


## Administrator Ann

HR Reality Show @ Happy Pet Animal Hospital

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Event: VHMA  
Summer Management Meeting

Presenter: Stuart Charlson, President  
ConsultStu, LLC



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## Our story begins...


Our fictional hero, Ann Administrator, has been working at the Happy Pet Animal Hospital for the past seven years. The business is set in the bucolic town of Eau Claire, a quiet enclave of homes nestled in the central Florida.

In this reality drama, Ann is confronted with a series of typical human resource, management and staff challenges.

Can you help Ann survive her day?

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## Happy Pet Animal Hospital

- The Hospital employs a staff of 26 employees.
- There is 1 owner, 5 veterinarians; 10 vet techs; 5 kennel staff, 3 receptionists; 1 assistant manager and Ann.
- Several employees work part time.
- There is a mix of older and younger employees.
- Office hours are from 8 am and 6 pm, one night per week for evening hours until 8 pm. There are weekend kennel hours.

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## Ann's Duties as Veterinary Administrator

- Staff Scheduling
- Human Resource matters; policies and procedures
- Information Technology
- AP/AR/Payroll and accounting
- Inventory
- Budgeting
- Promotions/advertising
- Fee schedule
- Being the "go to" person (anything else?)

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## Ann's knows - employees can make or break the Hospital's profitability

Necessary Human Resource Skills (Ann's toolkit)

- HR knowledge, creativity and a problem solving attitude
- A balanced focus on both short and long term results.
- Nimble and flexible, since most HR situations are unpredictable and usually inconvenient
- Valuing employee differences, they may want and value different things
- Staying HR healthy is a work in progress


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## Ann prepares her team for HR success

- Assigns roles and responsibilities
- Sets expectations
- Listens to diagnose
- Remains calm
- Shares information & communicates
- Trains staff and educates them to prevent surprises
- Strives to be consistent
- Reinforces positive behavior



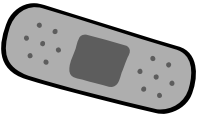
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## Emergency "HR" First Aid Kit

- ❖ Working knowledge of applicable employment laws
- ❖ Critical thinking methods
- ❖ Organizational goals & tools to keep employees aligned with them
- ❖ Knowledge of each employee; how to tactfully communicate information to them
- ❖ To remain HR healthy, your activity starts before the HR trauma occurs!




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## Monday at 7:30 AM, Ann arrives at work



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## Ann's Migraine Monday


(maybe she should have called in sick today!)

- ⊙ Early open kennel guy has a migraine
- ⊙ Receptionist delivers baby announcement
- ⊙ Vet tech sports a new tattoo
- ⊙ Vet tech complains about a sore neck
- ⊙ Reference call
- ⊙ Unpaid bills from resigning employee
- ⊙ Vet tech's arm is in a cast
- ⊙ DVM smells like beer
- ⊙ Rude DVM
- ⊙ Generational conflict
- ⊙ Look what I found?
- ⊙ Unhappy kennel employee
- ⊙ Losing Ann's favorite DVM – Randy Resigning



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## 7:30 AM – Steve calls in sick

- Your early open kennel employee calls the overnight answering service, to say he is not coming into work today.
- He has a migraine headache.
- It is the fourth time in the last two months that he has not been able to make it into work to open.
- He is the brother of the last veterinarian you just hired.

Trouble or no trouble?

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## Discussion: Migraine headaches

- Operational impact?
- Is this excessive? If so, what hospital rules apply?
- Any protections for Steve?
- Are there any applicable leaves of absence?
- Accountability?

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## 8:00 AM - Cathy leaves a baby announcement on your desk!

- Cathy has been a good employee, but just completed her fourth month of employment. She excitedly left a birth announcement on your desk, and has been talking with everyone. She is young and it is her first child.
- Ann starts thinking about future leave needs, and reflecting on the extensive cross training Cathy is receiving on some important office software.
- Your last employee that had a baby never came back to work after the birth.
- Should Ann cut her losses or ride it out?

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### Discussion: Pregnancy

- Evaluate leaves of absence available under the law
- Pregnancy Discrimination Act (US)
- State laws may also give time off for pregnancy
- What options are available for the organization?
- Any communication tips?
- What workplace policies are needed?
- Can Ann turn this into a positive? How?



### 8:45 AM – Rebekah's new Tat!

- For Ann, everything starts getting back to normal when Rebekah arrives at the office with a pierced lip and a large tattoo covering her right arm. Ann's thought - "wow." Ann is worried about customer reaction, and soon after arriving she overhears an older woman telling Rebekah that it does not look ladylike.
- What should Ann do?
- What are Ann's concerns?



### Discussion: Dress Codes

- Are there limits on your dress code?
- What items need to be in writing and signed off by employees?
- Can employees request an accommodation because of religious beliefs?
- Freedom of expression?
- What about good taste, and professional standards?



### 9:45 AM: Mark's aching, painful neck

- Vet tech Mark reports that while lifting several heavy dogs yesterday, he noticed a dull pain in his upper neck. Today, it was stiffening up and he wants to sit and put an ice pack on it.
- Today's schedule is busy, and several walk ins have made the waiting area quite busy.
- While deciding what to do, you recall that Mark had been involved in a mountain bike accident last year, and had taken 2 months off to recover after surgery.
- What does Ann do?

### Discussion: Workplace Injuries

- Reporting injuries
- Relationship between injury and work
- What workplace policies impact the situation and do they need to be written?
- Are safety standards involved?
- Leaves of absence?
- Protections for reporting claims
- Retaliation – what does it mean? Important?

### 10:30 AM: Ann receives a reference call

- ☎ Last month, Ann had fired a kennel employee after he had made some inappropriate comments to a customer, and had been on duty when some pet supplies had disappeared.
- ☎ The reference call is from a good friend and fellow VHMA member. What do you say?



## Discussion: Reference Liability

- ☛ References pose several areas of concern
  - ☛ Defamation
  - ☛ Invasion of privacy
  - ☛ Retaliation
  - ☛ Negligent referral or breach of duty to warn
- ☛ Advice for Ann
  - ☛ Tell friend about his inappropriate behavior?
  - ☛ That you suspect him of being a thief?
  - ☛ What did you tell the employee, when you fired him anyway?

## 11:25 AM – Donald's unpaid vet bills

- ❖ Donald has still not paid off the \$400 vet bill after his Tabby cat got sick. Promises and sob stories have led to it being in the over 90 day category.
- ❖ Donald has been telling his buddy that he is going to go back to school for physical therapy – better money.
- ❖ Since payroll is being run, you decide to take \$50 a pay check until the bill is paid – since Donald has not made any other plans.
- ❖ What do you think?



## Discussion: Paycheck deductions

- Arrangements are made ahead of time
- What kind of employee is involved?
  - US wage and hour restrictions may require minimum wage be paid to non-exempt employees.
- State law wage deduction statutes set forth a specific sequence of events before payroll deductions are allowed
  - Do you have written authorization?
- Prior to deducting money, you should have an agreement identifying the property/equipment and making the employee responsible for its return, or full payment.
- Improper deductions may result in fines and attorney fees in order to correct the illegal action.

## 11:55 AM – Vet Tech Andy arrives with a right arm cast

- ❖ One of your best employees, Andy, came back from a wind surfing weekend with his right arm in a cast and sling. His doctor note states no lifting with right arm for 6 weeks. After the cast comes off, he will have physical therapy sessions during his off time. His job requires regular lifting, restraining and physical exertion.
- ❖ What now? Can Ann just sent him home until he can lift?
- ❖ Ann has some paperwork to catch up on, can she use him for administrative work? Any concerns?

## Discussion: Non-work related injury

### Ann needs to get lunch, help?

- Do any laws cover this situation?
- Do your leave policies say anything about non-work related accidents?
- If you use him, does that open Ann up for a precedent on future situations?
- What documents would help?
- What if your work assignments aggravate his condition?
- Any safety concerns?



## 1:10 PM: DVM Danielle Smells like Beer?

- ❖ After eating lunch, Ann notices that the oldest DVM is not quite herself. She is a little loud, and when she walks past you, there is a distinct smell of alcohol. She is preparing to microchip a cat, and has a full schedule in the afternoon.
- ❖ Danielle has some personal problems with her husband, but they have not been interfering with work, up to this point. You also know that she spends several nights per week at the nearby Indian casino bingo hall.
- ❖ What can we do?
- ❖ How do we handle this confidentially? Any risks?

### Discussion: Substance abuse

- What is the extent of the problem?
- Can someone else confirm?
- Ann has a drug free workplace policy in place, but has never tested anyone. What is required?
- Privacy concerns must be considered.
- Document the facts to protect your actions.
- Can we just send her home?



### 1:55 PM - Harry's Rudeness and Anger

- ❖ Harry (DVM) is a gregarious, but moody vet who loves animals and has high standards of care. After lunch, vet tech Monica complains to Ann that Harry was rude, and a little aggressive with her during a small animal procedure that morning.
- ❖ He was frustrated with the pace of her work, and made some abrupt remarks about her abilities. She said he "ripped" an instrument from her hands. Another employee observed the events, but does not want to take sides. Monica was not Harry's choice for assistant, but Ann had been forced to schedule her because of vacations.
- ❖ Harry is great vet and popular with pet owners, but is sometimes difficult to work with. He is a great revenue producer, but is a little rough around the edges.
- ❖ Can Ann defuse the situation?

### Discussion: Difficult People

- What are your professional standards, and where do you set the bar
- Legal trend – addresses harassment based on personal characteristics, but also psychological harassment and "bullying"
- How visible should Ann's actions be? What should employees be told?
- What preventive measures are needed to demonstrate that your hospital has done all it can do?
- Can Harry be coached on his behavior?

### 2:50 PM - Millennial Jenny + Boomer Helen

- Jenny and Helen, two vet techs have been helping you with a project and they are increasingly not seeing eye to eye. Helen, an older and longer tenured employee, is upset at the text messaging and extended breaks. Jenny is a great young talent, but she has only been at Happy Pet for a year. She always has suggestions, and her questions seem to annoy Helen. Helen is leading the project, but she needs some help.
- How can Ann help get the project back on track?

### Discussion: Generational Conflict

- How do boomers see Gen X & millennial?
- How do Gen X and millennial see boomers?
- Are you adjusting your management styles to better facilitate generational communication?
- Get to know your team
- Successful leaders allow find a way to let all generations be heard
- Generational differences only represents one factor (variable) influencing adult interactions

### 3:30 PM – Look what I found?

- Ann needs to locate the key for the back storage room so she goes into Robert's desk. While looking in the desk drawer, Ann spots a romantic note from a customer. Robert is married. Ann finds the key, closes the drawer and goes back to her work.
- What should Ann do?
- Are there privacy concerns?
- What policies may be impacted?

### Discussion: Privacy at Work

- Privacy at work is different everywhere, depending on your location
- What are employee expectations?
- Does the employee – customer relationship pose any special concerns or problems?
- Are policies necessary?
- What legal concerns exist with affairs, personal issues and work?
- Does morality play a role?



### 4:15 pm George's poor attitude

- Lately Kennel employee George has been displaying some negative attitude (rumor mongering, complaining about duties, slow actions, comparing his "worth" to others and not being real friendly).
- Today, some personal problems have contributed to his short and abrupt interactions with co-workers. Ann just overheard a gruff remark.
- What does Ann do?

### Improve the Attitude, or Move On

- Poor morale can be infectious
- Employees look to leaders to address the grievances (if legit) or address the person, if he/she is not contributing
- Ann's approach – not personal, the match not right
- Decision making leave – committed, engaged or it will detract from your delivery (changes culture?)



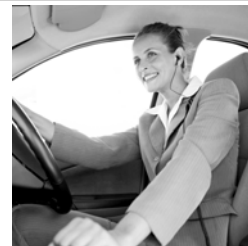
### 5:00 PM – Resignation by DVM Randy

- Ann's shortest tenured DVM Randy comes into her office and announces that he is leaving to start up a new clinic with two colleagues from school. He does not provide much information, but his roots are in Eau Claire, and he just bought a house. Ann is worried about the loan forgiveness agreement they have with Randy, and the impact on the practice. He offers a 60 day work out period. The owner is shocked and disappointed with Randy's decision.
- What is Ann thinking about? Things to do?

### Discussion: Leaving the practice

- Repayment agreement in place?
- Non-compete options
- He is well liked by the staff. Should Ann be concerned that other employees may following him? Can she restrict what he says at work?
- What will she say about him to future employers?

### Time to Go Home Ann!





## Ann's HR Survivability Depends on:

- Compliance
  - Effective Associates Manual, documents & forms
  - Training your staff
  - Documenting important events
- Cost Effectiveness
  - Managing performance effectively
  - Having the HR band-aids to smooth situation/people
  - Benchmarking and measurables
- Value Creation
  - Tools to lead successful change, continuous improvement
  - Steady communications, various methods
  - Long term, short term balance
  - Mission and vision
- Tact, Personal Skills, Sensitivity and Credibility



## Thank you!

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