TIME TO SHINE
While it is important to present yourself professionally, basic business casual is appropriate for most interviews at veterinary practices.

You’ve made it past the initial hurdle. You sent your résumé out and now you’ve landed the interview. Yikes, now what? An interview is your opportunity to make a connection with the manager and set yourself apart from other candidates in a genuine way. Managers are looking for veterinary nurses/technicians who are a great fit with their hospital team, demonstrate high skill proficiency, and also possess superb interaction abilities. During an interview, you need to be able to concisely convey why the manager should hire you.

Interviewing: Stand Out Among the Crowd

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But it's not only how you stand out that matters. This is also your chance to interview the practice to determine if it's the right fit for you and your career. You want to ensure that your values are reflected in the hospital culture and your skills will be fully utilized.

There is no magic formula for finding a solid fit. Be honest, be true to yourself, and let your light shine through.

**PREPARING TO STAND OUT**

Do your research. Look at the hospital website and social media, and learn about community involvement. Familiarize yourself with the practice, who owns it, how long they have been established, what procedures are offered, and to what type of clients they cater.

Prepare and rehearse answers to some common interview questions. What do you want the manager to know? Be ready with a quick synopsis of what you would bring to the team. Identify 3 key things you want to share. Consider these main areas:

- Where your skills shine
- What you would like to learn
- How your communication and teamwork abilities make an impact

**HOW DO YOU SHOW UP?**

**Show up on time and ready.** Beyond that, how do you present yourself? Visualize the impression that you would like to make and then align your actions to that vision. Focus on the great qualities that you have and present those with confidence.

**Dress professionally; basic business casual is fine.** A tie or heels is unnecessary for interviews in most practices and may actually give the impression that you do not understand the hands-on nature of the job. Don't wear blue jeans, any kind of athletic wear, sneakers, or sunglasses. Keep your cell phone off and out of sight.

**Aim to arrive 10 to 15 minutes early to absorb the energy of the hospital.** First impressions are important, and this might be your first chance to get a feel for how the hospital is run.

**Take 3 deep breaths before walking in the door to center yourself.** Bring out your best, and be humble with your weaknesses.

**If you can't make the interview, have the courtesy to notify the manager.** The veterinary community is tightly knit. Word travels fast, so if you don’t communicate well, or at all, with one particular manager, it could hurt your chances at other practices. If you're no longer interested in pursuing the interview, that's fine. Just let them know.

**EVALUATING A HOSPITAL AS A POTENTIAL EMPLOYER**

Know what is important to you in a hospital, employer, manager, and team. Be prepared to ask questions to help you determine if the fit is right. Observe the veterinary team members and their interactions. Chat with the team about why they like working there. Be kind and genuine. These are people you will potentially be working alongside.

Just because a hospital likes you and wants to hire you does not mean it’s the fit that you need. Consider which factors are important to you. Understand where you can be flexible and what aspects are deal-breakers.

Know where you stand on the following topics so you can ask questions to learn how the hospital functions:

**Hospital Culture**

Ask the manager to explain the hospital culture. Does the culture match your own values? Do your observations of the hospital reflect what the manager is telling you? In other words, how well does the hospital live up to its own cultural definition?

**Team Dynamics**

Watch the interactions among the team, between team...
members and clients, and between team members and pets. Do the veterinary team members seem to genuinely care about each other, the patients, and the clients they serve? Are they respectful? Do they enjoy the work they do? Is this a group of people you would want to work with every day?

Veterinary Nurse Skill Utilization
Veterinary nurses/technicians are used very differently in each hospital, so ask about tasks and procedures they are allowed to perform and what is reserved for doctors. How much latitude do veterinary nurses have when answering questions for clients? What does training and mentorship look like? Are new hires expected to jump right in or will you shadow for a time before being allowed to perform anything on your own?

Growth Opportunities
Even if you're a recent graduate and everything seems new, it is nice to know how the hospital views continued learning: not just the required continuing education but also opportunities to keep veterinary team members interested. How does the hospital support learning new skills? What types of projects do senior technicians take on? Is management open to new suggestions from team members?

Work-Life Balance
This balance can be hard to get right in veterinary medicine. For your own wellbeing, put some thought into what brings you fulfillment in your life and what you need to be able to offset the stress of work. Go into the interview with a solid understanding of how you envision work-life balance.

Ask about expectations for the work schedule, specifically shift times, days, weekends, holidays, and on-call rotations. What type of paid time-off benefits are there? How does the hospital encourage team members to take time away to rejuvenate? Do team members readily cover or trade shifts with each other?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW
Send a personalized thank-you email to the manager. If you really enjoyed the hospital and can see yourself working there, tell the manager so in your message. Let them know specifically what you liked and the contributions you envision making. Tell them you look forward to hearing about next steps in the interview process. If it isn't the right place for you, thank them anyway for their time.

COMMON MISTAKES IN INTERVIEWING
● Not fully answering an interview question. If you don’t know the answer to an interview question, that’s OK. However, don’t simply leave it with that. Part of interviewing well is showing your ability to think on your feet. Share your thought process and how you would find out the information or resolve the situation.
● Failing to share what you bring to the hospital. A good interviewer will ask you how you will contribute to their team. However, if they don’t, or if you have more to share than was elicited by the interview questions, then speak up.
● Trying to be someone you’re not. Be true to yourself. It’s important to be professional and courteous, but it is equally important to be genuine. If your true self is not the right fit for a practice, isn’t it better to know now?

A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP
When there is a good fit, both you and the hospital—and ultimately the patients—benefit. You want the manager to be just as excited about hiring you as you are about working there. Help them see why they can’t live without you. TVN