

# What Can't Be Taught

## Ce qui ne s'enseigne pas

### Recognize value

Dr. Marc Philippot

**A**fter graduating from veterinary school, I moved back to my home province of Manitoba to begin, I hoped, my career as a mixed animal practitioner. Now as I sit in my office, trying to write this article, I have to remind the reader and myself that I graduated 16 years ago. What possibly can I offer to new grads in advice about my first year, or years, in practice? Can I even remember that long ago? Sure, I had some difficult cases then, like now: a horse with immune-mediated thrombocytopenia, the first outbreaks of West Nile virus in Manitoba, the BSE crisis in cattle, an iguana with a fractured mandible and certainly being fooled by a sick golden retriever with Addison's disease; just to name a few.

As well, I certainly cannot forget my other life choices during this time. Falling in love, getting married, having kids. There is also agreeing to buy my first mixed animal practice in my home town, a month prior to BSE. I convinced myself that things would be okay, I had dairy farms and the PMU industry in the area to fall back on. LOL! But 10 years later, I was back at it, buying another mixed animal practice and its satellite clinic to complement my first business.

But why stop there — how about volunteering with local community groups or becoming president of the Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association.

So, the advice I give today, comes more from these past 16 years, instead of my first year. Recognize value — the value you give to your clients, the value your employees or coworkers or employer bring to the team, the value of time with loved ones.

We as employers often hear about or discuss value. If clients feel that they got more out of you, compared to what they paid for, they got value. I believe this to be true; I've seen it and I

preach it. If you charge a client \$50 for something, make them feel they got \$100 worth. One way to achieve this, in my opinion, is through good communication. Do not feel you have to educate clients; far too many times the client smiles and nods and walks away. You feel good, but they left confused. Therefore, don't educate, communicate! Through communication, both sides are talking, asking questions and getting to the point. Clients do value this time, and remember, you still have to sound knowledgeable.

The same goes to your staff and/or coworkers. If you cannot communicate effectively with them, nothing gets done right. You end up with upset people, and worse, a toxic environment. Don't forget to say hello or goodbye — you never know if that's the last time you'll see them. We lost an employee a few years ago. She was driving to work and died in an automobile accident. You just never know. Give praise where praise is due. Even for the little things. *Thank you* or *great job* can go a long way.

My wife has three plaques with quotes above the toilet, I read them every day. Her favorite is... *"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."* Now, I don't care what generation you may belong to. All I know is that I was raised to work hard, be kind and respectful, and do the job right the first time. Therefore I like to think I work hard, and in our career, that sometimes involves long hours. So, I do the task at hand; however, this may sacrifice family time. If it was not for my wife, I probably would miss even more things. I see my younger colleagues trying to enjoy life and value their time with their loved ones. I see my older colleagues wondering what the younger ones are doing (and I admit, I question them too). Maybe its envy. But as I write this, I remember a conference I was at recently and overheard an older colleague say to another that he was a terrible father, always working, never seeing his kids grow up and that he hoped to be a better grandfather. Now I hope his kids don't feel that way, many of us had parents who worked a lot. But if this is how we as a profession feel, then value your time with your loved ones. Don't forget to try and take that time when available with them and make some memories. Work does not always allow me to be there with my family, they understand that and they appreciate that I try.

So there you have it, something that was not taught to me at school, at least not directly. Someone once said... *"Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value."* Something to live by...

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