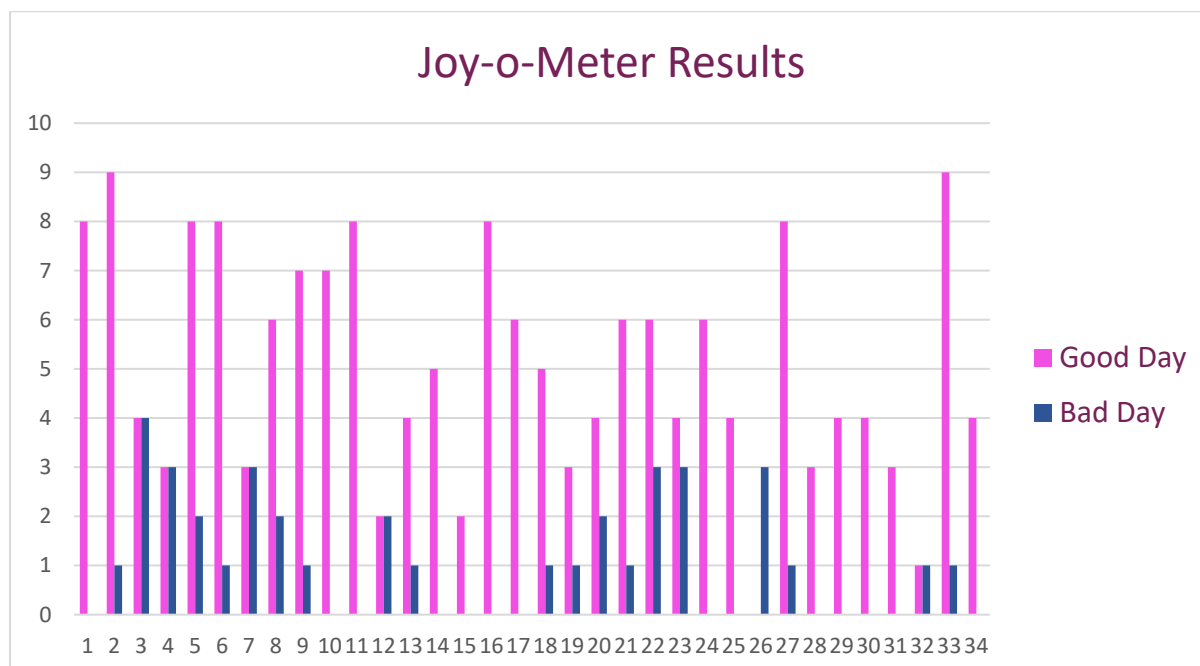


Figure 1: Joy-o-Meter results

The team really enjoyed the 'What Matters to You' sessions, feeling more engaged in helping set the direction for the practice and that they have a more productive way to address the day-to-day niggles, preventing them from accumulating and contributing to increased stress and burnout.

To maintain momentum and engagement with the initiative, a 'Joy in Work Board' listing the current

pebbles being worked on is displayed for the whole team to see and a 'Pebbles Pouch' has also been introduced where teams can identify future pebbles.

Fortnightly 'What Matters to You?' meetings are held to review the current pebbles and discuss potential solutions. There have been ten proposals for possible improvement from the 'Pebbles Pouch', indicating an ongoing engagement with the process.

Following the success of the 'What Matters to You?' sessions held at Bracken Veterinary Centre, Jenny has taken part in a Clinical Cuppa webinar discussing how the session was implemented and the results. This was recorded and made available to all colleagues within the corporate group. Jenny has also contributed to an article in CVS Connect practice magazine on the topic and presented at a regional meeting of Practice Directors and Managers, running a mini session for them to raise awareness of the initiative. Bespoke sessions have been run at other local practices and the outcomes of their solutions to their unique pebbles are being monitored. This is an added opportunity to learn from each other and share ideas for improvement.

¹ Rayner, A. and Moreton, M. (2022) *What matters to you? An antidote to burnout*. YouTube [Online Video]. Available from: <https://youtu.be/IEsufYySgr8>

² Perlo, J. et al. (2017) *IHI White Papers: IHI framework for improving joy in work*. [Institute for Healthcare Improvement] [online]. Available from: <http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/IHIWhitePapers/Framework-Improving-Joy-in-Work.aspx>

³ Nembhard, I.M. and Edmondson, A.C. (2006) Making it safe: the effects of leader inclusiveness and professional status on psychological safety and improvement efforts in health care teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27 (7), pp. 941-966. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.413>

⁴ *What matters to you - Conversation guide for leaders*. [RCVS Knowledge] [online]. Available from: <https://knowledge.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/what-matters-to-you-conversation-guide-for-leaders/>



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