

Leaders Experience of the What Matters to You framework

Pam Mosedale, Jenny Brown, Becca Jones and Hayley Potter

RCVS Knowledge:

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Pam Mosedale:

Hi everyone. Today, I'm very lucky to be talking to Jenny Brown, Hayley Potter, Becca Jones, all from CVS, about the What Matters to You framework. And I hope that they're going to be able to tell us about this and how people can use it in practice. They are all in senior positions at CVS, as Clinical Directors, Practice Directors or Regional Directors. So, they've all been involved in actually applying the What Matters to You framework into practices. Let's just start off by talking about what this is. Jenny, what is this What Matters to You framework?

Jenny Brown:

Yeah, thanks, Pam. It's an evidence based framework that was initially developed in the human healthcare field by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, and they called it Joy in Work. And they developed it with the aim of trying to sort of beat and address burnout and increase job satisfaction. And then subsequent to that, RCVS Knowledge took it on and sort of played around with it to see how we could implement it in our field and if it had a place in the veterinary field. And then CVS, we sort of picked up on it in CVS and we had a trial of it in the real world to see how it would work.

Pam Mosedale:

Excellent. Yes, and we have another podcast with Angela Rayner and Mark Morton from CVS who were involved with the theory of it right at the start. But then when it came to actually introducing it to practices, how did that happen, Becca? Can you talk about that?

Becca Jones:

Yeah, so we introduced it several years ago at one of the practices and what we did was we asked our Regional Director at the time to come in and facilitate the meeting rather than the leadership team that was in the practice to do it. We closed the practice for several hours so that it gave us the space and time to do it, and we prepared the team in advance for what the purpose of the framework was and what we were hoping to achieve from it. And then we also

prepped the leadership team as well, which I think was possibly the most important part to try to get them to understand that it was really important to sort of take a step back in the meeting, not try to find solutions to the problems, not to jump in when people were talking and not to try to sort of disagree with what they're issues were.

Pam Mosedale:

That's difficult isn't it? It's hard sometimes to listen and not to find... I think as vets we're all very solution focused. When you said you prepared the leadership and the team, how did you do that?

Becca Jones:

We had a preliminary meeting where we all sat down together and our Regional Director sort of went through the benefits of letting the team find their own solutions and the benefits of letting them have a free rein to air anything and everything that was bothering them at the time.

Pam Mosedale:

That's quite brave, isn't it?

Becca Jones:

Yeah, it was challenging.

Pam Mosedale:

So, Hayley, how did your team respond to it when it was introduced?

Hayley Potter:

I think it was a real mixed bag when we first introduced it. There was trepidation. It was a completely new way of looking at things. We'd been focusing on eNPS, so Employee Net Promoter Scores and how we can increase overall job satisfaction. But this seemed to be the next step. For myself, it was really quite daunting standing up in front of the team and discussing these things and stepping away.

The team at the Old Golf House had actually had one of the meetings similarly to how Becca had described prior to me joining the company. It really wasn't taken well. I had to do a lot of work to increase the psychological safety of the team ahead of the next one. So, I actually spent more time prepping the team with resilience and understanding that their views really do matter before we could hold the meeting. And at the end of the meeting, the feeling was just

elation that they'd had their feelings heard. They'd come up with a solution to a real world problem that happened for them every day and that they have the confidence to speak out and they have the ability to change this for themselves.

Pam Mosedale:

That's brilliant. Does anyone else have the same issue that their team had a lot of concerns about it?

Becca Jones:

Yes, there was initially a lot of reluctance about doing it before we even had the first meeting with the team's attitude towards it. This is just another exercise. We aren't going to see any benefits from this. It seems like a bit of a waste of time. There are other things that we could be doing with these couple of hours. But in the first meeting, they contributed a lot and a lot of things that came up, I think, after the first session, the majority of people did see the benefit. And I think the key thing that a lot of them have said since then is that it helps them to break down bigger issues into more manageable pieces so that we can change things a little bit at a time.

Pam Mosedale:

Jenny, did your team have any concerns?

Jenny Brown:

Yeah, I probably had a bit of a mixed response. The first team I did it with were the team that I was working clinically with at the time. And they were probably very used to me being a bit bonkers sometimes and trying all these ideas. And I think we had quite good psychological safety, they were a team I'd built up because it was a greenfield site, and I just grabbed a flip chart and some marker pens and did it. And it was brilliant, they received it so well, they were really open to it and they all spoke up. And then I tried it in a different practice team. And it was a bit more like Becca and Hayley said, there was a bit more suspicion and perhaps less initial confidence that they were able to speak up. I think that's when I realised it is important to do the prep work properly and create the right atmosphere so that people can speak up because it makes a difference, I think, to how it is received and how effective it is.

Pam Mosedale:

Yeah, absolutely. Hayley, you talked about psychological safety in the team, and I think this kind of feeds into the whole practice culture thing, doesn't it? That it's such a huge thing,

practice culture. But this being able to have the safe space to talk about all these things must be helpful, I would think, to practice culture.

Hayley Potter:

I did the same as Jenny. I started with my practice. I was very new at the time to CVS and to the practice. I was still building on that psychological safety, but going into other practices, actually I've got one tomorrow, I think you learn so much more by the mistakes that you've made in those practices. I went into a practice that I'd prepped the leadership team, they were all really onboard. There was one member of the leadership team that couldn't make it that day and we went ahead without him. He was still fully onboard with everything and actually the team were great. Some of the ideas they came up with were phenomenal, and that leader got back into practice and was very derogatory about the decisions that they'd made, the ideas that they'd had and it just stalled. So, without that overarching feeling of great culture, support from the leadership team, it really doesn't go anywhere. We had to then take it back a step to ensure that actually the mistake I made was thinking that we could go ahead without the entire leadership team being there or being onboard. We don't expect them to come up with ideas because that's not the point of the framework. The point of the framework is that we as leaders recognise we don't have all the answers. You're better at solving problems than we are. I think the mistakes that we make along the way teach us more than the framework can provide.

Pam Mosedale:

Yes, it's about the people on the ground who really know what's going on rather than the leaders. But it sounds to me like all QI, it needs to have top down and bottom up. It needs to have everybody involved, the whole team. So, I think one of you mentioned the benefits of it. I think it was you, Becca. So what benefits have you all seen?

Jenny Brown:

It sort of sounds obvious, I believe, like you just said, Pam, that actually the people who are doing the jobs usually know the best ways to fix some of the little problems. And, actually, some of the things that came out of some of the sessions were, they didn't seem like they were major problems, but they were annoying people every day. And actually they knew how to solve them. They just hadn't felt empowered to do it. I think what I've seen as a benefit is people then become empowered to solve them. They don't necessarily need to wait for the next session, they can just say, "actually, I thought we could do this a bit better". I think that empowerment of people who probably know the answers to solve the little day-to-day problems.

Becca Jones:

Yeah, I would agree with that. They initially started waiting until the sort of second and third meetings, but after a couple of months, just sort of started coming to us with “this is bugging us” and “this is what we’d proposed doing”. It was absolutely brilliant. It's not a magic bullet, I think, by any means, but it's significantly improved things. And we saw a huge improvement in our eNPS score. So, the Employee Satisfaction Score, and we've had markedly less instability in the practice since we starting doing this.

Pam Mosedale:

That's really important in these days when retention is difficult. Hayley, what sort of benefits have you seen?

Hayley Potter:

I think exactly the same as Jenny and Becca have said, that this idea of team empowerment and engagement and the confidence to solve problems before they've even become problems, we don't hold What Matters To You meetings anymore. It is the culture. We're constantly tackling those pebbles as a team.

Pam Mosedale:

That's brilliant, sounds amazing. I mean, I just wish I'd been in a practice that had done this, but can we have any more practical examples of those pebbles? What kind of things are they? I know they'll be completely different for every practice, but what kind of things are the things that come up?

Becca Jones:

Some of the ones that have come up recently are the chairs in the practice, particularly in the sort of restroom and behind the reception desk that they're finding uncomfortable. The solution that they came up with was to get some new chairs, which we were absolutely fine with. Other things like... it's usually just like small little things that are just sort of niggling away at people and take some of that joy out of being at work.

If we've got a packet of biscuits, them being left open and going stale. Somebody suggested buying some biscuit... you know, some bag clips and they all thought that was a great idea. Then they've just gone off and do it. And it's, it's those kinds of things. We do tackle some of the bigger problems. So, you know, things that come up with client incivility and even if we're not able to, or even if they're not able to solve the problem, discussing it in an open forum and

breaking it down to see if there are any small things that we can do to try to change it is really useful. Then the things that are absolutely insurmountable, things like the size of the building that we've got, even just acknowledging that it's a big problem and acknowledging the fact that there isn't anything that we can do to change it has helped them a lot to sort of move on from it being something that's in their minds on a day-to-day basis.

Jenny Brown:

Yeah, I think that's a really good point. Similar things to Becca's. I like saying this because it was from the first session I ran with my team and it was the paper towel dispensers in the consult rooms, well actually the whole practice.

We were at greenfield site, we put them on, we'd chosen them in a bit of a hurry. And I'd thought for a couple of years that it was just me being...because I am occasionally a little bit of a diva, and I hated them. I couldn't put a new paper towel in, I couldn't get the towel out in front of the clients. And it came up in the first session and I was so pleased. I'd spent years thinking it was me being fussy and everybody in the room was like "we hate them". I was like, "if you told me we could just replace them". And that is why I like telling it, is because we then replaced them and the new ones were even worse. But you know what, that was so powerful because my team then saw that it was okay to make a change that was worse, and nothing bad happened. We just went for around three of them.

And that's actually really empowering when you realise that you don't have to have the ultimate solution. We're all perfectionists, aren't we? And we wait for the perfect solution, and we never do anything. So that just that silly little story just made us all realise we could just try something. If it's rubbish, we'd fix it.

Pam Mosedale:

That's brilliant, I mean, yes, not every change is an improvement, is it? The ones you have to abandon. And that seems to be a great example there.

Hayley Potter:

I think the ever kind of niggling beast in one of my practices is diary management. And I don't think it's something that will ever solve or get completely right, but it's something that we tackled from the first meeting. It was actually the reception team that proposed our triage system for emergency appointments.

I think it was really empowering to see that you don't have to stick in your lane. Reception don't solve reception problems, vets don't solve vet problems. We're one practice that works together. And now we don't tackle diary management at a monthly meeting. We tackle it every single day because we know that that is the most important sticking factor to how well our day is going to go, how well we can serve our clients, whether we're going to get adequate breaks, whether we're going to finish on time. It's so important for us to look after ourselves and our clients that it is that constant conversation now.

Pam Mosedale:

That's amazing. All this sounds really just like QI in action, which is what we all need. If someone was starting out, we've said that there's these resources. We've got the resources now, and thank you very much, CVS, you've let us have your resources that you've developed on our RCVS Knowledge site, and they're there for anybody to use. And it's all free. So how would you recommend somebody starts off using the resources? Jenny, do you have any thoughts on that?

Jenny Brown:

Yeah, I think it's probably a little bit different for everybody. I'm kind of a bit of a learn by doing so I literally grabbed a flip chart, some marker pens, phoned Mark Moreton on my way there and said, "remind me what I do?" And just did it. But I had a really secure team that I felt comfortable doing that with. I think what I'd say for people who are wanting to give it a go is give it a go. Because, you know, actually, what's the worst that can happen?

Read through the resources, the guides are really helpful and they've been developed by people who've run lots of sessions. And I think the biggest thing for me was don't be too worried about doing it. I was a bit worried about what they might say, like I might be faced with a load of insurmountable problems. But actually, what's nice about it is it draws you towards getting to identify the pebbles, the little things. And when they said to me, like the computer system, I was like "boulder, park it".

Sometimes the concern going into it is what are the team going to say that I can't solve? But it's actually just pushing it back on the room and saying, "is that something we can solve in the room today? If not, let's not waste time on it". Yeah, my advice would be have a go and have fun with it.

Pam Mosedale:

Becca, what do you think?

Becca Jones:

Yeah, I completely agree. I think that it might surprise you how well they engage with it. You know, it's definitely just worth having a go because there's not anything that you've got to lose from just trying it. We've spent a bit of the first meeting really focusing on the positive things that we liked about our individual job roles and also what made us feel proud to work at the practice as well, and that set a kind of positive forward-thinking tone to the meeting as well.

Like this actually is a really good place to work and we do really like our job roles and these things that we're about to discuss are our issues. But because of all the stuff we've just mentioned, we do want to try and work towards fixing them to make it a better place.

Pam Mosedale:

So, you'd say to start with getting the leaders to read the resources, look at the resources, but what about the team? Do you ask them to look at the resources?

Becca Jones:

We didn't send the resources out to everyone. We sort of signposted them to them if they wanted to. What we did do was give them a sort of summary, a bullet point summary of it beforehand so that they understood what we were all going into. But we didn't send them absolutely everything.

Pam Mosedale:

Thank you. So, what would your sort of last word be to practices who are thinking that this sounds quite interesting? What would you say?

Becca Jones:

Just do it.

Pam Mosedale:

Yep, just do it. Anything else?

Jenny Brown:

Yeah, I think I'd say don't be afraid to have a go, and if it's not perfect the first time, don't give up on it. Because it's like anything with QI, it's do it, reflect on it. How could you do it slightly differently? Because it is a process. It's not one meeting, you've done it, tick the box.

Pam Mosedale:

I presume you have to keep on it as well. I know you said that things happen more organically without having meetings, but you do still have meetings, do you?

Jenny Brown:

Yeah.

Pam Mosedale:

So, we've asked them to get on with it. Any other tips?

Becca Jones:

I think be brave would be my advice and as a leader I would say be prepared to hear some things that might make you feel uncomfortable but sit with them and yeah.

Pam Mosedale:

Well, thank you all three of you. This has been amazing. I think it's inspiring, to be honest, what practices can do with this, just with a little bit of time and, you know, looking at some resources and thinking about what you're going to do sounds so powerful.

I would join Jenny and Hayley and Becca in saying have a look at the resources and see whether this could work for your practice. And thank you again to CVS for letting us have these resources so we can spread them through the whole profession. Thank you.

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