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EDITOR'S NOTE

It's Time for a Change

“Better to be nothing than a blind doorman at the head of civilization’s parade.”

— Kurt Vonnegut

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 4 million Americans quit their jobs in July 2021,¹ and a recent Gallup analysis finds that 48% of America’s working population is actively job searching or watching for opportunities.² While resignations actually decreased slightly in industries such as manufacturing and finance, 3.6% more healthcare employees quit their jobs than in the previous year.³ In general, it seems that resignation rates are higher among employees who have worked in fields that have experienced extreme increases in demand due to the pandemic, likely leading to increased workloads and burnout. Sound familiar? In the veterinary profession, turnover is estimated to be double that in human medicine at about 15%, with up to 25% turnover among veterinary nursing staff.³

There’s something existential behind what is being called the “Great Resignation.” The pandemic and the rise of remote work have changed the way we view our lives and the world with “pandemic epiphanies,” motivating many workers to leave their jobs for something different. For many, there has been a shift in priorities, but for others the decision may result from the way they have been treated during the pandemic. Already also termed the “Great Discontent,”² could this time in our lives actually bring about meaningful, long-term change to workplace culture and investment in employees? This is a time for pragmatism and recognition of what everyone in our organizations is going through, a time to be willing to let go of the past. But how do we communicate that our situation is one of potential and possibility, instead of fear and

uncertainty? There are 3 steps to consider for our work teams at all levels within this profession: re-recruit, reward, and re-engage. And these don’t all revolve around pay. It’s time to start anew and recognize that our technicians, for instance, are not just comparing their jobs to that of their colleagues at other veterinary hospitals, but to anyone paying a salary in any walk of life. The lack of stress, abuse, and lengthy workdays, even at equivalent pay in another job, is an attractive prospect to our colleagues who are highly trained!

The time is now to dramatically change what we will accept for our workplaces and teams. Otherwise, we are promoting the disengagement that is the precursor to discontent. The time is now to be bold and engage all of our people to help solve the problems we face, providing employees with autonomy and a vision for their development. This requires courage, because admitting that we do not know all the answers requires vulnerability. It takes strength and confidence to appreciate that outcomes are better when more ideas are included, when fuller representation is present, and when diverse perspectives are heard.

The time is now to create an environment for everyone to participate and inform the way forward, which sends a message that they are trusted and valued. A pay raise is always great and will often temporarily help, but engagement is a necessity without which there will be a spiraling loss of talent from our profession. Daring to be vulnerable is looking forward to a future with possibility. **TVP**



To see the references for this article, please visit todaysveterinarypractice.com.

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, an article titled “Looking Back, Moving Forward” in the 2021 Clinic Innovation Guide, which was distributed with the September/October 2021 issue, referred to Jim Weisman, DVM, as a “former veterinarian.” We regret the error.