



Be a Force for Change: “Show Up”



Heather Prendergast,
RVT, CVPM, SHPH
Co-Chair
The Veterinary Nurse Initiative



Kenichiro Yagi, MS, RVT,
VTS (ECC, SAIM)
Co-Chair
The Veterinary Nurse Initiative

What an exciting time for the veterinary nursing and technology profession—never before has the veterinary field been so focused on improving the sustainability of a career in veterinary nursing. The significant attrition rate of the members of our profession has been widely recognized, and many collaborative efforts are being made to make improvements.

The question is: “Where are *you* in all of these conversations?”

Where Are You?

With social media and the internet being the places many individuals choose when asking questions, discussing issues, or venting their frustrations, you can find an abundance of discussions, ideas, and opinions. Common questions about the profession and the veterinary nurse’s role in it often fuel passionate discussions that revolve around wages, credentialing standards, credential title, utilization, education, wellness, practice culture, and others.

The question of where you are in all of these conversations is not whether you have participated in these discussions. The question is whether you “show up” to have a productive discussion with someone who can directly make a difference: the toxic coworker, the veterinarians at your practice, the practice manager, state association leaders, national association leaders. Have you offered your thoughts and made efforts to initiate change—together?

Dr. Andy Roark recently wrote an article on venting that distills the factors that cause venting to become a habit that can cause a “perceived lack of control” and “an embrace of victimhood.”¹ “The problem is that venting isn’t like lancing an abscess,” Roark writes. “It’s like starting a bonfire in a forest.” Of course, not all venting is harmful, and we often need support from others to move in a positive direction. Dr. Roark also posits it can cause individuals to seek validation of their position and distract them from improving things in their lives that they can control.¹

With this in mind, how do we move toward positive change?

Be a Force for Change

Are you currently upset by something at work or in the profession at large that has you venting to coworkers, friends, or family members? The key is to utilize

¹ Roark A. Need to Vent? Are You Sure? Dr. Andy Roark website. drandyroark.com/need-to-vent-are-you-sure. Accessed December 21, 2018.



“Being a member of NAVTA and your state association will give you a voice in the current issues of the profession. Offering your help, however small, will add to the capabilities of the associations and help you become a part of the solution.”

that energy to make changes in the areas you have control over. Changes in your own actions are easier to accomplish since it involves only one person—you. But how do you help change the behavior of a group of people, the veterinary field, or people who aren't even in the field? This is where it becomes a bit more difficult. The answer, however, is simple: “Show up.”

The executive board of NAVTA and many other individuals invested in the profession serve on committees, collaborating to create positive change in the profession.² They become conduits for discussions and provide input into other groups that of people who may have the ability to effect positive change for the profession. These individuals are elected to executive boards or appointed to serve on committees, having varied backgrounds from within the field; they devote countless hours advocating for the profession. Your input can help shape and refine the dialogue.

Closer to home, state veterinary technician associations advocate for the profession. These associations are connected to NAVTA through the National District Representative System (NDRS). A proposal for the NDRS was submitted by Anna Santos, an RVT in Georgia, which aimed to refine the communication between NAVTA and the states—and it has become reality.³ The system now functions to provide regular communication and has become a welcome addition to the NAVTA Veterinary Technician Leadership Summits held twice a year to discuss national and state issues.⁴ Being a member of NAVTA and your state association will give you a voice in the current issues of the profession. Offering your help, however small, will add to the capabilities of the associations and help you become a part of the solution.

Move Forward

If joining an association and advocating for the profession is not what you are interested in, consider becoming involved in other initiatives. If you are interested in promoting better knowledge in veterinary nursing, for example, work with a group of people who promote better education or look for an association focused on a specialty area. If you're passionate about changing how veterinary practices are run, then work with a group of individuals centered on that goal, such as the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association (vhma.org). Or start in the workplace: perhaps you can improve your own practice by having productive conversations and finding solutions.

We all stand on the shoulders of those who have advocated for the profession. It is with a great sense of gratitude that we now do the same for the future generations. Don't let venting be the only step you take. Move forward in a positive way to create change in the profession. The future of the profession is in our hands, and there has been no better time than now to act. So, we leave you with the question we began with: Are you showing up? **TVN**

²National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America. NAVTA website. navta.net/page/leadership. Accessed December 21, 2018.

³National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America. NAVTA website. navta.net/page/DistrictRep. Accessed December 21, 2018.

⁴National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America. NAVTA website. navta.net/page/SummitsandSymposia. Accessed December 21, 2018.