



HERE'S A SECRET ...

The Key to Longevity Is to Embrace Change

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Have you met one of them yet? They are rare. They don't look the same every time, so they can be hard to spot. But they have always made an appearance in my career whenever I needed the reminder the most. Much like the Jedi they seem to actively mimic, they are the "change gurus," masters of veterinary medicine who can show you the way. Change is hard, but mastering it is necessary.

Whether it was the unshakable ER veterinarian celebrating over 30 years on overnights who could calmly shrug at the 20-deep pile of charts or the mentor (who has more than a passing resemblance to a certain green *Star Wars* master known to speak in the third person, having trained more than his fair share of predecessors) who still sends links to research articles, they have 1 common thread: They embrace, welcome, and even go so far as to encourage change!

These are the leaders that have the biggest arsenal of medical knowledge to fight the diseases and conditions we wage war with

every day. They use the latest and greatest techniques and treatments, but when even those fail, they have a plan B and 25 other options. They also are always willing to share their experiences and teach others.

You may have also seen the opposite. The veterinarians that felt they couldn't trust the latest anesthetic protocols, clinging to their halothane vaporizers long after they couldn't be refilled. They always seem grumpy and uncomfortable, like bull sharks trapped in a freshwater river, swimming upstream, usually alone, rather than joining others with an entire ocean to explore.

Of course, some of those sharks manage to stay in practice, grit and sheer stubbornness seeming to outweigh the tide of change. They use words like "always," "never," "won't," and "can't," which we know don't match the science of veterinary medicine, which uses "often," "likely," and "rarely."

On top of all that, change is accelerating! Telemedicine, artificial intelligence, new pharmaceuticals, and increased investment in animal health mean that the tide of change is pushing us forward faster than ever. But scientists are trained in skepticism, reluctant to believe anything that hasn't been tested and proven through peer review and publication. So, how do we do both? Luckily, those change gurus always showed me we can embrace the future, learn and try new things, and that the old ways don't have to be thrown out. We can mix the new with the old and slowly morph into the gurus ourselves, even if laser surgery doesn't have the lightsaber-like appearance I was hoping it did! **TVP**

Ben Kirchner

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This column is titled "The Secret Life Vets" so I can talk about the secrets that really should be considered well-known truths. These are the not-so-secret secrets that can help change our thinking and our profession for the better.

