



CAREER ADVANCEMENT

The Benefits of Joining an Association

Carolyn Becker, CVPM, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, CVT
Starpath Consulting LLC, Littleton, Colorado

Involvement in a veterinary nurse/technician association seems easy enough when you first enter the profession. After all, there are many benefits to becoming a member of an association. We know that these organizations represent veterinary nurses, keep us informed and updated, provide continuing education, connect us to job opportunities, and much more.



However, many find that once they start working as a veterinary nurse, the demands of the job quickly override all those good intentions, and staying actively involved in an association falls by the wayside. Veterinary nurses are busy people. Some days it's enough just to get through the workday, take care of personal responsibilities, and try to squeeze in a bit of time for yourself before falling exhausted into bed. Who has time for anything else?

Nevertheless, challenge yourself to place importance on staying informed and exploring opportunities. Don't shortchange your growth or your connections. Becoming actively involved in your association keeps you current on trends within the profession and gives you a sense of community outside of work. These are vital to long-term success and a sense of fulfillment.

WHICH ASSOCIATION IS BEST?

There are a variety of different options, including specific veterinary nurse-oriented groups.

- **National, state, and local associations.** On a national level, there is NAVTA (navta.net), but there are also many state and local associations. These will keep you updated on the happenings in our profession and changes that may impact veterinary nurses specifically where you live and work.
- **Specialized associations.** Depending on your interests, you may also want to consider joining a more specialized group such as an association with a focus on emergency, lab animal, zoo, or equine medicine. There are also specialist organizations for those veterinary nurses who are pursuing or have achieved VTS certification. Each will provide a different take on the profession. Look for a group that is centered on the type of practice you work in or your interests.
- **Veterinary industry associations.** There are many other organizations to consider joining that are not exclusive to veterinary nurses but may cover a broader scope within the veterinary profession, such as the AVMA (avma.org), AAHA (aaha.org), or the NAVC (navc.com). These can broaden your horizons and help you develop skills and knowledge in other areas of veterinary medicine.
- **Social media communities.** Of course, there are many social media groups too, each with its own parameters and focus.
- **Other opportunities.** Talk with your practice manager to see what else is available; often there are opportunities to join communities through vendors,

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suppliers, or group purchasing organizations, especially if your practice is a member of such an organization.

Choose 1 or 2 associations that resonate the most with you and set aside a small chunk of time each month (even 15 minutes!) to be involved.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

One of the most common and simplest ways to be active in your association is to pursue continuing education (CE). Virtual webinars or podcasts are a great way to obtain CE (often for free) and stay informed on new ideas and techniques. Check into attending an association-sponsored workshop or conference. These range from single-day to multiday events and often combine CE with the opportunity to visit a new city and meet new people, providing a refreshing outlook.

Beyond formal CE, many ideas are sparked by browsing through posts of fellow veterinary nurses, viewing quick videos for technique tips, or reading blogs or articles. There are often discussion boards and a library of templates and training opportunities that you can utilize to make your job easier.

CAREER GROWTH

Most associations have links to job boards, where you may just find your next great opportunity. If you are thinking of looking for a new position, start searching job postings to discover what types of roles are available and what piques your interest.

If you are currently in a supervisory role, or you would like to head in that direction, consider joining a veterinary manager's group, such as the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association (vhma.org).



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CAREER ADVANCEMENT

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

While you can certainly offer to head up a committee or volunteer to serve on the association board, these are not the only ways to make an impact. It is often the small things that carry significant weight. Find ways to be involved that fit with your interests, your schedule, and your preferences. Every voice counts. As you gain experience, share your expertise and tips with newer veterinary nurses to help them in their own journeys.

CONNECTION

A common mistake of veterinary nurses is failing to invest in themselves. You are important and your sense of belonging is a crucial piece of job fulfillment. Building your place within a community and connecting with others provides you with a support group, mentorship, and a source of encouragement. Fellow veterinary nurses can support you when times get rough, commiserate when things go south, and inspire at just the right moment.

FORWARD MOMENTUM

We all have a stake in the future of veterinary medicine. What happens in this profession, and to the people within it, has a critical impact on our collective ability to treat patients, care for clients, and continue our work. It is up to each of us to take an active role in shaping our future. Together we continue to move the profession forward. **TVN**



Carolyn Becker

Founder and president of Starpath Consulting LLC, Carolyn has an insider's perspective from more than 20 years in the veterinary profession as a CVT, practice manager, HR director, HR partner, and HR consultant. Her deep understanding of veterinary team dynamics is the foundation for Starpath Consulting LLC, which provides veterinary-focused HR support. Carolyn is passionate about veterinary practice culture and empowering hospital teams. She also offers résumé review and individual coaching services; see details at starpathconsulting.com.

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